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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Willard Mercantile Company
Other names/site number: Mountainair Mercantile Company; Lawson's Mercantile
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: 101 East Broadway
City or town: Mountainair State: NM County: Torrance
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide _X_local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

_X_A ___B _X_C ___D

Dr. Jeff Pappas, New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title : **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ 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:	[X]
Public – Local	[ ]
Public – State	[ ]
Public – Federal	[ ]

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	[X]
District	[ ]
Site	[ ]
Structure	[ ]
Object	[ ]

Willard Mercantile Company | Torrance, NM
Name of Property | County and State

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce/Trade: department store

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: art education facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property:

FOUNDATION: Concrete
ROOF: N/A
WALLS: Stucco
OTHER: Glass

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Willard Mercantile Company building is a large, one-story commercial building constructed of structural clay tile and features a center entrance and three large display windows. The building is located at the northeast corner of Broadway (US Highway 60) and North Summit Drive (US Highway 55) in downtown Mountainair, which is located in the Estancia Valley on east side of the Manzano Mountains. Built c. 1916, the Willard Mercantile Company building is supported by two rows of wood posts and includes a pressed-metal cornice and ceiling, wood floors, light well, and freight elevator. Its rehabilitation in 2015 as the Manzano Mountain Arts Council included minor interior construction, which preserved the open interior space.

Narrative Description

The Willard Mercantile Company building is a large, one-story commercial building constructed of structural clay tile and features a center entrance and three large display windows. The building is located at the northeast corner of Broadway (US Highway 60) and North Summit Drive (US Highway 55) in downtown Mountainair, which is located in the Estancia Valley on east side of the Manzano Mountains. Built c.1916, the Willard Mercantile Company building is supported by two rows of wood posts and includes a pressed-metal cornice and ceiling, wood floors, a light well, and freight elevator.

The Willard Mercantile Company building is a large commercial block with three display windows, transoms, and center entrance. Built of structural clay tile, the mercantile is clad in stucco, which has delaminated from portions of the west side. The west side features a series of transom windows with mosaic-tile artworks affixed to the exposed tile. A building was constructed on the east side of the mercantile after c.1960. The wood storefront remains intact. A small one-story addition to the northwest corner is mostly demolished with only the north and west walls and two windows in place. The rear (north side) of the property is open and includes several pieces of sculpture. Most prominent on the rear façade is the two-story, pyramidal-roofed elevator tower.

The interior is mostly a single open space with two rows of three wood posts that support the ceiling. The pace is light by the south-facing full-width storefront, small clerestory windows and light well. The ceiling is covered with a pressed-metal cornice and ceiling. Changes in color to the wood floor indicate that different floor plans were utilized over time. A freight elevator is located on the north side. The mercantile, then known as the Willard Mercantile Company, purchased the freight elevator after 1917 from the Kansas City Elevator Manufacturing Company in order to use the lower level as a stock room.

The mercantile building was purchased in 1915 by the Manzano Mountain Arts Council, which began minor interior construction, such as a stage, several studios, restrooms, and a kitchen. The new construction does not rise to the ceiling and, therefore, preserves the historic open interior of the mercantile.

Contributing and Noncontributing Resources

The Willard Mercantile Company is counted as one contributing building.

There are no noncontributing resources associated with this nomination.

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.)

- [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.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark “x” in all the boxes that apply.)

- [ ] A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- [ ] B. Removed from its original location
- [ ] C. A birthplace or grave
- [ ] D. A cemetery
- [ ] E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- [ ] F. A commemorative property
- [ ] G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Willard Mercantile Company | Torrance, NM
Name of Property | County and State

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Commerce
Architecture

Period of Significance
1916 to 1968

Significant Dates
c.1916

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Willard Mercantile is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the area of commerce because the mercantile provided farm equipment, oil and gasoline, and household goods to rural residents of Mountainair and Torrance County. The Willard Mercantile is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture because it is an excellent representative example of a rural 20th-century mercantile, which retains its original storefront, open plan, and pressed-metal ceiling.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Willard Mercantile is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the area of commerce because the mercantile provided farm equipment, oil and gasoline, and household goods to rural residents of Mountainair and Torrance County. The Davis Mercantile is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture because it is an excellent representative example of a rural 20th-century mercantile, which retains its original storefront, open plan, and pressed-metal ceiling.

In 20th-century rural New Mexico, mercantiles provided essential goods and services to farm and petroleum communities throughout the state. The appearance of these stores varied from large, brick-and-stone buildings to smaller, adobe-and-frame buildings. Most had display windows and porches, with storage rooms at the rear. The interiors were lined with shelves of goods with counters that separated customers from the most expensive items. Stores were crowded with the necessities of everyday life, including medicine and household goods and more substantial items, such as farm equipment, gasoline, and postal service.

Entrepreneurs saw opportunities in thriving villages and towns as well as new towns formed around railroad stops. They opened mercantiles, which quickly became the geographic and social centers of a community. Jews with sufficient capital and connections to wholesalers back East, opened mercantiles. The Kohn family in Quay County maintained a small ranching and business empire centered on the Kohn Brothers General Merchandise (c.1908) in Montoya.

Mercantiles thrived through the 1920s, but struggled through the Dust Bowl and Great Depression. Once-thriving communities could no longer support mercantiles as farmers migrated west for better job prospects and villages and towns were reduced in population. Few stores continued to operate after mid-century, except those providing essential services such as gasoline and postal services.

Mercantile stores that operated in rural communities in New Mexico during the 20th century include, the Española Mercantile Company, Española (c.1915); Hughes Mercantile Company,

Moriarty (1905); Coury Mercantile Company, Duran (n.d.); Hillsboro General Store, Hillsboro (1914); Craig & Keele General Merchandise Store, Pie Town (n.d.); Frisco Store, Lower San Francisco Plaza, Catron County (n.d.); General Store, Mogollon (n.d.); Roberts & Leahy Mercantile Company, Lordsburg (n.d.); and Stiens Mercantile, Stiens, Hidalgo County (n.d.).

Rural mercantiles listed in the State Register and National Register include, Coate's and Howard General Store, Mogollon (1898), SR 536; Cassidy Mercantile, Cleveland, (c.1863) SR 518; Gavilan Mercantile Company, Lindrith, Rio Arriba (1927) SR 1636; Pfleuger General Merchandise Store and Annex Saloon, Lamy (1881-1894) SR 1230; Stalder Mercantile Company, Grenville, Union County (1919) SR 1807; L.B. Bentley General Merchandise, Organ, Doña Ana County (1884-1909) SR 1879; and Huning Mercantile Incorporated, Los Lunas (late 1840s) SR 130.

Developmental history/additional historic context information

In 1905 Charles Ilfeld from Las Vegas, New Mexico, who later established a successful line of mercantile stores throughout the state, built a mercantile in Willard in Torrance County and hired B.J. Jackson as its manager. Before the business was completed, Ilfeld decided to merge with John Becker from Belen. They named the business the Willard Mercantile Company and bought beans, corn, and other crops and shipped them by rail to Belen.[1]

Charles Ilfeld built a second store c.1916, also called the Willard Mercantile Company, on Broadway in Mountainair. The name was soon changed to the Mountainair Trading Company, which became the largest store of its kind in Mountainair and the region. It carried a general line of merchandise under the management of L.E. Hanlon and R.C. Shockey. The store purchased hides and wool and advertised clothing, food, coffins, firewood, furniture, oil, grease, hay, lumber, seeds and livestock feed. It also sold a variety of farm products, including tractors, thrashers, plows, oil and gasoline and household goods, such as groceries and dry goods. The store provided credit for farmers to buy equipment and seeds, which they could repay in produce.

During the early 20th century when the local economy centered on pinto bean production, Mountainair Trading Company was the "biggest store" in town and operated its own bean-cleaning elevator located near the railroad line. The bean department shipped on an average some 90 car-loads of beans annually. Its warehouses had the capacity to store 120 car-loads of beans.

In the 1930s the name was changed to the Hanlon Mercantile Store when Earl Hanlon, who worked as the bookkeeper at the Willard Mercantile Company in Mountainair, purchased the company. He then closed the Willard branch stores in Willard and Encino. In the late 1930s Joe Lawson purchased the store and changed the name to Lawson's Mercantile Store. Lawson transformed the store from a general mercantile into a department store. In c.1960 he built an

[1] Dixie Boyle to Steven Moffson. Email to S. Moffson, 4 September 2018.

aluminum-framed entrance with sidelights to the south end of the west side. This was later removed and filled with brick.

Joe Lawson decided to semi-retire when his son, Fain, returned from the Second World War. Fain managed the store until the 1960s when he left to work for the Rural Electric Company. Joe returned to work and operated the store until his death in 1969. The store remained mostly vacant from the 1970s through the 1990s.

In 2015, the store was purchased by the Manzano Mountain Arts Council, which uses the building for art-related classes, activities, and local and professional performances. To serve as an arts facility, the Council built several additions to the open interior space. These include a stage and restrooms, at the north end and artist studios along the west wall.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Boyle, Dixie to Steven Moffson. Email to S. Moffson, 4 September 2018.

Herman, Bert. *Mountainair, N.M. Centennial History 1903-2003*. Mountainair, NM: Mountainair Public Schools, 2003.

Mountainair Independent. 2 August 1917; 9 August 1917.

Torrance County Historical Society. *Torrance County History*. Mountainair, NM, 1980.

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 # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

_X__ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University of New Mexico, Center for Southwest Research
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 0.10 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 34.520560 Longitude: -106.240343

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or

UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
The National Register boundary appears on the sketch map as a blue line drawn to scale and corresponding with the point of latitude and longitude in Section 10.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The National Register boundary includes the intact property historically associated with the Willard Mercantile Company.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kent Potter
organization: Manzano Mountain Arts Council
street & number: P.O. Box 534
city or town: Mountainair state: NM zip code: 87036
e-mail: kentfp720@yahoo.com
telephone: 505 847-0295
date: January 2, 2018

State Historic Preservation Office
name/title: Steven Moffson, State and National Register Coordinator
organization: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division
street & number: 407 Galisteo Street, Suite 236
city or town: Santa Fe state: New Mexico zip: 87501
telephone: 505.476.0444
date: August 23, 2018

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.) **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Maps

Map 1. Location Map.

Map 2. National Register Boundary Map.

Map 3. Floor Plan

Figures

Figure 1. Willard Mercantile, c.1916.

Figure 2. Parade in Mountainair, c.1925.

Figure 3. Mountainair Bean Festival, 1940s.

Figure 4. Willard Mercantile Company, c.1960.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Willard Mercantile Company

City or Vicinity: Mountainair

County: Torrance State: NM

Photographer: Steven Moffson

Date Photographed: August 28, 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 14. Main (south) façade, photographer facing north.

2 of 14. Detail of main entrance, photographer facing north.

3 of 14. Main and east sides, photographer facing northwest.

4 of 14. Main and west sides, photographer facing northeast.

5 of 14. West elevation, photographer facing east.

6 of 14. Rear and west sides, photographer facing southeast.

7 of 14. Rear elevation with elevator tower, photographer facing south.

8 of 14. Inteior, view to front entrance, photographer facing south

9 of 14. Inteior, view toward rear, photographer facing north.

10 of 14. Inteior, view with stage and studios, photographer facing northwest.

11 of 14. Inteior, view with studios and light well, photographer facing west.

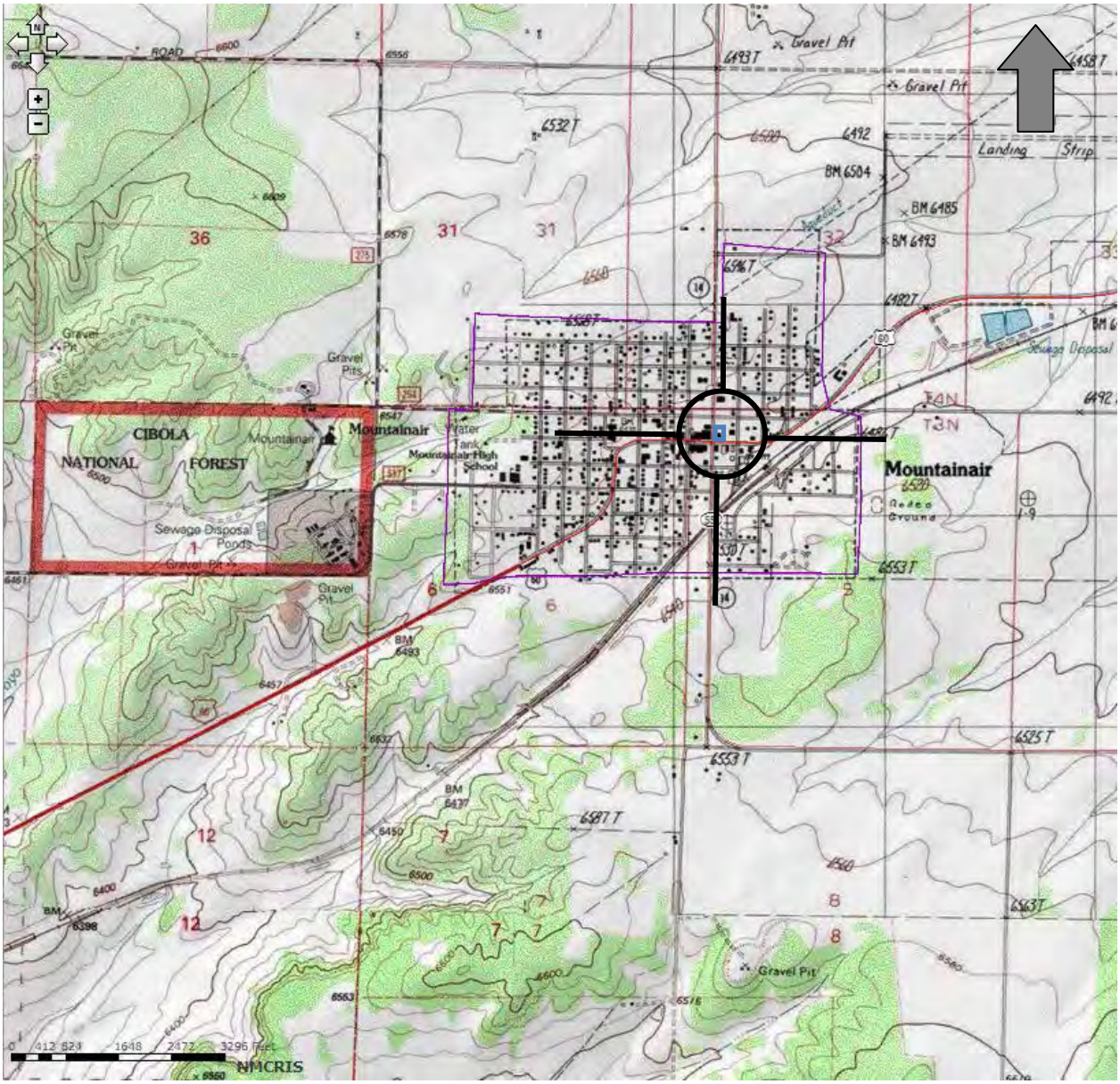
12 of 14. Interior, view of studios, photographer facing north.

13 of 14. Interior, freight elevator, photographer facing south.

14 of 14. Inteior, lower storage level, photographer facing south.

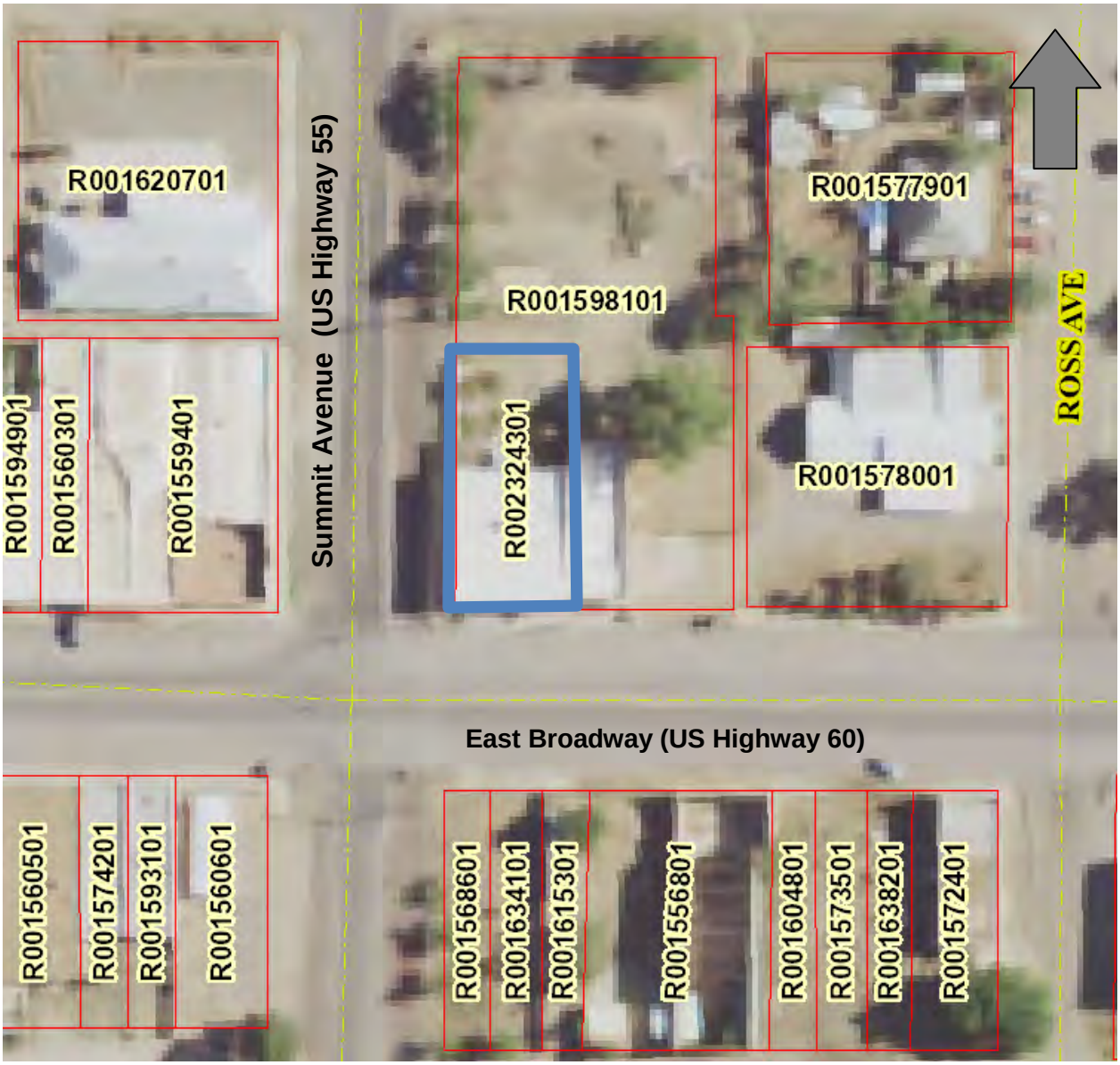
Willard Mercantile Company | Torrance, NM
Name of Property | County and State

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.460 et seq.). **Estimated Burden Statement**: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Willard Mercantile Company
Torrance County, New Mexico

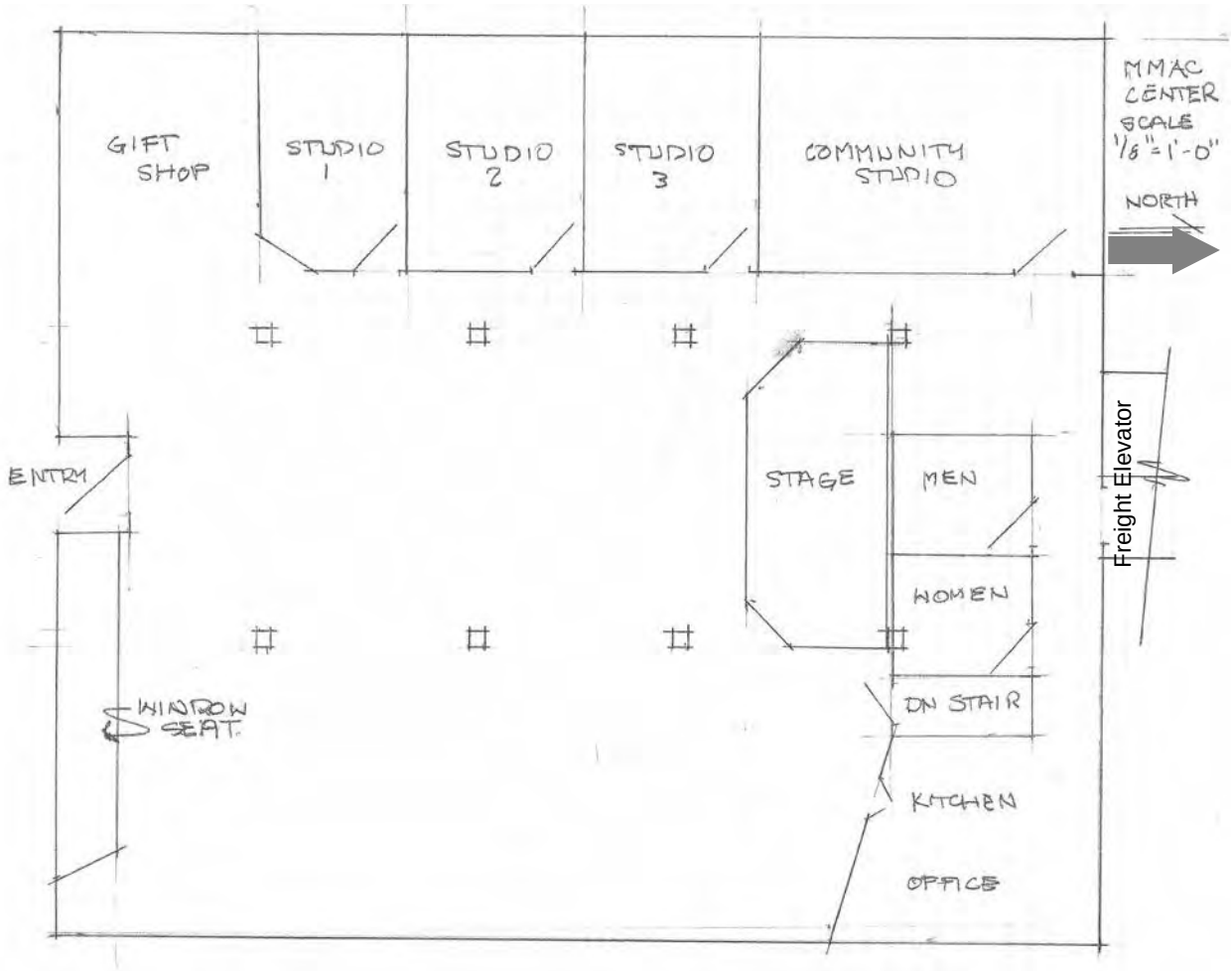
Location Map



Willard Mercantile Company
Torrance County, New Mexico

National Register boundary

Approximate scale: 1 inch = 100 feet



Willard Mercantile Company
Torrance County, New Mexico

First Floor Plan

No scale: 1/8-inch = 1 foot

Drawn by Kent Potter

Figure 1. Willard Mercantile Company, c.1916.

Figure 2. Parade in Mountainair, c.1925

Figure 3. Mountainair Bean Festival, 1940s.

Figure 4. Willard Mercantile Company, c.1960.

Photographs

1. Main (south) façade, photogrpaher facing north.

2. Detail of main entrance, photogrpaher facing north.

3. Main and east sides, photogrpaher facing northwest.

4. Main and west sides, photogrpaher facing northeast.

5. West elevation, photographer facing east.

6. Rear and west sides, photographer facing southeast.

Rear elevation with elevator tower, photographer facing south.

8. Inteior, view to front entrance, photogrpaher facing south.

9. Inteior, view toward rear, photogrpaher facing north.

10. Inteior, view with stage and studios, photographer facing northwest.

11. Inteior, view with studios and light well, photogrpaher facing west.

12. Interior, view of studios, photographer facing north.

13. Interior, freight elevator, photogrpaher facing south.

14. Inteior, lower storage level, photographer facing south.