

Walks through History



**Historic Downtown Osceola
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Introduction

Today we will look at the buildings that make up the Hale Avenue Historic District (NR-listed 1987 & amended in 2003), the buildings included in the Historic Resources of Osceola Multiple Resource Nomination (NR-listed 1987), and the individually listed Mississippi County Courthouse (NR-listed 1978) and Violet Cemetery (NR-listed 2004). We will also discuss some of the non-contributing structures along Hale Avenue that made up the commercial corridor of Osceola.

Brief History of Osceola & Mississippi County

Osceola is an early settlement in northeastern Arkansas's Mississippi County. Located on a low, heavily wooded ridge protruding into the Mississippi River, Osceola was ideally situated as a steamboat landing (steamboats would stop here to get wood to fuel their steam engines). In fact, the original name of the town was

Plum Point because steamboat captains would ask each other where to get wood for fuel and they would say, “Go plum to the point.”

In 1875, when the town of Osceola was incorporated (for the second time), the small Mississippi River community consisted of one hotel, four saloons, two grocery stores, and a few residences built along a main street. River trade continued to thrive and Osceola grew steadily until the 1890s when the Frisco Railroad built a line west of the town. The railroad and the building of improved roadways marked a decline in river commerce, and the end of an era for Osceola.

As commerce on the river declined, to be replaced by rail lines, Osceola re-established itself west of the original town site, nearer the railroad. Thus the designation between “Old Town” and “New Town”—the original location of Osceola near the river and the newer settlement inland. Captain Samuel Spenser Semmes, a prominent attorney and former county judge, built his home near the railroad line and encouraged others to move their homes and businesses closer to the railroad. A town site company was formed in the 1890s and lots were sold.

Development of the town of Osceola on its new site progressed steadily. In 1902 Osceola had around 1000 residents. The City had a municipally owned electric power plant and 28 electric streetlights. Promotional literature billed Osceola as “only 8 hours from St. Louis and 15 hours from Chicago”.

A road improvement district was formed around 1918 to facilitate the construction of roads from Osceola to points west in the county and primarily to build a “good” road to Little Rock. The project was heralded as one of the greatest advancements

in the county's history. Construction of the new roads provided the surrounding farm community access to the markets all seasons of the year.

Prosperous economic conditions prevailed in Osceola the first two decades of the twentieth century. But in the late 1920s a series of disastrous floods, the most destructive of which was the 1927 flood, rolled over Eastern Arkansas. Following the floods were years of severe drought. The stock market crash in 1929 only compounded the desperate conditions already existing in Mississippi County. Economic progress in Osceola came to a standstill.

Construction of a Federal Post Office in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration of Osceola signified a step toward economic recovery. However a year later in 1937, the worst flood in the history of the town drove thousands of people from their homes and businesses. Farmlands and crops were ruined. This severe flood prompted the government to assist in construction of the St. Francis levee and similar levees along the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River continues to be utilized as a port terminal for both import and export of agricultural products and supplies.

Mississippi County Courthouse

The first county courthouse was constructed in Osceola in 1882 about 6-8 blocks from its current location (at corner of Broadway and Union Streets). In 1910, Judge William J. Driver donated one acre of land in the center of "New Town" for construction of the present building. The Mississippi County Courthouse is the most impressive structure in the entire county. The courthouse was built in 1912, and the original cornerstone from the old courthouse bearing the names of the

county officials at that time was used as the northeastern cornerstone on this building.

The courtroom was used for different community events in the early days. Society balls were held there, and the Masons, the Progressive Club, and the Osceola First Christian Church all met there until they obtained their own facilities.

The Mississippi County Courthouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. It is an excellent example of the Classical Revival architectural style. The building's first floor was once used as a jail. The building's exterior walls are clad in unusually long brown stretcher bricks, measuring 12 inches in length x 1 ¾ inches in height. The full-height entry porch is supported by 6 fluted Ionic columns measuring 30 feet in height and 3 feet in diameter.

Under the portico, the building features five unique 36-over-36 pane windows. The decorative terra-cotta cornice wraps around the entire building, boasting a classically inspired egg-and-dart pattern and dentils. The most distinctive feature of the building is its copper plated dome. Cast concrete and terra cotta moldings form the base of the dome, and round polished insets are centered on each side of the dome.

Interior—

We will see marble staircases with wrought iron and wooden banisters. The floors are covered in beautiful ceramic tile imported from Italy. The interior walls are plaster with marble wainscoting, and the courtroom still has the original plaster and terra cotta molded cornice and exposed ceiling beams with Roman olive branch decorations at each end.

101-109 North Walnut Buildings

The block of buildings from 101-109 North Walnut were constructed circa 1900 by Eatmon Construction Co. The architect was William Frank Little, who moved to Osceola after the Civil War. This block appears to be one building, but in fact, each section is separated by a fire wall, creating 5 distinct structures. The block features two Mission-style parapets, decorative brick corbelling, vents, transom windows, and cast iron columns. These buildings are very high-style examples of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century standard commercial style.

The corner building at 101 N. Walnut is historically known as Cramer's Café, but according to Sanborn maps, it has served as a storage facility for agricultural implements, a grocery, a grocery warehouse for D.M. Moore Wholesale Grocery, and as a restaurant.

The building at 103 N. Walnut is historically known as the Joy Theatre, but it has housed agricultural implements, a barber shop, office, and various stores. 105 N. Walnut is historically known as the Courthouse Café, but has served as a storage facility for agricultural implements, cement storage, a restaurant, and various stores.

107 N. Walnut is historically known as Young Insurance Agency, but it has served as a hay storage facility, a bottling works, and a dry cleaners. Finally, 109 N. Walnut was historically Dr. Turentine's office, but has also been an auto repair shop and various other stores over the years.

W. Hale Street

New City Hall (City of Osceola Building)

Before this building's construction, a three-story opera house occupied this site. The new city hall was built by Andrew Florida in 1936-37 as the Mississippi County Bank. It would later become First National Bank and then Union Planter's Bank before serving as City Hall.

The building is designed in the Classical Revival style and features fluted columns, a dentiled cornice above the entryway, and classically inspired engravings like medallions and acanthus leaves, which is influenced by early Greek architecture.

The exterior of the building is made of Indiana limestone. The interior offices are finished in Burl walnut paneling, some of which is hand-carved. The interior flooring and counters are made of Italian marble, as are the benches. The teller cages are made of bronze.

Florida Brothers Building (1936)

The Florida Brothers Building was constructed in 1936 by Thomas Florida. This building was constructed to house his real estate business, which had done well during the Great Depression, enabling the Florida brothers to loan millions of dollars to farmers in Mississippi County. The Classical Revival building is constructed out of limestone blocks and features Greek influenced details around the entrance. This includes the bound bulrush molding, medallion and festoons with egg and dart detail.

Burnett Law Firm, (311)

This building is very Mid-century Modern and very minimal. The front of the building is the only part that has this brick treatment. The rear is composed of cinder block. I do not have an exact construction date, but I would say this is very early 1960s.

This building is considered noncontributing to the district because when it was listed, it was not old enough. It could probably be considered contributing today because it is architecturally intact.

Old City Hall (Old Post Office)

The Old City Hall or Old Post Office building was constructed by the Department of the Treasury in 1936. It served as the post office until 1967 when the current post office on Johnson Street was built. It's typical New Deal institutional architecture and utilizes colonial Revival features such as symmetry, 12/12 double-hung windows, keystones and blind arches around the windows and over the door and the split staircase.

There was a New Deal mural in the lobby but it was painted over.

D.M. Moore & Son (1927)

The D.M. Moore and Son Building is constructed in the early twentieth century standard commercial style with red brick walls, stone coping, and a stone panel engraved with the builder's name and date. D.M. Moore owned a wholesale grocery business in Osceola, and it was located in this building—his grocery warehouse was in the Cramer's Café building at 101 N. Walnut in 1931.

Since this building was constructed in 1927, it has traditionally been used as restaurant space. However, before this building was constructed, this was the site of the Courthouse Hotel (1913). Even though the datestone says 1927, I would say that the building was remodeled in the 1960s because of the long bricks, which were popular in that decade, and the aluminum display windows and entrances.

Raines Play House (Post Office)

Raines Play House was originally built to house Osceola's Post Office in 1915. When businesses began moving west of the railroad tracks to "New Town," there was much controversy over where to locate the Post Office. The *Osceola Times* even ran articles entitled "Where is the Post Office this Week?" The City of Osceola finally secured funds to build a permanent Post Office in 1915 and commissioned Memphis architect G.C. Parlow to design the Classical Revival building.

Floor tiles inside are the same design as the ones in the courthouse.

Parlow also designed the Coston Building next door, so he used the same type of cut mortar block to construct the Post Office. This building is made of brick, but the front façade is faced with cut mortar block. The building features a cut block parapet and cornice decorated by two sizes of dentils. The entrance is flanked by fluted pilasters topped by Ionic capitals.

On either side of the building are cut block pilasters with corbelled caps. The windows feature multi-paned transoms, which have been painted over. The mosaic tile that was used in the courthouse was also used in this building. After serving as the Post Office, this building housed a pool hall for many years.

J.T. Coston Building (1915)

The Coston Building was constructed in 1915 by Joseph T. Coston, a Tennessee attorney and graduate of Vanderbilt University, who moved to Osceola before the turn of the century. He was instrumental in the establishment of drainage districts in Mississippi County and represented plantation owner R.E. Lee Wilson of Wilson, AR, whose fields frequently flooded.

The Coston Building was designed by Memphis architect G.C. Parlow and is built of brick with a cut mortar block façade. The building is bounded by two square pilasters with corbelled caps and features a parapet with an elevated central portion. The stone panel is inscribed with the builder's name "J.T. Coston" and the building's construction year "1915." The building's four windows are slightly recessed and sit above a cut block ledge. Mr. Coston was one of the first people in Osceola to construct a door to his upstairs apartment on the front façade of his building. There was a grocery in this building in 1919, and it has also been used as a barber shop and hardware store over the years.

Bryan & Hook Dry Goods Store (1917)

The Bryan & Hook Dry Goods Store was built in 1917 and lacks much exterior ornamentation. It is designed in the standard commercial style with a flat roof and two stone string courses on its front façade to create a visual break from the otherwise plain brick upper façade. The building's plate glass windows made it unique at the time of its construction because of the large space for window displays. There was a clothing and dry goods store and a barbershop on this site in 1913 before this building was constructed. Bryan & Hook sold dry goods, clothing, ladies' and gentlemen's furnishings, and shoes.

You can see changes to the display windows, which are likely 1960s or 1970s because of the brick bulkheads and aluminum replacements.

Patterson Building (1902) & Fred Patterson Store (1904)

The 1902 Patterson Building (eastern one) was the second building to be constructed in “New Town.” It was owned by Fred G. Patterson, who operated a general mercantile store out of the building. The store sold everything from cotton sacks to shoes. In 1904, Mr. Patterson built the building next door and moved his store there (western one). He then rented out the eastern building.

Fred Patterson operated the store until he died in 1964, and his son, Henry J. Patterson, closed the store for one day in observance of his father’s funeral before taking over operations himself. Henry Patterson ran the store until his death in 1987. At that time, Henry’s sister, Lonetta, closed the Patterson Store because she was brought up in an era when it was not appropriate for women to work (although she was college educated).

She donated the Patterson Buildings to the Mississippi County Historical and Genealogical Society in 1993 to be used exclusively as a historical center. Lonetta died shortly thereafter. You are welcome to go inside after the tour.

The buildings have been altered very little from their original appearance. They feature the same exterior design and have elevated central parapets with arched tops and stone panels bearing the Patterson name and dates of construction. The buildings have decorative brick corbelling at the cornice line and vents.

Each building has its original storefront windows with transoms and recessed entrance. The entryways are set off by pairs of cast iron columns. The interiors of the buildings remain unchanged as well. The western building still has the original stools, counters, and shelves. The light fixtures were probably installed between 1908 and 1910, and they still work. Back then, electricity was only on from 8 or 9 a.m. until midnight.

When Fred Patterson was open for business, he would set out a pair of shoes; however, his son, Henry, was not so trusting—he would only set one shoe outside to signify that he was open.

Borum Building (Built in 1902 with first Patterson Bldg, but burned in April 2008)

The Borum Building was the third brick structure constructed in “New Town.” The building’s owners, Mr. and Mrs. James D. Borum, lived in the second floor apartment for many years. Mrs. Borum continued to live there until the 1950s.

The building housed a dry goods and jewelry store over the years, but it is most noted for the “Ladies Ready-to-Wear” that occupied the building. It was said to have the nicest fashions between Memphis and St. Louis. Mrs. Borum told an interesting story about a tornado in Osceola when the current courthouse square was just a pasture for some city-owned deer. The small deer were lifted up into the air and blown over to the “levee side of town.” When the building burned, a ghost sign from the Patterson Store was uncovered.

Main Street Osceola Building (circa 1925)

On the corner where the Main Street Osceola Building now sits, there was a large two-story brick building that faced Poplar Street toward the courthouse. In 1908

the Hotel Morris occupied the second floor, while a general store was on the first floor. In 1913, it was just listed as a general store called Morris & Co. By 1919, the building was used as a grocery, and the current building arrangement shows up on the 1931 and 1939 Sanborn maps, housing various stores.

In the 1950s the building was remodeled on the interior and you can see the evidence of that in the light-up wedge signs and aluminum windows. The terra cotta tile is likely a 1980s addition.

L.K. Harwarg Building (111 Hale Ave.) & Eli Saphin Building (109 Hale)

The L.K. Harwarg Building and the Eli Saphin Buildings were destroyed by fire this year. They were separated by a firewall, but they were both built circa 1910. From historic photographs, the buildings looked very similar to the Patterson Buildings. They each had decorative brickwork and an elevated arched parapet.

The Harwarg Building, which stood on the corner had been completely altered on its front façade, with a stucco covering and blue glass tiles. This would have been a popular treatment in the 1940s-1950s. It also had a very deeply recessed, stepped storefront. This allowed light from the windows to spill out on the sidewalk, which was a psychological manipulation because we are like moths, we're attracted to brightly lit attractions.

Also, this created a form of exterior lobby.

The arched parapet of the Eli Saphin Building had been removed, but the decorative brickwork was still visible. It had original cast iron posts and wooden window surrounds. The building also had large divided light transom windows

above the door and display windows, but I suspect they had been altered because they had a reflective coating applied.

On the 1908 Sanborn map, these buildings were used as storage and a hardware store. In 1913, these buildings housed farm implements and a harness and hardware shop in the east side. By 1919, there was a dry goods and clothing store in the western section and a harness and hardware shop in the eastern section. Harwarg's sold men's and boys' clothing.

107 Hale Ave (Pink and White painted brick)

This building housed Beehive Clothing. The building features a simple brick parapet with some corbelling. The building still has a recessed storefront and the 6-light transom windows are still visible. This building shows up for the first time on the 1913 Sanborn map as a meat and grocery store. Then it housed a dry goods and clothing store by 1919.

I would suspect again that this building was altered in the 1950s because of the depth of the entry and the use of aluminum.

Nichol's –Dentist 103 Hale

This building would not be considered contributing to the district because it has been greatly remodeled. In 1931 there was a long, thin building onsite, likely a store of some sort. This building is very deep, but if it were built in the mid-century, it would not have been flush, with no display windows, nor would it have had this stepped parapet. The pecked brick is a 1970s treatment.

Silverfield's Department Store (Gray upper façade)

Silverfield's Department Store was in this location beginning in the early 1900s. The earliest photograph I found was dated 1919. Before Silverfield's was here, there was a row of businesses, including a harness shop, tailor, restaurant, and pool hall (1913).

Again, we see the 1950s treatment with recessed entry and aluminum and the long, thin bricks. The flat fluted awning is 1950s also, but you can see the area where the original mid-century transom windows would have been.

Across the road where the parking lot is, there was an undertaker's business by the 1930s.

Railroad tracks—the passenger depot was located just to the south of Hale Avenue in between the tracks and Railroad Street. The depot shows up for the first time on the 1913 Sanborn map. At first, the St. Louis and Memphis Railroad (Frisco system) operated along this line, but later it changed to the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad. Now it is the BNSF Railway (Burlington Northern Santa Fe).

On the north side was a long thin, grocery wholesalers business.

Row of Buildings across from Newcomb's between RR tracks and Pecan St.

This row of commercial buildings has housed many different businesses over the years, including the post office, a wallpaper store, restaurants, barber shops, cobblers, grocery stores, clothing and dry goods stores, drug stores, meat shops, offices, and furniture stores.

Red Brick Building- (101 Hale)

This building has been altered, most likely in the 1960s but I think that the brick coursing on the pediment is historic because of the bond that they used. Also on the side of the building you can see the shadow of infilled windows.

Gothic pediment Building

You can see the changes in the storefront of this building, likely built in the early 20th century because the shaped pediment and the brick work is similar to the 1902 Patterson Building.

You can still see the transom windows and keystones on the right side of the storefront, and the display windows are still flush with the sidewalk, which would have the historic configuration, but the left side has been bricked up and a mid-century recessed store entry added.

Plain Red Brick and D.F. Taylor Building-(113 Hale)

Both of these storefronts are very utilitarian commercial structures, probably 1940s-1950s; however, they both were altered with mid-century storefronts at some point.

The one on the left is probably 1950s or early 1960s and it is an example of the use of the angled storefront. You see how it angles toward the door, to sweep the customer in.

The one on the right is probably 1960s because of the short casement picture window combination and long skinny bricks. You can see that they are a different

color from the pediment. From 1919 to 1931 there were two story buildings on these lots.

Tops Family Diner, (115 Hale)

This is an early 20th century Commercial building treatment. And again, you see the 1950s-60s alterations.

White Brick Building

The metal treatment on the upper area is typical 1960s alteration to commercial buildings. Sometimes original features are intact underneath, but sometimes they're destroyed during the application.

Stucco building

Applying stucco was an updating method popular in the 1920s and 1930s but you can see that there was decorative brickwork at the pediment. There are transom windows under the metal, but they contain glass blocks like the windows on the side of the building. That was likely a later addition.

In 1913 there was a post office in this building. By 1919 it became a store and by 1931 it had been added onto out the back. In 1913 there was a small addition on the north that sold popcorn. So perhaps like today we have stores devoted to selling popcorn, this was an early example.

Newcomb's Drug Store Building

Newcomb's Drug Store used to be a two-story building with an elevated parapet and a dentiled cornice that wrapped around the building's northern elevation. However, the building caught fire in the early 1960s and the upper portion was not

salvageable. This building has always been used as a drug store, dating at least from 1913 (it remained a drug store on the Sanborn from 1913-1939).

Nathan Weinburg Building to east of Newcomb's--There was originally a dry goods store at this location from 1913-1919.

Sterling Store (5-10-25 cents) (102 Hale)

The Sterling Store was where Harold's Discount Furniture is now.

Hubbard & Hoke (Green façade) (108 Hale)

Hubbard & Hoke used to be Swift's undertaking and furniture store as early as 1939. Dr. H.C. Dunavant's office (general medicine) was on the 2nd story behind the Hubbard & Hoke Building.

The Beall Hotel was on this site from 1908-1931, but the 1931 Sanborn map says that the building was missing its roof so it was scheduled to be demolished. On the 1939 map, the undertaker shows up here (Swift's).

It has been altered with the addition of the slanted roof, but limestone art Deco details remain.

Planter's Bank Building (circa 1920)

The Planter's Bank Building was built for Citizen's Bank circa 1920 (listed as 1919 on Sanborn) to replace the two-story brick building that housed the Citizen's Bank on this corner from 1908-1919. Citizen's Bank closed in 1928 and reopened as First State Bank, which closed in 1930.

The building housed a mercantile store and even housed City Hall in the early 1940s before becoming the Planter's Bank in 1944. The building was used as a bank until the early 1980s, and since then, it has been used as a funeral home and a church. The building was designed by Missouri architect Uzell Branson in the Classical Revival style.

An elaborate dentiled cornice with garland wreaths wraps around the north and west elevations. The front entrance is flanked by 4 square pilasters with Doric caps and two fluted Doric columns. The columns support a triangular pediment ornamented with dentils. Directly above the entryway is a segmental pediment with Classical detailing.

There was a one-story brick building to the east of the Planter's Bank Building (the current brown brick construction is a recent addition). It housed a drug store from 1908-1919.

Masonic Lodge building (circa 1915--painted pink) - Gone

The Masonic Lodge building was built circa 1915 in the standard commercial style. The second story of the building was probably used for lodge meetings, while the bottom floor housed different businesses, such as a general store and a dry goods and clothing store.

White Brick Bldg next to Masonic Lodge - Gone

was a barber shop in 1908 and then served as a jeweler in later years.

Red Brick Bldg to east—Gone

dates from at least 1913—housed grocery and then sewing machine shop.

Two-story brick bldg with 2 windows (painted pink)—dates from at least 1913—housed pool hall and restaurant and then auto sales room.

Gray bldg with transoms—dates from at least 1913 and housed a clothing store and then a theater.

There were two large two-story brick buildings to the east of the gray building in a circa 1915 photo, but they are long gone. The two buildings in their place today are fairly new constructions, but the businesses that were located on that site historically include a furniture store and an auto sales and repair shop.

Building on northeast corner of Hale and Pecan was Doc Mitchell's Drug Store (J.B. Mitchell & Co.'s Rexall Drug). There was also a jeweler, grocery store, and barber in between Mitchell's Drug store and the Bank of Osceola from 1913-1939.

Bank of Osceola (1909) (207-209 Hale)

The Bank of Osceola was built in 1909 to house a bank as well as other businesses. The bank was in the western portion of the building, while a furniture store, clothing and dry goods store, and a small movie theater occupied the eastern portion of the building. The building also contained law offices, a real estate office, a cotton brokerage firm, and a doctor's office at one time. The building was extremely high style for the time it was constructed. It featured two separate storefronts, which have been altered at the present time.

Each storefront originally had transom windows. The arched openings on the building's second story used to have central windows flanked by glass panels. The original projecting wood cornice has also been removed—the divided cornice joined the building where you see the vertical black lines along the top of the façade.

In addition, there were four circular stone panels with the profile of Indian Chief Osceola evenly spaced along the building's second story. They have since been removed and are now on a building at Osceola High School. However, the building does retain some of its original integrity with the stone string course dividing the two stories, the brick corbelling, and the parapet with arched recesses.

Building to east of Bank of Osceola—was office and dry goods store at one time, and then served as the snack bar for the Gem Theatre.

The Gem Theatre was in the empty lot next to this building, and you can still see some of the decorative brickwork from the theatre attached to this building. On the site of the former Gem Theatre, there have also been a printing shop, tailor, and auto sales room in past years (before theater was built).

Calvary Episcopal Church (1902) (101 N Ash)

The Episcopal Church was built in 1902 and is one of the oldest church buildings still in use in Mississippi County. The bell tower and main entrance to the church used to be on Hale Avenue, but it has been completely reconstructed on the other side of the building so that you now enter off of Ash St. The building would be considered Colonial Revival because of the keystones over the arched windows and the dentil molding.

The tower was not reconstructed exactly like the original. The original tower was shorter and featured double doors with a pointed arch transom and a louver vent above that on all four sides around the bell. The roof was pyramidal and had a cross on the top.

Old Bell Telephone Building (1911) (N Ash St.)

The Old Bell Telephone Building was built in 1911 by prominent Osceola businessman and attorney R.C. Rose.

A simple projecting cornice divides the two floors. The upper story windows are divided by two square pilasters with corbelled brick caps. Mr. Rose constructed several other buildings on this block, and it was known as the “Rose Block.” He was one of the first people to locate his business in “New Town.”

The building was used as a telephone office until the 1950s, and now it is owned by the Episcopal Church. A small farming community near Osceola is named after him—Roseland.

Violet Cemetery

Violet Cemetery, or “God’s acre” as it was referred to, has been used as a burial ground since the 1830s or earlier (there are several unmarked graves). The oldest burial is that of bladen Williamson who died in 1831.

This burial predates the formation of Mississippi County in 1833 and Arkansas statehood in 1836 (also predates Osceola’s incorporation as a town if you count the first incorporation date of 1833—other one was 1875). The cemetery remained

isolated for many years, as Osceola was a small river town. However, when the town moved to the west to be closer to the railroad around the turn of the century, the cemetery found itself in the middle of downtown Osceola.

This cemetery contains the remains of veterans from the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, WWI and WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. Also buried here are W.J. Driver, a congressman who sponsored legislation to control flooding on the Mississippi River in 1939, and Thomas Craighead, the namesake of Craighead County. In addition, numerous Osceola mayors, sheriffs, state legislators, the founder of the Osceola Times, doctors, lawyers, judges, teachers, etc. have been laid to rest here.

By 1912-13, the cemetery was described as being “jungle like” because the descendants of those who were buried here had died, so no one was maintaining it the land. A cemetery association was formed, and in its fifth year, violets were planted on every grave, suggesting the name for the cemetery. The cemetery is now maintained by the City of Osceola.

Pleasant view Baptist church (117 N Pecan)

The church was originally the First Christian Church and it shows up on the 1913 Sanborn map. There was a tower on the corner.

By 1919 there was an L-shaped addition around the south and west sides, like what you see now.

Courthouse Mall (118 Poplar)

In 1913 there was only one small building containing a black smith on the lot, which faced Johnson street. In 1919 the blacksmith shop was gone.

By 1931 there were three structures on the lot, one of which was a dwelling.

This building displays energy saving small windows, rather than the large double-hung windows that would have provided light and air before air conditioning.

Also in 1973 an oil embargo imposed by the organization of Arab Exporting Petroleum Companies led to fuel shortages and high prices, so the architecture of the time reflected this in the smaller windows. This was not the only reason for the stark architecture though.

Osceola Times Building (112 N Poplar)

The Osceola Times Building was built in 1901 and was one of the first substantial buildings constructed in “New Town.” It is now the oldest building standing in Osceola. It is designed in the standard early 20th Century commercial style with Italianate influences in its arched window surrounds. The building also features decorative brick corbelling along its cornice, three decorative vents, and transom windows.

As was the custom during the early twentieth century, the newspaper business was located on the first floor and the owner’s apartment was on the second floor. The Osceola Times was founded in 1870 by John O. Blackwood and Leon Roussan (the first editor) and is the oldest weekly newspaper in eastern—and maybe all of—Arkansas. Mr. Roussan and his family lived in the apartment upstairs. Roussan was the first mayor of Osceola in 1876 and was one of the first proponents of moving to “New Town.”

After Mr. Roussan’s death, his wife, Adah, took over operation of the paper and was well known for her editorials encouraging the formation of drainage districts and flood control. The Osceola Times continues to operate out of this building.

Barber shop

These 3 storefronts first show up on the 1931 Sanborn map and are simply labeled as store, with the exception of the middle, which was designated as a photographer's studio.

This building looks like its made of stone, but they're actually constructed of concrete blocks created with a press invented by Harmon Palmer in the early 20th century. It was basically a metal frame and mould box with a hand release lever to open the box and remove the blocks.

You could purchase the box from Sears catalogs by 1905 so individuals could make a vernacular building or a construction company could purchase one and create an industry.

Mural painted on Main Street Osceola Building in 2007 by 2 men from the Osceola Community Punishment Center.