

**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 an 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 Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell
other names/site number Ozark Trail Road, Old U.S 63, Eureka Road (Turrell), Front Street (Gilmore), Sites #CT0154-CT0156, Bridge #12360, Bridge #21183

2. Location

street & number Old U.S. 63 between Acwin Street in Gilmore and Ditch No. 2 in Turrell not for publication
city or town Gilmore vicinity
state Arkansas code AR county Crittenden code 035 zip code 72339

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 for 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		sites
2	1	structures
		objects
2	1	Total

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

Arkansas Highway History and Architecture, 1910-1965

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)/highway

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)/highway

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A
walls N/A

roof N/A
other CONCRETE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B.** removed from its original location.
- C.** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- 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.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering

Transportation

Period of Significance

c.1922-1952

Significant Dates

c.1922

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell
Name of Property

Crittenden County, Arkansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approximately 5.3 acres.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u> Zone	<u>747118</u> Easting	<u>3921888</u> Northing	3	<u>15</u> Zone	<u>747583</u> Easting	<u>3921216</u> Northing
2	<u>15</u>	<u>749010</u>	<u>3918897</u>	4	<u>15</u>	<u>749004</u>	<u>3918907</u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date January, 14, 2009
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9787
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

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

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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 listing. 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 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 20303.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell

County and State: Crittenden County, Arkansas

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable): Arkansas
Highway and Transportation Era Architecture, 1910-1965

Section number 2 Page 1

LOCATION

This bypassed section of the c.1922 alignment of Highway A-7 begins in Gilmore (ZIP Code 72339) and proceeds southeast before ending in Turrell (ZIP Code 72384).

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Name of Property: Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell

County and State: Crittenden County, Arkansas

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable): Arkansas
Highway and Transportation Era Architecture, 1910-1965

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SUMMARY

The bypassed c.1922 alignment of Highway A-7 from Gilmore to Turrell is a two-lane concrete highway. It follows an alignment to the northeast of the current U.S. 63, paralleling the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad line. The current U.S. 63 alignment, constructed in 1952, follows a straight route to the southwest of the old highway. The nominated highway retains its original c.1922 concrete pavement throughout. The highway retains its original roadway width.

ELABORATION

This bypassed section of c.1922 alignment of Highway A-7 is approximately 2.2 miles long and begins at the intersection of the current Old U.S. 63 (Front Street) and Acwin Street in Gilmore and proceeds in a southeasterly direction to the southeast end of the Ditch No. 2 Bridge on Old U.S. 63 (Eureka Road) in Turrell. The segment is flat and straight, something that is common for the roads in the Delta region of Arkansas.

Highway A-7 (Contributing)

The c.1922 alignment of Highway A-7 has a width of 17 feet for two lanes of travel. The section has no paved shoulders. (For comparison, the current American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Green Book indicates that a lane width of 11 feet 9 inches is desirable.) Unlike many historic concrete highway segments, the segment of Highway A-7 is comprised of one full-width concrete pour without seams. (Many of the concrete highway segments that have been previously listed have been comprised of concrete segments that are 9 feet wide and 50 feet long.)

Little Cypress Ditch Bridge (Non-Contributing)

The Little Cypress Ditch Bridge, also referred to as Bridge #21183 by the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, is a one-span bridge that is 89 feet long and 16 feet wide. The bridge, which is a replacement for the original bridge, was built in 1992 and is constructed out of two railroad flat cars that are placed next to each other. The bridge deck surface is steel and there is no guardrail.

Ditch No. 2 Bridge (Contributing)

The Ditch No. 2 Bridge, also referred to as Bridge #12360 by the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, is a two-span bridge that is 40 feet long and 19 feet wide. It was built c.1922. Both of the spans of the bridge are constructed out of reinforced concrete. The bridge's deck is also constructed out of concrete and has a continuous concrete curb on each side.

The guardrails on the concrete spans are also constructed out of reinforced concrete. The bridge's span's guardrails are comprised of two panels. Each panel has an incised rectangle on the side. There are also angled panels at each end of the bridge. Each guardrail is also topped by a projecting cap.

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INTEGRITY

Overall, the bypassed c.1922 alignment of Highway A-7 from Gilmore to Turrell has remarkable integrity. The original c.1922 pavement remains throughout the segment, and it retains its original dimensions. The pavement is still drivable, and the entire c.1922 alignment possesses a strong sense of continuity. Additionally, the area around the highway segment retains its rural and small town settings, and the surroundings still reflect the period of significance from c.1922-1959.

The weakest area of integrity centers on the bisection of the highway by Interstate 55. This portion of the road, which is approximately 300 feet long, has been removed and the area is now occupied by the Interstate and its access roads, which are utilized by AR 77 and U.S. 61. However, the two portions of the highway segment are visible from each other, and it is still possible to gain a sense of travel and continuity throughout the entire segment.

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Name of Property: Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell

County and State: Crittenden County, Arkansas

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Highway and Transportation Era Architecture, 1910-1965

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SUMMARY

Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion C** for its engineering. Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell, is the longest and most intact portion of the c.1922 alignment of Highway A-7 in Crittenden County. The Gilmore to Turrell segment of Highway A-7, which is approximately 2.2 miles long, still retains its original c.1922 concrete pavement. The highway section was the main automobile route in that part of Crittenden County from the time of its construction in c.1922 until the current U.S. 63 was built to the southwest of it in 1952. As a result, it is therefore eligible for nomination under **Criterion A** for its association with the development of Arkansas highway culture. Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell, is being submitted to the National Register of Historic Places under the multiple-property listing “Arkansas Highway and Transportation Era Architecture, 1910-1965” in conjunction with the historic context “Arkansas Highway History and Architecture, 1910-1965.”

ELABORATION

Crittenden County was formed by an act of the Territorial General Assembly on October 22, 1825, and was approved by Governor George Izard. It was named after Robert Crittenden, who was the first Secretary of the Territory of Arkansas. Originally, Crittenden County included all of the land between the Mississippi River west to the St. Francis River and the Missouri/Arkansas border south to approximately the location of Marianna, Arkansas, in neighboring Lee County. The size of Crittenden County shrank over the years as land was taken to form St. Francis County in 1827, Mississippi County in 1833, Cross County in 1862, and, finally, Lee County in 1873.¹

Growth in the Turrell area began in the 1880s as a direct result of the lumber industry coming to Crittenden County. Toof, McGowan & Company operated a steam-powered mill in the area in the 1880s, although it burned in August 1885. The area then became the center of operations of the Turrell-Lily Lumber Company, a company owned by Wisconsin lumberman Fletcher E. Turrell. When Turrell became the first postmaster of the community on February 15, 1901, the town was named after him.²

Turrell’s location was an important and logical choice for the community since it was at the junction of two railroad lines. The Springfield and Memphis Railroad Company, which was chartered on December 3, 1880, began service through the area around January 1, 1883, on its Springfield, Missouri, to Memphis, Tennessee, line. After the railroad changed names a couple of times, the line was leased by the St. Louis San Francisco Railroad (Frisco) on August 23, 1901, and they eventually purchased the line on August 23, 1928. The second railroad line through Turrell, the Frisco’s main line between St. Louis and Memphis, joined the Kansas City to

¹ Woolfolk, Margaret Elizabeth. *A History of Crittenden County, Arkansas*. Greenville, SC: Southern Historical Press, Inc., 1993, pp. 2-3.

² *Ibid*, p. 257.

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Memphis line on the south edge of town, and an arc-shaped spur also joined the two lines just south of the city hall site.³

By the 1920s, it was decided to incorporate the community. William Rector Flippo, who was nephew of William Grief “Happy” Flippo, one of the first store owners and a head sawyer and inspector with the Baker Lumber Company, spearheaded the effort for incorporation. Flippo circulated a petition for incorporation and obtained 96 signatures. After the incorporation was approved on September 6, 1926, Flippo served as the community’s first mayor.⁴

As with Turrell, the development and settlement of Gilmore was a direct result of the opening of the Springfield and Memphis Railroad line in 1883. The first settler in the area was John Gilmore who came to Crittenden County in the 1850s and became one of the county’s largest stock raisers, owning approximately 2,500 acres of land and 800 head of cattle by the time of his death in 1883. Other early settlers in the Gilmore area were Charles A. Walker who came to the area in 1871 and Levi Barton Boon (originally named Levi Barton Hogaboom) who came to Gilmore in 1883.⁵

Boon was an important individual in Gilmore’s early history. Not only did he open the town’s first street, he also owned a livery stable, a steam-powered cotton gin, and a nearby farm. In addition, Boon was also appointed Gilmore’s first postmaster on December 26, 1883. Although settlement and development began in Gilmore in the 1880s, it was not until October 1955 that a petition for incorporation was submitted and subsequently approved on November 18, 1955.⁶

During the first part of the twentieth century, as automobiles became more prevalent as a means of transportation, it became imperative to improve America’s roads to better accommodate them. As a result, several organizations formed in the early 1900s to work towards providing improved and marked highways for drivers to make it easier to get from place to place. Some of these highways, including the Bankhead Highway and the Albert Pike Highway, passed through parts of Arkansas and at least gave Arkansas drivers marked routes in parts of the state. However, one organization, the Ozark Trails Association, had much stronger ties to Arkansas, mainly through its founding and leadership under Arkansan William Hope “Coin” Harvey.⁷

William Hope Harvey was born in West Virginia in 1851 and was a real estate entrepreneur who became involved in mining ventures in Colorado. After he lost his fortune, he became an advisor to William Jennings Bryan during the 1893 Free Silver crisis. He was also involved in publishing the weekly *Coin* in Chicago,

³ *Ibid*, pp. 257-258.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 258-259.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 200.

⁶ *Ibid*,

⁷ Krim, Arthur. “The Original Mother Road.” *SCA Journal*, Spring 1996, pp. 14-15, and 22.

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which is where he got his nickname, but after Bryan's defeat as a presidential candidate in 1896, Harvey retired to Monte Ne, Arkansas, in 1900. In Monte Ne, Harvey developed a railroad to promote a health resort and executive retreat that he started.⁸

Harvey understood that automobile travel was growing in popularity and importance, and after he abandoned his railroad spur in 1910, he began to look at alternative means of transportation to Monte Ne. In fact, in June 1911 *Southern Good Roads* proposed an auto highway from Muskogee, Oklahoma, to Monte Ne. Other developments during the same period, including the formation of a National Highway Association in Washington, DC, the holding of a National Old Trails Road Convention in Kansas City in April 1912, and the formation of a Western Good Roads group in Joplin, Missouri, in May 1912, further inspired Harvey.⁹

As a result, Harvey organized his own auto road association, and a map published in the May 9, 1913, *Gravette News Herald* illustrated proposed "Ozark Trails" connecting Monte Ne with St. Louis, Kansas City, Wichita, and Oklahoma City through Tulsa. To further spread his ideas for the "Ozark Trails," Harvey hosted a meeting of the Ozark Trails Association (OTA) on July 10-13, 1913, in Monte Ne. The meeting was a huge success, attracting over 300 delegates, and at the meeting Harvey proposed 1,500 miles of white-signed auto routes through Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma. In addition, M. J. Kelley of Neosho, Missouri, was elected president of the organization.¹⁰

At an unknown date, although probably in the 1910s, the OTA also developed specifications for their roads, which read:

Our specifications call for a road 32 feet wide; 24 feet crown with curvature half an inch to the foot; culverts concrete 24 feet wide, same as crown of road; good drainage; above high water; curve turns on radius of not less than 150 feet, outside raised two feet; no grades to exceed 5 per cent; and hard surface of either sand and clay properly mixed, gravel or crushed rock with clay binder, concrete or other hard surface. When the road is not thus completed, we rely on the enterprise of the local people and road authorities to complete it in a reasonable time. There is an enterprising and public-spirited people living on our roads. We try to never route a road through a graveyard.¹¹

⁸ Krim, p. 22.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

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Although Kelley had been elected president at the meeting in Monte Ne, Harvey was elected president at the meeting in Neosho, Missouri, in November 1913, and Harvey would remain president for the next ten years. Even though the original focus of the organization, and of Harvey, was to develop roads radiating from Monte Ne, the organization's focus soon shifted to providing good roads in Oklahoma and Missouri. Conventions of the organization held in Oklahoma and Missouri in the mid 1910s were hugely successful – approximately 3,000 delegates attended the meeting in Springfield, Missouri, in April 1916 and over 7,000 delegates attended the Oklahoma City meeting in November 1916.¹²

After the success of the Oklahoma City meeting of the OTA, the organization was viewed more as a national organization that was trying to boost road development in the western frontier. Harvey also established a national headquarters of the OTA in Oklahoma City in 1916. Although there was a lot of factionalism in Oklahoma over promoting different proposed routes of the road in Oklahoma, Harvey saw it more as a singular road that would eventually go all the way to southern California. In fact, Harvey said in the January 1917 issue of *Better Roads* that “The Ozark Trail will not only be constructed, but it will be the ‘mother’ of other great roads feeding or intersecting this road that will span the state in continuous mileage in every direction.”¹³

The OTA remained a vibrant organization throughout the rest of the 1910s – the May 1917 Amarillo convention drew approximately 6,000 delegates and concrete obelisk markers were erected along the route in the late 1910s – but by the 1920s, the organization began to decline. In 1920 at the Pittsburg, Kansas, meeting, J. E. Swepston was elected president, although in reality he had been selected by Harvey and Harvey really continued to run the OTA. The 1922 meeting at Sulphur, Oklahoma, attracted more than 1,000 people, but the next two meetings in Joplin, Missouri, in 1923 and in Duncan, Oklahoma, in 1924 attracted around 100 members. The 1924 meeting also proved to be the last reported meeting of the OTA.¹⁴

Although the OTA disbanded in 1924, it was not before they had done some work in Arkansas. A 1919 route map of the organization showed that roads had been adopted and marked from Monte Ne to Rogers and Bentonville and then on to Vinita, Oklahoma. Another route from Bentonville to Joplin, Missouri, had also been adopted and marked. In addition, in northwest Arkansas, the OTA was promoting roads from Siloam Springs to Rogers and Bentonville, and also to Salina, and Westerville, Oklahoma. Additional routes were being promoted from Monte Ne to Springdale and from Rogers to Cassville, Missouri.¹⁵

Even though the OTA was most connected with northwest Arkansas, they also undertook some efforts of road

¹² *Ibid*, pp. 22-23.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 23.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 23.

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promotion and improvement in northeast Arkansas. In fact, a “mini” convention was held in Jonesboro in early 1917. Although 2,000 people attended the convention, it was considered a disappointment, because attendance was smaller than at past conventions and also because the delegation from Memphis was small. Harvey had stated that the whole purpose of the convention in Jonesboro was to promote the eastern extension of the Trail.¹⁶ However, by 1919, they had adopted a route proceeding south from Cabool, Missouri, to Mammoth Spring, Arkansas (although it was not marked), and they were promoting a continuation of the route to Hardy and then on to Memphis. This route eventually became Highway A-7, and later U.S. 63.¹⁷ In March 1919, at a meeting at the office of Ritter and Company, E. Ritter, D. D. White, and J. A. Emrich were named the local Ozark Trail commissioners for the Marked Tree and Tyronza area, and this may have also included Gilmore and Turrell.¹⁸

The 1910s and early 1920s was a good period for road building in Crittenden County, especially due to the opening of the Mississippi River bridge at Memphis. The *Third Biennial Report* indicated that:

Crittenden County has no stone or gravel for road building and the low, level surface renders it difficult to keep the earth roads in good condition. While a great deal of grading and draining has been done on these roads, the county is directing its efforts specially toward permanent road building.

The roads and bridges are in comparatively good condition and an excellent road sentiment prevails.

The opening of the new bridge at Memphis has stimulated road building in Crittenden and other Eastern Arkansas counties.¹⁹

The state of the roads in Crittenden County was due in part to the activeness of the Ozark Trail Association and its supporters and, early on, the efforts of the farmers to try and access the Memphis market. Although building and maintaining roads across Crittenden County was difficult, most roads in that part of the state at that time led to Memphis because of the importance of the market, but also because it was difficult to build roads across Crowley’s Ridge. Jeannie Wayne, in her book *A New Plantation South*, further illustrates the preference of building roads towards Memphis, but with respect to neighboring Poinsett County.

¹⁶ Lawler, Nan Marie. “The Ozark Trails Association.” Diss. University of Arkansas, 1991, p. 37.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Wayne, Jeannie M. *A New Plantation South: Land, Labor, and Federal Favor in Twentieth-Century Arkansas*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1996, p. 123.

¹⁹ *Third Biennial Report of the Department of State Lands, Highways and Improvements*. Publisher unknown, c.1918, pp. 34-35.

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Delta men petitioned the county court for the construction of seven roads in 1901 and 1902. Only one led to the ridge. Of the remaining six, three connected Tyronza Township in the southeastern section of the delta with Marked Tree and linked up with a fourth road leading to Crittenden County and eventually Memphis. A fifth road led from Lepanto in the northeastern delta to Marked Tree, and the sixth stretched from Marked Tree north to the Craighead County line.²⁰

Efforts regarding the Ozark Trail had been ongoing in northeastern Arkansas since at least 1916 when the *Marked Tree Gazette* reported in an article titled "Let's Join the Ozark Trail" that "The purpose of the meeting is to organize a good first class road from Jonesboro to Marked Tree and Truman [sic.]" Meetings were held around the area in Marked Tree and Jonesboro by early 1917, and a headline in the March 23, 1917, *Marked Tree Tribune* reported that the "Good Road Meeting [was] a Success, No Opposition to Ozark Trail."²¹ The excitement that was being generated in Poinsett and Craighead counties was probably present in Crittenden County as well. The goal of accessing markets in Memphis, which was the desire of residents in Poinsett and Craighead counties, would have also been the desire of the residents of northern Crittenden County around Gilmore and Turrell.

Work on improving the road in Poinsett County was underway by 1918. An article, "Road to Tyronza Now Ready for Travel," in the *Marked Tree Tribune* reported that "Thanks to T. J. Bennett, M. W. Hazel and others who donated their time, teams, and labor, the road leading to Tyronza has been put in fairly good condition, so that we can now get out of town through the country. The thanks of the entire community is given these gentlemen."²² With work ongoing in neighboring Poinsett County by 1916, it was only natural that Crittenden County was likely on board early as well. Crittenden County farmers, like those in Poinsett County, would have been yearning for an easy way to access the Memphis market.

By 1920, work was progressing in Crittenden County on two concrete roads, according to the *Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of State Lands, Highways and Improvements*. The *Fourth Biennial Report* listed a 14.3 mile concrete road being built in Local District 7. The estimated cost for the road was \$718,990.00 and \$43,000.00 worth of aid had been allotted towards its construction, although none of the grading or surfacing had been completed by November 1, 1920. The second proposed road was a 25.00 mile long road in Local District 9. The estimated cost of the District 9 road was \$1,176,390.00 and \$73,500.00 worth of aid had been allotted for its construction. By November 1, 1920, 50% of the grading had been completed, but only 15% of

²⁰ Whayne, p. 42.

²¹ "Let's Join the Ozark Trail." *Marked Tree Gazette*, 15 September 1916, p. 1, column 1, and "Good Roads Meeting a Success, No Opposition to Ozark Trail." *Marked Tree Tribune*, 23 March 1917, p. 1, column 3.

²² "Road to Tyronza Now Ready for Travel." *Marked Tree Tribune*, 28 June 1918, p. 1, column 1.

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County and State: Crittenden County, Arkansas

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the surfacing had been finished. Although it is not known for sure, based upon the lengths of the proposed roads, it is believed that Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell was part of the proposed road in District 7.²³

The construction of the road through the Tyronza area in neighboring Poinsett County was thanks in large part to Ernest Ritter and his brother Louis. Ernest Ritter had been involved with the experimental use of Portland cement as a road material. Apparently, Ritter believed that one could form up a section of muddy overflow and pour the cement mix into it and it would set up. Although at least one Portland cement company had insisted for at least fifteen years that it would not work, the company later had to change its mind after Ritter's successful experiments. Ritter served as one of the directors of the Ozark Trail road section in the Marked Tree area, and Louis served as the contractor, and it is quite possible that the Ritter brothers used Ritter's experimental method to construct the surviving road segment in Tyronza.²⁴ Since the construction method of the road between Gilmore and Turrell matches that used between Marked Tree and Tyronza, it is likely that the same builder, probably the Ritters, built the segment between Gilmore and Turrell. The construction method used on Highway A-7 is very distinctive in Arkansas. Unlike other historic concrete highway segments, which have been comprised of concrete segments that are 9 feet wide and 50 feet long, the surviving historic segments of Highway A-7 are comprised of one full-width concrete pour without seams.

Jeannie Whayne also notes of the importance of the Ritters in road building in the Marked Tree and Tyronza area by writing that "The fact that Marked Tree was the nexus for all delta roads was not coincidental. Marked Tree was the center of commerce and credit and therefore drew in the people from the surrounding countryside. In addition, those organizing the roads were often either Marked Tree residents or related to them. Ernest Ritter did not petition for the roads himself, but he won the contracts and built them. His brother, Louis Ritter, was one of the petitioners for the Tyronza roads leading to Marked Tree and to the Crittenden County line and Memphis."²⁵ The Ritters' influence in road construction in Poinsett County also meant that they likely had an impact on road construction in Crittenden County, especially because of the county's position in between Marked Tree and Tyronza and Memphis.

The agricultural nature of Crittenden County that was present in the late nineteenth century was unchanged by the 1920s and 1930s. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Arkansas* described the area around the bridges by saying that "South of Marked Tree US 63 passes through the plantation land of Poinsett and Crittenden Counties, where cottonfields run for miles from each side of the highway. The plantation houses, appearing at long intervals, are large, well built, and usually set on beautifully landscaped grounds."²⁶

²³ *Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of State Lands, Highways and Improvements*. Publisher unknown, c.1920, p 150.

²⁴ Grisham, Cindy. E-mail to the author. 22 August 2008.

²⁵ Whayne, p. 42.

²⁶ West, Elliott. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Arkansas*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1987 reprint of 1941 publication, p. 295.

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Name of Property: Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell

County and State: Crittenden County, Arkansas

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable): Arkansas
Highway and Transportation Era Architecture, 1910-1965

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Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell, represented an important link in the transportation network of Crittenden County and northeast Arkansas. By 1926, Highway A-7 had been redesignated U.S. 63, and it was an important highway linking northeast Arkansas with Memphis, Tennessee, and ultimately connecting Benoit, Wisconsin, with Ruston, Louisiana. However, the amount of traffic that the road was receiving eventually led to its bypassing in 1952, and today it remains in use only for the few local residents who live on the road between Gilmore and Turrell. The highway segment still remains an excellent and rare example of early concrete road-building technology in the Gilmore and Turrell area.²⁷

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion C** for its engineering. Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell, is the longest and most intact portion of the c.1922 alignment of Highway A-7 in Crittenden County. The Gilmore to Turrell segment of Highway A-7, which is approximately 2.2 miles long, still retains its original c.1922 concrete pavement. The highway section was the main automobile route in that part of Crittenden County from the time of its construction in c.1922 until the current U.S. 63 was built to the southwest of it in 1952. As a result, it is therefore eligible for nomination under **Criterion A** for its association with the development of Arkansas highway culture. Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell, is being submitted to the National Register of Historic Places under the multiple-property listing “Arkansas Highway and Transportation Era Architecture, 1910-1965” in conjunction with the historic context “Arkansas Highway History and Architecture, 1910-1965.”

²⁷ Scoggin, Robert. E-mail to the author. 13 January 2009.

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Name of Property: Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell

County and State: Crittenden County, Arkansas

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable): Arkansas
Highway and Transportation Era Architecture, 1910-1965

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: Highway A-7, Gilmore to Turrell

County and State: Crittenden County, Arkansas

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable): Arkansas
Highway and Transportation Era Architecture, 1910-1965

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the Highway A-7 (Old U.S. 63) and Acwin Street intersection in Gilmore, the c.1922 alignment of Highway A-7 follows Old U.S. 63 for approximately 2.2 miles to the southeast end of the Ditch No. 2 Bridge in Turrell. The width of the boundary includes 10 feet on either side of the c.1922 highway centerline.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This boundary contains the most intact portion of the c.1922 Highway A-7 alignment in the Gilmore and Turrell vicinity.