

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 City Commercial District

Other Name/Site Number: DE0301, DE0302, DE0303

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2. Location

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Street & Number: Desoto Avenue and Sprague Street

Not for Publication: N/A

City/Town: Arkansas City

Vicinity: N/A

State: AR County: Desha Code: AR041 Zip Code: 71630

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: District

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>3</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>3</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. Sluts 1-12-99
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

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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: Commerce Sub: Specialty/Department

Current : Work in Progress Sub: _____

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:

Twentieth Century Commercial Style

Materials: foundation Brick, Concrete roof Asphalt
walls Brick, Concrete other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

Summary

The Arkansas City Commercial District consists of three two-story masonry structures--the Cotham Drug Store built c. 1900, the Red Star Grocery, built in 1900, and the Ramus Brothers Market, built in 1910. These three buildings are the oldest surviving commercial structures in the business district of Arkansas City. The Cotham Drug Store and the Red Star Grocery are adjoining brick structures sharing similar architectural details. Both are located on Desoto Avenue facing south toward the levee, which protects Arkansas City from the Mississippi River. The Ramus Brothers Market faces west on Sprague Street in the block north of the Cotham Drug Store and the Red Star Grocery and is unique for its poured concrete construction.

Elaboration

The three two-story masonry structures comprising the Arkansas City Commercial District stand now much as they were when completed in 1900 and 1910. They represent the last vestiges of a once thriving commercial center, wearing their age and minor alterations with dignity and grace. The Cotham Drug Store, c. 1900, is the least altered of the three structures in the Arkansas City Commercial District. The first story of the front, or southern, elevation of this two-story brick building retains its

original central double-leaf recessed entrance topped with a large two-pane transom. The double doors are each lighted with two large stacked panes of glass and have a raised panel below. The narrow beveled sides of the entry contain one-over-one double-hung wood windows topped by single light transoms and sit atop raised-panel wooden bulkheads. The large stationary storefront windows flanking the entrance are comprised of four-pane-plate-glass topped by two-pane transoms. Raised-panel wooden bulkheads grace the bottoms of the windows that are framed by cast-iron pilasters with decorative rosettes. The second story consists of a single-leaf entrance on the west end of the building and a pair of two-over-two, double-hung wood windows. All three openings have brick segmental arches. A reconstructed shed roof with turned-spindle posts and a turned balustrade replicate the original second floor porch. The brick parapet obscures a sloping flat roof and features three vents, brick corbelling and a dentil course. The west side of the Cotham Drug Store is blank. Remnants of plaster indicate that it once was a party wall with another building long destroyed. The rear, or north, elevation features a single-leaf door and a two-over-two window on both floors. The upper door opens onto a reconstructed balcony matching the upper front porch. The eastern wall is a party wall with the Red Star Grocery. The interior of the Cotham Drug Store has had only minor alterations. The first floor still retains its original plaster, bead board ceiling and wood flooring in the front three-quarters. It has been recently partitioned to create a recording studio. The rear portion has plaster walls, a bead board ceiling, and a concrete floor. The moldings around the doors and windows are intact. The second floor is currently accessed by the metal staircase along the eastern side of the Red Star Grocery building. This floor is divided into two rooms and has matching door and window moldings, wood floor, bead board ceiling and plaster walls. The second floor is currently unused and still undergoing restoration.

The Red Star Grocery, constructed in 1900, is very similar in design to the Cotham Drug Store, sharing many of the same decorative features but is slightly wider in footprint. The Red Star Grocery originally had a first floor exterior similar to that of the Cotham Drug Store; however, following World War II it was modernized to reflect the changes taking place in architecture throughout the country. The recessed, beveled entrance was eliminated in favor of a flat storefront. The double entrance is still in place, but the flanking display windows are now single panes of plate glass. The transoms over both display windows and the entrance are also single panes of glass. The entire first floor façade is covered in black structural glass tiles. The second floor façade is intact with the same type of porch as that on the Cotham Drug Store and the same window and door arrangement. The upper parapet features brick corbelling and a dentil course that is similar, but slightly out of line, with the adjacent Cotham Drug Store. The west wall of the Red Star Grocery is a common party wall with the Cotham Drug Store. The rear, or north,

façade features a one-story brick addition on the first floor, with only a single-leaf entrance punctuating its otherwise blank wall. A metal staircase leads directly to a single-leaf entrance on the upper floor. Two two-over-two wood windows fenestrate this upper rear elevation and light the eastern elevation of the one-story addition. The only other windows on the east side are the five windows that fenestrate the second floor. Other features on the east elevation include a metal staircase that accesses the upper gallery to the south, a stepped parapet, and segmental brick arches over the windows.

The interior of the Red Star Grocery is largely original. The first floor has wood floors, plaster walls, and a beaded board ceiling. The second floor was converted into apartments during the 1950s; however, it retains the original wood floors and door and window moldings. The Red Star Grocery is still undergoing restoration.

The Ramus Brothers Market, constructed in 1910, is located on the eastern side of Sprague Street in the block north of the Cotham Drug Store and the Red Star Grocery. Unusual because of its construction style--poured concrete--the Ramus Brothers Market is a two-story, rectangular-plan commercial building covered with a sloping flat roof obscured by a parapet. The front, or west, façade of the Ramus Brothers Market contains a recessed, beveled double-leaf entrance flanked by large display windows. The doors contain large single panes of glass and are topped by a two-pane transom. Narrow one-over-one wooden windows fill the beveled sides of the central entrance. The large display windows each contain four, square panes of glass and sit atop a plain wooden bulkhead. The upper elevation features a central single-leaf entry flanked by three-over-six wood windows. This façade is further distinguished by a raised center section of the parapet. Originally, there was a two-story porch on the front façade of the Ramus Brothers Market. The owner plans to restore this feature as restoration continues. The north façade is fenestrated on the second floor only by four three-over-six wood windows. The rear, or east, façade is pierced by a single-leaf door and window on each floor. The window on the first floor is of six-over-six design, while the one on the second floor is three-over-six. Originally, a stair led to an upper covered porch. The owner has plans to restore this feature as restoration on this building continues. The south façade, like the north, is fenestrated on the second floor by four three-over-six wood windows. The lower floor contains a single-leaf entrance and a six-over-six window at the southeast corner. The interior contains little original material due to the fact that the building sat abandoned and neglected for almost forty years.

Arkansas City Commercial District
Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas
County and State

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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: local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A and C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance:

Commerce
Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1900 and 1910

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above:

Summary

The Arkansas City Commercial District is being nominated under Criterion A with local significance for its direct association with the early commercial era of Arkansas City and under Criterion C with local significance as representations of the only surviving examples of the many two-story masonry commercial buildings that once serviced this once thriving river port.

Elaboration

In 1838, Desha County was formed from Arkansas County in the new state of Arkansas. The first county seat was at Napoleon, a river port located at the conflux of the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers. Because Napoleon frequently flooded, the site was abandoned in the 1870s. The county seat was moved to Arkansas City in 1877 and has remained there. During the late 1800s Arkansas City was a major port on the Mississippi River, hosting

such famous steamboats as the *Robert E. Lee* and the *Kate Adams*. Because of its location, Arkansas City became a booming commercial center for river traffic, agriculture, and the timber industry of southeast Arkansas. At its most prosperous, Arkansas City boasted a population of almost 10,000, with three lumber mills, planing mills, a grain elevator, an opera house that seated 400, several cotton gins, a cotton compress, two hotels, and fourteen saloons.

Because of its early stature as a thriving river port, Arkansas City boasted many fine commercial buildings. Unfortunately, with its decline as the commercial center for Desha County, many of these impressive structures have been lost. The Cotham Drug Store, the Red Star Grocery, and the Ramus Brothers Market are the only surviving relics of the once prosperous commercial district in Arkansas City.

The Cotham Drug Store, constructed c. 1900, is important in that it was a part of the turn-of-the-century construction that served the then thriving business community in Arkansas City. The various uses as a grocery and meat market, post office, drug store, and the upstairs, at one time having housed a restaurant, show the versatility and significance of its purpose.

The Red Star grocery was constructed by John George Reitzammer in 1900 and was continuously occupied by the Reitzammer family as a grocery and bakery until it was sold in 1979. John George Reitzammer was born in Losurah, Bavaria in 1846 and migrated with his family in 1870. He worked as a laborer in Cincinnati, Ohio and Louisville, Kentucky before locating in Arkansas City in 1882. He established two bakery and grocery stores, both of which burned, before constructing the Red Star Grocery Building.

John and Annie Reitzammer had six sons and one daughter. They were all involved in the rich history of Arkansas City. George, Jr. was captain and pilot of a stern wheel steamer, which towed logs to one of the lumber mills in the city. Ed operated the city drug store and served on the city council. William served as deputy postmaster and was elected Desha County Circuit Clerk. Reinhault was involved in the Ramus Brothers Market, served on the Arkansas City Council and served also as Desha County Coroner. Louis also served as assistant postmaster and owned a drug store.

Leonard Reitzammer was the youngest of the boys and after serving as an infantryman in World War I came back to Arkansas and acquired ownership of the Red Star Grocery, which he continued to operate until his death in 1979. His wife Verna, served as postmaster in Arkansas City for over thirty years. Anna, the only daughter, was an accomplished pianist, married an attorney in Arkansas City and remained involved in the affairs of the city.

Not much is known about the Ramus Brothers Market other than that it was built in 1910 and housed a market on the first floor and an apartment on the second floor. The importance to the historical significance of this building was its construction style--poured concrete. No existing structures or remnants of other buildings in Arkansas City show a similar method of construction. As the known heirs of the Ramus family departed Arkansas City in the late 1950s, little is known of their history.

The Arkansas City Commercial District, consisting of the Cotham Drug Store, the Red Star Grocery, and the Ramus Brothers Market is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A with local significance for its direct association with the early commercial era of Arkansas City and under Criterion C with local significance as representations of the only surviving examples of the many two-story masonry commercial buildings that once serviced this once thriving river port.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Information and materials submitted by Robert S. Moore, Jr., November 1998.

Taped interview with Mrs. Verna Reitzammer, 1997.

Reitzammer, Louis. Desha County Historical Society 1991-92 Programs. Fall 1992.

Reid, Naylor. Desha County Historical Society 1979 Programs. Summer 1980.

Reitzammer, Verna P. "The George Payne Story Desha." County Historical Society. Fall 1992.

Desha County Today Edition, The McGehee Times. Vol. 13, No. 2, April 29, 1937.

Stuart, C. C. Arkansas City, Arkansas, The Front Door of Arkansas Nestled in the Arms of the Mississippi River. 1969.

The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas. Chicago Nashville and St. Louis: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890.

Herndon, J. T. The Annuals of Arkansas. Volume 1.

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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Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>666680</u>	<u>3719660</u>	B	_____	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____	_____

Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at the southwest corner of Desoto Avenue and Sprague (4th) Street, run parallel to Sprague (4th) Street two hundred and seven (207) feet (crossing the alley), to the northwest corner of the Ramus Brothers Market building, thence at right angles to Sprague (4th) Street and parallel to the alley run a distance of ninety (90) feet across lots 14, 13, and 12, Block 18 to the northeast to a point on a line between lots 11 and 12, Block 18; thence running southeasterly, parallel to Sprague (4th) Street on a line between lots 11 and 12, Block 18, a distance of two hundred and seven (207) feet (crossing the alley), to a point on Desoto Avenue, thence running along Desoto Avenue a distance of ninety (90) feet, to the point of beginning.

Legal Property Descriptions:

Cotham Drug Store: Lot 16, Block 18 Original Town of Arkansas City

Red Star Grocery: Lot 17, Block 18 Original Town of Arkansas City

Ramus Brothers Market: Part of Lots Twelve (12), Thirteen (13) and Fourteen (14) by ninety (90) feet on alley in Block Eighteen (18) in the Original Town of Arkansas City, Arkansas, more particularly

described as follows: Beginning at the South corner of Lot 14 in Block 18, at point on alley & 4th Street, thence run along line of Lot 14 on 4th Street towards 1st Avenue a distance of 37 1/2 feet, thence at right angles to 4th Street & parallel to alley, across Lots 14, 13, & 12 a distance of 90 feet to point on line between Lots 11 & 12, Block 18; thence running southerly, parallel to 4th Street on line between Lots 11 & 12, Block 18, a distance of 37 1/2 feet to point on alley, thence running along alley line towards 4th Street, a distance of 90 feet, to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: This boundary contains all property associated with the Arkansas City Commercial District.

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11. Form Prepared By
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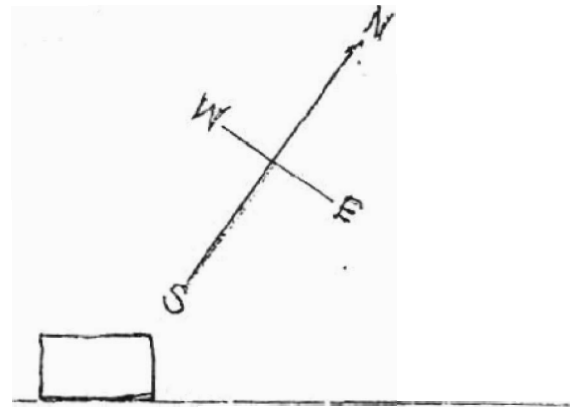
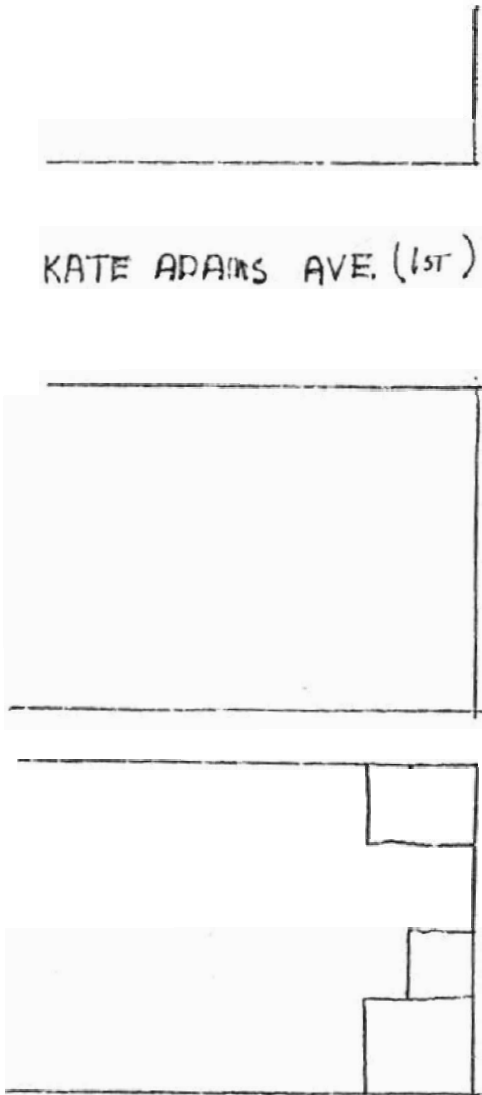
Name/Title: Randy Jeffery, National Register/Survey Coordinator

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 11-8-98

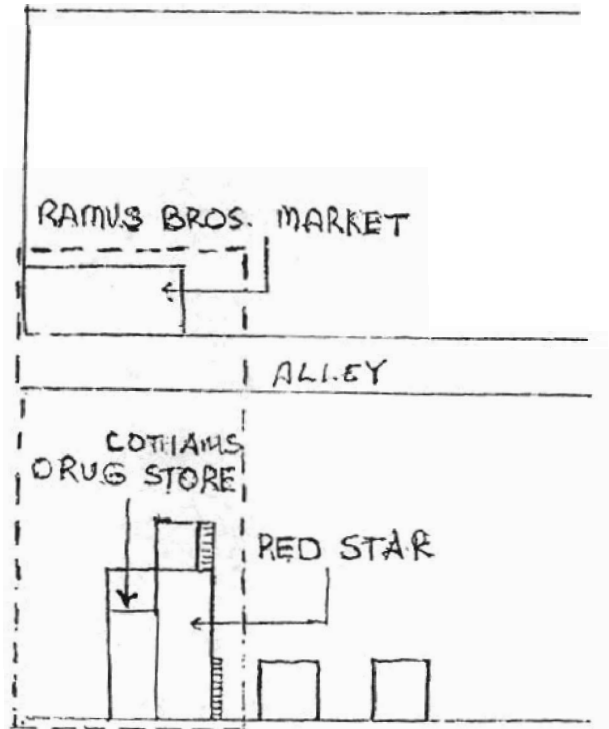
Street & Number: 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center St. Telephone: (501) 324-9880

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

ARKANSAS CITY COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT



SPRAGUE STREET (4TH)



DESOTO AVE.

SCALE: 1/2" = APPROX 36'

LEVEE

ARIZONA CITY COMMERCIAL
HIGHWAY DISTRICT
ARIZONA CITY
DESPA CO., AR
UTM REFERENCE:
15/666680/3719660

7751 11 NW
(CATFISH POINT)

669

970 10'

