

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name: **Cottonwood Commercial Historic District**

other names/site number: **N/A**

### 2. Location

street & number: **Approximately from 712 to 1124 North Main Street** not for publication: **\_N/A\_**  
city or town: **Cottonwood** vicinity: **\_N/A\_**  
state: **Arizona** code: **AZ** county: **Yavapai** code: **025** zip code: **86326**

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ 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 ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James W. Smirgin AZSHPO  
Signature of certifying official

14 APRIL 2000  
Date

ARIZONA STATE PARKS  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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**4. 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):

*Elson R. Beall*

*5-18-00*

*for*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

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**Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private

☒ public-local

☐ public-State

☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

☐ building

☒ district

☐ site

☐ structure

☐ object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing    Noncontributing

  34                19   buildings

                         sites

   3                  1    structures

                         objects

  37                20   Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   1   (826 N. Main St.)

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Category:	COMMERCE/TRADE	Subcategories:	Business; professional; specialty store; department store; restaurant
	DOMESTIC		Hotel/motel
	SOCIAL		Meeting hall; civic
	GOVERNMENT		Jail; post office; public works
	RELIGION		Religious facility
	RECREATION & CULTURE		Theatre
	TRANSPORTATION		Road-related/vehicular (bridge)

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Category:	COMMERCE/TRADE	Subcategories:	Business; professional; organizational; specialty store; restaurant
	DOMESTIC		Hotel/motel
	SOCIAL		Civic
	GOVERNMENT		City hall; government office; public works; courthouse
	TRANSPORTATION		Road-related (bridge)

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Category: EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN & MODERN MOVEMENTS

Subcategory: Commercial Style; Moderne; Bungalow; Art Deco

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: CONCRETE

Walls: CONCRETE; CONCRETE BLOCK/TILE; STUCCO; STONE; BRICK

Roof: ASPHALT/OTHER

Other: N/A

**Narrative Description** (*SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS 7-14*)

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.  
☐ B removed from its original location  
☐ C a birthplace or a grave.  
☐ D a cemetery.  
☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.  
☐ F a commemorative property.  
☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)  
COMMERCE

**Period of Significance**  
1917-1949

**Significant Dates**  
N/A

**Significant Persons**  
N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**  
N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Architects: A. J. Gilford; Leslie J. Mahoney

Builders: George Barnett, Joe and Roy Bigelow, William F. Edens, Joseph Hall, Jess Hood, Charles Kilgore, Alex and Guido Marianna, A. T. McCrory, Bud Smith, James Stein, Oscar Stewart, Oscar Webb, W. I. Willison; the firm of Gilmore, Schwitters, and Cresney; and the Civil Works and Works Progress Administrations

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (*SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS 15-22*)

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**Bibliography** (*SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS 23-25*)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested (Tax Act Certification - Part One).  
☐ 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

Name of repository: Old Town Association, 1101 N. Main St., Cottonwood, AZ 86326

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**10. Geographical Data**  
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**Acreeage of Property** \_\_Approximately 15 acres\_\_

**UTM References** (See accompanying USGS map for point references)

All Zone 12	Point	Easting/Northing
	1	405920/3845610
	2	406080/3845600
	3	406140/3845100
	4	405980/3845080

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary is shown as the broken line on the accompanying map entitled "Cottonwood Commercial Historic District, Yavapai County, Arizona." The boundary encompasses approximately 15 acres and is located within T16N, R3E, Sections 27, 28, 33, and 34 (Gila & Salt River Meridian).

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary of the Cottonwood Commercial Historic District defines a concentration of early to mid twentieth century buildings and structures that retain historic and architectural integrity. The historic properties relate to commercial development that occurred from 1917 to 1949. The majority of the properties are stores, although municipal buildings, two tourist courts, a hotel, movie theatre, former church, former jail, and two bridges are also present. The district boundary represents the approximate extent of Cottonwood's historic downtown. Within the boundary, the percentage of contributing resources is 65 percent. Outside the boundary, the density of historic commercial properties decreases sharply.

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**11. Form Prepared By**  
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name/title: **Pat Haigh Stein**  
organization: **Arizona Preservation Consultants**  
street/number: **6786 Mariah Drive**  
city or town: **Flagstaff** state: **AZ**

date: **June 1999; revised April 2000**  
telephone: **(520) 714-0585**  
zip code: **86004**

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**Additional Documentation**

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**Continuation Sheets** (pages 7-27)

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location (Figure 1)

A **sketch map** depicting the "Cottonwood Commercial Historic District, Yavapai County, Arizona" (Figure 2)

**Photographs**

Photocopies of **historical photographs** (Photos 1 and 2)

Representative **black and white current photographs** of the district (Photos 3 through 9)

**Additional items**

None

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**Property Owner Information**

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The district is in private and local public ownership and includes the following tax parcel numbers, all in Yavapai County, Arizona:

406-22-013, 014, 015, 016, 017, 018, 025, 026, 027, 028, 029, 030, 031, 032, 033, 035, 036, 037, 046A, 048, and 210;

406-32-044, 045, 047, 048, 050A, 050B, and 051;

406-34-001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006A, 006B, 036, 038, 039, 040, 041, 042, 043, 044, 097, and 098;

406-36-015D, and 022;

406-38-018 and 019A; and

406-42-001 and 002.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   7   Page   7   Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

**DESCRIPTION**

**SUMMARY**

The Cottonwood Commercial Historic District is located in Yavapai County in the Verde Valley of central Arizona. The district has a linear configuration, extending along North Main as the street passes through downtown. The majority of the properties are stores, although municipal buildings, two tourist courts, a hotel, movie theatre, former church, former jail, and two bridges are also present. The district contains 57 properties, including 53 buildings and 4 structures. Thirty-seven of the properties (65 percent) contribute to the historic character of the district. The remaining 20 do not contribute to the district because they lack integrity or are not yet fifty years old.

**Cultural-Geographic Setting**

The Cottonwood Commercial Historic District lies within the Town of Cottonwood in eastern Yavapai County, Arizona, approximately 100 miles north of the state capital of Phoenix and 40 miles northeast of the county seat of Prescott. The town is situated on the broad, southern banks and terraces of the Verde River, a major drainage of central Arizona. Euroamerican pioneers who settled Cottonwood in the mid 1870s found a situation nearly ideal for farming, with long growing seasons, fertile plains, and ample water for irrigation. They homesteaded, constructed canals, successfully grew crops, and sold their surplus to military forts and mining camps.

Processes related to mining shifted Cottonwood's economy from agriculture to commerce in the twentieth century. Jerome, five miles west of Cottonwood on Mingus Mountain, became one of the nation's largest producers of copper ore. The smelter towns of Clemenceau and Clarkdale developed between Cottonwood and Jerome to process the latter's ore. Clarkdale and Clemenceau were "company" towns, laden with restrictions. In contrast, Cottonwood was not a company town, and attracted entrepreneurs who wished to conduct business unencumbered by local regulation. Thus Cottonwood became the commercial hub of the Verde Valley, a distinction it retained even through the Great Depression. As the importance of commerce grew, that of agriculture diminished, in part because smelters polluted the valley with sulfurous smoke; farmers waged and won lawsuits against the smelters in the 1920s and 1930s. The continued desire for a business climate free of local regulation was a major reason Cottonwood was late to incorporate (1960).

**Streetscape and General Plan**

The district has a linear configuration, extending along North Main as the street passes through the historic downtown (Figures 1 and 2). Entering the district from the southeast, the street first crosses Del Monte Wash Bridge, built circa 1935 and attributed to the Works Progress Administration/WPA. The bridge forms a threshold to the district, defining its southern edge. Just beyond the bridge, North Main turns due north and declines gently in elevation as it passes three blocks of stores and municipal buildings. The street then turns northwest to cross the Cottonwood Bridge (built by the Civil Works Administration/CWA, c1934) before reaching Kovacovich Mercantile, a 1917 building that defines the district's northwest edge. Beyond Kovacovich Mercantile, Main Street leaves the district as U.S. Highway 89A and proceeds for 2.5 miles to Clarkdale. The east and west district boundaries generally correspond to the alleys a half-block

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   7   Page   8   Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

east and west of Main Street. North of the district is the Verde River. East, south, and west of it are residential neighborhoods.

The seed of Cottonwood's downtown was sown in 1908 when pioneers Charles Stemmer and Alonzo Mason created Main Street by using a team to pull a drag through brush. For several years, Mason's store/post office remained the only business establishment along the street. Owners of land along Main began to subdivide it only after the Clarkdale and Clemenceau smelters came into existence in the 1910s. Five owners held land along Main. Consequently, five subdivisions -- or more precisely, portions of five subdivisions -- came to comprise the downtown: Cottonwood Addition (recorded in 1917), Willard Addition (1917), Mason Addition (1918), Ellefson Tract (1920), and Hopkins Ranch #2 Subdivision (1926). Although block dimensions varied among the five subdivisions, the *width* of their lots facing Main were of fairly uniform size, usually from 20 to 25 ft wide. Buildings were constructed that contained one, two, or occasionally three storefronts, with one storefront per lot. Buildings reached one and sometimes two stories but never three. These elements -- uniform lot width and low building height -- gave a distinct rhythm to the pattern of the downtown streetscape.

The district has a surprisingly urban quality for a small Arizona community. It is compact and dense, with 57 properties occupying 15 acres. Particularly in the northern two-thirds of the district, the streetwall presents a nearly unbroken line of sight; its buildings tightly adjoin one another, have zero setback, and border virtually no vacant lots. The southern third of the district, which evolved a bit later and experienced less development pressure, has a greater number of free-standing buildings with deeper setbacks and adjacent vacant lots.

**Forms and Styles of Architecture**

The Cottonwood Commercial Historic District contains 53 buildings and 4 structures. Two date to the 1910s, 33 to the 1920s, 10 to the 1930s, 5 to the 1940s, 4 to the 1950s, and 3 to the 1960s. Forty-two were designed as stores (bakeries, car dealerships, restaurants, pharmacies, groceries, dry goods, etc.). The other 15 were originally tourist courts (2), bridges (2), offices (3), a hotel, theatre, jail, civic club, bank, church, fire station, and a free-standing neon sign.

Most of the stores and several other district properties exhibit a form (rather than style) of architecture commonly called twentieth-century commercial. Its characteristics in Cottonwood include: symmetrical massing (or asymmetrical massing in the case of buildings occupying corner lots); designs of usually one and sometimes two stories; central, often recessed, entries; large windows for displaying goods; transoms to increase interior lighting; sloping or flat canopies to provide shade; and parapets to present an impressive front to passersby. Within these parameters, Cottonwood's commercial buildings achieved some measure of individuality through parapet treatment, wall surfacing, and signage. Some parapets were high and arched (1042 N. Main), others low and straight (924-926 N. Main), some castellated (1023 N. Main as seen in a 1920s photo), others stepped (922 N. Main). Historically, most of the storefronts were sheathed with stucco. The stucco was variously given a stippled, spatter-dash, sponged, jazzed, pebble-dash, or smooth finish. Unsheathed buildings achieved individuality through color or texture of construction material; red brick, glazed brick, rusticated concrete block, and black mortar were occasionally used. Painted or neon signage, customarily confined to parapets, helped distinguish one business from the next in decades when street numbers were generally lacking.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   7   Page   9   Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

A building exemplifying these traits is the Lysons Building (928 N. Main), constructed in 1925 for a newsagent and confectioner. The client had contractors Jess Hood and Oscar Webb give his building eye-appeal by ordering a snappy parapet and swirly stucco. The *Verde Copper News/VCN* described the finished product as "a curious building with individuality," "a Jazz palace" (*VCN* 9/12/1925). The newspaper added that the building had a storefront simulating "Toltec Indian architecture," an interior like "a copy of the inside of the Carlsbad cavern," and a ceiling "like the frosting of a cake with snow-white miniature stalagmites [sic]." The distinctive parapet, jazzed stucco finish, and coarsely stippled ceiling remain as character-defining elements of the building today.

Commercial buildings in Cottonwood showed little design evolution until the late historic period. In 1947 a Quonset hut that had been used to train World War II Naval cadets was moved from the Cottonwood airport to North Main and adaptively reused as Emil Kovacovich's Buick Garage (720 N. Main). The Quonset received a storefront unlike any previously seen in Cottonwood. It had huge, 16-light display windows, only the nubby suggestion of a canopy (incapable of providing shade), and a parapet perfectly matching the curvature of the Quonset. The "style" was quickly propagated as frame buildings appeared north and south of it (712 and 724 N. Main) with storefronts mimicking that of the Quonset. Today two of the three properties (720 and 724) retain their historic character.

Virtually no buildings in the downtown today are exemplars of any particular historic style, although the same was not true in the past. From 1918 to 1923, Main Street was the site of an amusement hall called "The Bungalow." True to its name, the woodframe building was built along Craftsman lines, with a wide veranda, tapered porch columns, exposed rafter ends, and a low-pitched roof of complex gables. The interior, containing 4500 square feet of dance floor, was a venue for road shows, dances, and other diversions (Cousins 1918). The Bungalow was destroyed in 1923 to make way for the Rialto Theatre at 914 N. Main (*VCN* 7/27/1923).

A few Cottonwood properties reflect stylistic *influences* rather than styles, per se. Examples are the Rialto Theatre, Siler's Cut Rate Grocery, Braley's Auto Court, the Cottonwood Bridge, and the Cottonwood Community Civic Club:

- Rialto Theatre (914 N. Main) was built in 1923 by contractors Jess Hood and Oscar Stewart for impresario Joseph Becchetti. The concrete tile building replaced an earlier, woodframe Rialto a few doors north. Located mid-block, the new Rialto featured an offset rather than central entry, a flat canopy supported in part by wrought-iron brackets, and wrought-iron balustrades in its three second-story windows. The main character-defining elements were geometric motifs above the second-story windows that suggested a Moderne influence. Unfortunately, the Rialto lost its integrity through remodeling. Then, in 1998, a fire destroyed the roof and interior. Plans have been drawn to restore the exterior to its historic appearance, but the work has not yet begun.
- Siler's Cut Rate Grocery (904 N. Main) also suggests a Moderne influence. Of stucco-frame and metal construction, the building was erected in 1925 to be Jess Siler's warehouse and retail store. The facade featured stylized vertical projections at the center and corners, smooth stucco wall surfacing, and fenestration with a strong horizontal emphasis. The tall center of the building had a functional purpose. It was designed to draw heat upward in summer and maintain a cool environment for perishables (*VCN* 4/3/1925).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   7   Page  10  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

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- Braley's Auto Court (1003-1007 N. Main) was influenced by both the Bungalow and Moderne styles. It was constructed in 1932 for J. O. Braley, proprietor of an auto parts store. Its plan consisted of a central, detached office flanked by rows of rooms with attached carports. The office incorporated Bungalow elements such as asymmetrical massing, knee-braces, and exposed rafter ends. The two rows of rooms had Moderne massing and textures, but Bungalow details such as knee-braces below a wrap canopy. Historical photos suggest the auto court was built in this hybrid manner, and did not achieve it through remodeling episodes.
  - The Cottonwood Bridge (no street #, on N. Main between 1060 and 1124) was constructed circa 1934 by the CWA to replace an earlier bridge that had existed at the same location since at least 1926 (VCN 10/29/1926). The CWA bridge was of concrete sheathed with river cobbles, with an arched culvert and a flat but curving deck. Its main character-defining elements were delicately-proportioned Art Deco-style iron and glass lamps that were mounted on stone piers along the bridge balustrade. The bridge looks virtually the same today as it did when constructed in the 1930s.
  - The Cottonwood Community Civic Club (805 N. Main) merits special note in this discussion of stylistic influences. The club was designed in 1938 by Leslie J. Mahoney of the Phoenix architectural firm of Lescher and Mahoney. It was constructed the following year by the WPA in cooperation with the Cottonwood Civic Club (Cottonwood Civic Club 1989). Sheathed in river cobbles, the concrete building is a one-and-a-half story space with a high mass-to-void ratio. The ziggurat-shaped foyer features wooden double-doors with wrought-iron hinges, a cut-stone door surround, and quoins of river cobbles and sandstone. A frieze of horizontal grooves running along the base of the parapet pays a nod to the Modern movement, and yet the overall effect suggests a stepped pyramid of Mesoamerica or a hilltop village of the prehistoric Southwest. The architect may have had a specific archaeological site in mind; Tuzigoot Ruin, located 1.5 miles north of downtown, had recently been excavated, stabilized, and developed for tourism when Mahoney drew his plans. Before floodplain vegetation masked the view, Tuzigoot could be seen from the front of the civic club.

**Construction Materials**

Up to March of 1917, the business section of Cottonwood consisted of Alonzo Mason's store and post office (Cousins 1918). When the valley's copper industry surged during World War I, so did Cottonwood's downtown. A census conducted by the State in mid 1918 indicated that Cottonwood was by then home to 64 business people who operated the following concerns: seven pool halls; five stores that handled dry goods; four general mercantile stores; three restaurants and hotels; two garages, shoe shops, and blacksmith shops; and one barber shop, moving picture theatre, amusement hall, drugstore, bakery, confectionery, lumber yard, butcher, furniture store, service station, ice plant, jewelry shop, root beer stand, novelty store, and ice cream parlor (Cousins 1918). A fire-insurance map of downtown (Stich 1919) indicates that nearly all of the buildings housing these businesses were of wooden construction. Material for them was supplied by the downtown's McConnell Lumber Yard, or by Pugh Lumber, located on the outskirts of town.

With two exceptions, none of the pre-1920 buildings still stands. Most were destroyed by fires in December 1917, April 1925, or June 1933. The only surviving pre-1920 buildings are the 1917 Kovacovich Mercantile (1124 N. Main) and the 1918 Eckert Bakery (rear portion of 1002 N. Main). Both were constructed of concrete.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   7   Page  11  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

Concrete gradually became the most prevalent construction material in Cottonwood's historic downtown. The key ingredient of concrete, Portland cement, was developed in England in the 1820s and first manufactured in the United States in the 1870s (Mills 1931). By the late nineteenth century, Portland cement/concrete began to be used in Arizona for bridges and industrial structures and, less commonly, for buildings such as the 1890s Gila Bend Jail (Ryden 1998). The seismic and fire-proof advantages of concrete gained national attention during the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. In its aftermath, Arizonans increasingly turned to the material for commercial and residential construction. Statewide inventory data thus far suggest that concrete (specifically, reinforced concrete) enjoyed its greatest popularity in the early-twentieth century mining town of Miami, also in central Arizona (Pry 1999).

Forty-two of the 57 properties in the Cottonwood commercial district used concrete as their main material. The earliest concrete building, Kovacovich Mercantile, had slip-form construction. Masons built the store by setting wooden forms, pouring a small batch of concrete, screeding the top, moving the forms, and pouring another batch. Reinforced concrete made its appearance downtown circa 1923, when the MacIntyre Building (918 N. Main), Liberty Garage (1042 N. Main), and 917 N. Main were erected. The commercial building at 917 N. Main used all manner of metal for its reinforcing material. Some scraps came from farm equipment -- eloquent testimony to Cottonwood's transition from farming village to commercial hub. Another form of concrete used in the downtown was the rusticated concrete block. These solid-core blocks were used in the Marianna Building (826 N. Main), constructed in 1924 by Alex and Guido Marianna using a small machine the brothers owned (VCN 3/25/1924 and 5/23/1924).

The most popular form of concrete, however, was the hollow-core block (also called structural concrete tile and cement block). The material made its appearance in 1923 when businessman Charles C. Stemmer had a building constructed to house the post office and a small shop (VCN 10/12/1923). Located between what are now 1020 and 1028 N. Main, Stemmer's building stood until it was destroyed by "The Big Snow" of 1967. Other buildings of the same material fared better; 24 have survived to the present. Some of the concrete blocks, such as those used on the storefronts of the 1925 Charles Willard Building (1010-1012 N. Main) and Joe Hall Building (1004 N. Main), were made in Clarkdale (VCN 5/25/1925). However, the vast majority of them were manufactured in Cottonwood.

Cottonwood's concrete-block plant, located on the road to Jerome above the Pugh Lumber Company, was a busy local industry in the mid 1920s. It was started by the Concrete Engineering and Equipment Company in 1924 or 1925 using a machine developed by E. J. Garvin at the United Verde Copper Company's brick and tile plant. Garvin's machine featured a power tamper that allowed the feeding of concrete into a mold while it was being tamped. According to a local newspaper, engineers, patent attorneys, and "concrete men" hailed Garvin's machine as "not only highly efficient but a radical departure in principle and mechanism from any other of which they [had] record" (VCN 11/20/1925). Early in 1926, Cottonwood contractor Jess Hood leased the plant's equipment and began to manufacture the blocks himself. Meanwhile, Concrete Engineering and Equipment moved its base of operations to Los Angeles, where the company planned to manufacture cement tile, roofing tile, and other concrete building materials. News articles suggest that the company operated on a franchise basis. It leased the Garvin-designed machine to entrepreneurs like Hood, but reserved the right to cancel the lease if the blocks were not manufactured to a high standard (VCN 1/12/1926). Concrete blocks from the Cottonwood plant were used in many downtown properties, including the 1925 Requena Building (922 N. Main), the 1926 Joseph Becchetti Commercial Building (924-926 N. Main), the 1925 Lysons Building (928 N. Main), and the 1925 Cottonwood Hotel (930 N. Main).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   7   Page  12  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

The storefronts of many Cottonwood buildings were sheathed with stucco historically. In 1929 a new sheathing material appeared, river cobbles. Their first use occurred on the Cottonwood Jail (1101 N. Main), constructed by a Prescott contractor using standard plans provided by Yavapai County. The rock came from the river terrace in back of the jail site. Cobbles were next used in 1930 when contractor Frank Edens began to erect an auto court at 1034 N. Main; Edens completed the project in 1933. The CWA and WPA then used the material for several projects: the Cottonwood Bridge (circa 1934), Del Monte Wash Bridge (circa 1935), and the Cottonwood Community Civic Club (1939). Use of the material in modern times for street furniture gives the commercial district a unified appearance.

A few other construction materials contributed to the fabric of Cottonwood's historic downtown. Red brick was used in one building, the 1925 Marianna Annex (824 N. Main). Although brick was made from time to time in Cottonwood, bricks for the Marianna Annex came not from Cottonwood but Phoenix (VCN 9/29/1925). Stucco-frame construction (woodframe with stucco) was used for buildings such as Braley's Auto Court, the c1937 Norton law office (1027-1029 N. Main), and the storefront of Siler's Cut Rate Grocery. Corrugated metal formed the main material in the Quonset hut that became Emil's Buick Garage (720 N. Main). It was also used extensively in the rear portions of Siler's Cut Rate Grocery and the circa 1926 Hudson-Essex Car Shop (1035 N. Main).

**Architects and Builders**

At least two architects and 15 contractor/builders are known to have worked on specific properties downtown. The architects were A. J. Gilford and Leslie J. Mahoney. Gilford was responsible for the design of the front, 1925 portion of the Fred Eckert Building (1002 N. Main) and the 1926 Becchetti Commercial Building (924-926 N. Main). The Jerome architect appears to have been neither prolific nor well-known in Arizona; the current study could learn little more about the man or his work. Far better known was Leslie Mahoney, architect of the Cottonwood Community Civic Club. He moved from Los Angeles to Phoenix in 1912 at the urging of colleague Royal W. Lescher. They formed the firm of Lescher, Kibbey, and Mahoney in partnership with John R. Kibbey. When Kibbey moved to California in the mid 1910s, the company name was shortened to Lescher and Mahoney. The architectural firm was arguably Arizona's most prolific during the historic period. Its many designs included: the interior of the Phoenix City-Maricopa County Building (1928); the Phoenix Orpheum Theatre (1929); the Phoenix Title and Trust Building (1931); the B. B. Moeur Activity Center in Tempe (1938), the Phoenix Central Methodist Church (1950), and the legislative wings of the Arizona State Capitol (1956, with Lew Place) (American Institute of Architects 1983).

In alphabetical order, the builders of Cottonwood's historic downtown included: George Barnett (associated with the *Becchetti Commercial Building*, 1926), Joe and Roy Bigelow (*Arnold Building*, 1925), Carl Breeman/Brennan (*Cottonwood Jail*, 1929), William F. Edens (*Cottonwood Hotel*, 1925, *Eckert Building*, 1925, *Cottonwood Lumber Building*, 1929, *Eden's Auto Court*, 1930-1933) Joseph Hall (*Hall Building*, 1925-1926), Jess Hood (*Rialto Theatre*, 1923; *MacIntyre Building*, 1923, *Requena Building*, 1925, *Lysons'*, 1925, *Luna & Mack Willard Building*, 1925, *Charles Willard Building*, 1925-1926, *Groves-Hansohn Building*, 1925), Charles Kilgore (*Hall Building*, 1925-1926), Alex and Guido Marianna (*Marianna Building and Annex*, 1924 and 1925), A. T. McCrory (*G. M. Willard Building*, 1925, *Mason Building*, 1925-1926), Bud Smith (*Jersey Ice Cream Co.*, 1923), James Stein (*Silver Building*, 1924, possibly also the *Cottonwood Cafe*, 1924-1925), Oscar Stewart (*Rialto Theatre*, 1923, *MacIntyre Building*, 1923), Oscar Webb (*Requena Building*, 1925, *Lysons'*, 1925, *Luna & Mack Willard Building*, 1925, *Charles Willard Building* 1925-1926, *Groves-Hansohn Building*,

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   7   Page  13  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

1925), W. I. Willison (*Mason Building, 1925-1926*); and the firm of Gilmore, Schwitters, and Cresney (*Kovacovich Mercantile, 1917*). Properties attributed to more than one builder indicate temporary partnerships or cases in which one builder started a project but another completed it. With one exception, all of the builders were local men who lived within a five-mile radius of Cottonwood. The exception was Breeman/Brennan, who hailed from Prescott. His contract to build the Cottonwood Jail emanated from county officials in Prescott.

**Integrity**

The Cottonwood Commercial Historic District includes the extent of the historic downtown. Properties that contribute to the district are those that are at least fifty years old and that retain their basic historic character. Alterations most frequently consist of additions to the rear, alterations of the front canopy or parapet, sheathing in modern material (for example, some historic buildings received flagstone skirts in the 1950s and 1960s), or painting in vivid hues (a few buildings have mural designs). These changes are seldom obtrusive, nor do they seriously detract from the historic character of the property. Many of the buildings are in good condition, reflecting pride of ownership.

Unusual contributing properties are the following three:

- The Requena Building (922 N. Main) lost its roof in the snowstorm of 1967. The roof was never replaced, leaving a large, open, interior space. The space has been cleverly adapted for use as a gardening shop. The storefront, with its original parapet, stuccoing, door and window openings, remains a significant placeholder along the historic streetscape and is therefore counted as a contributing *structure* (not a building) within the commercial district.
- The Charles Willard Building (1010-1012 N. Main) was built with one story in 1925, gained a second story (to become Willard Hall) in 1926, lost its second story as a result of the storm of 1967, and was never rebuilt to two stories. It is considered a contributing building because the remaining portion reflects the 1925 appearance.
- The front of the commercial building at 1033 N. Main has been adorned with murals (some incorporating tiny mirrors), extensive signage, and street furniture. Despite a cluttered appearance, the storefront retains its basic historic design and is therefore counted as a contributing building.

Non-contributing properties within the district are those that post-date 1949 (the end of the historic period as defined by the National Register) or that lack integrity. Integrity is gauged by the Arizona SHPO's minimal standards for determining contributor/non-contributor status. Typically, properties in the district have lost integrity because storefront window and door openings have been extensively modified; *and* historic, exterior wall fabric has been replaced with modern, visually incompatible material. Fortunately, non-contributing properties are fairly evenly distributed throughout the district and thus do not constitute a notable intrusion.

The Cottonwood Commercial Historic District possesses good integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It contains 37 contributing and 20 non-contributing properties, listed below.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section   7   Page  14  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

Within the district boundary, the percentage of contributing buildings is 65 percent. Outside the boundary, the district adjoins the Verde River to the north, and residential neighborhoods to the east, south, and west.

**Contributing Elements (37)**

Buildings: (North Main Street addresses) 720, 724, 824, 826, 904, 918, 924-926, 928, 930, 1002, 1006-1008, 1010-012, 1016-1018, 1020, 1028, 1034, 1042, 1060, 1124, 791, 805, 907, 909-911, 913, 921, 1001, 1003-1007, 1017-1019, 1021-1023, 1025, 1033, 1035, 1101; plus 14 West Pinal

Structures: 922 N. Main; Cottonwood Bridge (between 1060 and 1124 N. Main); Del Monte Wash Bridge (southeast of 791 N. Main)

**Non-Contributing Elements (20)**

Buildings: (all North Main Street addresses) 712, 794, 796, 804, 816, 914, 1004, 1014, 817, 821, 827, 901, 917, 925-927, 929, app. 1009, 1027-1029, 1037-1039, 1045

Structures: free-standing "Shep's Liquor" neon sign at 1003 N. Main

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page  15  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

**SIGNIFICANCE**

**SUMMARY**

The Cottonwood Commercial Historic District is significant under Criterion A for its association with important events and trends in commerce from the early to mid twentieth century. Properties within the district represent distinct phases in the development of Cottonwood as the commercial hub of the Verde Valley. The period of significance (1917-1949) begins with the earliest documented date of construction for an existing building in the downtown. It ends fifty years ago, signifying the district's continuing importance through the end of the historic period (as defined by the National Register). The level of significance is local.

**The Founding of Cottonwood**

In early historic times the upper-middle Verde Valley lay within the traditional territory of the Yavapai and Apache Indians. In 1871 the Cottonwood locality became part of the Rio Verde Reservation when Vincent Colyer (Secretary of the Board of Indian Commissioners) urged the government to create a reservation for the Verde's indigenous people (Colyer 1871). Approximately 1500 individuals -- 1000 Northeastern Yavapai and 500 Tonto Apache -- were placed on the Rio Verde in the spring of 1873 following General George Crook's military campaign. Another 748 persons -- most of them Western Yavapai -- were added to Rio Verde in May of that year when their temporary reservation at Camp Date Creek was closed (Corbusier 1969:135 and 246-247). Disease ravaged the Rio Verde, and its occupants quickly found their numbers decreased by half. When the epidemics passed, the government began to develop agriculture on the reservation. In 1874, Colonel Julius Wilmott Mason and Lt. Walter S. Schuyler supervised construction of a dam and four- or five-mile irrigation ditch. The Indians brought 53 acres under cultivation and raised a good crop of corn, potatoes, melons, and pumpkins (Eason 1966:13; Corbusier 1969:17). The harvest was so productive that Mason and Schuyler made plans to bring additional acreage under cultivation the following year. Their plans were short-lived. According to the military surgeon assigned to Rio Verde, a Tucson ring arranged to have the Indians removed from the fertile Verde Valley and placed on the barren San Carlos Reservation. The ring feared a bad precedent: that Rio Verde might soon be a self-supporting reservation that would cease to provide a market for white contractors providing inferior goods at exorbitant prices (Corbusier 1969:17). The 180-mile exodus to the San Carlos occurred in the winter of 1875, resulting in the loss of many lives (Khera 1979).

With its native population removed, the upper-middle Verde Valley attracted Euroamerican settlers. In May of 1877 a team of surveyors contracted by the General Land Office/GLO explored the Cottonwood area. The team reported that several families were farming the locality: the Hawkins, the Bristows, the Strahans, and the Wingfields (GLO 1878). The farmers called their settlement "Cottonwood," after its lofty deciduous trees. The surveyors noted that the settlement contained a schoolhouse, located in the NW 1/4 of Section 34 (GLO 1878). According to some sources (including Granger 1983:179), the schoolhouse occupied an adobe building that had been headquarters for the Rio Verde Reservation; the 1878 GLO map indicates that the schoolhouse was close to Cottonwood's present downtown. The farming community gained recognition when the government established a post office there on March 6, 1879. William H. McMichael served as first postmaster (Theobald and Theobald 1961:93).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page  16  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

The tiny settlement attracted other pioneers. Among them was Charles Douglas Willard, considered by many to be the "father of Cottonwood," who arrived in the community in June of 1879 at the age of 20 (Willard 1954). Willard had been driving cattle from Nevada with his father and four of his brothers when the father died at Dolan Spring (northern Arizona) in December of 1878. The grieving brothers continued their journey and settled across the river from what is now Clarkdale. In 1885 their mother joined them. Mary Willard amassed acreage for a farm near the present downtown by homesteading and purchasing land. The Willard spread soon included a large vegetable garden, pear orchard, dairy, brick residence, and various outbuildings. One building on the family farm became Cottonwood's post office, where son George MacDonald "Mack" Willard served as postmaster from 1885 to 1899 (Theobald and Theobald 1961:93).

The Willards and their neighbors found a ready market for agricultural goods at the military fort of Fort Verde and the copper-mining camp of Jerome. Fort Verde's importance decreased as Indian-Anglo conflicts were quelled. The government abandoned the fort in 1881. Jerome meanwhile rose to prominence. Its first mining claims were located in 1876 when prospectors followed a prehistoric trail from the Verde into the mountains and discovered that it terminated at outcroppings of rich ores four miles from and two thousand feet above the river's edge (Young 1972:5). With capital facilitated by William A. Clark, the claims developed into the United Verde/UV Copper Company in the 1880s (Dunning and Peplow 1959:77, 113-115). Clark and associates received heady competition in 1899 when George Hull and colleagues developed other Jerome claims into the United Verde Extension/UVX Company. By the turn of the century, the astonishing productivity of the UV and UVX had earned for Jerome its reputation as "the billion dollar copper camp" (Young 1972).

**Early Downtown Development: The Boom of 1917-1918**

Cottonwood's downtown developed as the result of mining activity. In 1894, the United Verde built a smelter on the mountain above Jerome. Constructed over mine workings, the plant slowly began to sink, and so in 1912 the UV broke ground for a new smelter on flat, more stable ground in the valley two miles north of Cottonwood. The first furnace of the new plant was "blown in" on May 26, 1915. Near the smelter the UV developed a company town called Clarkdale. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, the UVX developed its own smelter in the valley a mile south of Cottonwood. The company town that developed near the UVX smelter was named Verde, then Clemenceau, in honor of France's Minister of War (Granger 1983:157; Rickard 1987:203-204).

Cottonwood developed as the "in between" town to Clarkdale and Clemenceau. It attracted people who would not or could not live in the highly restrictive climates of the company towns -- residents who wanted their own homes, entrepreneurs who wanted their own businesses (Simmons 1984:5). Cottonwood appealed to the adventurous, most of them law-abiding, some of them not. All manner of entrepreneurs -- from blacksmiths to bootleggers and grocers to gamblers -- moved to Cottonwood. Included were members of nationalities (particularly Mexicans, Italians, and eastern Europeans) who experienced prejudice in the company towns. Typical was the experience of Joseph Becchetti, who applied for work painting houses in Clarkdale, but was told they were not hiring Italians. He settled in Cottonwood, developed its moving picture house, and eventually came to own the theatre of the town that had slighted him (*Cottonwood Journal* 3/1996). Cottonwood provided the climate to sink or swim by one's own abilities.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page  17  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

Financial prosperity promised by completion of the UVX smelter triggered downtown Cottonwood's "boom" in 1917 (*Jerome Sun* 4/14/1917). Charles Willard subdivided his land west of Main Street into the Willard Addition. East of Main, the Verde Valley Improvement Company under A. E. Weidman bought land from Alonzo Mason and subdivided it into the Cottonwood Addition (Stemmer 1954:114-115). Lots in the additions sold for \$125, and sales were brisk. Builders rushed to the valley town, prompting a local newspaper to quip "There are so many carpenters in Cottonwood that when anyone drives up in an auto they all flock around to ask him when he is going to build" (*VCN* 4/1917). In March, Emil Kovacovich hired contractors Gilmore, Schwitters, and Cresney of Jerome to build him a \$5,000 mercantile store (1124 N. Main). Led by Charles Stemmer, the Verde Valley Amusement Company hired the same firm to build an amusement hall called "The Bungalow," two blocks north. Infill between the Bungalow and Kovacovich Mercantile ensued, and by December of 1917, Main Street was also home to Stemmer's confectionery, Mason's store/post office, Neff's garage, Rounseville's drugstore and bakery, McGimsey's Mercantile, W. J. Collins' "Verde Valley Cleaning & Pressing Works," the Oasis soda foundation and confectionery, Joe Hall's rooming house and grill, J. J. Hemler's root beer stand, Young & Hansohn's Mercantile, and Brown's second-hand store.

A fire on December 3, 1917, destroyed five buildings housing seven of these establishments: Rounseville's, the Oasis, Hall's, Hemler's, Collins', Young & Hansohn's, and Brown's. The blaze extended along the west side of Main Street from Mason Avenue (now Pinal Street) to a half-block north (*VCN* 12/3/1917). The fire originated in a pile of rubbish that had been allowed to accumulate in back of the buildings. The newspaper reported losses of \$13,400, only \$2,000 of which was covered by insurance (*VCN* 12/3/1917 and 12/4/1917). An adjuster from Los Angeles arrived a day after the blaze, settled the claims, and canceled all outstanding insurance until Cottonwood could gain better fire protection or a better class of buildings (*VCN* 12/5/1917).

The newly-formed Cottonwood Progressive Association, a cross between a chamber of commerce and a city council, spearheaded the rebuilding effort. President Jerry McGimsey worked with Charles Willard, owner of the local water supply, to increase water pressure and secure hose and hydrant couplings. The association saw to the removal of trash from back alleys, organized a fire-fighting unit, erected a fire house, and installed 300 ft of hose (*VCN* 12/5/1917; Simmons 1984:29). The association's membership sponsored several other improvements in the wake of the fire, ranging from the grading of Main Street to the installation of lights along it.

Rebuilding occurred rapidly in the first half of 1918. By summer there were 64 businesses. In May of the following year, R. G. Stich of the Springfield Insurance Company mapped the business district. He found that it included 38 commercial buildings, stretching along Main Street from Kovacovich Mercantile on the north to a pool hall about two blocks south (Stich 1919). Twenty-three buildings were on the west side of the street, 15 on the east side. Despite the 1917 fire and a lesson that should have been learned from it, most commercial buildings were still of woodframe construction. Expediency rather than durability apparently guided construction during the boom years.

**Post-War Recession and 1920s Growth**

The upper-middle Verde experienced recession as World War I ended, local smelters closed, and hundreds of valley workers lost their jobs. Effects of the post-war recession on Cottonwood's downtown are difficult to assess. On one hand, virtually no new construction occurred there from about 1919 through 1921. On the other hand, during the same

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page  18  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

period Cottonwood retained more business establishments in proportion to its population than any other valley community (VCN 10/25/1921). By October of 1921, the community could boast 2 mercantile stores, 3 groceries, 3 dry goods stores, a lumber yard, a general blacksmith shop, an auto repair shop, a garage/filling station, an auto parts store, a welding and tire shop, 2 pool halls, 2 butcher shops, 4 restaurants, 2 cobblers, 2 hardware and furniture stores, 1 drugstore-bakery, 2 hotels, a rooming house, a newsstand-confectionery, a large dance hall, a moving picture theatre, a cleaning and pressing shop, a hand laundry, a stage line headquarters, an ice plant, a bottling works, a sheet metal and pipe works, a medical bath house, 2 public bath houses, and 2 notaries. The *Verde Copper News* noted that Cottonwood had "shown with all the hard times, with all the people gone from surrounding towns that it is a permanent little town...and it now is about as lively as anything aside from Prescott in the county" (VCN 10/25/1921).

Construction resumed downtown as the region emerged from the recession. Issues of the *Verde Copper News* provide the following details. One of the first projects occurred in 1921-1922 when the McGimsey brothers erected a two-story hotel with shops on what is now the 900 block of North Main. Around the same time, Charles Willard had a garage constructed for a Durant auto dealership, and Tony Butkovich built a rear addition to his shop at the northeast corner of Mason (now Pinal) and Main. Fred Eckert, owner of Rounseville's former bakery and drugstore at the northwest corner of Mason and Main (1002 N. Main), added a modern oven to the business. A new cottage industry made its appearance on Main Street in the spring of 1923 when Karl Schott established the "Jersey Ice Cream Company"; although much altered, the building still stands at 804 N. Main. Charles Stemmer had a concrete tile building constructed at approximately 1024 N. Main, and the post office moved into it. The north half of the Bungalow was razed to make room for another amusement venue; Joe Becchetti built a concrete Rialto Theatre on the site (914 N. Main) to replace his woodframe Rialto a half-block north. At the same time (1923), John MacIntyre built a hardware and furniture store (918 N. Main) immediately north of the "new" Rialto. The single largest construction project of the era was Ersel Garrison's Liberty Garage, built at 1042 N. Main in 1923 and 1924. At 826 N. Main, Alex and Guido Marianna in 1924 constructed a rusticated concrete block commercial building "on spec"; its first tenant became Crutchfield Brothers Buick. By April of 1925, two additional projects neared completion: H. A. Arnold's Service Station at 1021-1023 N. Main, and Jess Siler's Cut Rate Grocery at 904 N. Main. Nearly all of these 1920s projects used some form of concrete as their main construction material.

The downtown suffered a major disaster on April 20, 1925, when a fire destroyed every building on the west side of Main between MacIntyre's and Stemmer's (between 918 and 1024 N. Main). The fire originated in a restaurant occupied by Thomas Moore in the rear of the "old" Rialto building (VCN 4/22/1925). The blaze caused the loss of nearly \$150,000 in property. Fifteen businesses plus 10 residences behind them were ruined. One man died, G. H. Brooks, a mentalist from Los Angeles who had been holding meetings in Cottonwood and staying at the Cottonwood Hotel when the fire erupted (VCN 4/20/1925). The tragedy was heightened when looters struck in the wake of the fire, "riffing slot machines and cash registers and carrying off things they took a fancy to" (VCN 2/22/1925). Analysts blamed the rapid spread of the fire on several factors: the woodframe and stucco-frame construction of the buildings, the boardwalk that connected them, and the incompatibility of hydrants with some of the hose couplings.

The burned sector was rebuilt with speed and care. Within a year, concrete buildings filled every lot between MacIntyre's and Stemmer's. From south to north were Requena's Pool Hall (922 N. Main), the Joe Becchetti Commercial Building (924-926 N. Main), W. L. G. Lysons' Building (928 N. Main), the Giordanos' Cottonwood Hotel (930 N. Main), Eckert's

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page  19  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

Drug Store (front portion of 1002 N. Main), Joe Hall's Cafe and Pool Hall (1004 N. Main), the Luna & Mack Willard Building (1006-1008 N. Main), the Charles Willard Building (1010-1012 N. Main), the G. M. Willard Building (1014 N. Main), the Groves-Hansohn Building (1016-1018 N. Main), and a temporary building for Eden's Lumber Company (1020 N. Main; this would be replaced by a permanent building in 1929). When the remaining, south half of the Bungalow was razed and the town lost its social hall, Charles Willard in 1926 added a second story to his new commercial building at 1010-1012 N. Main. The resulting Willard Hall, with its spacious hardwood dance floor, served as Cottonwood's assembly hall until the civic club was built in 1939.

The downtown streetscape changed as a result of the fire. With few exceptions, wood was no longer used for new construction fronting on Main Street. New buildings received large display windows. Older buildings were remodeled with larger windows to project a more modern appearance. Concrete sidewalks replaced boardwalks. The newspaper reported that the sidewalks gave rise to a stilt-walking craze among boys ages six to fourteen. Parents were said to fear that their sons would slip and crash through storefront windows. "Were the town incorporated," the article continued, "the practice would be forbidden by city ordinance and local authorities would stop any violations" (VCN 8/26/1925).

Lack of incorporation seemed a mixed blessing to Cottonwood. True, there was no legal remedy for stilt-walking, but some activities were best kept from the eyes of the law. Bootlegging was a big industry. Customers came from Clemenceau, Clarkdale, Camp Verde, and Jerome, as well as Cottonwood. Pool halls and restaurants lining Main Street were often fronts for back rooms dispensing home-brew. For years the "Prohis" (Prohibition agents) seemed to turn a blind eye to Cottonwood (Ochoa 1992:14-16). From the *Verde Copper News*, it would appear that the situation changed around 1928, when Sheriff George Ruffner stepped up County raids on Cottonwood distillers.

Joe Hall was a frequent target of Ruffner's raids. Alleged to be "the bootleg king of Arizona" (VCN 7/31/1928), Hall was said to have a hole in the floor of his back room at 1004 N. Main which concealed a supply of whiskey (Ochoa 1992:15). Several times arrested but not convicted, Hall's luck changed in July of 1928 when the Sheriff raided not only Hall's commercial building but also his home, seizing 300 gallons of 3-year-old whiskey (VCN 7/31/1928). In the following years, Hall was convicted and sentenced to 10 months in prison. Upon release Hall found his Cottonwood holdings considerably diminished (William Simpson, interview June 1999).

The issue of incorporation did go before voters at least once during the historic period. In 1927 and 1928 a series of fires erupted. One caused significant damage, and it was feared that a firebug was at work (VCN 7/6/1928). Proponents argued that incorporation would allow the town to raise funds for a better fire suppression system. The issue failed by a large margin in July, 1928. However, downtown property owners independently reached a consensus that they would pay 1% of their assessed values into a special fund earmarked for fire protection (VCN 7/13/1928). Two months after the vote, a Cottonwood pioneer was arrested on suspicion of arson. A jury found her not guilty (VCN 10/9/1928). She died two years after her acquittal. Fires ceased in the downtown, at least for the next few years.

Concern that Cottonwood was acquiring a lawless reputation prompted townspeople to lobby for a jail. In 1929 the town purchased a lot from Alonzo Mason, donated the land to the County, and the County built the jail, using a Prescott contractor (VCN 9/27/1929 and 11/8/1929). Its prominent location at the foot of Main Street (1101 N. Main) was likely intended to deter contretemps with the authorities.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page  20  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

**Downtown during the Depression**

Through the 1920s Cottonwood's commercial district was sustained by a healthy mining economy. However, at least one downtown business developed out of concern that the good times would not last. In 1928 Mark Barker forecast that the smelter where he worked would close, and thus started "Cottonwood Fuel & Feed" at the head of Main Street (796 N. Main) (Margaret Bilynskyj, interview March 1999). Unfortunately, most of Barker's peers were not prepared for the hard times ahead.

The stock market crash of October 24, 1929, was not covered in the local newspaper. Only gradually were its effects felt in the Verde Valley. In early summer of 1930 the UV and UVX announced they would curtail production. Hundreds of miners and smelter workers lost their jobs in the months that followed. By September of 1931, unemployment was a common topic for the front pages of the *Verde Copper News*. In February of 1935, the *News* itself became a casualty of the Depression.

Building activity slowed but did not cease downtown during the early years of the Depression. At least two properties were constructed by the private sector. Both were designed to serve the motoring public. At the time, the State was upgrading roads in the vicinity of Cottonwood. In 1930, William F. "Frank" Edens, owner of the Cottonwood Lumber Company (1020 N. Main) announced plans to build an auto court between the Liberty Garage and the Verde Marmon Motor Company (VCN 9/16/1930). He was said to be pushing his plans forward so as to afford work for Valley laborers. "Eden's Auto Court" was completed in 1933 (1034 N. Main). On the other side of Main Street opposite Willard Hall, Joe Becchetti in 1930 planned to build a mini-golf course (VCN 9/19/1930). However, J. O. Braley, proprietor of Braley's Auto Parts, prevailed with other plans for the site (1003-1007 N. Main) and in 1932 constructed an auto court there (VCN 3/11/1932 and 2/10/1933)).

Cottonwood began to benefit from work relief programs of the federal government in 1933. Civilian Conservation Corps/CCC camps wintered in the area, and CCC laborers frequented the downtown as they restored the countryside. A program of immense help to Cottonwood was the Tuzigoot project. Under the supervision of archaeologists from the University of Arizona, CWA (later, WPA) laborers excavated and stabilized the ruin and developed a museum/visitor center. The Tuzigoot project lasted for several years, employed many Cottonwood men, and helped develop Cottonwood's tourism industry (VCN 11/24/1933, 12/1/1933, 1/5/1934, and 5/11/1934).

The downtown suffered a stunning setback on the morning of June 26, 1933, when fire ravaged its southeast sector. The flames started from a gasoline-powered coffee urn at the Eatmor Sandwich Shop and quickly spread to adjacent properties (VCN 6/30/1933). The fire left a deep gash along Main Street from Ellefson Avenue (now Pima Street) to a half-block north. Destroyed were the Eatmor, Mary Martilona's Rest Rite Hotel, a building owned by Chokree Gobins that housed the Norton & Norton Insurance Company, and two small residences behind these establishments. Sparks also ignited the tents of a carnival that happened to be camped in the town park south of Ellefson. The heat was so intense that it cracked the windows of Siler's Cut Rate Grocery and the Rialto Theatre across Main Street. Reconstruction was slow to occur in the damaged sector. The Verde Valley Distributing Company built its place circa 1935 at 913 N. Main.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section   8   Page  21  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

Carlson's 5 & 10 Department Store was constructed circa 1939 at 909-911 N. Main. A commercial building was added at 907 N. Main circa 1940, and the Western Auto/VonGausig Building on the corner of Ellefson and Main (901 N. Main) was finally constructed circa 1959.

Government assistance facilitated three major projects in the 1930s. The Liberty Collision Works building (1060 N. Main) served as field office for the work-relief groups conducting them (VCN 12/8/1933; Ochoa 1992). Circa 1934 the CWA substantially rebuilt the Cottonwood Bridge (between 1060 and 1124 N. Main). Circa 1935 the WPA is believed to have constructed the Del Monte Wash Bridge (south of 791 N. Main). Finally, in 1939, the Cottonwood Community Civic Club (805 N. Main) was erected by the WPA in conjunction with the Cottonwood civic club organization. The organization raised \$30,000 for its share of the project through a grass-roots effort involving bake sales, White Elephant sales, bridge parties, and donations from 54 local business people (Cottonwood Civic Club 1989). Ethel Barker (wife of the aforementioned Mark Barker) chaired the building committee, and spent a great deal of time securing funds, monitoring design plans, and overseeing the construction (Veretta 1984).

The Depression reconfigured the economy of Cottonwood and the middle Verde Valley. The mining industry never recovered. In its place was a young tourist industry. Guest ranches and archaeological ruins attracted visitors in increasing numbers each year. The visitors arrived by motor car or flying machine. Travel by the latter was made possible by an airport developed in the 1920s and 1930s a mile south of Cottonwood (Ward 1984). The facility would have an important effect on downtown during the war and post-war years.

**World War II and the Post-War Years**

In part because Cottonwood had an airport with good pilots, it hosted a World War II primary flight school in which civilian instructors trained Naval cadets. The school included an airstrip, beacon, hangar, and temporary buildings such as Quonset huts. The training craft were biplanes manufactured by the Stearman Aircraft Company. Sixteen of them were usually stationed at the airfield. Local mechanics such as George Helms got jobs tending the aircraft -- rolling them out of the hangar each morning, readying them for flights, and rolling them back inside at night (Ward 1984).

Downtown served as home for the cadets. The civic club leased its clubhouse (805 N. Main) to the Defense Department, which used the fortress-like building as a barracks (Veretta 1984; Cottonwood Civic Club 1989). The Marianna building across the street (826 N. Main) became the mess hall (Barker, cited in Cottonwood Civic Club 1989). The cadets brought new excitement to the downtown. Their presence gave Cottonwood a sense of contributing as a community to the war effort. The dashing "fly-boys" cut a wide swath through downtown and many a young girl's heart, by some reports (Elsie Torrez, interview June 1999).

The war effort left an architectural imprint on the downtown. Two years after the war ended, a Quonset hut from the airfield was moved downtown and given a commercial storefront to become a car dealership (720 N. Main). The storefront featured a high, curved parapet that exactly mirrored the curvature of the Quonset. In short order, frame buildings were erected north and south of the Quonset (712 and 724 N. Main) and given storefronts exactly matching that

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section   8   Page  22  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

=====

of their neighbor. The southern building became a cold-storage facility, while the northern one became an auto parts store. Thus the downtown came to contain a cluster of buildings with storefronts derived from the form of a common World War II military building.

**Modern Period**

The Quonset and two Quonset-inspired buildings were the last ones constructed downtown during the historic period. The years following 1949 saw little construction activity. Around 1952, Bert Black's Richfield Service Station was built at 794 N. Main. The downtown got a bank when the Bank of Arizona opened its Verde Valley branch at 816 N. Main, in 1954. Circa 1956, the Chamber of Commerce erected a small cinder-block office at 817 N. Main.

The area received an economic boost in 1958 when the Phoenix Cement Company built a plant at Clarkdale. Its purpose was to provide material for Glen Canyon Dam, then under construction near the Arizona-Utah border. The plant quickly became the largest employer in the Clarkdale-Cottonwood area (Parker 1962). Long after completion of the dam, the cement plant remains a major employer of the valley's workforce. The current owner is a Native American tribe.

Around the time that Cottonwood incorporated (1960), Main Street gained a Western Auto building (901 N. Main), a new Arizona Public Service Company building (1045 N. Main), a post office (827 N. Main), and a towering neon sign for "Shep's Liquor" (at 1003 N. Main). Since the 1960s no new buildings or structures have appeared in the historic commercial area. The Old Town Association, Cottonwood's Main Street organization, is currently leading the effort to revitalize the downtown. This National Register nomination is part of the revitalization effort.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   9   Page  23  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   9   Page  24  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   9   Page  25  Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Photos Page 26 Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

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**Photographic Information**

- 1.) Cottonwood Commercial Historic District
- 2.) Yavapai County, Arizona
- 3.) Unknown
- 4.) Circa 1940
- 5.) Old Town Association, Cottonwood, Arizona
- 6.) View north showing downtown Cottonwood
- 7.) PHOTO 1

- 1.) Cottonwood Commercial Historic District
- 2.) Yavapai County, Arizona
- 3.) Unknown
- 4.) Circa 1934
- 5.) Sharlot Hall Museum, Prescott, Arizona
- 6.) View west showing Cottonwood Bridge under construction by Civil Works Administration
- 7.) PHOTO 2

- 1.) 914 to 930 N. Main St., Cottonwood Commercial Historic District
- 2.) Yavapai County, Arizona
- 3.) P. Stein
- 4.) March 1999
- 5.) Old Town Association, Cottonwood, Arizona
- 6.) View southwest showing portion of west side of district
- 7.) PHOTO 3

- 1.) 900 and 1000 blocks of N. Main St., Cottonwood Commercial Historic District
- 2.) Yavapai County, Arizona
- 3.) P. Stein
- 4.) March 1999
- 5.) Old Town Association, Cottonwood, Arizona
- 6.) View north showing east and west sides of district
- 7.) PHOTO 4

- 1.) 918 N. Main St., Cottonwood Commercial Historic District
- 2.) Yavapai County, Arizona
- 3.) P. Stein
- 4.) March 1999
- 5.) Old Town Association, Cottonwood, Arizona
- 6.) View west showing MacIntyre Building
- 7.) PHOTO 5

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section \_Photos\_ Page \_27\_ Cottonwood Commercial Historic District  
Yavapai County, Arizona

- =====
- 1.) 805 N. Main St., Cottonwood Commercial Historic District
  - 2.) Yavapai County, Arizona
  - 3.) P. Stein
  - 4.) March 1999
  - 5.) Old Town Association, Cottonwood, Arizona
  - 6.) View east showing Cottonwood Community Civic Club Building
  - 7.) PHOTO 6

- 1.) 826 N. Main St., Cottonwood Commercial Historic District
- 2.) Yavapai County, Arizona
- 3.) P. Stein
- 4.) March 1999
- 5.) Old Town Association, Cottonwood, Arizona
- 6.) View west showing Marianna Cement Block Building
- 7.) PHOTO 7

- 1.) 928 N. Main St., Cottonwood Commercial Historic District
- 2.) Yavapai County, Arizona
- 3.) P. Stein
- 4.) March 1999
- 5.) Old Town Association, Cottonwood, Arizona
- 6.) View west showing W. L. G. Lysons Building
- 7.) PHOTO 8

- 1.) 909-911 N. Main St., Cottonwood Commercial Historic District
- 2.) Yavapai County, Arizona
- 3.) P. Stein
- 4.) March 1999
- 5.) Old Town Association, Cottonwood, Arizona
- 6.) View east showing "Kiva Arts," formerly Carlson's 5 & 10 Department Store
- 7.) PHOTO 9

