

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

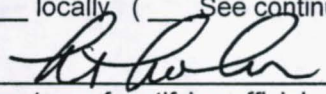
historic name: Woolworth Building
other names/site number:

2. Location

street & number: 207 Yazoo Avenue not for publication _____
city or town: Clarksdale vicinity _____
state: Mississippi code: MS county: Coahoma code: 27 zip code: 38614

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide X locally. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



Signature of certifying official

3-509

Date

/State Historic Preservation Officer
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

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
_____ entered in the National Register,
_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined eligible for the
National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined not eligible for the
National Register

_____ removed from the National Register

_____ other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

(Rev. 10-90)

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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 See continuation sheet.

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 determined not eligible for the

National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain): _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Number of Resources within Property:

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Category of Property: Building

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

1

buildings
sites
structures
objects
Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

NA

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register** None

NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: COMMERCE/TRADE/department store

Current Functions: WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification(s): MODERN MOVEMENT/International Style

Materials:

foundation: Concrete
roof: Asphalt
walls: Brick/Limestone
other: Horizontal band of windows on second floor: Glass/Steel
Cantilevered metal canopy: Aluminum
Storefront: Glass/Aluminum

Narrative Description:

See Continuation Sheets

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- X **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.
- X **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.

Areas of Significance

COMMERCE/SOCIAL HISTORY
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1955; 1955-1958; 1955-63

Significant Dates**Criteria Considerations:**

Property is:

- ___ **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.
- ___X___ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Person(s)**Cultural Affiliation(s)****Architect/Builder**

Narrative Statement of Significance: See continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

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

Primary Location of Additional Data

- ___X___ State Historic Preservation Office
- ___ Other State agency
- ___ Federal agency
- ___ Local government
- ___ University
- ___ Other
- Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	15	723500	3787190	C		
B				D		

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kinchen O'Keefe, Jr., President		
organization: ABC, LLC		date: October 15, 2008
street & number: 121 East Second Street		telephone: 662-645-8874
city or town: Clarksdale	state: MS	zip code: 38614

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner(s)

name: ABC, LLC		
street & number: 95 Hillcrest Drive		telephone: 662-645-8874
city or town: Clarksdale	state: MS	zip code: 38614

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section: 7 Page: 1 The Woolworth Building
Clarksdale, Coahoma County

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:

The Woolworth Building is located in the heart of downtown Clarksdale, on the corner of Yazoo Avenue and East Second Street. Built in 1955, the Woolworth building, along with the J.C. Penney building across the street, anchored Yazoo Avenue as downtown's "Main Street" for department and clothing stores. The building has had no renovations or modifications to it since it was constructed in 1955. There are, however, some original fixtures that are missing or have been removed due to damage or deterioration.

The Woolworth Building is a two-story buff (blond) brick and masonry structure with pre-cast coping, a reinforced concrete foundation, flat composition roof on metal decking, and a 75-foot glass and aluminum mill-finish storefront on the front, east-facing façade. There are red brick accents at the base of the front entrance as well as on the base and some sidewalls at the side, north-facing entrance. Terrazzo entrances at the front and side entrances are embedded with the "Woolworth's" logo. The front façade has two exterior aluminum mill-finish columns and a cantilevered metal-frame awning, which originally had a roll-up canopy that dropped down and hung vertically, but is now missing. The soffit under the awning has five recessed lights in a plaster ceiling, and on top of it are non-functioning floodlights that were used to light the "F.W. WOOLWORTH CO." signage on the upper wall of the facade, which is now missing.

On the side, north-facing façade, there are three steel windows with pre-cast concrete jams that are missing their original metal awnings. The second story front and side facades feature steel windows with a double horizontal sash—one fixed sash and one awning sash. The alley elevation is red brick.

The first-floor interior consists of an open sales floor with a drop-plaster ceiling with fluorescent ceiling lights running parallel with the side of the building. An enclosed stairway, immediately to the left of the front entrance leads to the second floor, and mop/electrical room is enclosed at the rear. Access to the alley is at the rear along with a stairway and conveyor. Ten metal structural columns are painted in various colors. The floor is concrete slab topped with heavily damaged vinyl tile, much of which is missing. The first-floor walls are exposed concrete where it had previously been covered by casework and store shelving, and plaster approximately seven feet from the floor up to the ceiling.

The second floor interior consists of payroll and manager's offices, a lady's break room and restroom and a men's bathroom. The walls are exposed concrete with exposed concrete floors (with remnants of vinyl tile) in the office area and exposed concrete in the stock area. In the rear is an open storage area used as an inventory stockroom, measuring 40 feet by 140 feet. On the sides, along the north elevation on the second floor in the stockroom, there were different block partitions and closets for mechanical units, men's and women's bathrooms for stock employees and a janitorial closet.

The twenty-seven-stool lunch counter that was located along the interior wall on the north side of the building toward the front of the store was removed on May 25, 1963. The display racks around the outer walls, the checkout booths in the front of the store and the turnstiles at both entrances were removed when Woolworth closed the store on January 27, 1991.

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Clarksdale, Coahoma County

Although the fixtures have been removed, the large open space that characterized the Woolworth retail philosophy remains in place. Most exterior materials and finishes are intact. The Woolworth Building retains sufficient integrity for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

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Clarksdale, Coahoma County

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Woolworth Building is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with Commerce and Social History and Criterion C as a good local example of the International style of architecture.

Commerce

The Woolworth Building is significant for its association with Commerce in the Mississippi Delta community of Clarksdale. "Woolworth's," as the F.W. Woolworth Co. store was called, was the most significant element of most small-town downtowns across America throughout the first half of the 20th century, and the Clarksdale store was no exception. The F.W. Woolworth Co. was among the first five-and-dime stores, which sold discounted general merchandise at fixed prices, usually five or ten cents, undercutting the prices of small local merchants. It was also one of the first stores to put merchandise out for the shopping public to handle, select and purchase. In earlier shops, merchandise was kept behind the counter and customers presented the clerk with a list of items they wished to buy.

During the first half of the 20th century, the main street of virtually every town and city in the United States featured a Woolworth's, which were called dime stores, or five-and-dimes. Woolworth's maintained a central place in American life from before 1900 until after World War II, and was the original and dominant dime-store chain; it was the first place many people went to look for basic merchandise of all sorts. Woolworth's offered its customers a wide assortment of very affordable household items and the working class appreciated finding basic things at basic prices. Although part of Woolworth's appeal was in its ubiquitous presence, local stores were also encouraged to remain local institutions. They varied widely from region to region and from city to town. Each filled a particular role and developed its own character.

The Woolworth's opened its first Clarksdale store at 228 Yazoo Avenue in 1924. Advertisements at the time proclaimed the Woolworth's as "the Only Real 5 and 10 Cent Store in Clarksdale, Miss."¹ In the phone directory Woolworth's was the sole listing under the heading "Five and Ten Cent Stores." The Woolworth continued to operate at 228 Yazoo Avenue in Clarksdale's main shopping district until 1955.

In 1955, the store moved down the block to 207 Yazoo Avenue. With great fanfare, the new Woolworth's opened in October 1955. The new building was larger than the previous store and was located on a prestigious corner lot. A newspaper article noted that the new Clarksdale store was "one of the most modern in the Woolworth Chain." In addition to the fireproof and air-conditioned structure, the new store offered other commercial innovations. The new store offered a self-service format where customers

¹ *The (Clarksdale) Register*, January 16, 1924.

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Clarksdale, Coahoma County

selected items from the shelves and paid at one of six checkout counters, five at the front of the store and one at the side entrance leading to East Second Street. A twenty-seven seat lunch counter was added. New lines of merchandise were offered, including goldfish and birds, and expanded choices for clothing and furniture.²

City directories and the phone book no longer listed the Woolworth's as a "five and dime", but under the category of "Department Stores," which reflected the growth and evolution of Woolworth's, Clarksdale's downtown shopping district, and the attitudes and habits of the America public in the post-World War II era. By 1955, three "five and dime" stores were listed in the city directory, although none were in the prime Yazoo shopping district. The Woolworth's competed with fourteen other "department stores," although many were locally owned smaller operations. With the success of the new Woolworth's in its modern and air-conditioned space, its primary national competitor, J.C. Penney, built a new store across the street in 1962. These two larger stores anchored the Yazoo Avenue shopping district into the 1980s.

The population of Clarksdale grew rapidly in the post-war years. By 1955, the population of the city had grown to 19,598. The city was marketed as "North Mississippi's Most Progressive City." The role of the Woolworth's store in this campaign was highlighted by a radio advertisement that ran on WROX radio in 1955:

Announcer: Did you ask for evidence of progress in Clarksdale?

Voice: Yes, I did.

Announcer: Well, take example the F.W. Woolworth Company. They have been established in the same spot that they're in right now since January of 1924. But, if you look on the corner of Yazoo and Second Street you will notice construction underway. That's the brand new F.W. Woolworth \$140,000 building under construction. Now they will have some brand new services for the City of Clarksdale and surrounding area. That's progress. F.W. Woolworth Company is progressing with North Mississippi's most progressive city, Clarksdale.³

The Woolworth Building is an important reminder of the period when Yazoo Avenue was the primary shopping district for the Clarksdale community and the surrounding areas. The period of significance for Commerce is 1955 to 1958.

² *Clarksdale Press Register*, October 25, 1955.

³ WROX radio, 1955.

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Architecture

The Woolworth Building is locally significant as an example of the International style of architecture applied to a commercial building.

On October 25, 1955, the eve of the new store's opening, the entire front page of section two of the Clarksdale Press Register was devoted to the new store, citing the "handsome new \$200,000 F.W. Woolworth store in the heart of downtown Clarksdale," as being "one of the most modern in the vast Woolworth chain." Indeed, the new store was a classic example of the modern, International style of architecture, which was popular at the time. Modern architecture emerged in many Western countries in the decade after World War I. It was based on the "rational" use of modern materials, the principles of functionalist planning, and the rejection of historical precedent and ornament. Architects who worked in the International style wanted to break with architectural tradition and design simple, unornamented buildings with modern materials. The most commonly used materials were glass for the facade, steel for exterior support, and concrete for the floors and interior supports; floor plans were functional and logical and not connected with an enforced symmetry on the exterior. The new Woolworth Building was designed in the more modern "International Style" with a horizontal band of windows at the second floor, a cantilevered metal canopy over the sidewalk, full plate-glass storefront and smooth masonry surfaces -- Clarksdale's new Woolworth Building epitomized the International style's principles and characterizations, which included:

- a rejection of historical styles as a source of architectural form (historicism);
- an adoption of the principle that the materials and functional requirements determine the result;
- an adoption of the machine aesthetic;
- a rejection of ornament;
- a simplification of form and elimination of "unnecessary detail";
- an adoption of expressed structure;
- form follows function.

The International Style became pervasive in the United States after influential practitioners and advocates of the style moved from Europe to the United States in the years between the wars. Such luminaries as Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe became deans of important architecture schools and introduced a Bauhaus-inspired curriculum which quickly spread to architecture schools across the country. This curriculum, in many ways, made tenets of the International Style the canon for American architecture. So widespread was the style that even small cities in the Mississippi Delta, such as Clarksdale, hosted examples.

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In addition to the Woolworth Building, three other International Style buildings were constructed in Clarksdale between 1955 and 1960. Two of these buildings were public buildings, the Coahoma County Extension Building (c. 1955), 503 East Second Street, and the Central Fire Station (c. 1960), 221 DeSoto Street. These buildings differ from the Woolworth Building in two distinct ways. First, they were built as public buildings for public functions and not as commercial buildings. These two buildings were also free-standing buildings occupying entire lots adjacent to the downtown. The Woolworth Building is a commercial building built by a private enterprise. It is located in the heart of the downtown commercial district with a common wall with other retail businesses.

The third International Style building built during that time is the Southern Bell Telephone Building (1960), 86 Yazoo Avenue. The building is used for office space and also houses the equipment related to telephone operations. It is also a free-standing building.

The Woolworth Building remains the best example of the International Style applied to a commercial building in Clarksdale. The period of significance for Architecture is 1955, the year the building was built.

Social History

The Woolworth Building is locally significant for its association with the Civil Rights movement as an example of resistance to the integration of public accommodations.

One component of the national movement for civil rights was the racial desegregation of public accommodations, such as public transportation, theaters, sports venues and restaurants and lunch counters. The national context is thoughtfully detailed in the National Historic Landmark Theme Study *Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation of in Public Accommodations*. (Draft, February 2002). The study identified the historic context for the establishment of Jim Crow laws in the Reconstruction era and in the twentieth century up to World War II. The theme study also traced the development of the Civil Rights Movement, including the modern phase of the movement in the years from 1954 to 1964.

The modern phase was marked by nonviolent confrontation of the established Jim Crow laws. Boycotts and sit-ins became tools which advanced the cause for equal access to public accommodations. One of the best-known protests was the effort to integrate the Woolworth lunch counter at the store in Greensboro, NC. On February 1, 1960, four freshman students from North Carolina A&T were denied service at the lunch counter. Demonstrations followed along with a boycott and pickets by the Greensboro black community. A committee of seven whites and one black appointed by the mayor finally worked out a deal to integrate the Woolworth's lunch counter, as

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well as several other variety stores. On July 25, 1960, three black Woolworth employees were served at the lunch counter.

Progress in desegregation of public accommodations and public education encountered massive resistance in the South. According to the theme study

the South embarked on a program of massive resistance to segregation that lifted the barriers to racial equality even higher than before. White Citizen's Councils formed to apply pressure on African Americans to back off from their pursuit of first-class citizenship and equal access to public accommodations and education. Resurrected Ku Klux Klan Klaverns unleashed a wave of terrorism to reinforce black subordination.⁴

The new Woolworth Building in Clarksdale featured a 27-stool lunch counter, a signature component of Woolworth stores since the 1940s. The Woolworth lunch counter served as a common meeting place but under the Jim Crow laws, it was off limits to blacks.

Even with the successful action in North Carolina, in Clarksdale, the wheels of change turned much more slowly. According to *The Struggle of Struggles* (Harlo Press, 1975) by Vera Pigea, a Clarksdale resident and adviser for the N.A.A.C.P.'s Coahoma County Youth Council, members of the Youth Council started "demonstrating" at Walgreen's and Woolworth's during the spring of 1960. No "sit-ins" were permitted since, after consulting the N.A.A.C.P. national office, Pigea and other adults agreed the youth didn't have enough experience, planning or resources to properly conduct a sit-in. A group of youths held a "shopping tour," and while at Woolworth's, their appearance drew comments, stares and, eventually, police attention. By 1963, the Clarksdale Woolworth's had shut down its lunch counter rather than allow sit-ins to occur. (*Clarksdale Press Register*, August 2 and 3, 1963). Although "massive resistance" in Mississippi had taken much more violent form, the closing of the Woolworth lunch counter to everyone, rather than allowing it to be integrated, illustrates the lengths that some people were willing to go to resist desegregation of public accommodations.

The NHL theme study identified property types that could be associated with the struggle to achieve equal access to public accommodations. One of these property types is "**Places associated with protest and conflict.**" According to the theme study properties in this type "include buildings and sites where groups challenged and protested against discriminating accommodations. Such actions include marches, sit-

⁴ *Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations*. A National Historic Landmark Theme Study, Draft, February 2004, p.71.

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ins, and other attempts to integrate facilities. Examples of properties include restaurants, parks, department stores, churches, and train and bus terminals".⁵

This category of properties is broad enough to include sites associated with the massive resistance to desegregation. Although there is no evidence the action of closing the lunch counter at the Clarksdale Woolworth had national consequences, it remains an important local site in the wider Civil Rights Movement. It represents one of the ways that resistance to desegregation of public accommodations manifested itself. The fact that the lunch counter is no longer present does not adversely affect the significance of the place since the loss of the lunch counter to all citizens is the story the building tells.⁶ The period of significance for Social History is 1955 to 1963, the year the segregated lunch counter opened to the year the lunch counter was closed rather than face desegregation. Due to the broad importance of the Civil Rights Movement, both nationally and locally, the efforts to desegregate the Woolworth lunch counter and the resistant response are exceptionally important.

Conclusion

The Woolworth Building represents the heyday of commercial prosperity and development in downtown Clarksdale. The building, in a highly visible location for auto and foot traffic, serves as a reminder of the growth of downtown Clarksdale as a retail center. The building illustrates an important architectural style as applied to a commercial building in a small Mississippi Delta city. It was the scene of a local skirmish in the larger battle for civil rights. For all these reasons the Woolworth Building merits preservation and recognition by listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

⁵ *Civil Rights*, p. 106.

⁶ A portion of the lunch counter from the Greensboro Woolworth store (NR, 1982) is on exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum of American History. *Civil Rights*, p. 124.

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(Clarksdale) Register.

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Pitrone, Jean Maddern. *F.W. Woolworth and the American Five and Dime: A Social History*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2003.

WROX radio.

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National Park Service**

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Section: 10 Page: 10 The Woolworth Building
Clarksdale, Coahoma County

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Lot Nine (9) and the North half (N ½) of Lot 8, Block G, City of Clarksdale, Coahoma County, Mississippi, as shown by the map or plat thereof on file in the office of the Chancery Clerk of Coahoma County, Mississippi.

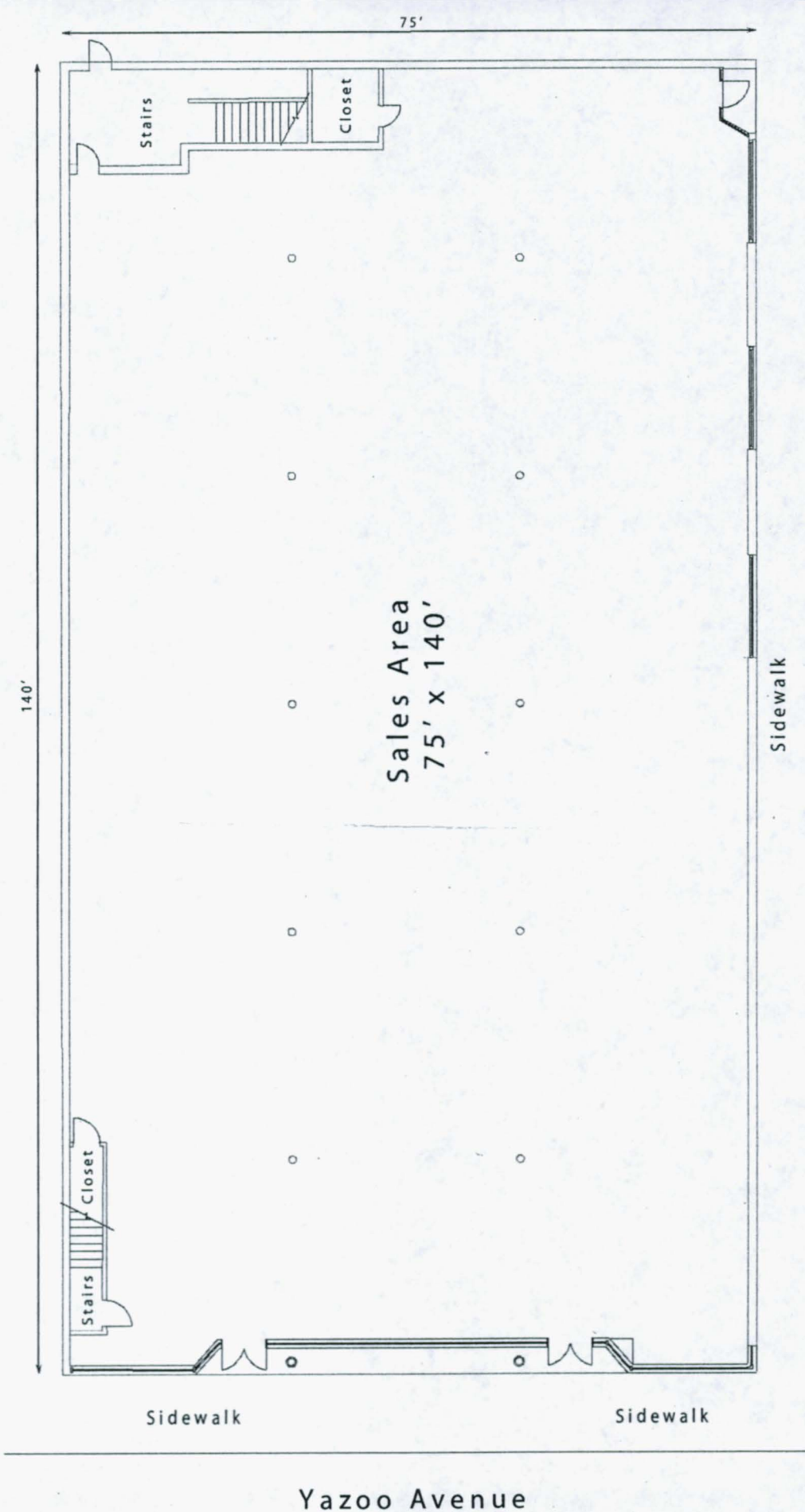
BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

These are the boundaries that define the city lot that is historically associated with The Woolworth Building.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

PHOTOS

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Photo 1 of 15: | Aerial view of façade (east), view to west |
| Photo 2 of 15: | East façade, view to west |
| Photo 3 of 15: | East façade and north elevation, view to southwest |
| Photo 4 of 15: | West façade and north elevation, view to southeast |
| Photo 5 of 15: | Roof (north half), view to east |
| Photo 6 of 15: | Roof (north half), view to west |
| Photo 7 of 15: | Roof (south half), view to east |
| Photo 8 of 15: | Roof (south half), view to west |
| Photo 9 of 15: | Interior first floor (sales), view to east |
| Photo 10 of 15: | Interior first floor (sales), view to west |
| Photo 11 of 15: | Interior second floor (lobby), view to north |
| Photo 12 of 15: | Interior second floor (main), view to east |
| Photo 13 of 15: | Interior second floor (main), view to west |
| Photo 14 of 15: | Exterior Terrazzo floor (front entrance), view west |
| Photo 15 of 15: | Exterior Glass Signage (side/rear entrance), view south |



East Second Street

140'

75'

Roof

Second Floor Inventory
24' x 116'

Second
Floor
Lobby
13' x 24'

Cashier

File

Ladies
Lounge

Ladies
Toilet

Men's
Toilet

Hot
Water

Mechanical
Room

Storage

Food Prep

Men's
Toilet

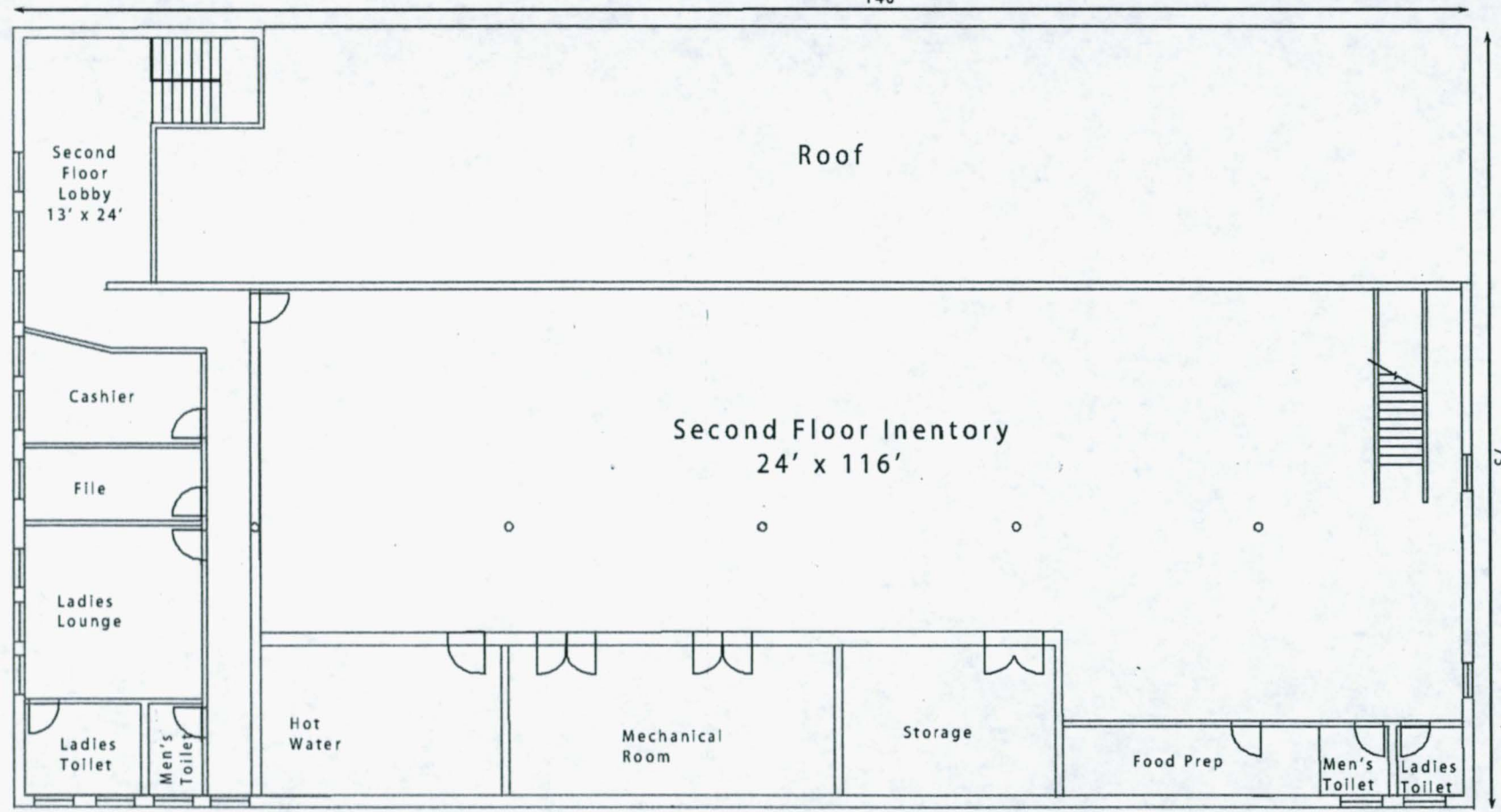
Ladies
Toilet

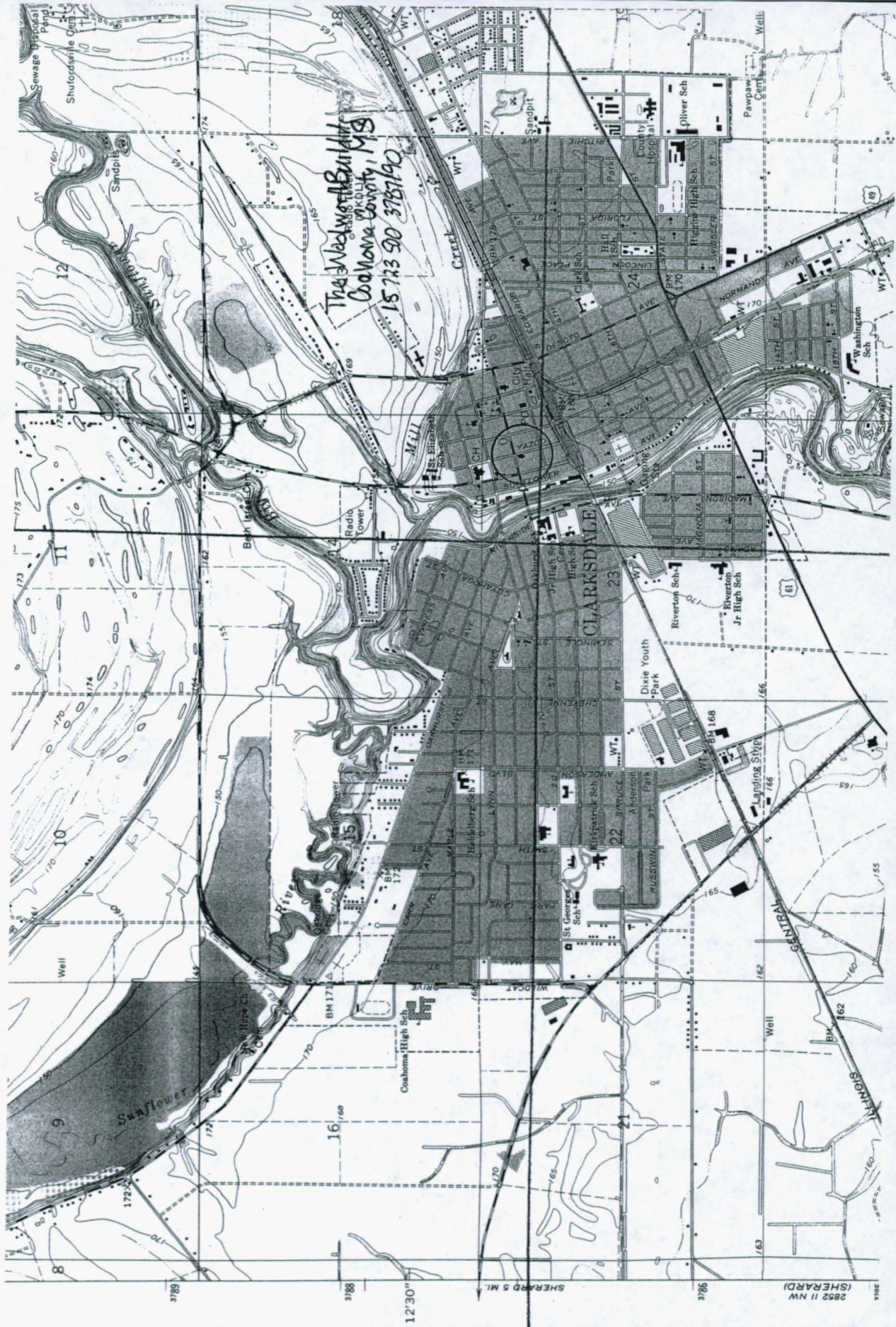
2

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

Scale: 3/32" = 1'-0"

North







03 27 2006

Woolworth Building, - Coahoma County, - MS - 0001



Woolworth Building, - Coahoma County, - MS - 0002



Woodworth Building, - Cochran County, - MS - 0003



Washworth Building, - Coahoma County, - MS - 0004



03-27 2006

Noel North Building, — Coahoma County, — MS — 0005



Woolworth Building, - Coahoma County, - MS - 0007



03 27 2006

Wadsworth Building, - Coahoma County, - MS - 0006



03 27 2006

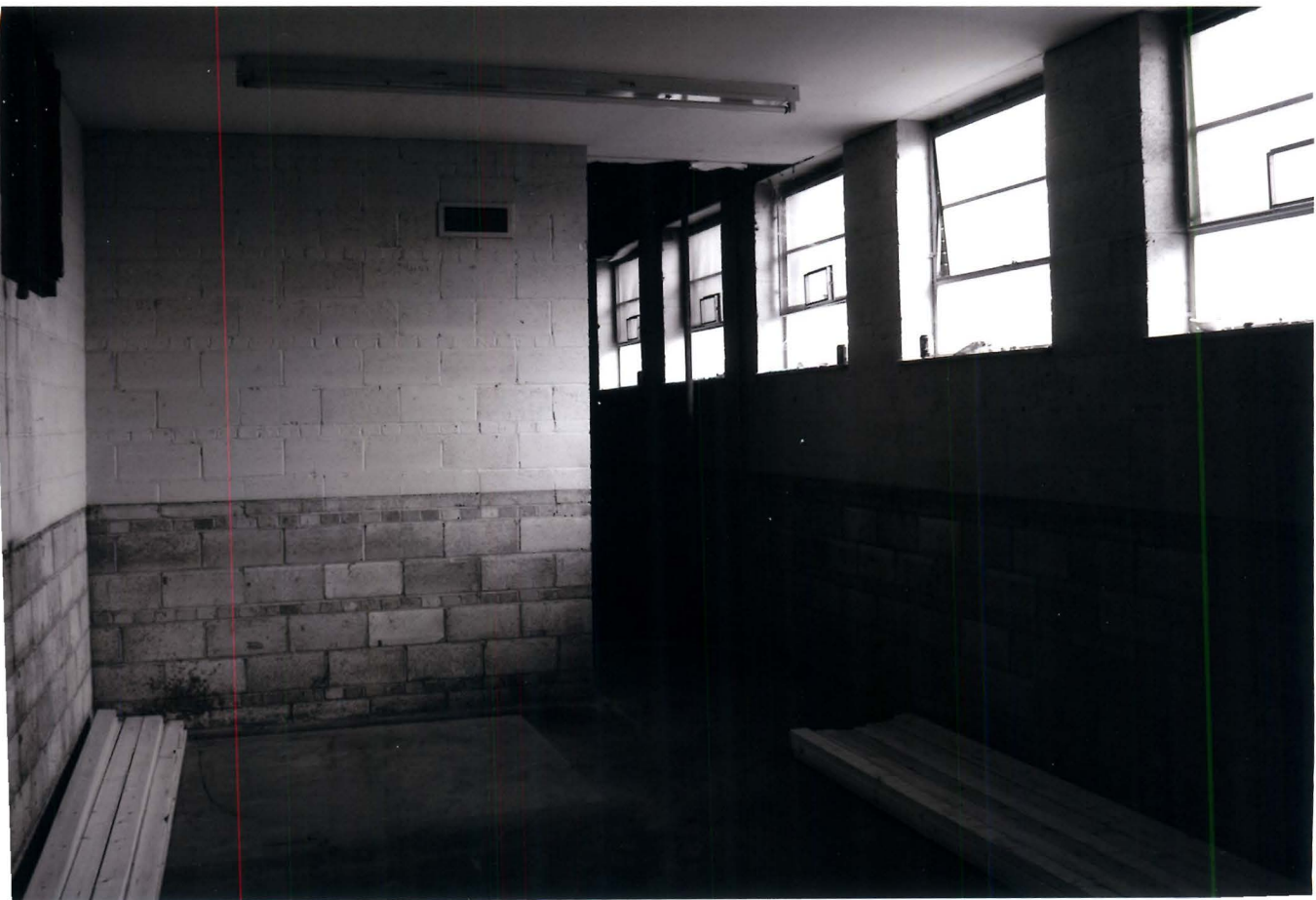
Woodworth Building, - Coahoma County, - MS - 00008



Wadsworth Building, - Calhoun County, - MS - 0009



Wadsworth Building, - Cashmere County, - MS. 6015



Wadsworth Building, - Cochran County, - MS - 0011



Wadsworth Building, - Coahoma County, - MS-0212



Woolworth Building, - Coahoma County, - MS - 0013



WOOLWORTH'S

Wadsworth Building, - Coahoma County, - MS - 0014

STORE HOURS

	OPEN	CLOSE
MON.	9..	5:30
TUES.	9..	5:30
WED.	9..	5:30
THURS.	9..	5:30
FRI.	9..	5:30
SAT.	9..	

Wadsworth Building, - Cahorne Certy, - MS - 0015