

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JUN 26 1979  
DATE ENTERED AUG 14 1979

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
Sherman House  
AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
301 South Main Street

\_\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN  
Alma

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF 3rd

STATE  
Wisconsin

CODE  
55

COUNTY  
Buffalo

CODE  
011

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
___DISTRICT	___PUBLIC	<u>X</u> OCCUPIED	___AGRICULTURE <u>X</u> MUSEUM
<u>X</u> BUILDING(S)	<u>X</u> PRIVATE	___UNOCCUPIED	<u>X</u> COMMERCIAL ___PARK
___STRUCTURE	___BOTH	___WORK IN PROGRESS	___EDUCATIONAL <u>X</u> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
___SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	___ENTERTAINMENT ___RELIGIOUS
___OBJECT	___IN PROCESS	___YES: RESTRICTED	___GOVERNMENT ___SCIENTIFIC
	___BEING CONSIDERED	___YES: UNRESTRICTED	___INDUSTRIAL ___TRANSPORTATION
		___NO	___MILITARY ___OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Delvan Deneff

STREET & NUMBER  
301 South Main Street

CITY, TOWN  
Alma

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE  
Wisconsin 54610

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Buffalo County Courthouse - Register of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER  
407 South Second Street

CITY, TOWN  
Alma

STATE  
Wisconsin 54610

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places

DATE  
1977

\_\_\_FEDERAL XSTATE \_\_\_COUNTY \_\_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS State Historical Society of Wisconsin

CITY, TOWN  
Madison

STATE  
Wisconsin 53706

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR  
 DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Situated on Main Street in Alma, the Sherman House is tucked into the bluff overlooking the Alma Locks and the Mississippi River. It is a large, 2-1/2 story building constructed of the bright red brick commonly used in Mississippi River communities in the 19th century. When it was built in 1866, the hotel was sheltered by a shed roof but in 1875, the current gable roof, with returned eaves, doubled attic lights in each gable end and a cross gable in front, was added.

The front facade is basically symmetrical, with three windows at the second level on each side of a toplit doorway. The doorway leads to a cantilevered porch, the elaborately carved Victorian balustrade of which has been replaced by a simpler wood railing. The rectangular windows are set under segmental arches, as are the other windows in the building. Sixteen of these windows retain the original six-over-six configuration. The symmetry of the first floor is broken by a large double doorway leading to the saloon room at the north end. Originally topped by a transom similar to those on the main and second level doorways, this doorway was altered, probably in the 1890s when the floor of the saloon room was lowered 30 inches to accommodate a change in grade on Main Street. Probably at the same time the windows flanking the saloon room door were lengthened. The current owners recently added the center front porch, which is constructed of wood.

In the back, an enclosed porch was added at the second level in 1927. One of the two earlier dormers was converted into a small porch in 1935.

The interior features a central hallway with an open stairway enhanced by a carved oak handrail and turned spindles. The original pine trim and some original door locks exist, and the ornate tin ceiling added in 1920-1921 remains in the saloon room. In 1925 two small kitchen windows were added on the south facade. In the 1930s a living room window was pierced into the south wall and a bedroom was converted into a bathroom. Sometime after 1975 this bath was changed into two bathrooms. Another was added in the south end of the second floor hallway and the dining room and waiting room were converted into a one-bedroom apartment.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) center of civic activity; association with significant persons
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1866

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sherman House is significant to the history of Alma and Buffalo County both for the role it played in the history of the community and for its association with several individuals of local historical significance. Architecturally, it is an intact representative structure from Alma's short-lived boom period, and it is a characteristic example of the vernacular red brick construction that typified much of the early non-domestic architecture of upper Mississippi River towns.

Built by Philip Kraft in 1866 of locally made red brick (Tax Rolls), the Sherman House is a piece of functional architecture. Its form is unpretentious but aesthetically pleasing. The symmetry of its main facade recalls that of the Federal and Greek Revival styles, which by 1866-1872 would have been considered passe in a more cosmopolitan environment. The replacement of the original shed roof with the present gable roof occurred in 1875 (Alma Weekly Express, 10/14/1875), during the height of the hotel's importance, and cannot be considered an adverse alteration. Since that time, the appearance of the building has been little altered, and the Sherman House remains today a local landmark possessing remarkable historical integrity.

The Sherman House was built during the decade when Alma emerged as the port city at Beef Slough, which was then the key staging area in the transportation of logs and lumber from the pineries of the Chippewa Valley. Alma was also then an important market and port serving the agricultural hinterland of Buffalo County. During Alma's heyday the Sherman House was a lively place, with its tavern and rooms serving the men who operated the boom at Beef Slough, the river traffic, and farmers from the surrounding countryside. The men who operated the hotel in the last third of the nineteenth century were among the political and civic leaders of Alma and Buffalo County. The hotel was the scene of a large portion of their activities, and played a significant role in local affairs.

The first keeper of the Sherman House was William Hamilton Gates, one of the earliest permanent settlers of Alma. He built the first house in town, kept Alma's first store, and figured prominently in the development of the community. He is credited with the naming of Alma in 1856, and the following year he became the Buffalo County Register of Deeds. He was the first chairman of the Town of Alma, sheriff in 1863, and postmaster in 1806 and for several years following. Before the construction of the Sherman House, he kept hotel at the Alma House. (Kessinger, 1888:613)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alma Weekly Express, 10/14/1875.

Buehler, Theodore Jr. interviews, 1975-1977 passim.

Curtiss-Wedge, Franklyn. History of Buffalo and Pepin Counties. Winona, MN., 1919. (cont)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.14

UTM REFERENCES QUADRANGLE NAME Alma, WI-MN

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24:000

A | 1 | 5 |   | 5 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 0 |   | 4 | 9 | 0 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 0 |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Probst and Wenger's Add. - Block 24 Lot 9  
 This is an angle lot with a 50' frontage, 80' rear, and 95' deep.

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David Donath, Historian

(continued)

ORGANIZATION

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

April 1979

STREET & NUMBER

816 State Street

TELEPHONE

(608)262-3390

CITY OR TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Richard Murray*

TITLE Director, State Historical Society

DATE

5/14/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Carol Hull*

DATE

8-14-79

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

*Emma Jane Sage*

DATE

8-13-79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Regional Coordinator*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 26 1979
DATE ENTERED	AUG 14 1979

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

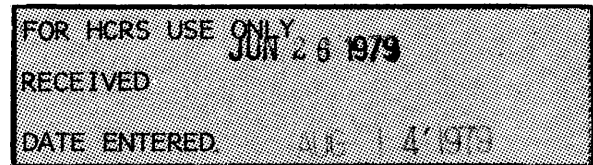
PAGE 1

8. SIGNIFICANCE continued

John Buehler bought the Sherman House in 1872 and kept the hotel until the turn of the century. Under the ownership of Buehler, the Sherman House became a center of political activity in Buffalo County. In 1919 local historian Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge lauded Buehler as "one of the prime movers in . . . the formation of the county." (p. 745) Buehler was born in Switzerland and came to Wisconsin in the early 1850s, settling in Fountain City. He quickly established a position of importance in the area, and in 1853 he was elected the first sheriff of Buffalo County. He held that office twice more, in 1859 and 1875. In 1856 he and a man named Clarke established the first grist mill in the county at Fountain City. In 1861 he was elected to the Buffalo County Board of Supervisors, and the following year he chaired the board. In 1872 Buehler moved to Alma and took over the Sherman House. Buehler and his son Theodore after him were dominant figures in the Democratic Party of the area, and for as long as Buehler kept hotel at at the Sherman House, it was a center of activity and a regular meeting place for local Democrats. (Curtiss-Wedge, 1919:745; Theodore Buehler;r., interview)

The Sherman House ceased operation as a hotel around 1900, but it remained the residence and place of business of members of the Buehler family until recently. Theodore Buehler, John's son, resided and maintained his law office there into the 1930s. Regarded in 1919 as "dean of the Buffalo County bar" (Curtiss-Wedge, 745), Theodore Buehler practiced law in Alma for about sixty years, beginning in 1878. In 1881 and between 1909 and 1916 he served as district attorney, and between 1893 and 1897 he was Alma's postmaster. A prominent and influential citizen of Alma, Theodore Buehler, like his father, was active in Democratic Party politics. (Curtiss-Wedge, 1919: 745)

Theodore Buehler's sons, Theodore Jr., and Edmund, were the last family members to reside in the Sherman House. Both brothers were editors of the Buffalo County Journal, Theodore Jr., was the long-time postmaster of Alma and Edmund served as justice of the peace for several years. In 1965 the Buehlers offered the Sherman House to the City of Alma for use as a museum. The city was unable to raise the funds necessary to support such a project, and ten years later the building was sold to Delvan Deneff, the present owner. Deneff, who is active as an officer of the local historical society, is stabilizing and restoring the building and has plans for its reuse as a museum.



## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 & 11 PAGE 1

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES continued

Gleiter, Nellie. interview, 4/1/77.

Kessinger, L. History of Buffalo County. Alma, WI., 1888.

Sherman House Papers. in possession of Delvan Deneff.

Tax Rolls. City of Alma, 1860-1870 in possession of Alma Historical Society.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY continued

Delvan Deneff, Owner  
301 South Main Street  
Alma

January 16, 1979  
(608)685-4929  
Wisconsin 54610

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Katherine Hundt, Architectural Historian  
State Historical Society of Wisconsin  
816 State Street  
Madison

April 1979  
(608)262-2970  
Wisconsin 53706