

TINY TOADS TOUR

A public art tour of a selection of Conway's key historical landmarks



The City of Conway was developed around the railroad depot as Conway Station in 1871. Several of its, now landmark, buildings are still here. Conway's Commercial Historic District has over 70 buildings contributing to the architectural character of the original town center. It's period of significance includes structures built from 1879-1960. The city's designation as a National Historic District and listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 2010 has brought national status and monetary incentives in the form of state and federal tax credits and grants to this area.

As part of a federally-funded grant administered by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Certified Local Government program, the City of Conway Planning and Development Department commissioned this "Tiny Toads" tour. The self-guided public art tour and brochure are intended to celebrate Conway's rich history in a fun and informative way. It tells the story of some of Conway's significant historic sites, many of which are included in the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places. Most of the sites are located within walking distance in downtown Conway and the Conway Commercial Historic District. So put on your walking shoes, grab your lunch money, and follow the tiny brass toads to learn more about the City of Conway's story.

Be on the look out for these properties, highlighted on the tour and listed in the National Register of Historic Places:

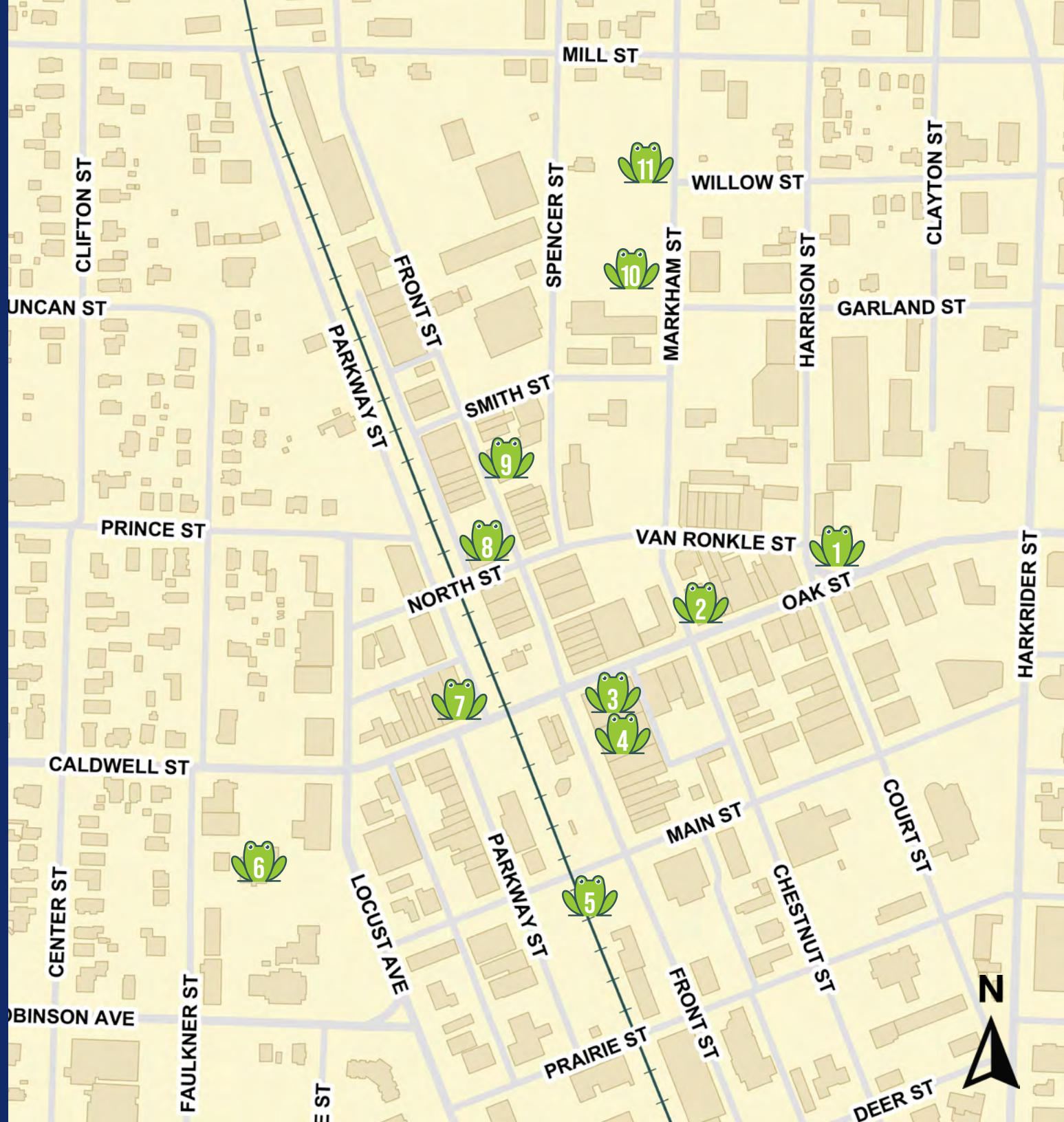
- Grummer-Massey Hardware Building • 1022 Oak St.
- Halter Building • 1125 Oak St.
- Frauenthal and Schwartz Building • 824 Front St.
- Faulkner County Jail • 801 Locust Ave. / Courthouse Square
- Goad Brothers Café and Bakery • 1304 Oak St.
- Farmers State Bank Building • 1001 Front St.
- Smith Ford Showroom • 1020 Front St.
- Fletcher Smith Jewelry Building • 826 Front St.

To learn more about Conway's Commercial Historic District, as listed in the National Register of Historic Places, visit:

<https://tinyurl.com/commercialhistoricdistrict>.

TINY TOADS TOUR

1. Rogers Plaza • Gateway to Downtown Conway
920 Oak Street
2. Grummer-Massey Hardware Building
1022 Oak Street
3. Halter Building
1117 Oak Street
4. Frauenthal & Schwarz Building
824 Front Street
5. Railroad Depot Site
1200 Block of Main Street
6. Faulkner County Jail; Faulkner County Library
801 Locust Avenue
7. Goad Brothers Café and Bakery Building
1304 Oak Street
8. Farmers State Bank Building
1001 Front Street
9. Smith Auto Co. Showroom
1020 Front Street
10. East Side Community at MLK Square
1110 Spencer Street
11. Golden Drag Café
1151 Markham Street



In 1871, Asa P. Robinson was deeded a one square mile tract of land near the old Cadron settlement in Faulkner County, Arkansas, as compensation for his service as chief engineer of the Little Rock-Fort Smith Railroad. When the railroad was extended to the area, Robinson deeded a small portion of this property back to the railroad for the purpose of establishing a depot. He platted the northeast corner of the remainder of the property into a town structure, naming it “Conway Station”, and reserved the remainder of the property for private hunting and raising of livestock. Many consider Robinson the “Father of Conway”. Conway Station was selected as the county seat in 1873 and incorporated, 1875. Conway grew into a popular trading center because of the railroad and its accessibility from the many surrounding communities and farms.

Because the town was designed by and around the railroad, the earliest developed streets and buildings were located closest to the depot. In 2010, the Conway Commercial Historic District was formed, listing this early commercial center on the National Register of Historic Places. The district includes 130 buildings, dating from 1879 to 1960 and beyond, when the majority of the commercial core was built. It encompasses 19 full and 4 partial city blocks.

Around the mid-twentieth century, Conway’s downtown began to suffer. With the advent of the automobile, being within walking distance of town amenities was no longer a necessity. People began to build new homes and commercial endeavors closer to highways and other high-traffic areas, pulling a thread in the fabric that kept downtown woven together.

By the 1990s, some of Conway’s historic buildings had been destroyed and many storefronts left vacant. The tide began to change in 1995 when Hendrix College began planning The Village at Hendrix, a traditional neighborhood development. It was built between Conway’s historic downtown and Hendrix College, essentially expanding downtown dwelling and business opportunities. Its planners designed the greenfield development to be historically sympathetic regarding building placement and materials. It includes multi-family housing for Hendrix students, single-family housing for residents along with offices, retail shops, and restaurants for the entire community.

Encouraged by the enthusiasm for Hendrix’s new plan, Mayor Tab Townsell (1998-2016) and former newspaper publisher, Mike Hengel, recruited a group of property owners, developers, and business professionals to meet weekly in order to discuss how to attract people and revive the City’s existing historic center into a desirable downtown community. These meetings resulted in the formation of the Conway Downtown Partnership (2001), a nonprofit economic development organization which collaborates with businesses, downtown residents, private developers, and city government to bring about positive and permanent change in downtown Conway.

The group agreed the first step toward changing the perception of Conway’s neglected downtown was to redevelop Front Street, one of Conway’s earliest streets, along which City Hall and numerous businesses were already established. Once the City invested in the needed infrastructure improvements, street beautification projects, and changes to local laws regulating restaurants, downtown building owners began to reinvest and weave downtown’s fabric back together.

The downtown community, and even Conway on the whole, began to take off. Notable additions, infill, and rehabilitations to downtown include:

- Mike’s Place restaurant (2006)
- EM Jeans Building (2007)
- Halter Building Renovation (2007)
- Ferguson Building (2007)
- Hendrix College Townhouses (2008)
- 920 Locust, Rik Sowell Building (2008)
- Plunkett-Jarrell Building (2008)
- Satterfield Station (2009)
- Federal Building Plaza (2011)
- Smith Ford Building (2012)
- Phillips-Gwin Store (2012-2013)
- Conway Bottling Works Building (2012-13)
- Moll Café Building (2013)
- Matchett’s Barber Shop Building (2013-14)

Since the early 2000s, millions of dollars have been invested in infrastructure improvements downtown. The Conway Downtown Partnership, City of Conway, Conway Area Chamber of Commerce, Conway Development Corporation, and Conway Corporation have all collaborated on a variety of projects including the introduction of roundabouts to better manage traffic safety and speed, landscaping, lighting, and underground infrastructure.

In 2009, the city added a new police station. Then in 2013, more than 70 parking spaces were added to the historic downtown and a signature entrance, Rogers Plaza, was created at Oak and Court Streets to identify the area as the gateway to downtown, welcoming visitors.



Rogers Plaza (c. 2014) [credit: Crafton Tull]

The addition of the Conway Commercial Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places in 2010 has generated increased attention in the area, brought educational opportunities to the community, and introduced state and local monetary incentives provided by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program and the National Park Service.

Conway’s downtown continues to thrive and exists as the heart of a city that honors the past while embracing a bright future.

The Grummer-Massey Hardware Building was constructed around 1915, in the popular standard 20th century commercial style. The store was built by John Grummer and Adalbert (Albert) Lachowsky. The front of the building housed Grummer's hardware store, while Lachowsky operated his tin shop in the back. The floor tiles at the building entrances still read "Grummer Hardware Co" today.



Massey Hardware Co. (c. 1978) [credit: *The Log Cabin Democrat*]

The business was founded in 1905 by two Grummer brothers, William and Gerhard, along with Lachowsky. John, a third Grummer brother, worked as a salesman in the store, and assumed his brothers' partial ownership in 1937.

In October of 1942, John Grummer sold his stock of merchandise to Walter Massey. Lachowsky retired from the business, though Grummer and Lachowsky retained ownership of the building and ultimately willed ownership to their widows. Massey had run a hardware store on East Oak Street in 1922, before purchasing the stock and moving into the Grummer building.

Throughout its eighty-plus years as a hardware store, the interior of the building saw few changes. The store featured floor to ceiling shelving with rolling ladders attached to their fronts so employees could reach the highest shelves. Massey lowered the shelves by six feet but kept the ladders in use during his ownership of the building. The store was lit with single light bulbs, dangled from cloth covered wires. Throughout its tenure as a hardware store, men from the community could often be found seated on a collection of makeshift stools, including nail kegs and wheelbarrows near the original pot belly stove in the corner, trading hunting or fishing tales and local gossip.

Customers, primarily farmers and sportsmen from across Faulkner County, frequented the store for its full stock of farm utensils, home and garden and hardware supplies, and leather goods along with guns and ammunition, fishing gear, outdoor clothing, hunting and fishing licenses, horseshoes, horse collars, crockery, and even parts for coal oil lamps.

In 1944, Massey hired John Henze, who had just finished his service in the Army Air Corps. Later in 1947, he hired Conway-native Jerome Moix who had returned home after six years in the Navy. At his death in 1948, Massey passed ownership of the merchandise to his widow who then sold a portion to Henze in 1950.

In 1956, at Mrs. Massey's death, her half interest was passed down as inheritance and ended up in Henze's hands. In 1964, as the sole owner, Henze made big changes. He purchased a franchise from Browning Arms to sell their guns and replaced the original buckled and warped wood floor with concrete. He also expanded and modernized the stock, improving the displays to appeal to more sportsmen.

Jerome Moix continued as Henze's employee, purchasing the business in full from Henze upon his retirement in 1968. As Henze had done before him, Moix kept Massey as the store's name.

One night in 1969, thieves broke in and stole 75 of Massey Hardware's best guns. The robbery was financially crippling. In an effort to prevent future thefts, Moix had the four skylights in the roof boarded up and replaced all of the dangling light bulbs with fluorescent lighting, to compensate for the lost sunlight and illuminate the interior at night.



Interior of Massey Hardware Co. (c. 1978) [credit: *The Log Cabin Democrat*]



Guy Massey (no kin to the original Massey), an employee of the store, replaces a handle in a hoe, a service for which the firm charges 50 cents.

Date unknown [credit: *The Log Cabin Democrat*]

Throughout all the years the hardware store was in business, some fixtures and furnishings remained. These elements are what people recall about their trips to the store and its unique atmosphere: the smell of oil and leather, the tall ceilings covered in decorative tin, a three-foot tall pendulum clock that was wound each day with a tiny key, stuffed wildlife trophies of bear and deer, and the large ornate hand-cranked cash register, all which had been there since the days of Grummer. Massey Hardware Co. eventually closed in 1998.

The Halter family came to Conway in 1871, when their church in Zanesville, Ohio encouraged parishioners to settle in the new Catholic parish being located in Arkansas. Asa P. Robinson was platting Conway around the railroad depot and selling lots on behalf of the Little Rock-Fort Smith Railroad. As a token for the Catholic Church's efforts to promote the fledgling Conway Station, the railroad made property grants to St. Joseph's Catholic Church.



Ferdinand & Susan Halter (center) with sons (L to R) Lawrence Edward, Otto Sylvester, Amos Aloysius, and Francis Urban Halter. [credit: Faulkner County Historical Society's *Faulkner Facts and Fiddlings*]

Conway was named the county seat of Faulkner County in 1873, but the town really began to grow following the completion of the courthouse construction in 1877. Conway remained the only municipality in Faulkner County until 1916.



Frank Urban Halter (second from right), with wife and sons, in front of the family's home [credit: Faulkner County Historical Society's *Faulkner Facts and Fiddlings*]

Wooden frame buildings began to pop up around town, particularly concentrated around the railroad, creating a central commercial district. Sadly, much of this commercial center was destroyed by fire in 1878. Following the fire, the new construction saw more permanent brick structures, as Conway began to establish itself as a cotton market for the surrounding county and region.

Frank and Amos, the second generation of the founding Halters, established Halter Brothers Construction Company, a lumber mill and general contracting business, during the rebuilding of Conway. Operational from 1905-1935, the firm worked with many prominent regional architects, using a variety of styles and materials. The company was known for building impressive structures, many of which have become well-known landmarks, including the Logan County Courthouse (1908), First Baptist Church of Conway (1910), the Old Science Building (1907-08) and Doyne Hall (1910) at the Arkansas State Teachers College (now University of Central Arkansas), and St. Joseph's Catholic Church (c. 1925).

In 1917, the Halter brothers built their own landmark building. They constructed it as the only three-story building in Conway, siting it on the city's most valuable corner. It was advertised as an upscale office and retail building, the tallest and most modern building in Conway. It was constructed of steel and concrete, and boasted as completely fire-proof. Their new building adjoined the Halter's existing two-story building fronting Oak Street.

The brothers chose a design with Italianate influences, a popular architectural style in Conway at the time. Design features include wide overhanging eaves boxed with large eave brackets and a deep trim band with dentil molding. The top floor has arched windows with brick hooding and ceramic glazed brick.



The Halter Building (c. early 1920s) [credit: Faulkner County Historical Society's *Faulkner Facts and Fiddlings*]

According to family records, when the Halter Building first opened, the first floor housed the following businesses: Robinette Clock and Jewelry, Fletcher Smith Jewelry, Sterling Stores Five & Dime, Elmer's, Alco Variety, Greeson's Drug and Soda Fountain, Triple Dip Ice Cream & Confection, OK Barber Shop, and the CoEd Café. On the second floor were: Barlow Dentist, Conway Medical Group (Drs. Ed Dunaway, Archer, Fred Gordy, McCollum), Stanley Russ, and Lonzo Ross. "Teen Town" (parties, dancing, bowling alleys, car/table games, group games) was located on the third floor. Listed as "others" were Harley Weatherly-Dentist and Francis Donovan-Attorney.

In 1915, the business showed a loss, causing a rift between the brothers. This is likely why Amos parted ways and founded the Conway Lumber Company. He died in 1924 of cancer while Frank lived until 1943. The building remained in the Halter family until 2006, when it was sold to Bentonville developers, Tom and Chris Seay. The Seays extensively renovated and refurbished the building, making it again one of the most prominent buildings in downtown Conway.

The Frauenthal family influenced the commercial landscape of Conway for nearly 80 years. A German immigrant from Marienthal, Rhenish Bavaria, Max Frauenthal launched his retail business in 1872. Having arrived in Conway with the railroad construction workers, he set up a small wooden store, the second in town, in an alley opposite the train station. He shrewdly chose the alley instead of the planned business corridor, as this was where farmers and visitors parked when coming to town to sell their goods. This gave Frauenthal first dibs at their business. The meager alley eventually became Front Street. Front and Oak Streets are downtown's principal business corridors in part because of Frauenthal's decision.



Jo Frauenthal (date unknown)
[credit: Faulkner County Museum]

Frauenthal's business proved so lucrative that, within a year of opening, he solicited the help of a cousin from Kentucky, Jo Frauenthal, to keep his books. Eventually, another cousin, Leo Schwarz, also from Bavaria, joined his management team.

In 1878, a fire destroyed all of the wooden structures erected along Front Street, including the Frauenthal Mercantile. When rebuilding, Frauenthal constructed the first two-story brick commercial building in Conway, setting the standard for future construction. This area of town became known as the "Frauenthal Block". His building was designed in the elaborate Italianate style, featuring the first plate-glass window in Conway. A portion of this building still exists at 904 Front Street.

In 1880, Max and Jo Frauenthal partnered to form M.&J. Frauenthal & Company. Their business model allowed farmers to purchase merchandise on credit with the intention of settling their accounts at harvest at a time when farming was a particularly risky venture for many farmers. This practice proved lucrative, allowing Max to accumulate massive wealth and numerous farm mortgages, making Frauenthal & Co. the largest mercantile store in Faulkner County by 1883.

By 1888, the business enterprise expanded into various additional markets. Max became an agent for cotton gins, saw, wheat, corn, and cane mills, corn shellers, and engines. He even owned an Excelsior production factory. In 1892, Max sold his interest in the mercantile company to Jo Frauenthal and Leo Schwarz. He then moved to Sugar Loaf to help found the community of Heber Springs, while Jo and Leo rebranded the business to Frauenthal and Schwarz.

Jo's brother, Charles, joined him as a general manager and by the 1890s, they acquired the building to the south, significantly increasing the mercantile's storefront. The firm hired noted architect Charles Thompson in 1915, to design a facade renovation for the 1879 building that now housed one of Conway's most prosperous retail businesses.

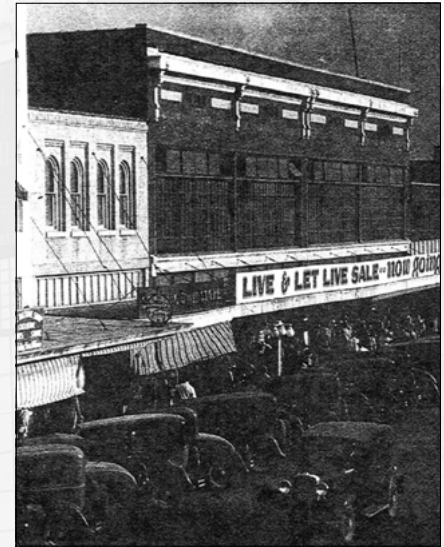
In 1925, Frauenthal and Schwarz hired prominent Little Rock architects, Sanders and Ginocchio, to expand, renovate, and update the building at 824 Front Street into what we see today. The work joined the original 50' wide two-story brick building with the adjacent 50' single-story structure to create the current two-story commercial building with 100' of frontage. It incorporated plate glass windows on the first floor with four, six-window groupings on the second. Perched above Front Street, the second floor provided a social hall for the city where dances, balls, skating, and other celebrated events were held.

Jo, like Max before him, was instrumental in defining Conway's commercial development. He led the Chamber of Commerce for 25 years, served as president of the Conway Commercial Club, and served on the Conway Corporation Board from 1932-1935. He eventually passed executive duties of Frauenthal and Schwarz to Charles, who by 1911 had moved to Little Rock and had to commute to Conway.

In 1928, Leo Schwarz died followed by Charles a year later. Charles' son-in-law, Mayer Gates, assumed management of Frauenthal and Schwarz, running the business for nearly the next 20 years, and transforming it into a department store.

In 1952, Frauenthal and Schwarz closed its doors, allowing Sterling Stores from next door to move into the Frauenthal and Schwarz Building.

In the 1960s, the building was slipcovered with aluminum siding in an effort to "update" it. When the siding was removed in 1989, the building was restored to its original 1925 appearance with the exception of a multi-colored ceramic tile ornament applied at the base of the storefront. Now the building is a source of pride for the community and a good example of historic preservation, helping to instigate the current renaissance of downtown Conway.



Frauenthal & Schwarz Building (c. 1930) [credit: UCA Archives]

The introduction of the Little Rock-Fort Smith Railroad (later part of the Missouri-Pacific and Union Pacific Systems) to Conway secured the town's role as county seat and a burgeoning regional trading center. Asa P. Robinson, a railroad engineer, considered the "Father of Conway", moved from New York to Little Rock and platted Conway Station in 1871. Conway incorporated as a city in 1875.

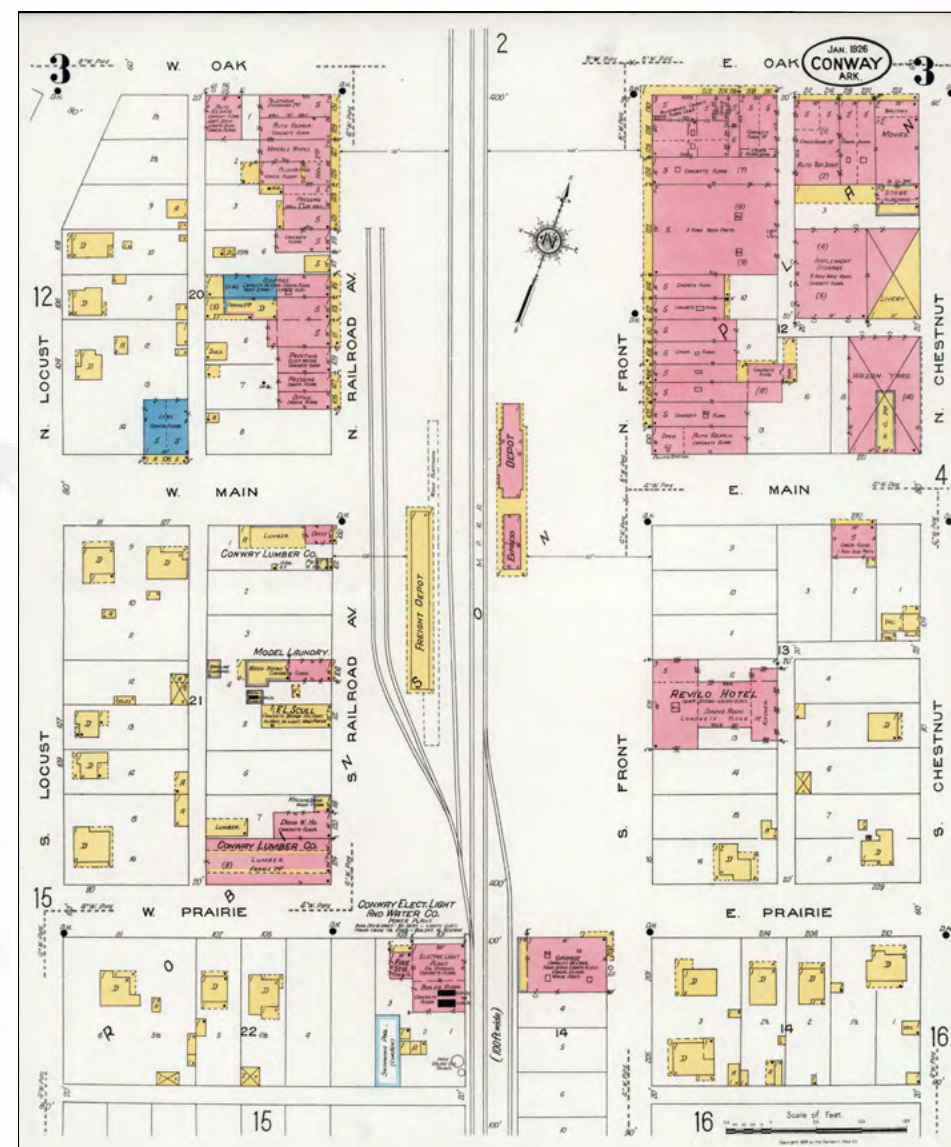
The Missouri-Pacific Line Depot sat in the heart of the community, but was later viewed by community leaders as standing in the way of progress. Conway, like many communities, was redefining its infrastructure to deal with the rise of the automobile. The business community considered the old structure a blight, blocking the flow of traffic and taking up valuable parking area, and not a monument to Conway's founding. As a result, it was demolished in 1974, and the city lost an iconic piece of its history.

For early Conway residents and businesses, the railroad was the life-blood of the community. As the city's primary mode of long-distance transport, it brought supplies, merchandise, and people to and from the city. Many Conway residents visited the depot daily to visit with fellow residents, pick up their mail, a copy of the state newspaper, or simply watch the passenger trains arrive.

The first train station was a wooden board-and-batten Victorian-style structure built around 1871. Sitting on 5 tracks in the middle of town, it served as both a passenger and freight depot. It was constructed on the east side of the railroad tracks by the Iron Mountain Railroad. The immediate surrounding area was used for the loading and unloading of livestock and freight which resulted in an unsanitary and foul-smelling channel of wastewater.

By 1912, Conway was served by four southbound and four northbound trains per day. Other nearby communities began having their mail delivered by train in lieu of stagecoach and Conway wanted the same. For mail to Little Rock, this reduced delivery time by a day.

The increased railroad traffic and unhealthy site conditions spurred conversations about a new depot. Ultimately, Mayor W. H. Duncan demanded that the Iron Mountain Railroad do just that. Acknowledging the current deplorable conditions, railroad division superintendent, C. B. Wildman, wrote to the City that the railroad was requiring them to build a concrete walk from the southwest corner of the new Farmers State Bank building (c. 1912) to Railroad Avenue (now Parkway Street) and an up-to-date passenger and freight depot. In two days, a proposal which had been considered for years, was approved by city leaders.



1926 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map [credit: Faulkner County Museum]



Missouri-Pacific Railroad Depots (c.1923) [credit: Faulkner County Museum]

While the railroad agreed to build the new depot in 1913, the railroad superintendent submitted requirements to the Mayor of Conway for its construction.

These stated

that the building was to be 180' x 25', constructed of pressed brick, and be modern and up-to-date for the time, including offices and a segregated waiting room. Also included were plans for track and platform locations, in an effort to keep non-passenger work off of the public square. The original depot was relocated across the tracks to the west to serve as the freight station while the new brick depot building was constructed to serve as a passenger depot. The new foundation was set by the railroad company, and construction of the building was awarded to J.C. Duncan.

The new depot opened on March 30, 1914 with much fanfare. The Grand Opening included bands and addresses by key community leaders. The new depot had seating

to accommodate 32 people in the white waiting room, 28 in the black, and 18 in the women's restroom. Four, 40-watt electric chandeliers lit the building, and a bulletin board was installed in each waiting room for posting community news. It was truly the pride of Conway!



Missouri-Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot (c.1915) [credit: Faulkner County Museum]

Though the railroad remained an important component of the shipping industry, passenger rail service began to decline in the 1940s as the automobile gained steam and acceptance. The next few decades saw train depots across the nation abandoned and fall into disrepair; many were demolished as a result.

The demolition date of the original wood depot is not known, but as of the early 1970s, the newer brick passenger depot still remained, albeit neglected. The Conway City Council, in what they considered an attempt to save the downtown economy, devised a plan to acquire the depot and its surrounding property from Missouri Pacific. The intent was to demolish the building, allowing the connection of Main Street across the railroad tracks and providing more parking for adjacent businesses.

The City Council, with the support of the downtown business community, presented the plan. Conway Corporation provided financial assistance by purchasing the building for \$185,000 and yielding control of it to the city. The negotiation between the City Council and the Mayor's Office lasted for approximately twelve years.

The project was met with opposition from many corners, including the American Association of University Women, the Community Arts of Conway, and the Faulkner County Historical Society. The Historical Society put forth its own proposal, arguing to save the south end of the building to serve as a cultural attraction as a reminder of the importance of the railroad in the history and development of Conway. The Historical Society reasoned that this solution would still allow for the street opening. Yet another proposal suggested rehabilitating the building for use as an arts center. However, the city was not dissuaded, justifying that removing the building would mean increased parking availability and lower maintenance costs.



Passenger Depot (c.1974) [credit: Faulkner County Museum]

As it turned out, the demolition of the depot did not stop downtown's decline. By the 1980s, Conway's downtown business district was in a deep recession. Most new businesses were built on the outskirts of town and many existing downtown businesses followed, leaving storefronts vacant. It was not until the early 2000s that the area began to reemerge as a viable and sought-after location for businesses and home ownership. Downtown Conway now has several art galleries, restaurants, and shops. Most store fronts are occupied and the streets are, once again, full of pedestrians.

The Faulkner County Jail, now home to the Faulkner County Museum, is the oldest remaining, publicly owned building in Faulkner County. The jail was actually Conway's second. The first, built in 1876, was a one-room, sawn-timber home with a wood shingle roof and an iron cage inside. It was a mere 270 square feet, measuring 15' x 18' with a 9' ceiling. By the late 1890s, the city considered the building primitive and a poor representation of a successful city.

Fortunately, when the time came to build a new jail, the county already possessed land ideally suited for the purpose. Asa P. Robinson had donated land to the county on the condition that it always be used for public facilities. In his proclamation, he even included several provisions which required the preservation of the massive oak trees located along the perimeter of the property. Designed by architect A.N. Miller, the building was constructed in 1896 by J.M. Courtney and T.B. Rice at a cost of \$2,300.00. The project was overseen by J.A. Pence, the court-appointed Commissioner of County Jails. The cells, window guards, doors, and sewer and water pipes were supplied by Pauly Jail Building.

The second jail was of the "monumental construction" style, popular in 1895. It was built as a two-story rectangular, 26' x 23' red brick structure with 18 inch-thick walls and a tower. The building was capped with Courtright pattern tin roof shingles with ornamental cresting and finials. Miller designed it with four stone lintel and stone sill windows on each facade, with 6 panes in each sash.



County Jail (c.1896) [credit: Faulkner County Museum]

The upstairs, intended to house prisoners, was equipped with four 6'-6" high steel mesh jail cells and windows fitted with heavy iron bars. Each cell was furnished with one hammock, attached to an angle iron by three heavy leather straps, and a metal night bucket. From the back of each set of cells, a foul air duct ran up through the roof to ventilators. Doors were fitted with heavy, five-member locks, and the inside door could be unlocked from either side. The five-inch long jail keys were notoriously heavy and were kept on a large metal ring. Local lore says the keeper used them as a weapon against uncooperative prisoners.

Miller designed the downstairs as a living space for the jailer and his family. Originally, the tower held a reservoir for washing water. The shed porch, complete with porch swing, spanned the south side from the tower to the end facade.

In 1934, the Conway unit of the American Legion applied for funds, available through the national project "Aid to Libraries," instigated by the Economic Recovery Act, in order to acquire a public library. Around this same time, work began on a state-of-the-art courthouse on the jail's grounds which included a 28-bed jail on its third floor. When the new facility opened, the old jail was vacated.

In 1939, the library, which had amassed 637 volumes, moved into the freshly renovated former jail, furnished through Works Progress Administration funds. The Little Rock architectural firm, Wittenberg & Delony redesigned the building. The building saw several changes for the new use, including a new composition roof and removal of the cresting as well as the porch and the exterior door to the stair tower. Additionally, a large arch was added to the front entry, the brick was stuccoed, and the jail fixtures removed. In 1958, the library built an approximately 1,400 square foot addition to the northeast of the building. In 1964, yet another addition was added to the southwest part of the building, this time 2,048 square feet. Both additions are painted concrete block. The renovations and additions significantly altered the appearance of the old jail building.



Public Library (date unknown) [credit: Faulkner County Museum]

After a failed battle by concerned citizens to save the railroad depot from demolition in the 1970s, the community began to realize the value of its historic sites. In 1978, the Faulkner County Jail Building was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1995, the Faulkner County Library moved to a new location on Tyler Street, and in 1997 the building became the home of the Faulkner County Museum.

Goad Brothers Café & Bakery, more commonly referred to as Goad's, was one of Conway's most popular local restaurants, enduring at its 1304 Oak Street location for 36 years. The restaurant was opened on New Year's Day 1921 by two brothers, Luther "Luke" Goad, who ran the kitchen, and Judson "Jud" Goad, who managed the bakery. The brothers originally leased the building (constructed in 1913), but purchased it from John B. Morris in 1925.

The kitchen first operated with a coal oil stove, switching to natural gas when it became available in Conway.

In the early years of the restaurant, the brothers worked together, 16 to 18 hours a day, seven days a week. As the restaurant began to "take off", Luke and Jud altered their schedules so the restaurant could operate 24 hours a day with at least one brother present at all times. Luke even had a place to sleep in the back. Since the door was always open, for a period of time, there was no key to the establishment.

The café was known for its daily plate lunch specials, but also offered hamburgers, soups, and short-order sandwiches piled high with roast beef or ham. A great place to grab a Coke, the Coca-Cola Company informed the brothers that they were consistently the number one café in sales between Little Rock and Fort Smith. Before Faulkner County went dry, the café even had beer on the menu.

Morning Glory bread and other baked goods were made daily, and sold from a glass case in the front of the café. This bread was so popular that Dennis, Jud's son, drove the Morning Glory Bread delivery truck around town to supply retail outlets. They even kept yeast in bulk to sell to neighborhood women so they could make their own bread at home.

In 1943, the military, in command of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and Naval Cadets at Arkansas State Teachers College (now University of Central Arkansas), along with Army trainees at Hendrix College, required inspections of local restaurants for military standards of cleanliness. These standards included controlling the garbage and insects, ensuring the installation of sinks, requiring covers for food, and general cleanliness. Although Goad's did not pass the military inspection, their business did not suffer. Local and regional clientele continued to frequent the restaurant. Coaches would bring their entire sports teams for a bite, and groups from neighboring communities would even phone in advance to make reservations.

Goad's was a favorite hangout and an important connecting point for the local community. Because they were always open, newspaper delivery boys who started their days as early as 2 am would ride their bikes to Goad's, where the newspapers were dropped. The Goad brothers allowed the boys to roll their papers on the sidewalk in front of the café. On cold mornings, they'd invite them to work inside, treating them to hot chocolate.



County Fair Parade passes in front of Goad Café (c.1950s)
[credit: Faulkner County Historical Society; Cindy Beckman *Goad's Café: "Looking Back"*]

A jukebox and various pinball machines lined one wall in the café. When pinball machines were switched out, it created a stir of excitement with the kids in town. Businessmen ate lunch here and the town's youth would gather for after school dances. Men who rode the bus to work in Little Rock would sit around the counter late at night waiting to catch a ride home with the rural-route newspaper carriers who delivered to the small communities on the outskirts of town. By 5 am, all the late-night customers gone, the day would start all over again with Jud back on duty, preparing a hearty breakfast for hunters and early risers.

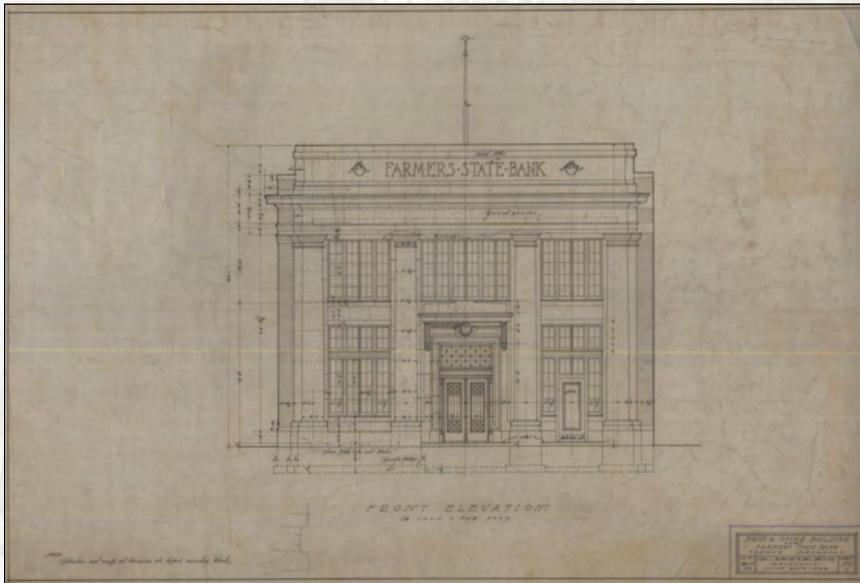
The brothers hired local high school students to help out at the café. One such student, Eulon Naylor, even returned to Goad's after his service in World War II. When Jud retired in 1946, he sold his half-interest to Naylor and another former employee, Robert Hairston. At that time, without Jud on board, the bakery portion was closed and the name shortened from Goad Bakery and Café to Goad Café.

After a couple of years, Naylor went to work for the postal service and sold his quarter interest to Hairston. In 1956, Hairston retired and sold his share to Luke, making him the sole owner. Eighteen months later, "Uncle Luke" retired, selling the café to Gene Blessing, who changed the name to Oak Street Café. It was said that when Luke finally sold the business, he couldn't find the key, as the door had not been locked in 33 years. Both Goad brothers passed away in the late 1960s.

The 1913 building was listed as a contributing structure in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Conway Commercial Historic District in 2010.

Prior to the opening of Conway's first bank in 1890, local businesses traveled to Little Rock for their banking needs. Farmer's State Bank, the third bank in Conway, opened in 1913 at 1001 Front Street. Its founders included S.G. Smith, Frank Farris, J.A. Pence, William J. Grummer, and other local businessmen.

For its initial operations, bank officials purchased a store at the busy corner of Front and North Streets from Governor G.W. Donaghey for \$5,000. The bank saw such success that just 5 years later, the original building was demolished and a handsome new Classical Revival structure was built. It was designed by prominent Little Rock architecture firm, Thompson and Harding (now Cromwell Architects Engineers, Inc.). The grand two-story structure features four monumental Tuscan engaged columns, and is the most formal and imposing of the firm's several Classical Revival designs for small-town banks. The name of the building "Farmers State Bank" and two laurel wreaths are carved into the stone parapet in the cornice above the front doors.



Architectural elevation by architect, Charles L. Thompson (c.1918) [credit: Old State House Museum]

The Wall Street Crash in the autumn of 1929, forced investors across the nation to sell out, beginning the deepest economic depression in American history. Within a few years, all three Conway banks failed, including Farmer's State Bank.

In 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression, First National Bank opened in the former Farmers State Bank building. Harvey Couch Jr. approached the Chamber of Commerce and local businessmen about establishing a new bank in Conway. Couch, Jr had honed his craft well as the son of a Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) Director and entrepreneur. His father, Harvey Crowley Couch, was founder and president of the Arkansas Power & Light Company (now part of Entergy). Harvey Couch, Jr had assurances from the RFC to make subscriptions for stock. As a result, the local businessmen surmised the economy could not recover without a strong local bank. In a one-day canvas, the Chamber of Commerce secured an ample amount of stock subscriptions. Due to the stagnant economic state and the failure of other banks, First National Bank existed as the only bank in Conway until the end of World War II.



Couch Family (date unknown), Front row L to R: William Couch, Jessie Couch with husband, Harvey Couch, Sr., and daughter, Catherine. Back row L to R: Harvey Jr., Johnson, and Kirke Couch. [credit: www.couchwood.org]



First Security Bank (c.2021) [credit: B. Sketoe]

Through the years, First National Bank grew, adding new departments and services which forced its relocation to a larger building in June 1975. A few years later, Central Arkansas Savings and Loan Association, chartered by a group of local residents, began operation in the Farmers Bank building and conducted business here until acquired by another institution in 1988. The Farmers Bank building has consistently housed banking and finance operations throughout its history.

The bank was individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1984, as an excellent example of a Classical Revival style building.

Founded in 1916, Smith Ford is the oldest car dealership in Conway. The Ford franchise, originally known as Hess-Smith Ford, began as a partnership between Samuel Gallatin (S.G.) Smith and John D. Hess, the shop's mechanic. They began by selling Model T motorcars shortly after World War I, a time when personal automobiles were first being introduced to the region.

Smith was born in 1837, into a Dallas County farming family. The family relocated to Hot Springs around 1880, where his father kept a saloon. After his father's death, S.G. moved to Faulkner County where he married Medora Ellen (Ellen) Grisard. By the time he purchased the Ford franchise in 1916 S.G. already had a hand in multiple enterprises, not uncommon in small communities. He operated a general store located at the southeast corner of North and Front Streets, bought cotton, sold livestock, and was one of the founders of Farmers State Bank in downtown Conway. More than once, he accepted a mule on trade as payment toward a new car.



Ellen Grisard Smith portrait
(date unknown)
[credit: Faulkner Country
Historical Society]

S.G.'s wife, Ellen, was a prominent member of the Conway community in her own right, being well-known for her philanthropy and volunteer efforts. She served as the first female member of the Conway Public Schools' Board of Education, a position she held for 18 years. She was instrumental in establishing an elementary school on the east side of town, Ellen Smith Elementary, named in her honor.

Though, S.G. never drove a car, he understood the appeal of this new franchise opportunity. He opened the dealership with the hope of bringing his son, Samuel Theodore (S.T.) "Doe" Smith, into this business when he returned from his military service during World War I. Doe's introduction was delayed as he recovered from wounds he received in the service.

The business flourished during Doe's tenure, and in 1923 moved to the iconic 1020 Front Street location. The two-story red brick building is Conway's only Art Deco style building. Its characteristic parapet brick work and half-octagon overhang help define it in this style. Underneath the overhang, two hand-operated gas pumps once served as a filling station.



Smith Ford Building (c.2010)
[credit: National Park Service Archives]

The showroom's prime location along Front Street was instrumental in the dealership's success.

Smith's cars arrived in Conway by railroad where Smith Ford employees would meet the train at the depot and install wheels and tires on the vehicles before driving them the few blocks back to the dealership.



Smith Ford Staff (c.1936) [credit: Log Cabin Democrat]

The Smith family also owned the (now-demolished) movie theater next door. The theater provided additional income for the family, and made window-shoppers out of those waiting in line for tickets.

Doe ran the business until his son Samuel Theodore "Ros" Jr. took over in 1955, when he returned from service in World War II. Doe retired from the car business, and opened the Secretary Savings and Loan Association, serving as its vice president.

SMITH AUTO CO.



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FAIRLANE
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THUNDERBIRD**

Authorized
Sales — Service — Parts

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**MERCURY
COMET
METEOR
MONTEREY**

HEADQUARTERS FOR *Ford* TRUCKS

- Authorized Dealer
- Registered Mechanics

- 24 Hour Wrecker Service
- Genuine Ford Parts

Since 1916
1020 FRONT ST.

Advertisement from 1930 City of Conway Directory

Smith Ford operated on Front Street for about fifty years, until moving to East Oak Street in 1974. At that time the current Smith Ford location was at the eastern-most edge of the city. About this time, many downtown businesses began moving away from the center of town and closer to Interstate 40. Ros' son, Samuel Theodore "Ted" Smith III, and his son-in-law Kenny Ketcheside inherited the company, and operation continues today as Smith Ford, Inc.

The Front Street showroom building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Conway Commercial Historic District in 2010.

In the years following Civil War Reconstruction, Conway's black population grew steadily, nearly tripling between 1880 and 1920. Many freed black people found work with Faulkner County farmers. However, by the 1930s the mechanization of farming decreased demand for farming labor. As a result, many black families relocated to Conway's East Side, where a small number of black households were already established.

The East Side Community, once known as Argenta, encompasses the Pine Street and Markham Street communities. More specifically, the area is bounded by Spencer Street to the west, the Hendrix College campus to the north, Ingram Street to the east, and Garland Street to the south.



Union Baptist Church (date unknown) [credit: Pine Street Community Museum]

Due to Jim Crow-era segregation, the community's mostly black residents developed tight-knit connections that fostered a thriving social community. Work, school, church, and social activities all stayed within walking distance. Starting with a few houses at the edge of town at Conway's founding, a building boom at the turn of the century resulted in a neighborhood large enough to support its own school.

In 1910, the Conway School Board purchased property on Pine Street to build a school for black students. Opened in 1912, the school taught 1st through 9th grades. It was a catalyst for the development of Conway's black community and anchored the neighborhood. In 1925, the school building was improved with a brick veneer, wooden floor, and new roof. The school saw considerable growth during the 1930s, as black schools in surrounding communities were consolidated.

During the Depression, many black public high schools, including the Pine Street High School, were built with federal aid amid concern in an era of economic challenges. The school received accreditation in 1938, graduating its first class in 1940.

Although the East Side Community's population increased in the 1930s, Conway's lack of industry meant little opportunity for black workers. Some domestic jobs were available, but the majority of black residents found work within their own community. As the community grew, it became largely self-sustaining with a wide array of occupations. Markham Street became the community's commercial corridor with several other businesses operating out of homes.

In the 1940s the community became more economically integrated as residents began to participate in the broader economy. World War II provided many young men the opportunity to travel and locals reaped the benefits of war-time jobs in factories. Residents began to purchase new and larger homes.



Thomas Barber Schop (date unknown) [credit: Pine Street Community Museum]

The high school grew steadily until the Little Rock Central High crisis (1957) temporarily affected enrollment. Many black students, afraid of retribution, questioned whether pursuing higher education was safe. Within a year enrollment rebounded and remained steady until 1961, when the integration of Conway Schools occurred. The Pine Street High School graduated its final class in 1968, and the remainder of the school was closed following the 1969-70 school year. The closing of the Pine Street School was a tremendous loss for the community as the school was not only an educational institution, but a place where young black students felt included and received valuable mentorship.



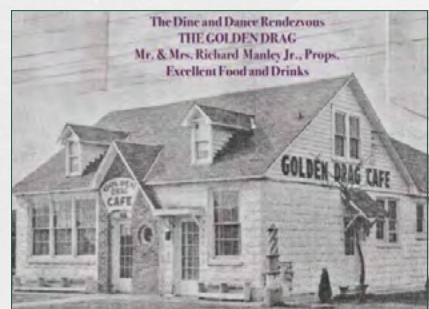
Pine Street School (c.1950) [credit: Arkansas News Bureau]

Though the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Fair Housing Act (1968) were meant to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, opportunities for young black people in the South remained limited. Many left to attend college and relocated for better paying jobs. In those days, the majority of jobs available to Conway's black residents were still in factories, the cotton processing industry, or in domestic work. Given this, many young people moved away in search of better futures. As a result, the East Side Community's population declined though community ties have remained strong through neighborhood churches. Today, the community is experiencing a renaissance with renewed hope for a growing, thriving future. The opening of the Pine Street Community Museum is helping tell the area's story, and public and private investment is pouring into the community with development such as Old Conway Village and Martin Luther King, Jr. Square.

In the 1930s, Conway had 928 black residents. Most of the black men in the community worked outside of town as farming hands and women worked as domestics for Conway’s wealthy families. As need for farming labor decreased, black Faulkner County residents moved to urban settings to seek more lucrative economic opportunities.

Richard Manley was one such man. He took a job chauffeuring a shoe salesman whose territory spanned several states. As Jim Crow laws did not allow black customers to patronize most white establishments, Manley’s travel exposed him to many black-owned businesses across the region.

In 1936, an unexpected opportunity arose for Manley to purchase a small wood-framed café at 1163 Markham Street. As a result, he pivoted careers from chauffeur to restaurateur and began selling candy and food off-the-grill. Unfortunately, in the late 1930s, his business burned.



Around 1940 Manley rebuilt his café, this time of cement block, at 1151 Markham Street. He hired the best-known black builder, master electrician, and plumber in Conway, Bruce Bynum, for the job. Because banks wouldn’t lend to black people at the time, Manley paid cash for the land and building, owing nothing when the project was complete.



Excerpt from 1949 calendar (c.1949) [courtesy Ted Manley; credit: Arkansas Democrat-Gazette]

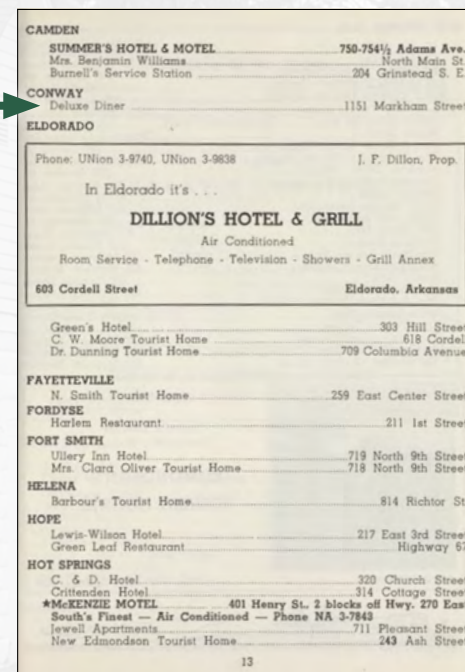
He named his new business the Golden Drag, after a café of the same name he’d seen in New Orleans. The building had two entrances, one for the café and the other for a separate space he leased to a barber shop. He also built a few rooms upstairs that travelers could rent.

The Golden Drag had a juke box and live music. While the front café was family-friendly, selling food from the griddle, the back was for adults-only, housing three pool tables and selling beer and wine. The café held booths, but rarely tables, as customers needed room to dance. The Golden Drag acted as a recreation center for all of black Conway, with no other place in town quite like it. For a time, the café was open seven days a week, and Manley never closed until the last person left—making for some late nights.

Sometime in the 1950s, Manley built a small, three-room motel next door to the café to accommodate more black travelers. He named it the Ebony Motel. Around this time, Manley renamed the Golden Drag, the Deluxe Diner. It was a popular spot with locals and visitors alike. The Deluxe Diner was listed in the 1961 through 1967 issues of The Travelers’ Green Book, a travel and vacation guide covering the United States, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean. This guide provided a list of black-owned and black-friendly businesses that were safe and welcoming to African Americans.



Cover and interior page from 1961 *The Traveler's Green Book* [credit: New York Public Library Digital Collection]



With the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, the motel ceased operation, as guests had more choices for travel accommodations. As a result, Manley began to use the building as personal office space and for storage.

In 1975, Richard Manley retired from his businesses and rented the café building to Acklin Funeral Home, which operated there until around 2010. At his death in 1992, Richard willed the café and motel buildings to his son, Theodis (Ted) Manley. Circa 2010 the motel was demolished, while a church now calls the café building home.

While the café is gone, hope abounds at the site. Adjacent to the site is planned a new park to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It is anticipated this major public investment, including funds from the Environmental Protection Agency, will help renewed business development that honors the lively past of businesses like the Golden Drag.

Want to learn more?

Contact or visit the following:

Pine Street CommUnity Museum

Faulkner County Museum

University of Central Arkansas Archives



ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

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