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United States Department of 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 Viroqua Downtown Historic District
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Main Street, roughly bounded by West Court, East Jefferson, and the odd numbered 200 block of South Main Street N/A not for publication
city or town Viroqua N/A vicinity
state Wisconsin code WI county Vernon code 123 zip code 54665

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 forth 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.)

Alicia T. [Signature] June 2, 2003
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer-WI

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 official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Viroqua Downtown Historic District

Vernon

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

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.

See continuation sheet.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain):

Edson H. Beall

7.17.03

[Signature]

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 structure
- site
- object

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

contributing	noncontributing
21	4 buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
21	4 total

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

None

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

COMMERCE/TRADE/financial institution

DOMESTIC/hotel

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

COMMERCE/TRADE/financial institution

DOMESTIC/hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Queen Anne

Classical Revival

Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Limestone

roof Asphalt

other Stone

Narrative Description

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

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Viroqua Downtown Historic District
Vernon County, Wisconsin

Description

The Viroqua Downtown Historic District consists of portions of four rectilinear-shaped city blocks that together form the historic downtown commercial section of the city of Viroqua. Most of the buildings in the district face onto the north-south running North and South Main Street (which is also USH-14), but two are also located on east-west running cross streets: the 100 block of West Court Street, and the 100 block of E. Jefferson Street. The district contains most of the surviving nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings that constitute the historic commercial business district of Viroqua. The proposed district consists of twenty-five buildings, twenty-three of which face onto N. and S. Main Street, one of which faces onto W. Court Street, and one onto E. Jefferson Street.

Of the twenty-six buildings in the district, only four are considered to be non-contributing because they have been extensively altered. One of the twenty-one contributing buildings in the district was built prior to 1892, nine were built between 1892 and 1902, two were built between 1905 and 1911, four were built between 1911 and 1921, five were built between 1922 and 1933, and one was built after 1933. The contributing buildings range from one to three stories in height, all are either rectilinear or square in plan, and all are of masonry construction. Nineteen have facades that are clad in brick, one has a facade clad in dressed limestone, and one has a facade that is still partially clad in its original rock-faced limestone.

The earliest contributing building was built in 1882 (110-112 S. Main St.). Other late nineteenth century buildings in the district include: one Italianate style building (113-117 S. Main St.), three Queen Anne style buildings (102-104 N. Main St., 106 N. Main St., and 107-109 S. Main St.), and three Commercial Vernacular form buildings (120 S. Main St., 111 S. Main St., and 106 S. Main St.). The most prevalent style in the district is the Twentieth Century Commercial Style, of which there are nine contributing examples, some are quite elaborate in design while others are exceedingly plain. In addition, the district also includes three fine buildings influenced by the Classical Revival style (118 S. Main St., 119 E. Jefferson St., and 101 S. Main St.) whose designs span nearly the entire period during which this style was used (1908-1939 in this case). There are also two frame construction Boomtown style buildings in the district (205 & 207 S. Main St.). Both are believed to have once had facades that were originally partially clad in clapboards (these buildings, though, have now been altered and they are considered to be non-contributing to the district).

As is typical of other such groupings of older commercial buildings in Wisconsin cities, most of the original first story storefronts in this district have been lost to subsequent modernization. The upper

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floors of these facades are all still largely intact, however, and most also retain their decorative cornices.

Size, design and especially integrity set the buildings in the Viroqua Downtown Historic District apart from the other historic commercial buildings in the downtown area that is centered on Main Street. All of the other nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings that once flanked the district have now been either greatly altered or demolished. Other historic commercial buildings located outside the district are now either too altered for inclusion or they are too isolated and too ordinary in design to be included. Consequently, the Viroqua Downtown Historic District now constitutes the only remaining intact contiguous group of historic commercial buildings left in the center of Viroqua's downtown.

INVENTORY

The following inventory lists every building in the district and, when available, includes the names of the original owners, the construction date, the address, and also the resource's contributing (C) or non-contributing (NC) status. The abbreviations given below for architectural styles and vernacular building forms are the same abbreviations used by the Wisconsin Historical Society's Historic Preservation Division. These are as follows:

AS = Astylistic Utilitarian
BO = Boomtown
COM = Commercial Vernacular
IT = Italianate
NE = Neoclassical
QU = Queen Anne
TC = Twentieth Century Commercial

C	1896/1922- 1933/1933-1946	118-124	W. Court St.	Nels Solverson's Livery Barn	AS/TC
C	1939	119	E. Jefferson St.	U. S. Post Office Building	NE
C	1899	102-104	N. Main St.	Fortney Hotel	QU
C	1899	106	N. Main St.	C. & J. Michel Brewing Co. Building	QU
C	1908	101	S. Main St.	First National Bank of Viroqua	NE
C	1931	102-104	S. Main St.	Felix Store Building	TC
C	1908	105	S. Main St.	Mrs. B. F. Ferguson Building	TC
C	1898	106	S. Main St.	H. D. Williams Commercial Building	COM

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C	1892	107-109	S. Main St.	Lake & Herrick Double Store Building	QU
NC	1882/1941	108	S. Main St.	Thomas Jerman Commercial Building	TC
C	1883/pre 1940	110	S. Main St.	Thomas Jerman Commercial Building	TC
C	1892	111	S. Main St.	Peck & Chapman Meat Market	COM
C	1902	112	S. Main St.	Thomas Jerman Commercial Building	TC
C	1892	113-117	S. Main St.	Casson & Purdey Double Block	IT
C	1922	114-118	S. Main St.	Temple Theater Building	NE
C	1926	119-123	S. Main St.	L. C. Boyle/Fred Eckhart & Co., Inc. Double Block	TC
C	1900	120-122	S. Main St.	C. F. Dahl-Andrew Beat Building	COM
C	1928	124	S. Main St.	C. F. Dahl Building	TC
C	1914	201-203	S. Main St.	C. H. Ostrem Building	TC
NC	1875	205	S. Main St.	Marshall C. Nichols Building	BO
NC	1882	207	S. Main St.	Marshall C. Nichols Building	BO
NC	1911	209	S. Main St.	Ethel Atwood Building	COM
C	1915	211	S. Main St.	Nels Solverson Building	TC
C	1919	213	S. Main St.	Charles W. Clark Automobile Garage	TC
C	1912	219	S. Main St.	Charles W. Clark & Albert O. Tuhus Auto Garage Building	TC
C	1926	223	S. Main St.	Reed & Son Commercial Building	TC

The following list describes each of the resources in the district, tells what is known of their history, and notes whether or not they are contributing [C] or non-contributing [NC] to the proposed district. Names given in the heading are historic names, when known.

Resource Name	Address	Status
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C. F. Dahl Building	124 S. Main Street	C
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This two-story, 90-foot-long x 25-foot-wide, Neo-Classical Revival style-influenced Twentieth Century Commercial style building was built in 1928 to house Dahl's drugstore (first story) and professional offices (second story).¹ It has a poured concrete foundation, a full basement story, and exterior walls clad in brick. The building is located on the northwest corner of S. Main and W.

¹ *The Vernon County Censor*. June 27, 1928, p. 1.

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Jefferson streets and it has a rectilinear plan, its main facade faces east onto Main Street, and historic photos show that its first story originally consisted of a nearly full-width storefront but this has now been replaced with one of modern design. Otherwise, this building is in largely original condition and its second story windows are especially notable because they all still retain all their original three-over-one-light double hung sash. The side elevations of the building is largely intact as well, the only change being the replacement of the first story display window positioned in the far right-hand (east) corner. An addition in the same style and using identical materials was added to the rear of the building in 1947, at which time the building was owned by W. D. Dyson.

Both the original building and its 1947 addition are the work of the well known La Crosse architectural firm of Parkinson and Dockendorff.² This building is also a listed City of Viroqua Landmark.

C. F. Dahl-Andrew Beat Building 120-122 S. Main Street C

Sanborn maps show that this fine Italianate-style influenced, Commercial Vernacular form, two-story, double store building was built between 1900 and 1905. Other evidence suggests that it was built around 1900 for C. F. Dahl and his brother-in-law, Andy Beat.³ The building is rectilinear in plan and measures 65-feet-deep x 40-feet-wide. The main facade of this building faces east onto Main Street, it is clad in brick, and historic photos show that its first story originally consisted of two nearly identical storefronts that have now been replaced with two of modern design. Otherwise, this facade is in largely original condition, its six tall second story window openings still retain their original one-over-one-light double hung sash, and it is especially notable for retaining its tall, rather elaborate brick cornice.

Sanborn maps show that this building's two stores housed a drugstore (south store) and a grocery store (north store) from 1905 to 1922. In 1908 these would have been C. F. Dahl's drugstore and A. E. Sorenson's grocery store.⁴ This building is also a listed City of Viroqua Landmark.

² Original drawings in the possession of Kratt Associates, Inc., Architects, in La Crosse, WI.

³ *Vernon County Heritage*. Viroqua: Vernon County Historical Society, 1994, p. 204.

⁴ *Vernon County Censor*. February 6, 1908, p. 1. This page shows a map of the downtown businesses at that time and it will be referred to throughout the description section in regard to 1908 occupants of district buildings.

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Temple Theater Building 114-118 S. Main Street

C

This large, excellent, two-story multi-purpose Neo-Classical Revival style building was built between 1921 and 1922 to house the Masonic Temple lodge hall in its second floor and the Temple Theater and two retail stores in its first story and in the theater wing that is located behind it.⁵ The main block is 110-foot-deep x 60-foot-wide and its main facade faces east onto Main Street. Historic photos show that the appearance of this facade has changed very little since it was built, the only changes (and they are slight) having been to the two storefronts that flank the asymmetrically placed and recessed main entrance. The rest of the facade, with its distinctively arched second story window surrounds is in almost totally original condition.

The theater portion of this two-use building is accessed through the lobby in the main block, but it is housed in its own rectilinear plan 110-foot-deep x 60-foot-wide wing, which is situated directly behind the main block. This theater is still in very original condition (the theater was remodeled in 1930), and has recently been the subject of an outstandingly successful restoration effort.

The Temple Theater and Masonic Temple building is the work of Parkinson & Dockendorff of La Crosse and it was listed in the NRHP on December 12, 2000.

Thomas Jerman Commercial Buildings 110-112 S. Main Street

C

Sanborn maps and historic photos show that what today appears to be a one-story rectilinear plan Twentieth Century Commercial Style building is in fact two historic one-story Commercial Vernacular form buildings, the left-hand southernmost one (112) of which was built in 1902, and the right-hand northernmost one (110) of which was built in 1883⁶. Both of these buildings were built as income property for Thomas Jerman. Originally, the slightly greater height of the cornice of the narrower south building was clearly visible, but by 1940 historic photos show that its cornice had been lowered to the level of that of the north building, giving the two buildings the appearance they have today. The earlier of the two buildings (north) was originally rectilinear in plan and it measured 50-foot-deep x 25-foot-wide and it had brick exterior walls, and its main facade faced east onto Main Street. The later building was similar and taller but only about 10-foot-wide. Historic photos show that the original

⁵ *Vernon County Censor*. June 28, 1922, special Masonic Temple dedication issue.

⁶ Navrestad, Victor and Donnalee. *Historic Viroqua Downtown Building Study*, unpublished. The Navrestad's are Viroqua citizens and their excellent continuing in-depth research into Viroqua's downtown is still ongoing as of this date.

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facades of both buildings consisted of nearly full-width storefronts, but only the older of the two now contains any original elements. Never the less, the differing original heights of these storefronts can still be clearly seen in the combined facade of today. The storefront of the south building is the most altered of the two but the greater height of its opening is indicative of the original height of the building. The storefront of the north building, however, is still believed to retain some of its original features and its original layout, although it is now partially filled with modern materials.

Sanborn maps show that the south building contained a millinery shop in 1905 and 1911 (the Mrs. J. E. Bigley Millinery Shop in 1908), a barber shop in 1922, and an undefined store in 1933. The same maps show that the north building contained a clothing store in 1892 and 1900 (the George Michaelsohn store), an H & C store in 1905, a clothing store in 1911 and 1922 (the T. T. Sanwick Clothing Store in 1908), and an undefined store in 1933. It is not known when the south building's height was reduced and the stores combined into one internally but both happened within the period of significance.

Thomas Jerman Commercial Building 108 S. Main Street NC

This building is rectilinear in plan, it measures 75-feet-deep x 25-feet-wide, and its main facade faces east onto Main Street and is clad in brick although not the original brick. Sanborn maps show that this now greatly altered, two-story, Twentieth Century Commercial Style building was built prior to 1892 and historic photos show that it was originally a good representative example of an Italianate style commercial building. Historic photos show this facade originally had a full-width first story storefront, that its second story featured three evenly distributed segmental-arched window openings with one-over-one-light double hung windows, and that it was crowned by a decorative overhanging bracketed cornice. By 1940, historic photos show that the first story had been altered and the cornice removed, but the second story was still intact as of that date. Some time after that date, however, the middle second story window opening was blocked up and the flanking openings shortened and reduced in size, and smaller modern windows installed. Today, the only part of the original fabric of this facade that remains is the outline of the original storefront opening and as a result, this building is believed to be too altered to be a contributing resource in the district.

Recent research has established that this store was built in 1882 for Thomas Jerman, who operated a drugstore in the building.⁷ Sanborn maps show that this building also contained a drugstore from 1892 until 1933 (it housed the A. J. Johnson Drug Store in 1908).

⁷ Navrestad, Victor and Donnalee. Historic Viroqua Downtown Building Study, unpublished.

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Howard D. Williams Commercial Building 106 S. Main Street

C

Sanborn maps show that this recently restored two-story Italianate style commercial building was built between 1892 and 1900 (other sources say 1898). The building is rectilinear in plan, measures 75-foot-deep x 20-foot-wide, and its main facade, which faces east onto Main Street, is clad in brick. Historic photos show this facade originally had a full-width first story storefront, that its second story featured two tall evenly distributed semi-circular arched window openings with one-over-one-light double hung windows, and that it was crowned by a decorative brick cornice. By 1940, later historic photos show that the first story had been altered and the uppermost part of the cornice had been removed, but the second story was still intact as of that date. Subsequently, however, the original molded stone hoods above the second story windows were reduced in size, the original windows were removed and the openings were partially blocked up and smaller modern windows installed. Since then, fortunately, the current owner has undertaken an outstanding restoration of the building and has returned it to its original appearance.

Historic photos also show that this building was originally almost identical in design to the first two stories of the much larger three-story Rogers & Williams Block that was once located next door to the north and which was built in 1880 and destroyed in a fire in 1927. It is not known if the two buildings shared the same designer and contractor but Howard D. Williams was the sole or joint owner of both.

Sanborn maps show that this building contained a boots and shoe store from 1892 until 1922 (it housed the H. D. Williams Boots and Shoe Store in 1908) and an undefined store in 1933. This building is also a listed City of Viroqua Landmark.

Felix Store Building

102-104 S. Main Street

C

This one-story, rectilinear plan, Twentieth Century Commercial Style building was built in 1931 to house the Felix Store.⁸ The building measures 80-foot-deep x 50-foot-wide, has a poured concrete foundation, a full basement story, and brick over hollow tile exterior walls, and its main facade faces east onto Main Street. The original, nearly full-width storefront of this building has been replaced with a modern one of somewhat similar design. The original transom lights that spanned the width of the storefront have now been covered over and a modern flat canopy now extends across the width of the building just below this transom. The remainder of the facade is still intact and the original Art Deco

⁸ *Vernon County Censor*. November 11, 1931, p.1 and November 18, 1931, pp. 2 and 3.

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style-influenced parapet wall with its decorative brick work is still intact and still contains its two capital letter "F."

This building was a joint project of local merchant M. J. Felix and the Leonard Gay Investment Co. of Madison, Wisconsin. The still unidentified architect is reputed to have been from Madison as well. The building was well known locally for its method of construction. "The construction of the roof is the only one in the state of Wisconsin, in buildings the size of the Felix Store. The hip roof is held up by wooden trusses and I-beams, eliminating pillars and supporting posts in the store. Go in and notice that there are none to obstruct one's view. It is a new departure in building construction."⁹

This building has been continuously occupied by the Felix Store, a general store and department store, since it first opened.

Nels Solverson Livery Stable **118-124 W. Court Street** **C**

This large, two-story building was originally built for Nels Solverson in 1896 as an Astylistic Utilitarian style livery barn/carriage barn and it was faced entirely in rock-faced dressed limestone. The building's asymmetrical main facade faced south onto W. Court St. and historic photos show that it was eight-bays-wide. Sanborn maps also show that the original building was rectilinear in plan, although a section that has since been demolished in the rear of the building resulted in the L-plan building that is visible today. Although originally in single ownership, the building was subsequently subdivided into three separate buildings beginning in the 1920s and two of these (120 and 124) now have Twentieth Century Commercial style brick-clad facades constructed in the 1920s and 1930s.

118 W. Court Street

One portion of the original building retains its original facade. This is the Astylistic Utilitarian Vernacular form, two-story, two-bay-wide, rectilinear plan building now known as 118 W. Court St. whose first story for many years served as the sample room of the adjacent Fortney Hotel (102-104 N. Main St.). This portion measures 65-feet-deep x 20-feet-wide and has a cut stone foundation and two-foot-thick rock-faced ashlar limestone exterior walls. The main facade faces south onto Court Street. Historic photos of the livery stable facade show that this portion is still largely intact with the exception of the smaller modern window that now fills its first story display window opening and the single-light modern windows that fill its two segmental-arched second story window openings.

⁹ *Vernon County Censor*. November 18, 1931, p. 2.

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The east-facing side elevation of this building is also clad in stone. Much of this side is now hidden by a covered exterior staircase that is of modern construction, but Sanborn maps show that a staircase of similar size has always covered most of this elevation. Sanborn maps also show that this building was occupied by the sample room of the hotel until at least 1922, but in 1933 its first story was occupied by a vulcanizing business and its second story by a printing shop.

120 W. Court Street

Sanborn maps and historic photos show that this two-story, Twentieth Century Commercial style building is the remodeled two-story wagon house portion of the Nels Solverson livery stable building that was built in 1896. It is not known how much of the original building is incorporated into the fabric of the present one, but the 1933 Sanborn map shows that by that date the original stone-clad front of this portion had been refaced with the present brick-clad front. No other information about this building has been found but its present remodeled appearance appears to date from the years between 1922, when Sanborn maps show it still had its original appearance, and 1933. It is shown in its present guise in a dated 1946 photo.

The present building is rectilinear in plan, measures 65-feet-deep x 35-feet-wide, and its main facade faces south onto Court Street. The very simple remodeled facade appears to be largely intact but its original windows and doors have been replaced with modern ones. The rear elevation of this portion also still retains its original stone cladding.

124 W. Court Street

Sanborn maps and historic photos show that this two-story, Twentieth Century Commercial style building is the remodeled two-story livery stable portion of the Nels Solverson livery stable building (118-124 W. Court St.), which was built in 1896. It is not known how much of the original building is incorporated into the fabric of the present one either, but a historic photo dated 1946 shows this portion with its present facade, which is believed to have been remodeled between 1933 and 1946. No other information about this portion of the building has yet been found.

This portion is rectilinear in plan, measures 85-feet-deep x 35-feet-wide, and its main facade faces south onto Court Street. This very simple remodeled facade appears to be largely intact, including the windows and doors in the very intact storefront. The rear elevation of this portion still retains its original stone cladding.

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For National Register purposes, 118-124 Court Street is still considered to be one building because it was built as a single building.

Fortney Hotel Building **102-104 N. Main Street** **C**

The three-story L-plan Fortney Hotel was built in 1899 and it is one of the largest and most intact buildings in the district. The building occupies the northwest corner formed by the intersection of N. Main and W. Court Street and its prominent corner location gives it principal facades that face south onto Court Street and east onto Main Street. The main block of the building measures 120-foot-long (the Court Street facade) x 55-foot-wide (the Main Street facade) and it has a cut stone foundation, exterior walls that are clad in brick, and these walls rise up to a tall, still intact brick parapet wall and cornice. The Queen Anne style design of the building was produced by the La Crosse architectural firm of Schick & Stolze and it features such hallmark Queen Anne features as a circular plan three-story corner oriel bay on the southeast corner (the date 1899 is placed on the stringcourse just below its top story) and two two-story polygonal oriels, one on the east facade and one on the south facade.¹⁰ The first story of the hotel was originally given over to public rooms and these are expressed in the large display windows (several of which still retain their elaborate original stained glass transoms) that punctuate both facades at regular intervals. The second and third stories are given over to multiple window openings that light the guest rooms and these still retain their original one-over-one-light double hung windows.

The Fortney Hotel replaced the earlier Greek Revival style Tremont House hotel, which was located on the same site. It was built for Torger Fortney, who owned it until his death in 1927, after which it was operated by his son, Adolph Fortney.¹¹ Between 1911 and 1922, a 35-foot-long addition that replicated the design of the original block was added to the west end of the Court Street facade of the building, but otherwise the hotel is largely intact and is in very good condition and is still in use as a hotel.

¹⁰ *Viroqua Republican*. May 19, 1891, p. 1; July 21, 1899, p. 1; November 17, 1899, p. 1.

¹¹ Vernon County Historical Society. *Vernon County Heritage*. Viroqua: Vernon County Historical Society, 1994, p. 99.

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C. & J. Michel Brewing Co. Building 106 N. Main Street C

This largely intact two-story Queen Anne style commercial building was built in 1899 to house a first story saloon that sold the products of the C. & J. Michel Brewing Co. of La Crosse. The design of the building is attributed to the La Crosse architectural firm of Schick & Stolze, who also designed the Fortney Hotel next door, built in the same year. The Michel Building is rectilinear in plan, measures 25-feet-wide x 75-feet-deep, and has a cut stone foundation. The main facade faces east onto Main Street and it is clad in brick with cut stone decoration and its second story is dominated by a polygonal oriel window.¹² This building is also a listed City of Viroqua Landmark.

First National Bank of Viroqua Building 101 S. Main Street C

The Neo-Classical Revival style First National Bank Building of Viroqua is one of the district's finest buildings and it was built in 1908 to a design by the La Crosse architectural firm of Parkinson & Dockendorff.¹³ The bank occupies the southeast corner formed by the intersection of S. Main and E. Court streets and this location gives it two principal elevations, one facing onto either street. This two-story building has a rectilinear plan, measures 100-feet-deep x 40-feet-wide, has a partially exposed dressed limestone over poured concrete basement story, exterior walls above that are clad in gray brick, and a main facade that faces west onto Main Street. This three-bay-wide facade is dominated by a pair of colossal order limestone Ionic columns located between two thick paneled brick piers that are placed in antis in relation to the columns. These elements support a full limestone entablature that encircles the two main elevations and a solid paneled balustrade acts as a parapet wall above it.

The length of the longer north-facing Court Street side elevation of the bank is divided into six bays by seven two-story-tall paneled pilaster strips and the second, third, and fourth bays from the right of the first story contain segmental-arched window openings, unlike all the building's other window openings, which have square heads.

¹² Svendsen, Marlys A. Determination of Eligibility Form for the C. & J. Michel Brewing Co. Building. December 29, 1988. On file with the Historic Preservation Division, Wisconsin Historical Society.

¹³ *Vernon County Censor*. July 22, 1908, p. 1 (Illustrated).

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The exterior of the bank is still in excellent, highly original condition today, the only change of importance has been the replacement of all the building's original single and paired one-over-one-light double hung windows with pairs of modern one-light casement windows. The excellence of its design and its high degree of integrity makes this building an important contributing resource in the district.

Mrs. B. F. Ferguson Commercial Building 105 S. Main Street C

This two-story, Twentieth Century Commercial Style building was built in 1908 as an investment property for Mrs. B. F. Ferguson and its first story originally housed Stoll & Groves' men's clothing store.¹⁴ The building is rectilinear in plan, measures 100-feet-deep by 25-feet-wide, has a concrete foundation and a full basement, and its exterior walls are clad in brick. The main facade of the building faces west onto Main Street and historic photos show that its first story originally consisted of a recessed second story entrance door placed to the left of a nearly full-width storefront that featured a centered and recessed entrance flanked by equal-sized display windows, both windows being surmounted by multi-light transoms. Today, however, the entire original first story of the building has been replaced by one of modern design that consists mostly of a flat fieldstone veneer that also extends across the first story of the adjacent store as well.

The second story of the main facade is more intact, however. This story is two-bays-wide and each bay contains a single window opening that originally (and still) contains a pair of one-over-one-light double hung windows, although the current window openings are shorter than the originals. The wall surface above these windows is quite elaborate. A stone cornice supported by paired stone brackets that originally spanned the width of the facade at the base of the paneled parapet has been removed. Historic photos show that this cornice and its brackets had been removed by the late 1940s, but the wall surface that they were originally attached to is still very visible and is now almost a design element of its own.

Like the First National Bank Building next door that was built in the same year, this building was also the work of Parkinson & Dockendorff of La Crosse.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Vernon County Censor*. September 9, 1908, p. 1 (Illustrated).

¹⁵ Original drawings in the possession of Kratt Associates, Inc., Architects, in La Crosse, WI.

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Lake & Herrick Double Store Building 107-109 S. Main Street C

This unusual, two-story, asymmetrical design, Queen Anne style, double store building was built in 1892 to replace separate ones destroyed by fire in 1891.¹⁶ This building consists of two rectilinear plan portions of unequal depth (107 is the deepest, being 70-feet-deep) and with a total width of 45-feet. It has a cut stone foundation and brick exterior walls. The main facade of the building faces west onto Main Street and its original first story storefronts were almost equal in width. The storefront of 107 consisted of a centered, recessed entrance door that was flanked by equal-width display windows. The storefront of 109 consisted of a recessed entrance to the left and a display window to the right, this entrance containing the entrance doors for both the storefront of 109 and the second story of both buildings. Both of these storefronts have been replaced with modern ones, but their original layouts are still visible.

The second stories above these storefronts are almost totally intact, however, and they clearly show the asymmetrical unity of the overall design of the building. The second story of 107 is symmetrical in design and three-bays-wide with the center bay being slightly narrower than the two that flank it. Each bay contains a window opening housing a one-over-one-light double hung window and the story is crowned by an elaborately corbelled cornice upon which is centered a small triangular pediment that has the date "1892" set into it. By way of contrast, the second story of 109 is asymmetrical in design and it is four bays wide. The dominant feature of this story is a large triangular pediment in the cornice that is placed above the two right-hand bays. Unity is provided by grouping the second story windows of both 107 and 109 between stone beltcourses that are identical in height and thickness and by extending the corbelled cornice across portions of both stores.¹⁷

Sanborn maps show that the south space (109) has been occupied by a jewelry store since 1892 and it is still houses one today, Biederman Jewelers, Inc.¹⁸ The same maps show that the north space (107) contained a dry goods store from 1892 to 1900, a clothing store from 1905 to 1922 (Coffland & Ellefson's "Blue Front" Clothing Store in 1908), and an undefined store in 1933.

¹⁶ *Vernon County Censor*. October 21, 1891, p. 3; March 30, 1892, p. 3; July 6, 1892, p. 3; July 20, 1892, p. 3.

¹⁷ Historic photos show that all the second story window openings on this facade were originally the same height. The four left-hand window openings have since been reduced in height, only the two right-hand openings retain their original size.

¹⁸ Fire insurance maps of Viroqua, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1892.

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Peck & Chapman Meat Market Building 111 S. Main Street C

This small, one-story, Commercial Vernacular form building was constructed in 1892 to replace one destroyed by fire in 1891.¹⁹ The building is rectilinear in plan; it measures 75-foot-deep x 20-foot-wide, has a cut stone foundation, and has exterior walls clad in brick.²⁰ The main facade of the building faces west onto Main Street and early photos show that it had a full-width storefront, above was a tall corbelled brick cornice that was then crowned by broad, shaped pediment. The original storefront consisted of a centered and recessed entrance flanked on either side by display windows. The present storefront is modern but its general design echoes that of the original. The elaborately corbelled brick cornice is still intact, but the shaped pediment has been removed.

Sanborn maps show that this building was occupied by a meat market from 1892 through at least 1911 (in 1908 it housed Morrison & Larson's meat market). In 1922 it housed a jewelry store (possibly this was an expansion of the store next to it, 109 S. Main Street) and in 1933 it housed an undefined store.

Casson-Purdy Double Block 113-117 S. Main Street C

This large, two-story, Italianate style commercial building was built in 1892 to replace separate ones destroyed by fire in 1891.²¹ The building is rectilinear in plan, it measures 75-foot-deep x 70-foot-wide, has a cut stone foundation, and has exterior walls clad in brick. The main facade of the building faces west onto Main Street and early photos show that its first story originally consisted of three storefronts, the openings for which have survived even though the storefronts themselves have been replaced with modern ones. These openings are framed and separated by pilaster strips and the two right-hand storefront openings are also separated from each other by the entrance door opening for the second story.

The building's second story is still largely intact and it is nine bays wide with the two bays at each end of the facade separated from the five in the center by pilaster strips that terminate at the corbelled brick cornice that crowns the facade. Each bay contains a single segmental arch window opening that has a decorative brick head, although the original one-over-one-light double hung windows themselves have

¹⁹ *Vernon County Censor*. October 21, 1891, p. 3.

²⁰ Between 1922 and 1933 an additional twenty-five feet was added to the original 50-foot length of this building.

²¹ *Vernon County Censor*. October 21, 1891, p. 3; December 23, 1891, p. 3; January 13, 1892, p. 3; February 10, 1893, p. 3; March 30, 1892, p. 3.

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now been replaced with modern units. Historic photos also show that the portion of the cornice above the five central bays was once somewhat taller than it is today and that stone finials were once positioned on it above the points where the pilaster strips end.

Sanborn maps show that the retail spaces in the building have housed a variety of uses over the years. In 1892 the north space contained a grocery store, the middle space was a drugstore, and the south space contained a harness store. The same uses continued through 1911, except that the harness store had given way to a clothing store (in 1908 the spaces were occupied respectively by: C. M. Thompson, groceries; O. E. Davis, drug store; and Roman & Felix, Dry Goods).

L. C. Boyle/ Fred Eckhart & Co., Inc. Double Block 119-123 S. Main Street C

This two-story, Twentieth Century Commercial Style, two-store commercial building was built in 1926 as a double block for L. C. Boyle and Fred Eckhart, whose previously separate buildings on this site were destroyed by fire earlier in the year. The new building was designed by Parkinson & Dockendorff of La Crosse.²²

The smaller Boyle side (119) has a rectilinear plan, measures 85-feet-deep x 20-feet-wide, has a poured concrete basement story, and exterior walls above that are clad in brick. The principal facade faces west onto Main Street and its original storefront had two large display windows flanking a recessed, centered entrance surmounted by a prism glass transom. This storefront has since been replaced with a modern one.

The second story of this side is largely intact, and it is two bays wide. Each bay consists of an oblong window opening, although these openings no longer contain their original pairs of eight-over-one-light double hung wood sash windows. This story is crowned by a brick parapet that has a pronounced horizontal emphasis.

The larger Eckhart side (121-123) occupies the northeast corner formed by the intersection of S. Main and E. Jefferson streets and this location gives it two principal elevations, one facing onto either street. This building measures 85-feet-deep x 45-feet-wide, has a rectilinear plan, a poured concrete basement story, and exterior walls above that are clad in brick. The principal facade faces west onto Main Street and its original storefront had three display windows separated by two recessed entrances surmounted by a prism glass transom. A second display window and transom was also located at the west end of

²² Original drawings in the possession of Kratt Associates, Inc., Architects, in La Crosse, WI.

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the first story of the south-facing side elevation as well. Today, the Main Street storefront has been replaced with a modern one and the one on the side elevation has been filled in with brick.

The second story of this side is largely intact, and its main facade is three bays wide. Each bay contains its original oblong window opening and these still contain a pair of eight-over-one-light double hung wood sash windows. The other three are still intact, as are the ones in the six bays of the south-facing side elevation's second story. The second story is crowned by a brick parapet that has a pronounced horizontal emphasis.

The first tenant of the Eckhart Building was the Schultz Bros. Co. dime store.

U.S. Post Office Building

119 E. Jefferson Street

C

The highly intact, one-story Viroqua Post Office building was built in 1939 to a design provided by Louis Simon, supervising architect for the Post Office.²³ The building is a representative example of the "stripped classicism" that was employed by the government in the late 1930s and early 1940s and it appears to be completely intact. The building is rectilinear in plan and freestanding in design and it has a full poured concrete basement story and exterior walls clad with brick over hollow tile. The main facade faces north onto E. Jefferson Street and it is dominated by the three large, tall openings that are grouped in the center of the facade. The center of the three openings contains the paired three-light main entrance doors, which are surmounted by a three-part ten-light transom. The openings on either side both contain triple window groups consisting of five-light sidelights that flank a fifteen light main window, and these windows are also both surmounted by a three-part ten-light transom. Two tall six-over-nine-light double hung windows flank the center group and the only decorations are a stone beltcourse that encircles the building at the sill level of the two side windows and another that is placed at the lintel level of the central window group.

An important feature of this post office is an excellent mural (actually oil on canvas) located at the east end of the lobby. This highly dramatic painting shows a night scene of Sac and Fox Native Americans stealing cavalrymen's horses during the Blackhawk War. It was painted by Forrest Flower, who was born in Portage, WI in 1912 and studied art at the Layton School of Art in Milwaukee from 1930-1934. This painting was installed in March 1942, and it is in excellent condition today, as is the entire

²³ Plaque on the building. The whole text reads: "James A Farley, Postmaster General; James A. Carmody, Federal Works Administrator; W. Engelbert Reynolds, Commissioner of Public Buildings; Louis A. Simon, supervising architect; Neal A. Mplick, supervising engineer. 1939."

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building, which is still in use as Viroqua's post office.²⁴ The mural is significant as a fine example of a public works mural possessing high artistic value. Furthermore, it contributes to the overall significance of the post office. This building is a listed City of Viroqua Landmark.

Christ H. Ostrem Building **201-203 S. Main Street** **C**

This fine, largely intact, two-story Twentieth Century Commercial Style building was built in 1914 to house a general store owned by Christ H. Ostrem.²⁵ The building occupies the southeast corner formed by the intersection of S. Main and E. Jefferson streets and this location gives it two principal elevations, one facing onto either street. The building is rectilinear in plan, measures 75-foot-deep x 40-foot-wide, has a poured concrete foundation and a full basement story, and its exterior walls are clad in brick. The principal facade faces west onto Main Street and its first story originally consisted of a full-width storefront that featured two large display windows on either side of a recessed and centered main entrance, the whole storefront surmounted by a prism glass transom. This storefront has been replaced with a modern one that has a similar design, but which uses a different layout; the prism glass transoms, however, are still intact and are covered now by an awning.

The second story of this facade and all of the north-facing Jefferson Street side elevation are still intact. The main facade consists of five nine-over-one-light double hung windows, all five are enframed by a single corbelled brick surround and two plaques in the parapet wall above have panels that read "C. H. O." and "1914." The second story of the side elevation features five pairs of nine-over-one-light double hung windows, each pair is enframed by a corbelled brick surround, and the only alteration that has affected this elevation has been the stepping down of the original horizontal cornice of its parapet.

The first story of this building was occupied by Ostrem's general store until at least 1934. The second story was originally used as the lodge and club rooms of the Knights of Pythias. The La Crosse firm of Parkinson & Dockendorff designed this building.²⁶

²⁴ Zalewski, June. "Main Street Meandering: Historic Walking Tour in Viroqua, Wisconsin." Viroqua: Viroqua Revitalization Association, 1990.

²⁵ *Vernon County Censor*. June 3, 1914, p. 1.

²⁶ Original drawings in the Parkinson & Dockendorff Collection of Kratt Assoc., Inc. of La Crosse.

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Marshall C. Nichols Commercial Building	205 S. Main Street	NC
Marshall C. Nichols Commercial Building	207 S. Main Street	NC

Research has found that this one-story three store frame construction Boomtown Style building was constructed as two buildings for Marshall Nichols, the left-hand store dating from 1875 and the larger two-store right-hand portion dating from 1882.²⁷ The currently combined building is rectilinear in plan, it measures 45-feet-deep x 50-feet-wide, and it has a cut stone foundation. The main facade of this building faces west onto Main Street and early photos show that it then consisted of three small storefronts and had a tall clapboard-covered parapet wall that was crowned by a simple overhanging cornice. Photos that show the original appearance of these storefronts have not yet been found and all the present storefronts now consist of modern elements, but the layout of the present storefronts is believed to be close to that of the originals. The rest of the facade is now completely clad with modern materials, including fake stone veneer, and the original cornice has also been lost.

These currently joined buildings are the last remaining frame construction nineteenth century commercial buildings on Main Street and Sanborn maps show that these three spaces have been occupied by a variety of businesses over the years, including some that occupied two of the spaces for a time. Never-the-less, it is believed that this very simple joined building has lost too much integrity to be considered as contributing resources in the district.

Ethel Atwood Commercial Building	209 S. Main Street	NC
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Sanborn maps show that this tiny, one-story, frame construction, Commercial Vernacular form building was constructed between 1911 and 1922 and recent research has found that this building was constructed in 1911 for Ethel Atwood to house her millinery shop.²⁸ The building is rectilinear in plan and it measures 45-feet-deep x 10-feet-wide. The main facade of the building faces west onto Main Street, but no early photos that show its original appearance have been found. It is believed, however, that its very simple facade originally consisted of a small entrance door and a small display window, above which was a clapboard-clad parapet wall. In general, the facade retains this earlier appearance, but both the present door and window are now modern and the facade is now clad in a mixture of fake stone veneer and other modern material. Consequently, it is believed that this very simple building has lost too much integrity to be considered as a contributing resource in the district.

²⁷ Navrestad, Victor and Donnalee. Historic Viroqua Downtown Building Study, unpublished.

²⁸ Navrestad, Victor and Donnalee. Historic Viroqua Downtown Building Study, unpublished.

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Nels Solverson Building

211 S. Main Street

C

This two-story, Twentieth Century Commercial Style building was constructed in 1915 for Nels Solverson. The building is rectilinear in plan, measures 110-feet-deep x 30-feet-wide, has a concrete foundation, and has exterior walls that are clad in brick over hollow tile. The main facade of the building faces west onto Main Street and historic photos show that it was originally symmetrical in design and had a nearly full-width first story storefront. This storefront consisted of two large display windows that flanked a recessed and centered entrance containing a pair of entrance doors. The entire storefront was surmounted by a prism glass transom. Today, though, two stores occupy the first story and the entire original storefront has been replaced with ones constructed out of modern elements.

The second story of the building is entirely intact, however, and it is three bays wide, with the center bay containing a single, one-over-one-light double hung window that is positioned slightly higher than other two window openings that flank it. These openings both contain a pair of eight-light casement windows and historic photos show that the windows in these three openings are all original to the building. A stepped parapet wall then terminates the facade.

The earliest history of this building is unknown, but from 1917 until 1922 it was the Star Motion Picture Theater (capacity of 380) and that by 1933 it was used as the Vernon County National Guard Armory.

Charles W. Clark Garage Building

213 S. Main Street

C

This one-story, Twentieth Century Commercial Style building was constructed in 1919 for Charles W. Clark as an automobile showroom and garage. The building is rectilinear in plan, measures 120-feet-deep x 65-feet-wide, has a concrete pad foundation, and has exterior walls clad in brick. The main facade of the building faces west onto Main Street and historic photos show that it originally had two unequal-width storefronts that flanked a deeply recessed entrance containing a large overhead garage door. These storefronts each consisted of several large display windows surmounted by transoms and each of them had its own entrance door located on the canted sides of the main recessed entrance. Today, the transoms of both storefronts are covered over and the side doors and the overhead garage door are modern, but otherwise the appearance is nearly identical with the original.

The remainder of the facade, including its distinctive segmental-arched parapet wall, is intact as well, and the building is still in use as an auto showroom and garage today as part of the Petersen Buick-Pontiac dealership.

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Charles W. Clark & Albert O. Tuhus Garage Building 219 S. Main Street C

This one-story, Twentieth Century Commercial Style building was constructed in 1912 as an automobile showroom and repair shop. The building is rectilinear in plan, measures 125-foot-deep x 30-foot-wide, has a concrete pad foundation, and has exterior walls that are clad in brick. The main facade of the building faces west onto Main Street and historic photos show that it originally had a nearly full-width storefront that consisted of a two-light display window with a transom above to the left, a garage opening that contained two side-hinged wooden doors with small nine-light windows in each to the right, and an entrance door to the shop in between the two. The openings that once contained these elements have been preserved, but the elements they contain and the roles they play have been altered. Today, a modern overhead garage door fills the left opening and a one-light display window fills the right-hand one. The remainder of the facade is still intact and consists of a tall, paneled, brick-clad parapet wall that hides the gable end of the roof behind it.

Originally, this building was separate from its larger, newer neighbor next door at 213 S. Main St., but when Charles Clark became sole owner of the Buick agency he had been running with Albert O. Tuhus and built the much larger building next door in 1919, the two buildings were joined internally. Both buildings are still in use as part of the Petersen Buick-Pontiac dealership.

Reed & Son Commercial Building 223 S. Main Street C

This two-story, Twentieth Century Commercial Style building was constructed in 1926 to house the tire repair and vulcanizing shop of Reed & Son. The building is rectilinear in plan, measures 100-foot-deep x 30-foot-wide, has a concrete pad foundation, and has exterior walls that are clad in brick over hollow tile. The main facade of the building faces west onto Main Street and it is believed that it is in almost completely original condition. The first story consists of a deeply recessed garage door opening to the left that contains an overhead garage door (this door is probably later than the building) that is surmounted by a twelve-light two-part transom, and a display window to the right that still retains its prism glass transom. The second story is two bays wide and each bay contains a triple group of three-over-one-light windows. Centered between and slightly above these windows are two stone plaques, one with the date "1926" and the other with the name "Reed & Son."

This building is now occupied by the Dairyland Printing Co. and it is one of the most intact of the contributing resources in the district.

Viroqua Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Vernon
County and State

Wisconsin

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the 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** a birthplace or grave.
- 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.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Architecture

Period of Significance

1892-1953

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Stolze & Schick

Parkinson & Dockendorff

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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Viroqua Downtown Historic District
Vernon County, WI

Significance

The Viroqua Downtown Historic District is of local architectural significance (NRHP Criterion C) because it is the only intact historic streetscape of Late Victorian period and early twentieth century commercial buildings remaining in the historic business center of the city of Viroqua. Individually, the buildings in the district are good representative examples of Italianate, Queen Anne, Neo-Classical Revival, Twentieth Century Commercial style, and Commercial Vernacular form designs. While other historic commercial buildings are scattered throughout the downtown they are found either in isolation or they have been greatly altered by insensitive modernization. Collectively, however, the buildings in the district have a significance that is even greater than the merit they possess individually. Intact surviving streetscapes of such buildings are rapidly nearing extinction in the changing economic and social reality that characterizes the downtowns of Wisconsin's cities today. Consequently, the retention of the buildings in this district is a matter of importance in preserving what remains of the downtown's historic character. In addition, the buildings in the district are also believed to be of local significance to the history of commerce in Viroqua (Criterion A) because they represent the most intact group of surviving buildings in Viroqua that are associated with this community's historic retail stores and other service-oriented commercial enterprises. The period of significance is 1892-1953. It begins with the date of the first contributing building in the district that retains integrity to its period of construction and extends to the 50-year mark.

Commerce

The Viroqua Downtown Historic District is believed to be of local historic significance (NRHP Criterion A) because its resources comprise the still largely intact historic commercial core of the city. The district consists of 26 mostly two-story masonry construction mid-to-late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings, all but two of which line N. & S. Main Street in the historic heart of the city. These buildings still form the commercial heart of the city today and they also represent a large number of all the buildings that were ever built in this city to serve the retail and professional needs of its citizens prior to 1953.

The first settler in what is now the city of Viroqua was Moses Decker, who came in 1846 and built the first building in the new settlement in that year. Decker initially chose this site because it lay on the route of an old Indian trail leading to La Crosse, the general route of this trail being roughly identical in Viroqua to that of the present day USH-14, which in Viroqua is also known as North and South Main Street. In 1850, Decker platted the future village and built a building that served the settlement as its first schoolhouse, meeting house and courthouse. In the same year Rufus Dunlap also arrived and built

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Vernon County, WI

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a two-wing log building that became the first store and the first hotel in the settlement. In 1852, Viroqua was designated the county seat by popular vote and it is still the county seat today. This act brought still more settlers to the settlement and with them came more new stores and other places of business. By the spring of 1866, the population had increased to the point where the settlement was incorporated as a village.²⁹

Most of the retail store buildings in the city were built on both sides of Main Street between Decker and Terhune streets and gradually this area became the hub of Viroqua's business district. Growth was slow but steady until the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad built a new track from Sparta south to the village of Viroqua in 1879. The coming of the railroad gave the agricultural region surrounding Viroqua a means of shipping its surplus to markets and its effect on Viroqua was instantaneous. In the same year the first lumber yard in the city was begun and in 1880, a new and much larger courthouse building (the present one, NRHP 1-8-80) was constructed. By 1884, when the first history of Vernon County was published, Viroqua was a thriving village, and the following year it was incorporated as a city.

Growth followed quickly, in large part because of Viroqua's position as the county seat and as the principal transshipping point for the products of the surrounding area's numerous and highly successful tobacco growers. This growth was soon reflected in the new buildings that were constructed in the business district of the community. By 1899, Viroqua's increased size and its evolving role as the commercial hub of the area caused Torger Fortney to build a new three-story brick room hotel building. It replaced the smaller frame one he had purchased the year before; his new building is the still extant Fortney Hotel (102-104 N. Main St.), one of the district's highlights.

Subsequent events justified Fortney's faith in Viroqua, which in 1892 had a population of 1400. After 1892, the population grew even more rapidly and as it grew, more new commercial buildings began to appear up and down both sides of North and South Main Street. The first generation of buildings constructed on that portion of the blocks that now comprise the proposed Viroqua Downtown Historic District consisted mostly of small frame commercial buildings into which were inserted a few clad in brick. Gradually, though, the increasing value of the commercial lots on these blocks, the accelerating growth of the city, and the expanding wealth of the surrounding farming area made it expedient to replace the first generation of buildings with a second one. In 1891, for example, the still extant Opera House Block building (118-122 N. Main St.) was completed on the southwest corner of N. Main and

²⁹ Vernon County Historical Society. *Vernon County Heritage*. Viroqua: Vernon County Historical Society, 1994, pp. 95-102.

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Vernon County, WI

State streets, this being a multi-store two-story brick building that once contained the Viroqua Opera House. Helping this replacement process along was the destruction wrought by Viroqua's numerous fires. Indeed, the district's present appearance today is, to a remarkable degree, one that has been created by a series of fires beginning in 1891 and continuing on up to 1927. The first of these happened on October 15, 1891, and it leveled all the buildings on the east side of the 100 block of S. Main Street from the Main Street-Court Street corner south to and including today's 113-117 S. Main St.³⁰ The destroyed buildings were all small frame construction buildings, and they were promptly replaced with larger two story brick buildings, three of which (107-109, 111, and 113-117 S. Main St.) still exist today. Seven years later, in 1899, another fire destroyed the frame construction Tremont Hotel, which was located on the northwest corner of the N. Main Street-W. Court Street intersection, and this was promptly replaced by the Fortney Hotel and the C. & J. Michel Brewing Co. block (102-104 and 106 N. Main Street, respectively). Nine years later, yet another fire destroyed the buildings located at 101 and 105 S. Main St. that had been built in 1892 to replace ones lost in the 1891 fire. These buildings were replaced, in turn, by the First National Bank Building located at 101 S. Main St. and the Mrs. B. F. Ferguson building next door at 105 S. Main St., both built in 1908.

By 1911, the population of the city had reached 2500, its commercial district extended for five blocks along Main Street from Decker Street south to South Street, and some of its second generation commercial buildings were beginning to be replaced by third generation ones. And, as before, fire was again able to lend a helping hand. In 1918, a fire destroyed the Masonic Temple building at 114-118 S. Main St., which was then replaced with the even larger and more elaborate Temple Theater building that is now located at 114-118 S. Main St. and which was built in 1921-1922. Yet another fire in 1926 destroyed the L. C. Boyle building and the F. M. Towner building, the latter of which occupied the northeast corner of the intersection formed by S. Main and E. Jefferson streets.³¹ These buildings were then replaced with the L. C. Boyle/Fred Eckhart Double Block (119-123 S. Main Street) later in the same year. In January of 1927 still one more fire leveled what had been the tallest brick block in the city, this being the three-story Williams Store building that had been built in 1880 and which occupied the southwest corner of the N. Main Street-W. Court Street intersection.³² This building was then replaced by the Felix Store Building (102-104 S. Main St.) in 1931, which was the last product of the fires that so materially reshaped the district.

³⁰ *Vernon County Censor*. October 21, 1891, p. 3.

³¹ *Ibid.* March 10, 1926, p. 1.

³² *Ibid.* January 5, 1927, p. 1.

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Viroqua Downtown Historic District
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From 1930 until the end of World War II, growth in Viroqua was slight. As a result, relatively few new buildings were constructed in the downtown part of the city during this period and most of these were related to the rise of the automobile. After the war, though, Viroqua's population began to climb again and today it has reached an historic high of 3922. This growth is in part a result of the continued prosperity of the surrounding agricultural area, where dairying has now supplanted tobacco as the major activity for most of the region's farmers. The consequences of this renewed growth for Viroqua's historic business district, however, have been mixed at best. Almost all the historic (pre-1953) buildings in the downtown have experienced some degree of exterior and interior alteration since the end of the war, a number of others have been demolished, and many of those that remain and that are located outside the district have experienced probably irreversible change. The buildings within the district, though, constitute the still intact heart of the historic business district of Viroqua and they bear witness to the way it has evolved from the early 1880s to the 1930s. Besides their significance as the most intact buildings in the business district, these buildings have also been occupied by a good percentage of all the commercial enterprises that existed in Viroqua during the period of significance. These enterprises include hotels, banks, restaurants, hardware stores, general stores, post offices, drugstores, harness makers, movie theaters, grocery stores, and other usages, all of which were once central to the life of Viroqua and the surrounding area. Consequently, the district is believed to be of significance in the area of Commerce because they constitute the most intact surviving embodiment of the historic period of Viroqua's historic commercial and retail life.

Architecture

The Viroqua Downtown Historic District contains an excellent collection of nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings and it is believed to be locally significant under NR Criterion C (Architecture) as a result. The district's resources constitute the most intact concentration of the surviving buildings within the city that were built specifically for commercial activity through 1953 and they also comprise a good percentage of all the buildings that were *ever* constructed for this purpose in Viroqua before that time. In addition, nearly a third of them are good representative works of important regional architectural firms.

Viroqua's excellent collection of mid-to-late nineteenth and early twentieth century masonry construction commercial buildings is arrayed primarily along a three-block-long stretch of Main Street. These buildings display a high degree of individual integrity for buildings of this type and they also have a considerable collective importance as an intact ensemble that represents the continuous evolution of the various architectural styles that are associated with commercial buildings in Viroqua from the 1870s through 1939. All of the twenty-one contributing buildings in the district are good, representative, largely

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Viroqua Downtown Historic District
Vernon County, WI

intact examples of their styles and include buildings designed in the Italianate, Queen Anne, Neo-Classical Revival and Twentieth Century Commercial styles and the Commercial Vernacular form. These are all architectural styles and vernacular forms identified in the Architectural Styles study unit of the *Cultural Resource Management Plan* and the buildings in the district display many of the salient characteristics associated with each of these styles and forms.³³

Surviving Italianate style commercial buildings are quite common in Wisconsin. These buildings are usually two-to-three stories tall and typically have bracketed cornices, flat or shallow-pitched shed roofs, and tall, often segmental or semi-circular-arched windows that are decorated with hood molds or pediments. Stone examples and wood frame examples exist but the vast majority of such buildings have main facades faced in brick and many have their other walls made out of brick as well. The district's only example of the Italianate style as applied to a commercial building is the Casson & Purdey Block at 113-117 S. Main St., which was built in 1892 and is a late example of the style.

The district contains several fine examples of Queen Anne style commercial buildings including: the Lake & Herrick Double Store Building (107-109 S. Main St.), built in 1892, and the C. & J. Michel Brewing Co. Building (106 N. Main St.), built in 1899. Another variation of Queen Anne Style design as applied to commercial buildings features a corner tower and the district contains an excellent example, the Fortney Hotel Building (102-104 N. Main St.), built in 1899. The Queen Anne style, as used for commercial buildings, was much more likely to approximate the appearance of contemporary English models than was the case with residential designs. Wisconsin examples of Queen Anne style commercial buildings are generally from one to three stories tall, have exterior walls which are usually constructed of brick, have either brick or stone trim, feature period revival style ornamentation that is sometimes of English origin, and have exterior elevations that feature bay windows or oriel windows placed above the first floor and corner towers that are either full height or treated as oriel bays.

The most prevalent style in the district is the Twentieth Century Commercial Style, of which there are nine contributing examples, some of which are quite elaborate in design while others are exceedingly plain. The identification of this style is the most recent fruit of research into commercial buildings of this era and its salient features are described below in a draft subsection written for the CRMP.

³³ Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986. Vol. 2, pp. 2-9, 2-18, 3-10. The Twentieth Century Commercial style section is still in draft form.

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Viroqua Downtown Historic District
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The Commercial Style or 20th Century Commercial Style is an early twentieth century commercial form. The style was rather utilitarian, and consequently was perhaps the most ubiquitous commercial style of the period. Examples may be found in both small and larger cities and range from one-story, single storefronts to large two or three story, multi-unit commercial blocks.

The style is characterized by a relatively unornamented, two-dimensional facade and a broad rectangular massing. Buildings are generally executed in "textured" brick, which has a coarse, striated appearance. A stepped or shaped parapet, often topped with a flat, stone or concrete coping is a common element. Ornamentation is generally confined to the use of contrasting materials or brick patterns in the cornice and a simply ornamented storefront often with prism glass transoms. Typical examples will have rectangular panels in the cornice framed by soldier or header brick courses, the insets of which are often detailed with decorative brickwork in herringbone or basket weave patterns. Small insets of tile, stone or concrete in diamond, square, or other simple shapes often form secondary accents. Window lintels and the storefront cornice line are often ornamented with soldier bricks.

The popularity of the Commercial style may be due to the simplicity of its design and ease of construction. A secondary factor was likely its versatility in application to needs and types of commercial enterprises emerging in the early twentieth century such as automobile showrooms and department stores. It appears to have been supplanted after the Great Depression by still more utilitarian and austere forms.³⁴

The district contains both typical and also excellent examples of the Twentieth Century Commercial style as described above. Not surprisingly, the finest of these were designed by Parkinson & Dockendorff: the Christ H. Ostrem Building, built in 1914 (201-203 S. Main St.); the L. C. Boyle/Fred Eckhart & Co. Double Block, built in 1926 (119-123 S. Main St.); and the C. F. Dahl building, built in 1928 (122-124 S. Main St.). Other good and more typical examples include the Felix Store Building (102-104 S. Main St.), built in 1931 and the work of an as yet unknown Madison architect, and the two buildings built for Charles W. Clark to house his automobile dealership at 213 and 219 S. Main Street, built in 1919 and 1912, respectively.

³⁴ On file with the Historic Preservation Division, Wisconsin Historical Society, in Madison, WI.

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Viroqua Downtown Historic District
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In addition, at least two and possibly more of the buildings in the district are works of the well known La Crosse, Wisconsin firm of architects, Stolze and Schick. Gustav Stolze (? - 1899) emigrated to the United States from Germany in 1872, and after receiving six years of technical training in Boston, worked for the Boston firms of Ware & Van Brunt and Rotch & Tilden. In 1880 he moved to Minneapolis to work with a firm in that city and in 1885 he moved to La Crosse, Wisconsin, starting his own practice in that city. In 1888, Stolze formed a partnership with Hugo Schick, who had emigrated from Austria in 1880 after graduating from schools in Vienna. Schick served with architectural firms in New York, Chicago, and St. Paul before coming to La Crosse in 1886 and his partnership with Stolze lasted until the latter's death in 1899. This firm was responsible for many buildings in La Crosse and the surrounding region and in 1899 they produced designs for two buildings in the district, the Fortney Hotel (102-104 N. Main St.) and, it is believed, the C. & J. Michel Brewing Co. building next door at 106 N. Main St.³⁵ In addition, Hugo Schick designed at least one other building in Viroqua after his partner's death. This was the second Lindemann Block (non-extant), which was located at 101 N. Main Street and built in 1901.³⁶

Six more buildings in the district are the known work of the especially prominent twentieth century La Crosse architectural firm of Parkinson & Dockendorff. Albert E. Parkinson began his career as a contractor before taking up architectural studies and Bernard J. Dockendorff, after two years of apprenticeship in an architectural office in this country, studied architecture in Europe for six years. In 1902, the two men formed an architectural practice in La Crosse, Wisconsin that became one of the most successful in the western half of the state. Surviving records of the firm indicate that they designed at least twenty-five buildings of all types in Viroqua as well as several alterations and additions.³⁷ A particular area of expertise of the firm was the design of school buildings, among which was the Vernon County Normal School in Viroqua (410 S. Center Ave.), built in 1919.³⁸ The firm also designed most other types of buildings as well, including six in the downtown business district of Viroqua: the First National Bank of Viroqua building, built in 1908 (101 S. Main St.), the Mrs. B. F. Ferguson building, also built in 1908 (105 S. Main St.); the Christ H. Ostrem Building, built in 1914 (201-203 S. Main St.); the Temple Theater building, built in 1921-1922 (114-118 S. Main St.); the L.

³⁵ Rausch, Joan and Richard Zeitlin. *Intensive Architectural/Historical Survey of the City of La Crosse*. La Crosse: City of La Crosse, 1984, pp. 13-14, 29-32.

³⁶ *Vernon County Censor*. December 18, 1901, p. 8 (illustrated).

³⁷ Parkinson & Dockendorff Collection. Kratt Assoc., Inc., Architects. La Crosse, WI.

³⁸ Parkinson & Dockendorff. *Twenty-Five Years of School House Planning: 1902-1927*. La Crosse: Parkinson & Dockendorff, 1927, pp. 82-83.

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Vernon County, WI

C. Boyle/Fred Eckhart & Co. Double Block, built in 1926 (119-123 S. Main St.); and the C. F. Dahl building, built in 1928 (122-124 S. Main St.).

In summary, the twenty-two contributing buildings in the Viroqua Downtown Historic District are considered to be of local architectural significance (NRHP Criterion C) individually because of their good, representative designs, their largely intact state, and the potential associations of a number of them with architects of regional and even statewide significance, and they are considered to be of architectural significance collectively because they comprise the still largely intact historic downtown commercial core of the city of Viroqua.

Archeological Potential

The extent of any archeological remains in the district is conjectural at this time. Earlier buildings are known to have occupied the sites of all of the existing buildings in the district and despite subsequent construction activity, some archeological remains from these earlier buildings may still be extant. No information about possible prehistoric remains in this area was found in the course of this research. It is likely, however, that any remains of pre-European cultures that may once have been located within the district would have been greatly disturbed or lost during the building activity associated with the subsequent development of this area.

Preservation Activity

The Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission was created in 1996 and has been very active in educating property owners in the district as to the importance and value of historic preservation, including acting as the sponsor of this nomination. A number of buildings in the district have been designated as Viroqua Landmarks by the Commission.

Viroqua Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Vernon
County and State

Wisconsin

9. Major Bibliographic References

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

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- 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:
Vernon County Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 6.0 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 670400 4824580
Zone Easting Northing

3 15 670560 4824360
Zone Easting Northing

2 15 670560 4824550
Zone Easting Northing

4 15 670500 4824350
Zone Easting Northing

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	Timothy F. Hegglund/ consultant for the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission	date	August 13, 2003
organization		telephone	(608) 795-2650
street & number	6391 Hillsandwood Rd.	zip code	53560
city or town	Mazomanie	state	WI

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Viroqua Downtown Historic District
Vernon County, WI

Major Bibliographical References:

Fire Insurance Maps of Viroqua, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1892, 1900, 1905, 1911, 1922, 1933.

Navrestad, Victor and Donnalee. Historic Viroqua Downtown Building Study, unpublished.

Parkinson & Dockendorff. *Twenty-Five Years of School House Planning: 1902-1927*. La Crosse: Parkinson & Dockendorff, 1927.

Parkinson & Dockendorff Collection. Kratt Assoc., Inc., Architects. La Crosse, WI.

Rausch, Joan and Richard Zeitlin. *Intensive Architectural/Historical Survey of the City of La Crosse*. La Crosse: City of La Crosse, 1984, pp. 13-14, 29-32.

Svendsen, Marlys A. Determination of Eligibility Form for the C. & J. Michel Brewing Co. Building. December 29, 1988. On file with the Historic Preservation Division, Wisconsin Historical Society.

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Vernon County Historical Society. *Vernon County Heritage*. Viroqua: Vernon County Historical Society, 1994.

Vernon County Historical Society. Historic Photo Collection.

Viroqua Republican.

Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986. Vol. 2.

Zalewski, June. "Main Street Meandering: Historic Walking Tour in Viroqua, Wisconsin." Viroqua: Viroqua Revitalization Association, 1990.

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Boundary Description:

The district boundaries begins at a point located on the east curbline of S. Main St. that corresponds to the SW corner of the lot associated with 223 S. Main St., then proceeds N along this curbline to the NW corner of the lot associated with 201-203 S. Main St., then proceeds N, crossing E. Jefferson St., to the SW corner of the lot associated with 119-123 S. Main St.. The line then turns 90° and proceeds W across S. Main St. to the SE corner of the lot associated with 124 S. Main St. The boundary then continues W along the north curbline of W. Jefferson St. to a point that corresponds to the SW corner of the lot associated with 124 S. Main St., then turns 90° and runs N behind said building and also behind 120-122 S. Main St. for approx. 65-feet until it intersects with the south lot line of the lot associated with 114-118 S. Main St. The line then turns 90° and proceeds W along said lot line until it intersects with the E curbline on S. Rock Ave. The boundary then turns 90° and continues N along said curbline to the NW corner the lot associated with 114-118 S. Main St., then turns 90° and proceeds E along the N lot line said lot until it intersects with the SW corner of the lot associated with 110-112 S. Main St. The boundary then turns 90° and continues N along the rear lot lines of 110-112, 108, 106, and 102-104 S. Main St. until intersecting with the S curbline of W. Court St. The line then proceeds N across said street to its N curbline, then proceeds W along said curbline to a point formed by the intersection of this curbline and the E curbline of N. Rock Ave. The line then turns 90° and continues N approx. 90-feet to the NW corner of the lot associated with 118-124 W. Court St., then turns 90° and continues E along the rear of said lot line to the NE corner, then turns 90° and proceeds S along the east lot line of said lot until intersecting with the NW lot line of the lot associated with 106 N. Main St. The line then turns 90° and continues E along the north line of said lot to a point located on the W curbline of N. Main St. The line then turns 90° and continues S along said curbline and across W. Court St. to a point that corresponds to the NE corner of the lot associated with 102-104 S. Main St.

The boundary line of the district then turns 90° and crosses S. Main St. and continues E along the north curbline of E. Court St. to the NE corner of the lot associated with 101 N. Main St. It then turns 90° and continues S along the rear lot lines of the lots associated with 101, 105, 107-109, 111, 113-117, and 119-123 S. Main St. until intersecting with the N curbline of E. Jefferson Street. The line then continues S across said street until intersecting with the S curbline of E. Jefferson Street, then turns 90° and continues E along said curbline to the NE corner of the lot associated with 119 E. Jefferson St., then turns 90° and continues S along the W curbline of S. Center Avenue to the SE corner of said lot, then turns 90° and runs W along the S lot line of said lot until reaching the SE corner of the lot associated with 211 S. Main St. The line then turns 90° and runs S along the rear lot lines of the lots

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associated with 213, 219, and 223 S. Main St. until reaching the SE corner of the lot associated with 223 S. Main St. The line then turns 90° and continues W along the S line of said lot to the POB.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries enclose all the land historically associated with the district's resources. The boundaries have been drawn so as to exclude all the pre-1953 buildings in the downtown portion of the city of Viroqua that do not meet NPS criteria for NRHP eligibility and buildings built after 1953. Buildings of similar history to those in the district located along N. Main St. north of the district and on the south side of W. Court St. are either separated from the district by substantial areas of open land associated with demolished historic buildings or consist of groups of significantly altered historic building and/or buildings that are less than 50 years old. Areas to the east and west of the district exhibit buildings of differing types and scale from those in the district.

Viroqua Downtown Historic District

Vernon

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

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/title	Various				
organization				date	
street & number				telephone	
city or town		state	Wisconsin	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 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 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 Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Items a-d are the same for photos 1 - 11.

Photo 1

- a) Viroqua Downtown Historic District
- b) Viroqua, Vernon County, WI
- c) Timothy F. Heggland, July 24, 2002
- d) Wisconsin Historical Society
- e) 102-104 & 106 N. Main St., View looking W
- f) Photo 1 of 11

Photo 2

- e) 102-104, 106 N. Main St. View looking NW
- f) Photo 2 of 11

Photo 3

- e) 100 Block of S. Main St. View looking SW
- f) Photo 3 of 11

Photo 4

- e) 100 Block of S. Main St. View looking NW
- f) Photo 4 of 11

Photo 5

- e) 201 Block of S. Main St., View looking NNE
- f) Photo 5 of 11

Photo 6

- e) 213 & 219 S. Main St., View looking E
- f) Photo 6 of 11

Photo 7

- e) 201 Block of S. Main St., View looking SE
- f) Photo 7 of 11

Photo 8

- e) 119 E. Jefferson St., View looking S
- f) Photo 8 of 11

Photo 9

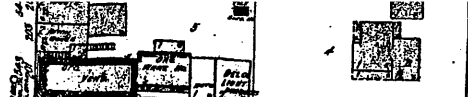
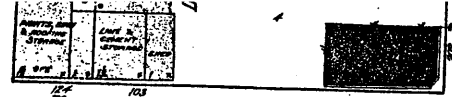
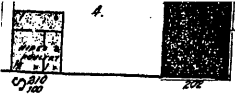
- e) 101 Block of S. Main St., View facing NE
- f) Photo 9 of 11

Photo 10

- e) 105 and 107-109 S. Main St., View facing E
- f) Photo 10 of 11

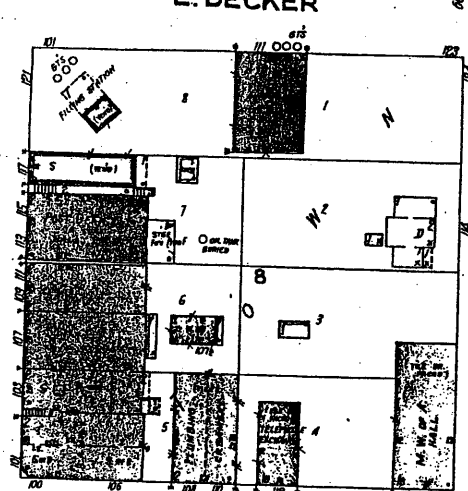
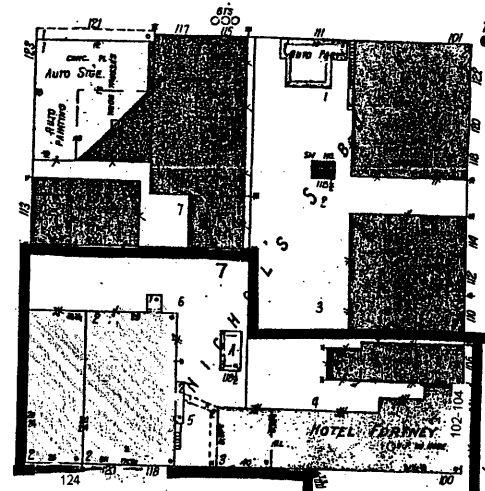
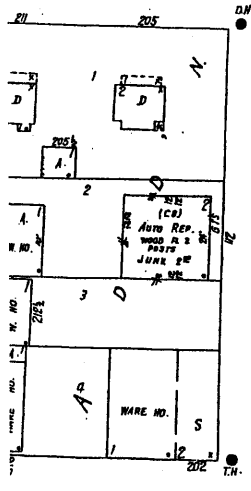
Photo 11

- e) 101 Block of S. Main St., View facing SE
- f) Photo 11 of 11



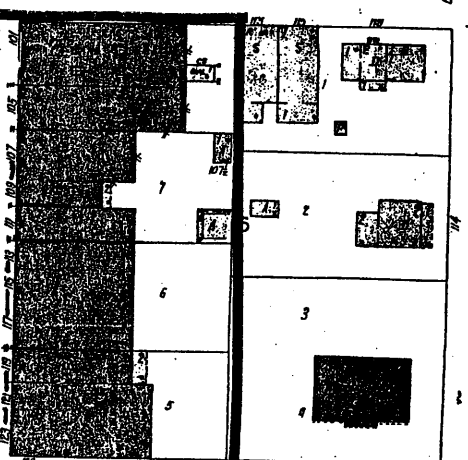
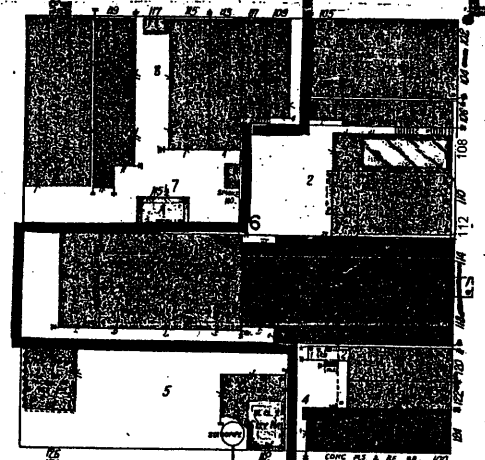
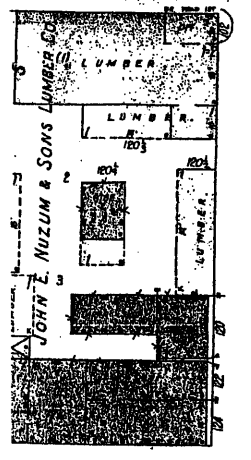
W. DECKER

E. DECKER



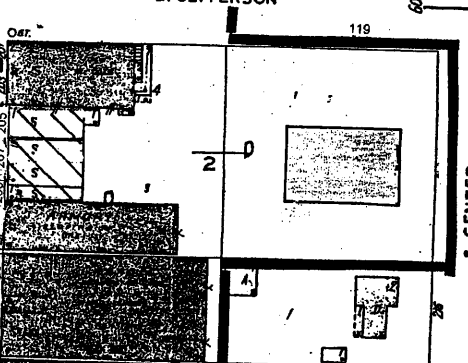
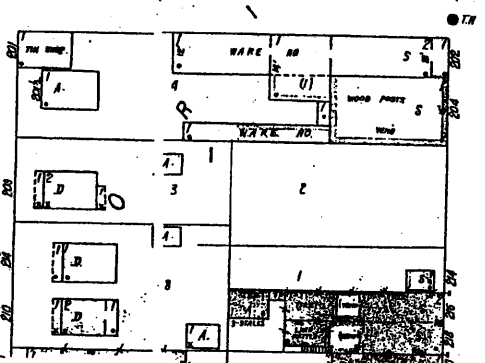
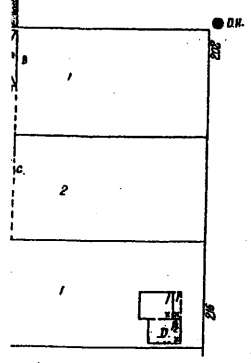
W. COURT

E. COURT



W. JEFFERSON

E. JEFFERSON



S. ROCK AV.

S. Main

S. CENTER AV.

District Boundary Line

Non-Contributing

Not to Scale



VIROQUA DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

Viroqua, Vernon Co., WI

E. TERHUNE

