

AR0039

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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historic name: Arkansas County Courthouse - Southern District

other name/site number: N/A

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2. Location

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street & number: Courthouse Square

not for publication: N/A

city/town: DeWitt

vicinity: N/A

state: AR county: Arkansas code: AR 001 zip code: 72042

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Public-local

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Cathryn A. Byford _____ 10-12-92 _____
Signature of certifying official Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program _____
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====

5. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ entered in the National Register _____
____ See continuation sheet. _____
____ determined eligible for the _____
National Register _____
____ See continuation sheet. _____
____ determined not eligible for the _____
National Register _____
____ removed from the National Register _____
____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

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6. Function or Use

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Historic: GOVERNMENT _____ Sub: Courthouse _____

Current: GOVERNMENT _____ Sub: Courthouse _____

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7. Description
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Architectural Classification:

Art Deco

Other Description: N/A_____

Materials: foundation Brick_____ roof Asphalt_____
walls Brick_____ other N/A_____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Locally_____.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C_____

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A_____

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1931-1932 _____

Significant Dates: N/A_____

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A_____

Architect/Builder: Burks, H. Ray
Bird, E. V. Construction Company

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreege of Property: Approximately 1.5

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>653240</u>	<u>3795940</u>	B	___	_____	_____
C	___	_____	_____	D	___	_____	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ___ See continuation sheet.

The entire block known as the Courthouse Square, bounded by the interior curblines of the four unnamed streets that surround it.

Boundary Justification: ___ See continuation sheet.

This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with this resource.

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

Name/Title: Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: October 9, 1992

Street & Number: 323 Center Street, 15th Floor Telephone: (501) 324-9880

City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201

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Summary

The Arkansas County Courthouse in DeWitt is a three-story, structural brick courthouse building designed in the Art Deco style. Apart from the replacement of the front doors with aluminum pair doors and the construction of two single-story additions on the rear of the building, the building is intact and in very good condition.

Elaboration

The Arkansas County Courthouse in DeWitt is a three-story, structural brick courthouse building designed in the Art Deco style. Its original plan is symmetrical, with the axis running through the center of the length of the building (north-south), and roughly resembles an "H", as a double-bay projects at both ends of the eastern and western elevations (two vault additions, constructed in 1971, project from these end bays on the eastern elevation). A single brick chimney rises above the roofline at the intersection of the northern wall of the southern projecting bay on the eastern elevation. The built-up/tar roof behind the raised parapet and the brick walls rest upon a continuous brick foundation.

The western or front facade is symmetrically organized around the central entrance bay. The entrance itself is composed of a modern aluminum double-leaf entry and transom with flanking solid windows. The cast concrete panel directly above the entrance is filled with a stylized floral pattern, and a pair of large twelve-over-eighteen windows light the wall above. The bay is finished by the large cast concrete signage panel and the clock set into the raised central section of the parapet. The flanking window bays in this central, recessed wall section are separated from each other by the five wide, fluted concrete pilasters that rise from the water table to the lintel that stretches across the full width of this section. The window openings in these flanking bays are filled with pairs of one-over-one wood sash windows on each of the three floors, with their height descending from the first floor to the third. The raised parapet section in the center is coped with concrete set into the typical, stylized forms common to Art Deco designs. The projecting wall bays at either end are also fenestrated with a pair of one-over-one wood sash windows on each floor, though each pair is separated by a slightly-raised brick pilaster. The eastern elevation opposite is virtually identical, the only differences being the addition of the single-story brick vaults at either end and the omission of the clock in the parapet.

The northern and southern elevations are virtually identical, as each is anchored by a projecting central concrete entrance bay that features a double-leaf entrance on the first floor and a pair of

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six-over-six wood sash windows on each of the two floors above. The walls to either side are each two bays across, with the internal bay containing only one window while the external bay contains a pair of windows. The entrance bay is ornamented with fluted pilasters at its exterior edges and a decorative cast concrete panel above the entrance.

The interior has suffered the resurfacing of most of the walls in the hall areas with modern wood paneling, though this constitutes the principal alteration to the interior. Most of the original door trim, window trim and balustrades survive, as do the principal features of the courtroom upstairs. Of note are the original judges bench and witness stand, all of the original courtroom windows, and most of the original lighting fixtures. The courtroom ceiling is also intact.

The principal alterations to the building are the addition of the two single-story vault spaces on the rear elevation (though this has clearly always been considered the rear of the building, given the absence of the clock and the location of the chimney on this elevation) and the refinishing of the interior hallway spaces with modern wood paneling.

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Summary

Criterion C, local significance

The Arkansas County Courthouse in DeWitt, constructed in 1931 and designed by the Little Rock architect H. Ray Burks, stands as not only the best known example of the Art Deco style in both DeWitt and all of Arkansas County, but also as one of the best extant Art Deco courthouses in the entire state. It is thus eligible under Criterion C with local significance for the quality of its architectural design.

Elaboration

Arkansas County was first formed on December 31, 1813 through the passage of an act by the legislature of the state of Missouri, of which this county was a part at the time. However, the first organized civil government within the present boundaries of the state had actually been established as early as 1804 -- after the completion of the Louisiana Purchase by the United States Government -- with the appointment of James B. Maney as the civil Governor to preside at Arkansas Post, a trading center on the north bank of the Arkansas River and the only such organized settlement within the state at that early date. The initial boundaries of Arkansas County included approximately ninety per cent of the modern land area of the entire state, with Arkansas Post as its county seat. Many counties were subsequently carved out of that enormous area, eventually resulting in the establishment of its current boundaries by 1871.²

As the local and regional importance of Arkansas Post dwindled in the early years of the territorial period, which saw the capital moved up the Arkansas River to the more central location at Little Rock, and as the county boundaries came to more closely resemble their modern configuration, the city of DeWitt (named for De Witt Clinton, governor of New York) became the natural candidate for the relocation of the county seat, largely through its central location relative to the shrinking county boundaries. The initial land for the town was purchased by investors in 1853, and the land was platted soon thereafter, with the construction of the first log courthouse buildings taking place in 1855 (located approximately one block from the current site). The county records were moved to it from Arkansas Post and the first probate and county court sessions were held in October of that year. This was replaced with a second, two-story red brick courthouse in 1862, which was in turn replaced with a larger red brick structure in 1893.

²Ironically, though Arkansas Post has long since ceased to serve as the center of county government, its most recent site and its earlier locations, both known and suspected, all remain within the drastically-reduced modern boundaries of the county.

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However, its construction proved faulty, as cracks developed in the foundation, and it deteriorated to the point that it was finally condemned. DeWitt remained the sole county seat until the early twentieth century, which saw a confluence of important events that resulted in the dramatic growth of the city of Stuttgart, the bustling agricultural, commercial and transportation hub in the northern part of the county.

The current courthouse structure in DeWitt was erected on the same site as the two previous courthouse structures and completed in 1932. Designed by Little Rock architect H. Ray Burks and erected by the E. V. Bird Construction Company, this courthouse building is one of the finer examples of Art Deco courthouse construction in the state. Its noteworthy features include the overall symmetry of the facades, the employment of such stylized Classical elements as the fluted pilasters and the pseudo-Classical, almost abstract "zig-zag" detail common to such early Art Deco designs, and the square, blocky lettering used for the name panel near the cornices on both the eastern and western elevations. Such typical interior features as the ceramic tile floor and shallow, stylized "bracket" details at the tops of the columns also survive. Due to its status as the best and most well-preserved example of Art Deco construction within the city of DeWitt, it is eligible under Criterion C with local significance.

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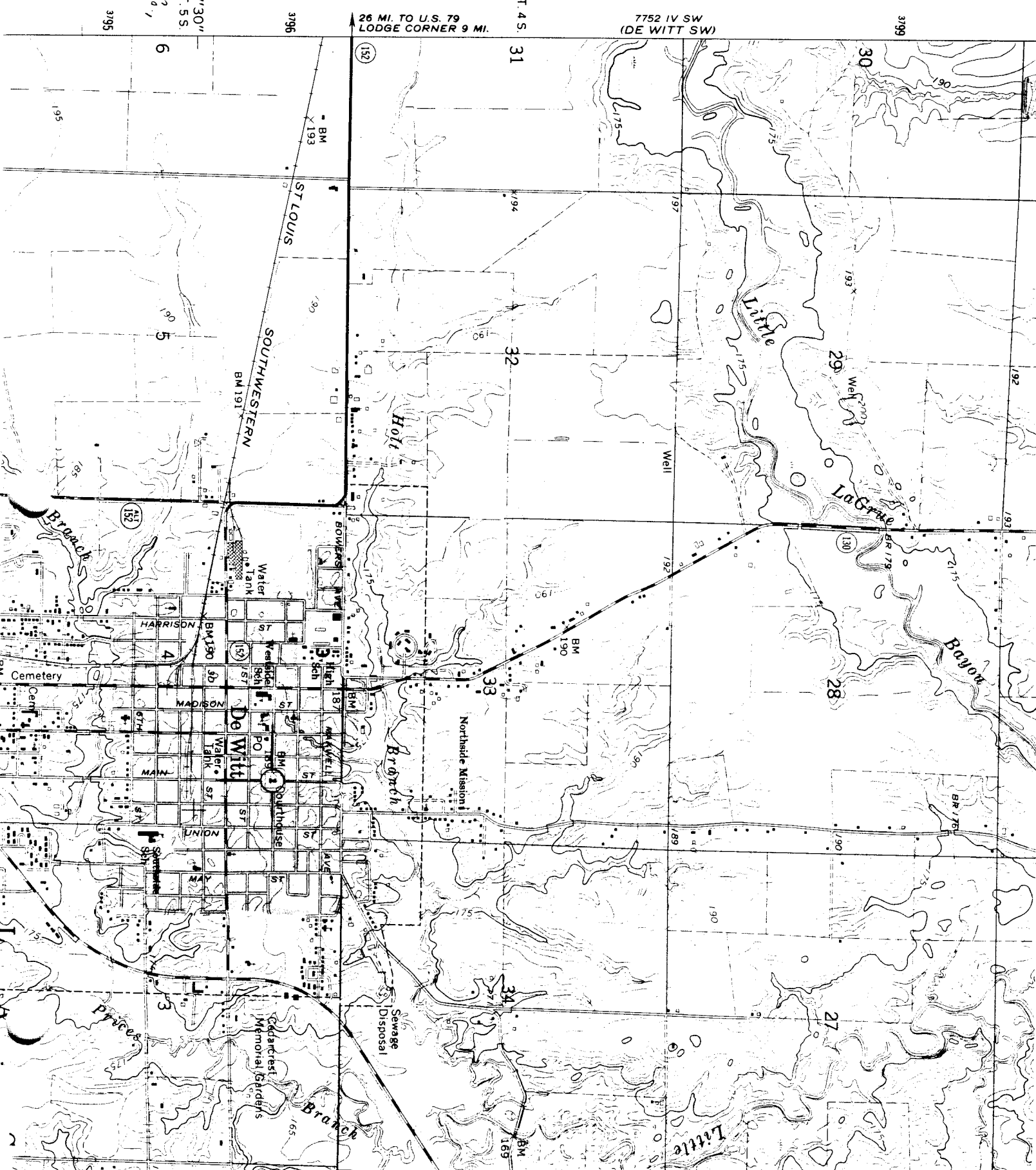
Bibliography

Goodspeed's *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas*, 1890.

Unsigned manuscript, National Register nomination file on the *Buerkle House* (Stuttgart, Arkansas County, Arkansas), on file at the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

Workers of the Writers' Program, *The WPA Guide to 1930's Arkansas*, with a new introduction by Elliott West; University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas; 1987 (original copyright 1941), pp. 355-356.

ARKANSAS Co.
COURTHOUSE
(SOUTHWESTERN
DISTRICT) 1730"
DE WITT,
ARKANSAS Co.,
ARKANSAS
15/653240/
3795940



26 MI. TO U.S. 79
LODGE CORNER 9 MI.

7752 IV SW
(DE WITT SW)

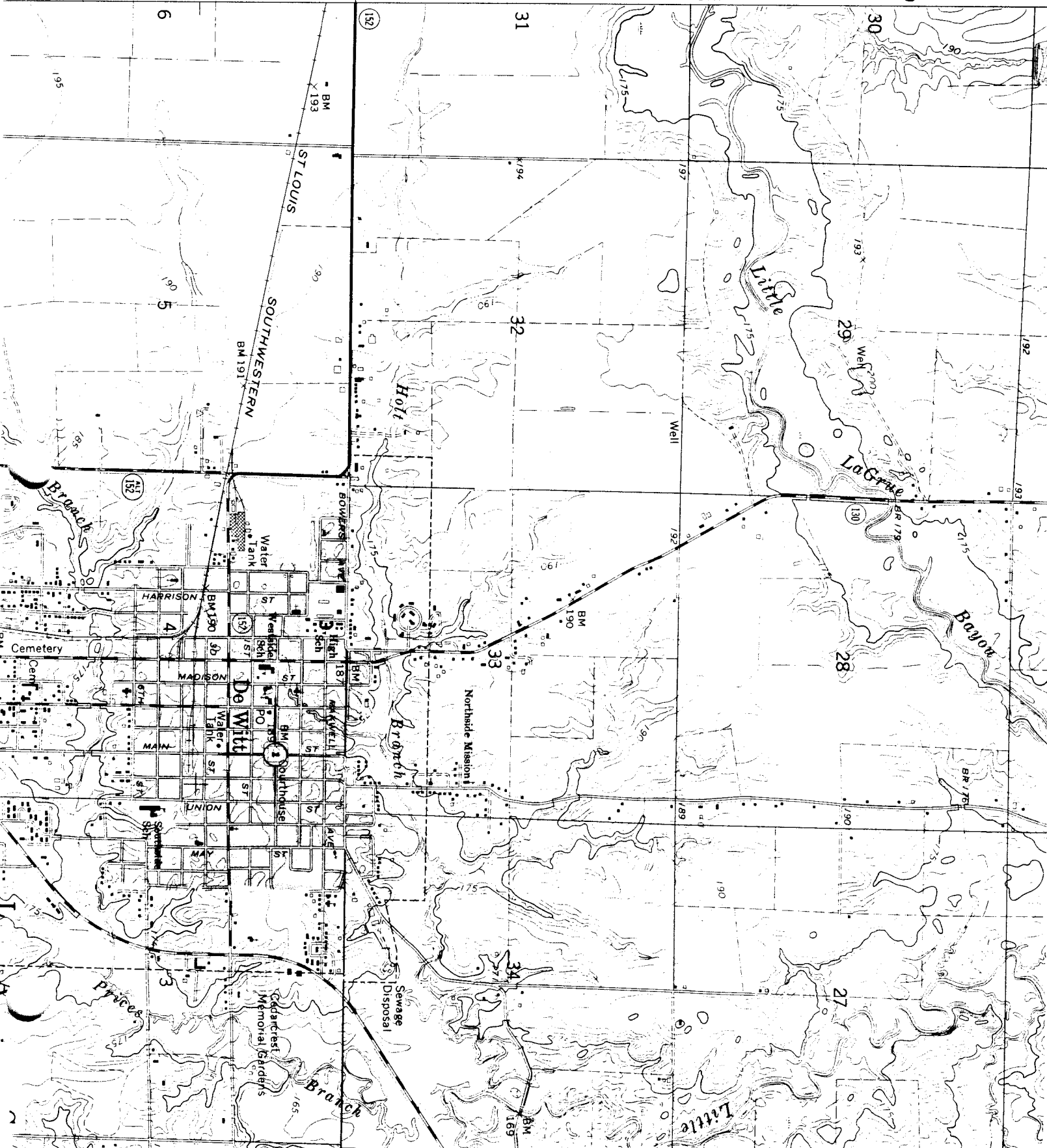
T. 45 S.
R. 31 W.

3795

6

3796

3799



26 MI. TO U.S. 79
LODGE CORNER 9 MI.

7752 IV SW
(DE WITT SW)

T. 45 S.
R. 31 W.

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