

## Marks Designated A Downtown Historic District

History was made on March 15, 2024, the United States Department of the Interior National Park Service (NPS) certified Marks Downtown as a Historic District. This distinct designation places Downtown Marks District on the National Register. The district is approximately 1 square mile and includes 88 buildings and structures in an area roughly bounded to the east by Peach Street, on the north by Chestnut Street, on the south by Humphreys Avenue, Walnut Street, Maple Street, and Main Street, and on the west by Third Street. There are 67 contributing resources and 21 non-contributing resources within the district. The Marks Downtown Historic District is a collection of largely intact buildings that illustrate the history of the development of the downtown area.

The Marks Downtown Historic District is a cohesive collection of early to mid-20th-century commercial, agricultural, transportation, and governmental buildings comprising the central business district in Marks, which is the county seat of Quitman County, Mississippi.

Velma Wilson, the County Economic and Tourism Director worked on this project for approximately 2-years with a Memphis consultant firm, JJ and Associates, along with Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) National Register Coordinator, James Bridgeforth. This project was a collaboration between the City of Marks Board of Aldermen and the Quitman County Board of Supervisors.

Wilson states; the benefits of being designated as a National Register District can not be overstated in that it will bring tax incentives to help with the revitalization of the downtown Marks Historic District. Additionally, the federal government encourages the preservation of historic buildings through various means. One of these is the program of federal tax incentives to support the rehabilitation of historic and older buildings. The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program is one of the federal government's most successful and cost-effective community revitalization programs. The National Park Service (NPS) administers the program with the Internal Revenue Service in partnership with State Historic Preservation Offices. The tax incentives promote the rehabilitation of historic structures of every period, size, style and type. They are instrumental in preserving the historic places that give cities, towns and rural areas their special character. The tax incentives for preservation attract private investment to the historic cores of cities and towns. They also generate jobs, enhance property values, and augment revenues for State and local governments through increased property, business and income taxes. The Preservation Tax Incentives also help create moderate and low-income housing in historic buildings. Through this program, abandoned or underused schools, warehouses, factories, churches, retail stores, apartments, hotels, houses, and offices throughout the country have been restored to life in a manner that maintains their historic character.

Wilson is looking forward to marketing the Marks Historic District. She has experienced successes with grants from the MDAH and NPS. These grants have help fund the restoration of the county historic courthouse, the Marks Rosenwald School, and develop a cultural trail for the Marks Mule Train Martin Luther King, Jr's Poor People's Campaign.