

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Albert Lea Commercial Historic District (Boundary Increase and Decrease)

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MINNESOTA, Freeborn

DATE RECEIVED: 11/14/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/02/03
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/18/03 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/29/03
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03001337

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 12/29/03 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept

REVIEWER Edson Beal

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 12/29/03

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

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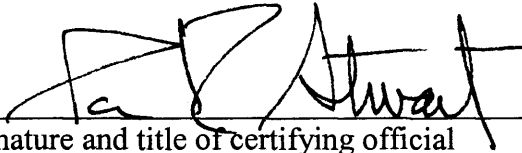
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name of property

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, I hereby certify that this documentation amending the Albert Lea Commercial Historic District (NRHP 1987, #87001214) meets the National Register 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 amended property meets the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant locally.



Signature and title of certifying official

Ian R. Stewart

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

11/5/07
Date

Minnesota Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

United States Department of the Interior
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Location: Located on Broadway Avenue between Water and Pearl Streets

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Ownership of Property:

Private and public

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing: 91 buildings

Noncontributing: 18 buildings, 5 sites

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:

42 buildings

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Description

The existing Albert Lea Commercial Historic District encompasses forty-eight buildings (forty-two contributing, six noncontributing) along three blocks of Broadway Avenue between Water Street on the north and Main Street on the south. Listed in the National Register in 1987, it excluded a number of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commercial buildings on neighboring streets. Historically, these buildings were part of Albert Lea's commercial district. Sixty-two of these properties are buildings and five are vacant lots now used for parking. Most of the buildings are one to two stories in height, although the 300 block of South Broadway has two- to three-story buildings similar to those in the existing commercial historic district. The city's tallest building, the six-story Home Improvement Building, is also on one of the downtown side streets. All but one building have flat roofs and are built of brick or clad in brick veneer. Most are examples of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commercial styles, although there are representations of high styles like Sullivanesque, Prairie, Moderne, Beaux-Arts, and Romanesque Revival. Because building permit records for the early twentieth century are sporadic, Sanborn maps were consulted to define building periods. This research revealed that of the sixty-two buildings, ten were built before 1899, twenty-three between 1900 and 1918, sixteen between 1919 and 1931, twelve between 1932 and 1953, and three after 1953.

- 1. Historic Name: Commercial building**
Current Name: Woodgrains Furniture
Address: 310 South Broadway Avenue
Date: pre 1886
Contributing

Built before 1886, this two-story brick building is rectangular in plan. The tan-brick facade dates from the 1940s and is historic. The modern plate-glass door is set in an asymmetrical storefront with multiple plate-glass windows, wood bulkheads, and wood transoms. Green-painted corrugated metal covers the storefront cornice and is connected to a flat metal awning, also painted green. The two second-story openings contain paired two-over-two double-hung-sash windows. The building shares a party wall and a stamped-metal cornice with 302-306 South Broadway Avenue. Both buildings were occupied by the same business from the 1940s to the 1980s.

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This building was originally operated by the Val Blatz Brewing Company and was half of its current size. Between 1899 and 1905, the first and second floors were extended to the rear property line. By 1918 the building had been transformed into a billiards parlor. In the 1940s, the building use changed to retail when the Bob Wallace Mercantile Company, located in 302 South Broadway, expanded into the building. Wallace's of Albert Lea remained in the building until the 1980s. At that point, the building was remodeled into offices and renamed the Heileman Building. By 1999 the Woodgrains Furniture store had moved into the building, which is presently vacant, although it still bears the furniture store's name.¹

- 2. Historic Name: Gulbrandson Hardware Company**
Current Name: Christian and Peterson, P.A., Attorneys-at-Law
Address: 314 South Broadway Avenue
Date: 1886
Noncontributing

The building was originally constructed in 1886 with a red-brick facade and Queen Anne decorative details. In the mid-twentieth century, the owner modernized the facade with cream brick. The four second-story window openings were moved closer together and fitted with casement and transom windows. The storefront was also altered with an asymmetrical configuration. The display windows have been covered with plywood and stucco, and two new plate-glass doors and a transom window fill the entryway.

From its construction until 1968, this building housed the Gulbrandson Hardware Company. The business was founded by Hans Gulbrandson and his two brothers, Gilbert and Vegger, in 1870. The building was constructed with a detailed Queen Anne facade that was extensively remodeled by Hans's grandson to its current appearance. After the hardware store, a variety of

¹ The following entries rely primarily on two sources: Albert Lea, Minnesota City Directories, various publishers, 1899, 1914, 1928-1929, 1939, 1940, 1950, 1961, 1970, 1980, 1990, 1999, located at the Freeborn County Historical Society (hereafter referenced as FCHS), Albert Lea; and Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Albert Lea, Minnesota* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1884, 1886, 1891, 1899, 1905, 1910, 1918, 1926, 1931-1938, 1931-1948), available at the Albert Lea Community Development Division, City Center, Albert Lea, and at the Minneapolis Public Library website. Additional sources are cited when used.

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businesses occupied the building including the Town House of Albert Lea, a supper club; Bell's Townhouse Supper Club; Tax savers, Inc.; Christian, Slen, Savelkoul, Johnson, Brober, and Kohl, attorneys; and the present occupant, Christian and Peterson, another law firm. The facade has been altered and the building's historic integrity compromised; it is noncontributing to the historic district.²

3. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Cafe Cappuccino & Deli; Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota

Address: 330 South Broadway Avenue

Date: between 1891 and 1899

Contributing

Built between 1891 and 1899, this three-story dark-red-brick building is rectangular in plan. The two plate-glass doors on the first story are set in a recessed entry and surrounded by multiple plate-glass display windows. A non-historic stucco sign band was added to the storefront, but the original rusticated-stone pilasters are visible on the exterior ends of the facade. The second and third stories were remodeled in the 1930s when Mier Wulff and Sons moved into the building. The six second-story window openings contain modern plate-glass and sliding vertical-sash windows. The four third-story window openings are also plate glass. White tile and white brick stringcourses were added below the second- and third-story window openings. White tile also ornaments the brick pilasters and forms panels above the third-story window openings. Red bricks form the lintels and a stringcourse above the third-story windows.

This building was originally constructed to house a hotel on the upper floors and businesses on the first. The storefront at 324 South Broadway held Philpott and Palmer, a music store. In addition to selling instruments, the store also offered the services of a piano and organ teacher and a violin and coronet teacher. The Lion Drug Store was located in the storefront at 328 South Broadway. The Hanson House was the hotel operating on the second and third floors. By 1918 the first-floor businesses had changed, but the hotel was still operating. M. L. Olson, a grocer, and the Sieberg Candy Company occupied the storefronts. While Olson and the

² "Gulbrandson Hardware to Close After 98 Years; Leased by Restaurant," n.p., April 10, 1968, clipping available at FCHS.

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Hanson Hotel continued to use the building in 1929, the confectionary had changed hands and was operated by F. L. Wagner. In the 1930s, the entire building was taken over by Mier Wulff and Sons, a furniture store. The business expanded into the building immediately to the south, now 332 South Broadway, in the 1940s. Mier Wulff and Sons would continue to occupy the building until the 1960s. Like the other buildings on this block, the building was inhabited by a series of short-term occupants over the next thirty years. In the 1970s, a tavern, The Name of the Game, and Ritter's Beauty School operated out of the building. In the 1980s, the building, along with 332 South Broadway Avenue, was remodeled into offices and renamed "The 300 Building." The 324 and 328 addresses assigned to the building were merged into 330 South Broadway Avenue. Although it had a high occupancy rate of twenty businesses in the beginning, by 1999 the number had dropped to five. The last known occupants of the building were the Cafe Cappuccino & Deli and Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota.³

- 4. Historic Name: Nissen Block**
Current Name: vacant
Address: 332 South Broadway Avenue
Date: between 1891 and 1899
Contributing

This three-story dark-brown-brick building has a C-form plan and was constructed between 1891 and 1899. A courtyard on the southern side was enclosed and roofed after the Broadway Theatre was built immediately next to the building in 1903. This courtyard area became a one-story section with a skylight. The storefront was modified with inappropriate materials, including an extension of the stucco sign band above the windows and doors on 330 South Broadway, but the original banded stone pilasters are intact. The plate-glass door and windows are recent alterations. The brick-banded second story is intact, but contains modern sliding vertical-sash windows in the three flat-arch openings. Brick pilasters with stone capitals divide the third-story window bays. The three window openings contain sliding vertical-sash windows with sheet metal covering the round-arch sections of the original openings. The original carved-stone keystones and stone accents on the window openings are untouched. Both the second- and third-story window openings have stone sills that connect to form stringcourses. A

³ Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge, *History of Freeborn County, Minnesota* (Chicago: H. C. Cooper, Jr. and Company, 1911), 262.

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stone and corbelled-brick architrave is above the third-story windows. The cornice is cream-colored tile laid in a soldier-course pattern. Two pediments, which formed the original parapet, were removed and the original stone finials were set directly onto the present parapet wall.

This building was known as the Nissen Block, housing the Nissen Hospital and doctors' offices on the first, second, and third floors. The storefront at 334 South Broadway contained a shoe and boot manufacturer, C. L. Strom. By 1914 the hospital had been put out of business by Naeve Hospital on the north side of Albert Lea, and the building was converted for commercial and residential use. Wiele and Voigt, druggists, operated out of the northern storefront, while the East Texas Land Company and Dr. G. A. Stevenson used the southern storefront. The upper floors were rented out as furnished rooms by Christine Lien. By the 1920s, the Majestic Dry Cleaners had moved into the southern storefront and the drugstore was operated by T. J. Wiele. The upper floors had become the Nissen Hotel. In the 1930s, Carl's Grocery and Market occupied the northern storefront and Dr. C. N. Wulff and Wulff's Jewelers were in the southern storefront. The Albert Lea Broadcasting Company, which operated station KATE, used part of the second and third floors until moving out in the 1950s. Mier Wulff and Sons, a furniture store located at 330 Broadway, expanded into the first floor in the 1940s. After the furniture store left in the 1960s, Jansma Music Company and King Optical Company moved into the first floor, but the remainder of the building was vacant. The music store was replaced by Carlson's Hobbies and Crafts in the 1970s. During the 1980s, the building was developed as part of "The 300 Building" with 330 South Broadway Avenue. The 334 storefront was merged into the 332 South Broadway Avenue address. It was briefly occupied by Tax Savers of Albert Lea in the late 1990s, and is currently empty.⁴

5. Historic Name: Broadway Theatre

Current Name: Stephen R. Erickson, Lawyer; Rochow Eskens Law Office; Tovar Styling Salon

Address: 336-346 South Broadway Avenue

Date: 1902; 1927; 1947

Contributing

⁴ "KATE Begins Seventh Year of Operation," *Albert Lea Community Magazine*, October 1943, 4-5, available at FCHS.

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When originally built in 1903, the building's east (primary) facade was finished with tan brick in a Romanesque style. In 1947 the building's interior and exterior were remodeled to display a more modern appearance. The exterior was covered with the current tan stone. The upper half of the windows were covered with wood panels, and the three storefronts, each with its own entrance, were clad in red marble. The banded brick pilasters between the eight second-story window openings on the east facade and two openings on the south facade are remnants from the original facade, as are suspension chains that once supported a large projecting sign. The south facade has been little altered except for the removal of a brick cornice, the enclosure of original window openings, and the addition of a gray stucco storefront and entrance. After the theater closed in 1988, the building was converted to offices. The gray stucco central storefront on the east facade dates from that renovation.

This building was constructed for live stage performances and was later adapted to show motion pictures. The front section on Broadway Avenue housed office and commercial space. The Opera House Cigar Store occupied the southeast corner of the first floor and the Odd Fellows had a meeting hall on the third floor. By the 1920s, Kappel and Bassett, a barbershop, and an art supply store run by Mrs. G. T. Paine occupied the storefronts. The upper stories held management offices for the Broadway Theatre. In 1927 the Tapager Construction Company rebuilt the interior with reinforced concrete and expanded the balcony into the third floor of the building, enclosing the exterior windows with wood panels. In the 1930s, the Shattuck Hat Shop moved into the first floor, but this business was gone by 1947 when the entire building was remodeled into the New Broadway Theatre and the Albert Lea Amusement Corporation. In the 1960s, the word "new" was dropped from the name and the management company became the Minnetonka Amusement Corporation. Office space was rented to the Farmers Insurance Group, the Gus A. and Dale Wangen Insurance Agency, and the Kluver Insurance Agency. During the 1970s, the theater changed hands again, and a record store called Discounted Records moved into the first floor. Although the balcony was enclosed in 1974 to create a second movie theater, the business could not compete with the larger multiplexes being constructed at the time. In 1988 the theater went out of business and the building sat vacant until the mid-1990s, when it was remodeled into office and commercial space. Tenants included Stephen R. Erickson, an attorney; American Express Financial Advisors; Mary L. Creative Hair Studio; Matthies Essig Agency; and Retired Senior

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Volunteer Program and Freeborn County Senior Resources. Currently only Stephen R. Erickson, Rochow Eskens Law Office, and Tovar Styling Salon are listed as occupants.⁵

- 6. Historic Name: Tribune Building; Morin Block**
Current Name: Credit Bureau; Absolute Bail Bond Co.; All-State Residential Loans;
All-State Bonding; Info Tec Computer Service; Mediar, Inc.
Address: 400-410 South Broadway Avenue
Date: pre 1886; 1904; 1910
Contributing

Constructed before 1886, this building was originally smaller and had an Italianate-style facade. After the newspaper office moved into the building in 1904, a two-story addition was made to the south end to house the printing presses and the building was clad in dark-brown brick. The north facade and second story of the east facade were modified to the present configurations in 1910. Four additional storefronts were added to the east facade in 1961 and the north-facade storefront was remodeled. Contemporary plate-glass doors and windows dominate the storefronts and continuous corrugated-metal panels cover the transoms. Some of the 1910 brick and stone details remain on the first story. The stone sills and stringcourses below the second-story window openings are intact, and the stone blocks on the window corners are untouched. Most of the original second-story four-over-one double-hung-sash windows remain. Four pairs on the southern end of the east facade have been replaced with contemporary one-over-one double-hung-sash windows. Above the second-story windows, a corbelled polychromatic-brick frieze leads to the metal cornice, which has a stamped pattern of rosettes.

This building was known as the Morin Block, owned by the son of one of the city's founders. The Morins were involved in real estate, and at one point owned the largest amount of land in the city. In 1904 W. A. Morin and C. S. Edwards purchased the *Albert Lea Enterprise*, one of the local newspapers, and moved production into the Morin Block. In 1910 the *Times-Enterprise* was merged with the *Albert Lea Tribune*, operated by the Simonsen, Whitcomb and Hurley Company. All of the newspaper operations were centered in the Morin Block, which

⁵ "Re-Modeled Theater Called One of Best in This Area," n.p., August 19, 1951, and "The Playhouse is One of Finest in The Northwest," n.p., October 17, 1927, clippings available at the Albert Lea Public Library; *Freeborn County Heritage* (Albert Lea: Freeborn County Historical and Genealogical Societies, 1988), n.p.

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was expanded to the south and re-faced to become the Tribune Building. The two newspapers were printed and distributed from the building until the 1950s when the business moved to larger quarters. The second floor of the building was rented as the Tribune Apartments. In the 1960s, the first floor was converted into several offices and rented to Davies, Leland, Dress, and Malepsy, a real estate firm; Westrum-Wick Independent Insurance Agency; Freeborn County Abstract; Beneficial Finance Company; and the Freeborn County Welfare Department. In the 1980s, new tenants included the Myre-Sorenson Real Estate company, Wick-Osbeck Insurance Center, Vi's Custom Draperies, Credit Bureau of Albert Lea, and Beneficial Loan and Thrift Company. The 1990s saw another turnover of businesses, with the Freeborn County Community Action Agency, Vernon L. Haase Insurance Agency, Wick Osbeck Thisius Insurance Center, Kraus Companies, and Farmers Insurance Group occupying the first floor along with the Credit Bureau of Albert Lea. The second floor continued to be rented as apartments. Presently, the Credit Bureau, the Absolute Bail Bond Company, All-State Residential Loans, All-State Bonding, Info Tec Computer Service, and Mediar, Inc. occupy the first floor.⁶

7. Historic Name: Commercial building

**Current Name: Jensen Real Estate and Auctioneers; Stanley K. Westland, CPA;
Massage Connections; Progress Management Co.; Planned Parenthood**

Address: 111-113 East Clark Street

Date: 1924

Contributing

Built in 1924, this brown-brick two-story building has a rectangular form and extends the length of the lot. The storefront is set off by a green-tile bulkhead and although the configuration appears original, the metal window frames and plate-glass windows are not historic. Originally the transom windows were hidden behind an awning; the awning line is visible on the brick above the storefront. The two first-story doors are plate glass. The central doorway opens into the storefront and the doorway in the easternmost bay leads to the second floor. The eastern bay is slightly recessed and the first-story doorway is ornamented with a stone door surround consisting of pilasters, capitals, and garland. The seven window openings on the second story have brick sills and contain plate-glass windows.

⁶ Curtiss-Wedge, 482-484, 756-757.

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Before 1923, three two-story buildings were located at the 111 and 113 East Clark Street addresses. A temperance hall, jeweler, restaurant, and confectionary occupied the three buildings between 1899 and 1918. Between 1918 and 1923, a fire destroyed these buildings, along with those at 101 to 109 East Clark Street. After rebuilding, the J. C. Penney Department Store was the tenant at 111 and 113 East Clark Street. By World War II, Penney's had moved out, and a series of furniture stores occupied the building for the next thirty years. These included Sorenson's, Hanson's and Thompson-Walker. By 1980 the building was used for Michael's School of Cosmetology and as a separate gift store. The beauty school was replaced by three beauty salons in the 1980s. Less than a decade later, the building was converted to office space for a management consulting service, an insurance agent, and a graphic designer. The second floor, which uses the address of 113 East Clark Street, has also been used for retail and office space. Currently the space is occupied by Planned Parenthood of Minnesota. Four businesses are located on the first floor, Jensen Real Estate and Auctioneers; Stanley K. Westland, CPA; Massage Connections; and Progress Management Company.⁷

8. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: First Light

Address: 115 East Clark Street

Date: between 1924 and 1926

Contributing

This two-story brick building was constructed by 1926 and has a rectangular plan. The storefront was remodeled in the 1950s and has an asymmetrical entrance and display area. The Permastone surrounding the windows and doors has been painted blue, and wood paneling covers the storefront transoms. The aluminum-framed plate-glass doors and transoms appear to date from the 1950s. One doorway opens into the storefront while a doorway in the westernmost bay leads to the second floor. The second story is clad in red-brown tapestry brick. Stone sills below the second-story window openings extend into a stringcourse. The three original windows have been replaced with one-over-one single-hung-sash windows. Brick panels with stone accents are located above the windows and a corbelled-brick cornice sits below the stone parapet cap.

⁷ "Fine New Business Block for the J. C. Penn[e]y Company Store," n.p., n.d., clipping available at FCHS.

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This site was vacant until a fire destroyed and damaged the buildings from Broadway east to 113 Clark Street and the current building was constructed. After a brief stint in the 1920s as Albert Lea Hide and Fur, the building was used for a tavern, the Tinian Bar. The Chef Cafe, a restaurant, was the longest occupant, arriving in the 1950s and staying until 1987. After the restaurant closed, Ray's Custom Cycles rented the space for a few years. Presently, a store called First Light occupies the first floor. The second floor has been used for apartments since the building opened.

- 9. Historic Name: Commercial building**
Current Name: Pieper's Western Store
Address: 119-123 East Clark
Date: between 1886 and 1891
Contributing

This building was constructed sometime between 1886 and 1891, and a rear addition was made to the eastern side between 1891 and 1899. The two storefronts were altered in the mid-twentieth century with dark-red-brick bulkheads, large plate-glass display windows, and wood doors with large glass panels. Since that remodeling the transoms have been covered with corrugated metal. The first story sports rusticated stone quoins on the corners that extend to the second-story stringcourse. A rusticated stone surround flanks a middle doorway that leads to the second floor. The second story displays several characteristics of the Romanesque Revival style, including paired round arches and lintels above the windows. The second-story windows have rusticated stone sills that connect to form the stringcourse. Above the openings are elaborate brick arches with stone keystones and brick checkerboard decoration. All of the eight second-story window openings have been partially filled with gray stucco creating smaller openings for the one-over-one single-hung-sash replacement windows. The same gray stucco covers the top of the facade where a decorative cornice was probably located.

The present building began life as a restaurant and saloon. By 1899 an interior decorating company, Surdam, Sullivan, and Company, rented space in the building, which was also used as the Arcade Hotel. In 1905 the building was known as the Metropolitan Hotel and a saloon occupied the 119 storefront. A restaurant, known as the Banquet Cafe, used the 123 storefront. Following 1918, a series of businesses occupied the building including Bonnerup-Sorenson, a furniture and home furnishings store that would later move to 111-113 East Clark Street; the

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Home Cafe; and Knudtson and Myre, hardware and paint. The second floor was rented out as residential apartments. By 1961 Westrum Outlet, a clothing retail business, had moved into the first floor. In 1970 Pieper's Western Store replaced Westrum's and is the present occupant. The second floor is still rented as apartments.

- 10. Historic Name: Hotel Freeborn**
Current Name: Municipal parking lot
Address: 120 East Clark
Date: 1965
Noncontributing

Once the site of the Hotel Freeborn, this parcel is now a municipal parking lot. The Hotel Freeborn was built by an early Albert Lea citizen, Frank Hall, as a residence in the late 1860s. Hall ran a general store on the southeast corner of Clark Street and Broadway Avenue. Part of this business included the town's first banking operations. He was also the city's first mayor in 1878. After constructing a three-story mansion on the half block bounded by Clark, Newton, and William, Hall realized it had more value as a hotel and quickly converted the building, which became known as Hall House. Between 1899 and 1905, the property's ownership changed. The southern half of the block was sold for development, and by 1905 a two-story building occupied the southwest corner. A large addition was built on the west end of the hotel, which was renamed the Hotel Freeborn. In the early twentieth century, the hotel was known throughout the state for its "home-like allurements," and the proprietor claimed that every Minnesota governor, all of the state's Congressional senators and most representatives had stayed there. The land surrounding the building was landscaped with lawns, several trees, and a garden in the rear. Three more two-story brick buildings fronted on William Street by 1918, and in 1916, the six-story Home Improvement Building opened on the corner of William and Newton. The Hotel Freeborn underwent several changes, including a large addition on the northwest side, until it no longer resembled the original house, with the exception of its height. The hotel's business waned as railroad travel diminished. In 1965, the run-down hotel and the four early twentieth-century two-story brick buildings were demolished, and the lot paved for public parking. The property is noncontributing to the historic district because the historic building associated with the site was razed.⁸

⁸ "Notable Change in Pioneer Hotel," n.p., n.d., clipping available at FCHS; Curtiss-Wedge, 261-262; Inspection of Buildings Record for 116 and 120 East Clark Street, available in the Fire and Inspections Division, City

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11. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Bud Freeman Hearing Aids; vacant; Bill & Mark's Barbershop

Address: 125-129 East Clark Street

Date: pre 1884

Noncontributing

The one-story building at 125-129 East Clark Street is one of the oldest buildings on the block; it was built before 1884. The building's three storefronts have been altered, although the configuration of windows and doors in the storefronts are historical. All the storefronts have wood paneling covering the transoms, and bulkhead materials range from masonry to Permastone to stucco and wood. Each storefront has modern plate-glass doors and windows. A large brick parapet clad with stucco unifies the facade.

The storefront at 129 East Clark Street was used as an office and restaurant in the late 1800s; however, since 1899, it has been in continuous use as a barbershop. The storefronts at 125-127 East Clark Street have also had a variety of businesses, including a gun shop, grocer, tobacconist, shoe store, restaurant, electrician, jeweler, insurance agency, hearing-aid retailer, plumbing supplier, and bookstore. While 125 East Clark has had a great variety of tenants, 127 East Clark housed the Clark Street Lunch restaurant for approximately thirty years. Currently, Bud Freeman Hearing Aids is located at 125 East Clark and Bill and Mark's Barbershop at 129 East Clark. The middle storefront is vacant. The storefronts have been altered and the building's historic integrity compromised; it is noncontributing to the historic district.

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12. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: vacant

Address: 131 East Clark Street

Date: between 1918 and 1926

Contributing

Built between 1918 and 1926, this dark-red-brick building has a rectangular plan. The storefront was altered considerably in 1959 to its current configuration and finished with Permastone and asphalt siding. The brick surrounding the storefront was painted white to blend in with the alterations. Frosted-glass transom windows are located over the storefront, which has two contemporary sliding vertical-sash windows. Two doorways are located on the first story; one leads into the storefront and the other to the second floor. The second-story facade is dark-red tapestry brick. Non-historic one-over-one single-hung-sash windows fill the three second-story openings, which retain the original stone sills. A brick checkerboard panel is located above the windows, and the corbelled-brick cornice is capped with stone.

Early records indicate that the first building on the site was a smaller two-story building used as a saloon and billiards hall. By 1899 the Salvation Army had moved into the property, but not long after, a saloon run by Rasmus Jensen occupied the building. The original building was replaced between 1918 and 1926 by a building extending to the rear of the property. The Yankee Bakery was located on the first floor of the building and the second floor was rented out as two apartments. By 1950 the Home Lumber and Builders' Supply Company occupied the building. The second floor was divided into four apartments. The storefront was remodeled in 1959, and by 1961 Larry's Bar had moved in, but like other businesses in that location, it was short-lived. The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), at 137 East Clark, purchased the building and opened the party wall between the buildings to expand the VFW's meeting space. After the VFW left the building, a tavern, called Your Place, occupied the first floor. Presently, the building is being remodeled.⁹

⁹ Building owner, interview by Elizabeth Gales, April 2, 2003.

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13. Historic Name: Danish Brotherhood Society Lodge 75; Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 447

Current Name: vacant

Address: 137 East Clark Street

Date: 1910

Contributing

Built in 1910, this building originally had a traditional storefront, and double-hung-sash windows on the second story. Following its purchase of the building in the 1940s, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) undertook an extensive renovation to create the current appearance. The storefront was rebuilt with cream-colored limestone and stained-glass windows. The doorway on the western end of the storefront leads to the first and second floors. The second story has a red-brick facade. The four second-story round-arched window openings were bricked in to create rectangular openings that are filled with glass block. The westernmost opening is the exception, having a plate-glass window. Brick pilasters on the second story are capped with stone capitals that are linked to a stone and brick architrave. Between the architrave and the cornice are recessed brick panels. The corbelled-brick cornice has a central stone plaque bearing the seal and initials of the Danish Brotherhood Society (DBS) and the date 1910.

A justice of the peace, D. K. Stacey, had his two-story office on the site of the present building in the early twentieth century. The current building was constructed by Tapager and Hanson in 1910, and occupied by the Nelson and Sorenson clothing store and the DBS, which owned the building. It was the only building owned and occupied by a DBS lodge in the state of Minnesota. Like other fraternal organizations, the DBS allowed several other lodges to utilize the meeting hall on the second floor of the building. The first floor was rented to Nels Thompson in the 1920s. As the society's membership waned, the building changed ownership and was briefly known as the Club Royal. Following World War II, the VFW bought the building and extensively remodeled it for their meeting hall. The building served as the VFW Post 447 from 1949 to the mid-1990s, when it became a restaurant and club. The most recent occupant was a business called The Downstairs.¹⁰

¹⁰ *Freeborn County Heritage*, 100-101; "Tapager & Hanson, Contractors and Builders," *Albert Lea Evening Tribune*, May 21, 1912, clipping available at the Albert Lea Public Library.

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14. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Alliance Benefit Group Financial Center

Address: 201 East Clark Street

Date: between 1910 and 1918

Contributing

Built between 1910 and 1918, this two-story dark-brown-brick building has a rectangular plan. The storefront has been framed in, clad with stucco, and holds new plate-glass windows and a French door flanked by sidelights. Originally, the storefront had a more traditional configuration of display windows, a doorway, and a garage-door opening. The first-story openings on the west facade have plate-glass windows with double or triple panes. The second story has glass-block windows, installed in the 1950s, in the openings of the south facade and in two openings on the west facade. The remaining openings on the second story have the same window treatment as the first story. The original first- and second-story windows were Chicago style.

This building was constructed as a garage and remained in that use for several decades. In 1939 the Locke Motor Company owned the building, but the occupant had changed by 1950 to the Lesota Tool Company. Lesota, which distributed small hand tools and household utensils, occupied the building into the 1980s. The building sat vacant in the 1990s until it was renovated into offices. Now it is occupied by the Alliance Benefit Group.

15. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: vacant

Address: 212 East Clark Street

Date: between 1918 and 1926

Contributing

This dark-red-brick building, constructed between 1918 and 1926, has a rectangular plan. The storefront was altered in 1982 with painted board-and-batten siding. The doorway is centered in the storefront and flanked by two small plate-glass windows. The three original second-story windows have been replaced with one-over-one double-hung-sash windows. Stone sills below the second-story window openings extend into a stringcourse. Brick panels with stone accents are located above the windows and a corbelled-brick cornice sits below the stone

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parapet cap.

This early twentieth-century building has always housed bars and restaurants. The first occupant listed in a 1940 city directory was the Brown Derby. In 1950 the Dew Drop Inn occupied the building and continued to do so until the late 1960s. Jim's Inn was followed by the Clark Street Lunch, which moved from its long-time location at 127 East Clark Street. The Hong Kong Chinese restaurant was located in the building through the 1980s and 1990s, but currently the first-story is vacant. The second floor has been used as a residence.

- 16. Historic Name: Commercial building**
Current Name: Sportsman's Tavern
Address: 216 East Clark Street
Date: between 1910 and 1918
Contributing

Built between 1910 and 1918, this red-brick building has a rectangular plan. The storefront was remodeled in 1957 and again in 1982 to its current state. The original display windows were eliminated and small plate-glass windows installed. The storefront's central doorway opens into the first floor while the western doorway leads to the second floor. A non-historic internally lit sign projects from the facade above the storefront. The second story has three window openings with stone sills and stone lintels that connect to form a stringcourse. Each opening holds a replacement one-over-one single-hung-sash window. The brick architrave and cornice are similar to that on the building at 218 East Clark Street.

Before 1950 this building housed a variety of businesses, including a tire company, a fruit company, and an appliance store. In the last half of the twentieth century, bars and taverns have been the only occupants. These include the Royal Tavern, Ole's Place, Wiley and Lou's, and the current occupant, the Sportsman's Tavern. The second story has been used as a single residence, usually by the tavern operators.

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17. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Albert Lea Business Services & Shipping

Address: 218 East Clark Street

Date: between 1910 and 1918

Contributing

Since this red-brick building was constructed between 1910 and 1918, the storefront has been changed several times. The most recent alteration clad the storefront in weatherboard siding with narrow plate-glass windows and a wood-shingled overhang. Two doorways are located on the western end of the storefront. The westernmost doorway leads to the second floor. The three second-story window openings have been filled in with weatherboard siding and hold small fixed-pane windows. The stone sills and lintels and the brick architrave and cornice are similar to those on 216 East Clark Street.

Before the present building was constructed, a two-story concrete-block building occupied by a dry goods mercantile and a furrier was located on the same site. It was demolished for the construction of the current building, which was first occupied by the F. J. Doyle plumbing company on the first floor and the Gustaveson Apartments on the second floor. Eventually three businesses moved into the first floor, Lindsay Soft Water, Joe's Hobby Shop, and Krueger Radio Service. In the 1950s, the building was purchased by the owner of the Bailey Electric Car business, and the apartments were renamed Bailey Apartments. This name stayed with the building into the early 1980s, even when the storefront stood vacant. By 1990 a dentist's office had moved into the first floor, while the second floor was still rented as apartments. During the late 1990s, Albert Lea Business Services and Shipping moved into the building.

18. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: The Heart of the Artichoke

Address: 222-224 East Clark Street

Date: between 1910 and 1918

Contributing

Built between 1910 and 1918, this dark-red-brick two-story building has a rectangular plan. The storefront contains a centered display window flanked by two doorways. The western

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doorway has been filled in with wood paneling and surmounted by a wood trellis. The eastern doorway leads to the second floor and contains a plate-glass door and metal-covered transom. The three second-story window openings have been filled in with weatherboard siding to create five smaller openings that hold one-over-one single-hung-sash windows and contemporary round-arched windows. A non-historic wood sign projects from the second-story facade. A corbelled-brick cornice is located above the second-story windows.

This building was originally constructed for the Albert Lea Construction Company as a warehouse, although the second floor was rented out as apartments. For a short time in the 1920s, the front of the building housed the Saint Theodore Catholic Church's Sunday school. The rear was used for an automobile dealership and a bill-poster printing business. By 1930 a hotel had been established in part of the building. This business eventually took over the northern half of the building and included a restaurant in the Clark Street storefront. The Goodwin Hotel was in business from the 1930s through the 1950s, when the ownership and the name changed. The Dorman Hotel stayed in business until the early 1990s. The building's rear continued to house a printing business until the 1960s. Additional occupants included a justice of the peace and a funeral service. By 1970 The Heart of the Artichoke had moved into the Clark Street storefront. This retail business has occupied the first floor since that time, while the rear space has become vacant. The second floor is rented out as apartments.

19. Historic Name: Freeborn County Oil Co-Op

**Current Name: Freeborn County Oil Co-Op; Greater Enterprises; Ken's Service
Auto Value**

Address: 226 East Clark Street

Date: between 1939 and 1948

Contributing

Constructed between 1938 and 1948, this building still retains its original Streamline Moderne glass-block entrance section, which includes a tower with the signage "CO-OP." The north side of the building has been clad in corrugated-steel siding with an inappropriate wood-shingled overhang wrapping around the east and north facades. There are a total of six garage-door openings on the east facade. The one-story east-facing garage portion has a brick veneer that has been painted. On the glass-block section, two doorways flank three tri-part factory windows. The two second-story window openings also contain tri-part factory windows. The

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four remaining second-story openings on the east facade each hold three-over-one double-hung-sash windows. On the north facade the two second-story windows also hold three-over-one double-hung-sash windows. The north facade has one doorway with a wood-shingled overhang and one garage-door opening. All of the garage doors are contemporary.

This building was constructed to house the Freeborn County Co-Op Oil Company. In 1950 the Mutual Service Insurance Agency moved into the north side of the building. From the 1960s into the 1980s, a Co-Op Oil Credit Union also occupied the building. Presently Ken's Service Auto Value operates with the Co-Op and a business called Greater Enterprises.¹¹

20. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Jake's Pizza

Address: 126 West Clark Street

Date: between 1884 and 1886

Noncontributing

Built between 1884 and 1886, this two-story brick building was remodeled in 1966 when the business changed from a dairy to a restaurant. The building was covered in tan corrugated metal in 1986. Three contemporary windows were installed in the storefront and a wood-shingled overhang was added. A non-historic metal sign, with the word "PIZZA" spelled out in neon, projects from the facade above the overhang. There are two door openings in the storefront, one leading into the restaurant, the other to the second floor. The three window openings on the second story are original and contain one-over-one double-hung-sash windows.

In 1886 a hardware store and tin shop occupied the building. By 1891 the building had been turned into a saloon, one of many on this particular block of West Clark Street. For the next twenty years restaurants and saloons alternately occupied the building. In the 1920s, the Thompson Dairy moved into the building as part of a general trend on Clark Street, when saloons were forced out of business by Prohibition. Thompson Dairy stayed in the building until 1966 when Jake's Pizza moved in. This restaurant is the current occupant. The second floor has held commercial uses and acted as a single residence. The facade has been altered with historically inappropriate materials and the building's historic integrity has been

¹¹ Albert Lea City Directories; Sanborn Insurance Maps for Albert Lea, Minnesota.

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compromised; it is noncontributing to the historic district.¹²

- 21. Historic Name: Commercial building**
Current Name: Four Seasons Travel, Inc.
Address: 130-132 West Clark Street
Date: between 1910 and 1918
Contributing

This two-story red-brick building was constructed between 1910 and 1918, at the same time as the neighboring building at 134-140 West Clark Street. Both buildings have the same materials and style, and at first glance appear to be a single building. The other building has a different second-story configuration, although a modest Flemish-bond brick design unifies the buildings' facades. The storefront at 130 West Clark was remodeled in 1949 for the Morris Furniture Company, and again in 1973 when Four Seasons Travel moved in. The storefront is clad in brown aluminum panels with dark-tinted plate-glass windows and doors. Aluminum sections also cover the transoms and sign band and support a metal awning, all brown in color. The storefront has plate-glass windows and two door openings, one of which leads to the second floor. There are four rectangular window openings on the second story, each with a one-over-one double-hung-sash window. These windows have stone sills with a separate stone belt course below the openings. A brick soldier course architrave and corbelled-brick cornice are located above the windows.

The Value Store, a department store selling dry goods and ladies ready-to-wear apparel, originally occupied the first floor. The second floor was rented out as boarding rooms. In the 1950s, the Morris Furniture Company moved into the first floor. It would stay in the building until the 1960s, when the Commercial Furniture Center, an early electronics retailer occupied the storefront space. Four Seasons Travel moved into the first floor in 1973, and remains there today. The second floor has been in continuous use as apartments.

¹² Inspection of Buildings Record for 126 West Clark Street.

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- 22. Historic Name: Commercial building**
Current Name: Four Seasons Vacations, Inc.
Address: 134-140 West Clark Street
Date: between 1910 and 1918
Contributing

This red-brick building is nearly identical to 130-132 West Clark Street. The two share a party wall, and at first glance look like one large building block. Built between 1910 and 1918, the brick two-story building at 134-140 West Clark Street has a rectangular plan. The Flemish-bond brick facade is divided in half by brick pilasters creating two identical sections, each with three rectangular openings holding one-over-one single-hung-sash windows on the second story. The modest brick ornament ties the facades to those of 130-132 West Clark Street. The storefronts were remodeled in the 1950s and 1960s after long-term tenants moved out, and are clad in brown-coated aluminum panels with dark-tinted plate-glass windows and doors. Aluminum also covers the transoms and sign band. A brown-painted metal awning, suspended from tie rods inserted through the sign band, extends from the 134 storefront east across the 130-132 West Clark Street storefront. This was added when Four Seasons took over the building in the 1970s, and unifies the storefront with that of the neighboring building. A non-historic internally lit sign projects from the easternmost pilaster on the facade, above the aluminum signboard. The two storefronts each have two sectioned plate-glass windows. There are four door openings in the first story, two of which lead to the second floor. There are six rectangular window openings on the second story, each with a one-over-one double-hung-sash window. These windows are accented with stone sills and a stone stringcourse. A brick soldier course architrave and corbelled-brick cornice complete the facade.

Like 130-132 West Clark Street, the first floor of this building has held businesses while the second floor has been used for residential apartments. The two storefronts originally held a meat market and a jewelry store, but the jewelry store was replaced by 1928 with the Karlberg Music Shop. Karlberg would occupy the eastern storefront until the 1950s, when the Bach Music Company took over. The meat market was replaced by a florist, which in turn was replaced by the Avalon Cafe in the 1930s. Like Karlberg Music, the Avalon Cafe occupied the building for several decades. By 1970 the 134-136 storefront held Fountain Products of Minnesota, Ka-Nel (an advertising firm), and Four Seasons Travel. The western half, 138-140, housed an optometrist's office. Four Seasons Travel moved into 130-132 West Clark

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Street in 1973, and acquired the Fountain Products and Ka-Nel businesses. The business names were changed to Four Seasons Services and Four Seasons Advertising. The optometrist left 138-140 and a consignment shop, an insurance company, and Peterson's Tax Service moved in. By 1990 Four Seasons Travel had expanded into the 136 storefront. The second floors of these buildings were rented as apartments, except for 140 West Clark, which still housed Peterson's Tax Service. Presently Four Seasons Travel occupies the entire first floor of 136-140 West Clark Street. The entire second floor is used for residential apartments.¹³

- 23. Historic Name: First Federal Savings & Loan Association of Albert Lea**
Current Name: Home Federal Savings Bank; Albert Lea—Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce
Address: 143 West Clark Street
Date: 1955; 1965
Noncontributing

Built in 1955, this one-story building was remodeled in 1965 to its current appearance. Several wood-frame buildings on the same lot were torn down in 1949, 1978, and 1984 to construct the current building and expand its parking lot and drive-through. Black marble covers the primary facade on the north and extends around the corner to partially cover the west facade, which is mostly tan brick. The building has one storefront with several plate-glass sections, all with gold-chrome trim. An asymmetrical concrete awning projects from the north facade and is topped by a brick parapet. An interior-lit sign with a large metal eagle projects from the northwest parapet corner.

Before the present building was constructed, there were three two-story buildings on the site. The first floors of these buildings housed restaurants, bars, and a dairy and silo supply business. The second floors were used as residences and hotels. These three buildings, dating back to the late nineteenth century, were demolished for construction of the current building. The present building has been occupied by First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Albert Lea, MAH Insurance Agency, Midwest Savings Association, Carlsen Companies of Albert Lea, and Home Federal Savings Bank. Presently the Albert Lea—Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce shares the building with the Home Federal Savings Bank.¹⁴

¹³ *Freeborn County Heritage*, 83-84.

¹⁴ *Freeborn County Heritage*, n.p.; Curtiss-Wedge, 261; Inspection of Buildings Records for 121, 131, and 137

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24. Historic Name: Commercial building

**Current Name: Daniel S. Schoeneman, Craig A. Hoffinan, Gary R. Jernberg
(dentists)**

Address: 146 West Clark Street

Date: between 1926 and 1931

Contributing

Built between 1926 and 1931, the two primary facades of this brown-brick two-story building front on West Clark Street and North Washington Avenue. The storefronts on both facades were remodeled in 1974 and 1985 and are covered with a stone veneer. They are asymmetrical in arrangement and modern in appearance. The south (primary) facade has three narrow plate-glass windows and one plate-glass door, while the west facade has nine plate-glass windows and two plate-glass doors. The second-story window openings on both facades contain paired six-over-one double-hung-sash windows. All of the second-story window openings have stone sills and stone lintels that connect into a stringcourse. A simple brick basket-weave pattern decorates the cornice.

The original building on this site was a one-story wood-frame building occupied by the Albert Lea Marble and Granite Works from the 1880s until the building was demolished in the 1920s. The present building has had a variety of occupants in the West Clark (south) storefront. These have included a children's clothing store, a photography studio, a jeweler, law offices, and the current dentists' offices. The North Washington (west) storefront was occupied by the B. V. Salisbury Barbershop and the Looking Glass Beauty Shop from the building's construction to the 1940s. The Looking Glass Beauty Shop remained in the storefront until the 1980s, and since then lawyers' and dentists' offices have occupied the entire first floor. In the 1950s a second doorway was added to the west facade, which allowed access to the upstairs Stielor Apartments, known later as the Arends Apartments. The second floor is now used for offices.

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25. Historic Name: Blacklin Building

Current Name: Peterson Chiropractic Center; Jamie A. Kylo, Attorney-at-Law

Address: 202-204 West Clark Street

Date: 1926

Contributing

This two-story brown-brick building, constructed in 1926, replaced a two-story brick building that burned earlier that year. The two storefronts have the original bulkheads, and the configuration of the display-window and doors are original. The display-window frames are not historic and the transoms are covered with plywood panels. The second story has five rectangular openings, all containing one-over-one double-hung-sash windows. The first-story windows on the east facade have been enclosed with plywood panels and hold small plate-glass windows. Like the south facade, the second-story windows on the east facade have one-over-one double-hung-sash windows. All of the second-story window openings have stone sills and lintels. Two doors on the east facade lead to first-floor commercial space and the second-floor apartments. A brick soldier course runs around the storefront openings and provides a unifying decoration above the second-story windows. The cornice is accented with a brick and stone basket-weave pattern. The building's parapet is stepped back from the main building.

There were three buildings on this site before the present building was constructed. The first was a two-story brick building housing a dry goods and general merchandise store. It is unclear if this building was destroyed by fire between 1884 and 1886, but by 1886 a one-story building housing a drug store had been constructed. At the end of the nineteenth century, this one-story building housed a paint shop, but it was replaced with a two-story brick building with three storefronts, two facing south onto Clark Street, and one facing east onto Washington Avenue. A paint shop, possibly from the old building, occupied the east storefront, while the south contained the *Albert Lea Enterprise* newspaper offices and a plumber's business. The building was destroyed by fire in 1926 and replaced with the current building. A variety of businesses have occupied the first floor for short periods, similar to the first floors of other buildings in downtown Albert Lea. These have included a candy store, notions store, drug store, sewing machine store, grocery store, insurance agency, clothing store, chiropractor's office, and lawyer's office. Presently, Peterson Chiropractic Center and Jamie A. Kylo, an attorney, operate out of the south facade storefronts. The east facade has also had a variety of businesses, which have included a dentist's office, a secretarial service,

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and a lawn maintenance company. This commercial space is now part of the lawyer's office. The second floor has always been rented as apartments.¹⁵

26. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Allstate Insurance Agency; Humane Society of Minnesota

Address: 206 West Clark Street

Date: between 1899 and 1905

Noncontributing

Built between 1899 and 1905, this two-story brick building has a rectangular plan. The front facade has been covered in off-white corrugated-steel siding. The storefront has three doors. The westernmost leads to the rear of the building, while the easternmost door accesses the second floor. The second-story windows have been filled in with wood to form smaller openings, which hold one-over-one double-hung-sash windows. The storefront is covered in a narrow-gauge-steel siding and has a flat metal awning. The common-brick west wall is visible from the street.

Like several buildings in Albert Lea's commercial district, this building has housed a variety of businesses. C. M. Tapager, a prominent general contractor, occupied the building after it was first constructed. In the 1920s, Tapager moved into the Home Improvement Building on East William Street, and Benjamin Jensen opened a meat market in the building. From the 1940s to the 1960s, one of the longest occupants, Shea Ice Cream Store, was in the building. This was followed by Tony's Sweet Shop in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The United States Navy used the building from the 1970s into the 1990s. Presently the building houses an Allstate Insurance office in the front and the Humane Society in the rear. Two apartments are located on the second floor. The facade has been altered and the building's historic integrity has been compromised; it is noncontributing to the historic district.

¹⁵ "Early Morning Blaze Puts 3 Firms Out of Business 5 Families Are Homeless," n.p., 1926; "Mrs. Blacklin to Rebuild," n.p., 1926; clippings available at FCHS.

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- 27. Historic Name: Boyum Tailor Shop**
Current Name: ACT (Albert Lea Community Theater)
Address: 214 West Clark Street
Date: between 1905 and 1910
Contributing

Built between 1905 and 1910, this two-story tan-brick building has a rectangular plan. The first story has been remodeled with corrugated-metal siding on the bulkheads and covering the transom windows. A flat metal canopy, aluminum-frame display windows, and aluminum-frame door were probably added at the same time, but follow a historic pattern. The storefront's recessed doorway is flanked by the display windows. The four window openings on the second story have been enclosed with plywood to create smaller openings. A one-over-one double-hung-sash window fills each opening. The second-story facade is decorated with two stone belt courses, stone sills and lintels, and a corbelled-brick cornice, all similar to that on 218-220 West Clark Street.

The two-story building formerly on this site housed a bicycle shop and grocery store. The present building was constructed at the same time as the building at 218-220 West Clark. The first occupant was a tailor, Andrew Boyum. The Boyum family continued to operate a tailoring business from this building into the late 1980s. The second floor was used as a residence for individuals associated with the shop. The Albert Lea Community Theater, ACT, currently uses the first floor, but it is unclear if the second floor is still used as an apartment.

- 28. Historic Name: Commercial building**
Current Name: Peterson Tax and Albert Lea Income Tax Service
Address: 218-220 West Clark Street
Date: between 1905 and 1910
Contributing

This tan-brick building was constructed between 1905 and 1910. The two storefronts were remodeled in 1979 using inappropriate materials. The display windows were enclosed to hold modern plate glass and a flat metal canopy was suspended above both storefronts. The first story has three doorways, one of which leads to the second floor. The six second-story window openings were filled with wood shingles to create smaller openings, which hold one-

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over-one double-hung-sash windows. Stone sills and lintels accent the openings. The second-story facade has two stone stringcourses, one below the second-story windows and the other just below the lintels. The building is topped with an elaborate corbelled-brick cornice. The brick and stone ornament visually connects the facade with 214 West Clark Street. The corrugated-metal siding over the storefront's transom windows and the metal canopy are also similar to 214 West Clark. The west facade is common brick and has its original window openings.

Similar to other downtown commercial buildings, this building has held a wide variety of occupants. It was built at the same time as 214 West Clark Street and the facades are very similar in style and configuration. When first constructed, Beedle Plumbing and Heating Company occupied the eastern storefront and the Albert Lea Milk Company occupied the western storefront. By the late 1920s, the entire first floor was used by the Albert Lea Bakery Company. The second floor was rented out as apartments. Printing companies operating under the names Gordon Printing Company, Weaver Printing, Feature Office Services, and Arrow Printing occupied the eastern, and then western, storefront from the 1940s into the 1980s. The businesses changed each decade. The Busy Bee Shoe Service occupied the eastern storefront from the 1940s into the 1990s. Presently, the Peterson Tax and Albert Lea Tax Service uses the western storefront, while the eastern storefront is vacant. The second floor is still used for residential apartments.

29. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Minnesota Abstract Title Company; Goodmanson Law Office

Address: 115 West College Street

Date: between 1905 and 1910

Contributing

Built between 1905 and 1910, this two-story dark-red-brick building has a rectangular plan. The storefront was remodeled in 1986 to its current configuration. It has seven narrow plate-glass windows and one door to serve both the first and second stories. A yellow brick stringcourse runs below the second-story windows, which are accented with stone sills and lintels. The tops of the four window openings are filled with plywood panels to create smaller openings that hold one-over-one, single-hung-sash windows. A second stringcourse passes below the cornice, which is defined by a row of brick headers.

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This building originally had two storefronts that housed a saloon and a notions store. In the 1920s, the Western Union Telegraph Company moved into the eastern storefront and Stieler's Meat Market was located in the western storefront. In the 1930s, Max Stieler converted his father's market into Stieler's Hamburger Shop, which closed in the late 1960s. A law office moved into the western storefront. The Western Union Telegraph Company left the building in the mid-1980s and the law office took over the entire first floor. The same firm occupies the building today, along with an abstract title company. At one point in the 1930s the second floor was rented as apartments, but it is not clear how long it was in residential use. Currently the second floor is used as office space.

30. Historic Name: Commercial building
Current Name: Midwest Antiques
Address: 119 West College Street
Date: between 1905 and 1910
Contributing

This two-story brown-brick building was constructed between 1905 and 1910. The storefront was remodeled in 1996 using stucco and a non-historic configuration of four plate-glass windows and three plate-glass doors. The round-arch second-story windows have the original sandstone sills and keystones. All but one of the openings hold round-arch glass windows. Five of the openings have been enclosed with plywood panels to accommodate smaller one-over-one rectangular windows, and three of the openings are completely covered with plywood panels. Sandstone bands ornament the first- and second-story brick pilasters on each end of the facade. The second-story band extends into a stringcourse between the window openings. A corbelled-brick cornice is situated directly above the second-story windows. The remainder of the cornice was removed from the facade, but its location can be distinguished by a red-brick panel.

A feed and livery business was originally housed in this building, but by 1918 a partition divided the first floor in half. The eastern half was the Royal Theatre and the western half was occupied by Takle-Dock-Hopperstad Company, a wholesale notions business. The second floor was separated into the Reynolds and Luce Flats. In the mid-1920s, the Royal Theatre became a dance hall, but was quickly supplanted by a Pentecostal Gospel Mission, and the

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notions company was replaced by Gamble Auto Supply. In the 1930s, the Burnsmoor Dairy occupied one half while the Home Made Ice Cream Company occupied the other. Later, the Burnsmoor Ice Cream Store remained in the western half, and the Church Lithograph Company moved into the other storefront. During the 1950s, a photography studio operated in the eastern side, and the western side was subdivided to accommodate the Albert Lea Board of Realtors, the Florette (flower shop), and Hyland Realty. While Hyland Realty remained in the building for the next twenty years, other businesses came and went, including a credit association, a printing company, and another florist. In the 1990s, an automobile parts store occupied the eastern side of the building. Presently, a business called Midwest Antiques operates on the first floor. The second floor continued to be rented as the Reynolds Apartments until the 1990s and now is vacant.

31. Historic Name: Garage

Current Name: Aragon Bar

Address: 130 West College Street

Date: between 1918 and 1926

Noncontributing

Built between 1918 and 1926 as a garage, this building has had several alterations to its storefront, but the original tile walls are visible on the east and north sides. The storefront is composed of six contemporary plate-glass windows flanking recessed double doors. The facade is sheathed in Permastone and black structural glass. The original curved parapet is obscured by metal siding.

The present building replaced Trinity Evangelical Norwegian Lutheran Church, which stood on this site. The church was seriously damaged by a storm in July 1916, and not long after the congregation merged with another Lutheran church to form First Lutheran Church. The current garage building was built for Jens Christensen with a capacity for twenty-five cars. By 1940 the ownership had changed to the Zetterholm-Toepel Company, but the use remained the same. The 1940s saw another change in ownership, to Earl Christensen and Jordan Erickson. Soon the building became part of the Motor Inn dealership across the street and was used for automobile storage. In the 1970s, the Motor Inn sold both buildings to Radue Cyclery, a bicycle store. In the 1980s, the building was in use as Rydjor Bike Shop, but by 1999 it had been converted into the Aragon Bar, the current occupant. The facade has been altered with

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historically inappropriate materials and the building's historic integrity has been compromised; it is noncontributing to the historic district.¹⁶

32. Historic Name: The Motor Inn

Current Name: Sanderson Auto/Mr. Tire/NAPA Auto Care Center

Address: 131-147 West College Street

Date: between 1938 and 1948

Contributing

Built of fireproof terra-cotta tile between 1938 and 1948, this building has a L-shaped plan. The storefront was altered in 1987 when the four large display-window openings were enclosed with weatherboard siding and filled with narrow plate-glass windows. Two modern plate-glass doors are centered in the storefront. The main section of the building and the garage additions on the western facade, constructed before 1948, have been painted blue. There are three garage-door openings, each containing a modern garage door.

For several years, only a two-story wood-frame building housing the Erickson Floor Company occupied the western edge of the block. The present building was constructed for the Motor Inn in the late 1930s and used for automobile sales and service. The building was sold to Radue Cyclery in the 1970s and used for a marine business. In the 1980s, it reverted back to automobile-related use as Sanderson Auto Repair and a NAPA Auto Parts store. The wood-frame building at the end of the block was torn down in the 1980s to expand the parking lot.

33. Historic Name: Albert Lea Public Library

Current Name: Americana National Bank

Address: 146 West College Street

Date: 1903

Contributing

Built in 1903 with a grant from Andrew Carnegie, this red-brick building was designed in a distinctive Beaux-Arts style by Schick and Ross, architects from La Crosse, Wisconsin. The basement story has rusticated limestone and brick bands, and is separated from the raised first floor by a sandstone stringcourse. The first story has eight tall window openings on the west

¹⁶ "Trinity Lutheran Church, After the Storm," postcard, July 22, 1916, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

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facade and five tall window openings on the south facade, all filled with modern plate-glass windows. Brick pilasters with sandstone bases and capitals and brick bands ornament the first story. The entrance in the building's angled southwest corner has been remodeled with a modern plate-glass transom and double doors. The brick wing walls and concrete stairs of the entrance stoop are replacements. The original stone door hood is supported on brackets above a roundel flanked by foliation. A stone cornice wraps around the west, southwest, and south facades and forms an arch over the entrance. The characters "A. D. 1903" are executed in stone below the arch. A brick parapet rises above the cornice. A modest shed-roof addition is located on the north (rear) wall. It allows for street-level entry at the northwest corner of the building.

Citizens of Minneapolis, Duluth, and Saint Paul were the first to set up libraries as Minnesota became established in the last half of the nineteenth century. By 1879, twenty-seven subscription libraries had been founded throughout the state, including one in Albert Lea in 1873. By 1875, the Albert Lea facility claimed 175 volumes. Possibly located in makeshift quarters on the second floor of 102 East Clark Street, the library soon closed for lack of support. A more successful attempt was made in 1897 when a group of women opened a library in a vacant house at North Broadway and Water Street. Beginning with fifty books and thirteen dollars in cash, the women kept the library open weekday evenings and Saturday afternoons. By 1899, their continued pressure convinced the city to levy a tax to support a free public library, a financing option enabled by state legislation passed in 1879. The library soon moved to bigger quarters in the Enterprise Building at West Clark Street and Washington Avenue.¹⁷

It was a propitious time for library development. In the late nineteenth century, steel maker and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie created a program to subsidize library construction throughout the English-speaking world. Of the over 2,500 libraries that received support before the program ended in about 1919, only 27 percent were named after their benefactor. Carnegie assisted sixty-five libraries in Minnesota. Duluth and Mankato received the first grants in the state in 1900. Saint Cloud, Stillwater, and Austin were next in 1901. Albert Lea

¹⁷ *Freeborn County Heritage*, n.p.; Ellsworth Carlstedt, "The Public Library Movement in Minnesota, 1849-1900," *Minnesota Libraries* 14 (September 1945): 351-363.

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was quick to follow, opening its new Carnegie-funded library in 1903.¹⁸

Since the United States had few public libraries prior to Carnegie's initiative, there was little precedent for library building design, particularly in smaller and mid-sized cities. Carnegie provided guidelines after 1908, but before that time communities were left to their own devices. Most turned to architects for guidance. In Albert Lea, the process of selecting a design apparently involved extensive deliberation. On December 6, 1902, the local newspaper reported: "The Library Board met shortly after 8 o'clock this morning to further consider plans for the library building and according to request, Mr. Schick, senior member of the firm of Schick and Ross, La Crosse, was present with the sketches he had prepared, especially for the lot, while the board had the plans of the two other architects." Schick's presentation must have gone well, because his firm was awarded the contract.¹⁹

The library stayed at that location until 1968 when it moved to the new City Center on East Clark Street. The building served as the local senior citizens center until the mid-1990s, and now houses the Americana National Bank.²⁰

34. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Roche Electric

Address: 120 Elizabeth Avenue

Date: between 1931 and 1938

Contributing

Built between 1931 and 1938, this fireproof terra-cotta-tile building has a simple rectangular plan. The two display-window openings on the first story have been enclosed with plywood siding to hold smaller sliding vertical-sash windows. Two of the three second-story openings each have a one-over-one single-hung-sash window, and the center opening is enclosed with plywood and holds an air-conditioning unit. A modern door and screen door fill the central

¹⁸ Carlstedt; Clara F. Baldwin, "The Public Library Movement in Minnesota, 1900-1936," *Minnesota Libraries* 14 (December 1945): 384-394; George F. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969), 57-58, 105, 172.

¹⁹ Bobinski; "Library Plans Selected," *Albert Lea Evening Tribune*, December 6, 1902, available at the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

²⁰ *Freeborn County Heritage*, n.p.

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entrance. A non-historic internally lit sign projects from the facade above the entrance.

Originally this building was used for storage. The Minnesota Sales Company, auctioneers, occupied the building in the 1940s. By 1961 the building held Thorp Sales Company, also auctioneers; Ridgewood Park Realty Company; Morrison Insurance Agency; Ridgewood Park Construction Company; and Midwest Realty. Roche Electric moved into the building in the 1960s and has remained to the present.

- 35. Historic Name: Commercial building**
Current Name: Albert Lea Paint and Glass Company
Address: 120-122 West Main Street
Date: between 1905 and 1910; 1950
Contributing

The building's light-brown-brick facade was created when the building was remodeled in 1950. The storefront's central display windows are flanked on each side by two recessed entrances. All the doors and display windows are aluminum-framed plate glass. The second-story window openings have been enclosed with plywood and hold sliding vertical-sash windows. The building has little decoration, except for the use of red brick to highlight the second-story windows.

The building was initially connected to a one-story concrete-block building at 132 West Main Street. Built between 1905 and 1910, this building housed a bowling alley and cigar shop until the late 1910s, when a second-hand store moved in. By 1929, four businesses operated out of the building: G. N. Miller, automobile-top manufacturers and trimmers; I. P. Thomesen, clothes cleaners, dyers, and pressers; Vaughn's Parcel Delivery; and the Albert Lea Paper Company. The building was still connected to 132 West Main and was also linked to a new one-story garage, now 134-136 West Main Street. In the 1930s, the openings that connected this building with the others were sealed. Four new businesses moved into the building: the Diamond Furniture Store, W. M. Piepho, Prehm Radio Service Company, and Witt's Finance Company. Albert Lea Paint and Glass arrived at the building in the 1940s and extensively remodeled it in 1950. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the Rapid Printing Company was also located in the building, and two other businesses spent a brief time here. The Kennelly Fur and Fabric Shop operated from the building in the 1950s and 1960s, and the Joyce Matthies

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Dance Centre occupied space in the building in the 1980s.²¹

36. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: vacant; Craig Clausen, DDS; Northwestern Mutual Financial Network

Address: 132-136 West Main Street

Date: between 1905 and 1926; 1940s

Contributing

The footprint for the 132 West Main Street section of the building dates back to 1886. Between 1905 and 1910 a concrete-block building was built on the foundation of the 1886 building. The 134-136 brick sections of the building were erected between 1918 and 1926. Historic photos show that the current facade was erected before 1947. Although the interior has been remodeled since 1947, the facade has remained intact, including the cream and burgundy structural glass, the aluminum-frame display windows, and the aluminum-frame recessed entrances, all of which are in excellent condition. The entrance stoops are finished in terra-cotta tile, and a flat metal awning, typical of mid-twentieth century storefronts, spans the entire facade. A plain yellow brick parapet rises above the awning.

The eastern section, 132 West Main Street, was originally used as a wagon shop. It also served as a machine shop until the late 1920s, when the Arnold Plumbing and Heating Company moved into the building. This company did not move out until the 1960s, when the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company of Milwaukee took over the space; it remains there today. The two western storefronts, 134 and 136 West Main Street, were originally used as garage space. In the late 1920s, two businesses were based out of this space, N. B. Rice, batteries and battery repairers, and the Mentho-Jell Company, which manufactured medicines. In the 1930s, the Freeborn-Mower Cooperative Light and Power Association rented the western section. This business was replaced by the DeLuxe Cleaners in the 1940s, which probably remodeled the facade. In the 1960s, a dentist, Jarvis A. Knutson, moved into 134 West Main, which is the middle storefront. The Lovejoy Enterprise Import-Export business occupied the westernmost section. During the 1970s, an accountant opened shop in the western section, but he had moved out by 1990. The middle section is still occupied by a dentist, but 136 West Main Street is currently vacant.

²¹ Inspection of Buildings Record for 126 West Main Street.

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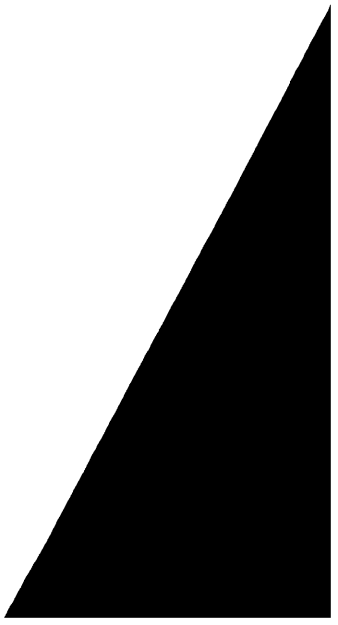
- 37. Historic Name: Commercial building**
Current Name: Municipal parking lot
Address: 133-141 West Main Street
Date:
Noncontributing

This municipal parking lot once held commercial buildings. The northeast corner of this lot was the site of a two-story brick building, which housed the town hall between 1886 and 1905. A large rectangular livery stable, operated by the Thompson Brothers, was located immediately to the west of the town hall. Several smaller outbuildings occupied the south edge of the lot. Between 1910 and 1918, the former town hall building was demolished and the stable, a feed shed, and a small warehouse were also razed. Between 1931 and 1938, two new buildings were constructed on the property. One was a one-story wood-frame building, which housed the Red Top Diner, and the other a tile and concrete garage occupied by Smith Tire and Electric Company. Both businesses remained in their respective buildings until the buildings were demolished for the parking lot. Because the historic buildings associated with the site were razed, the property's historic integrity was compromised and it is noncontributing to the historic district.²²

- 38. Historic Name: Trades Publishing Company**
Current Name: Minnesota Dept. of Corrections; Cedar House, Inc.
Address: 142 West Main Street
Date: 1941
Contributing

Constructed in 1941, this fireproof terra-cotta-tile building has a red-brick veneer. It replaced a two-story brick building that was destroyed by fire earlier that year. The southern portion of the building is two stories and a one-story section stretches north. The first story has been finished on the south and west facades. Cream- and mauve-colored stucco has been applied to the south facade and part of the west facade, and the window and door openings have been finished with hold three narrow plate-glass windows and a modern plate-glass door. The second-story window openings have been enclosed with cream-colored stucco to match the first story. The two second-story openings on the south facade each hold two

²² See, e.g., 89; Inspection of Buildings Record for 141 West Main Street.



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one-over-one double-hung-sash windows. The three second-story openings on the west facade each contain a one-over-one double-hung-sash window. The original stone cornices on the storefront and the second-story are intact.

The Albert Lea Gas Light Company was the building's first occupant. In the 1920s, the Trades Publishing Company, which published the *Freeborn County Standard*, *Northwestern Jeweler* magazine, and *Albert Lea Community Magazine*, moved into the building, occupying it into the 1990s. The building was then taken over by the Minnesota Department of Corrections and an adult care center called Cedar House.²³

39. Historic Name: Commercial building
Current Name: Larson Allen, CPA
Address: 115 North Newton Avenue
Date: between 1918 and 1926
Contributing

This one-story tile building was originally four separate buildings with shared party walls, all constructed between 1918 and 1926. An addition was made to the south side, creating the current rectangular plan, after the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) moved into the building in the 1950s. The present brown-brick facade has little decoration, except for brickwork above the four segmental-arch window openings. These openings hold modern plate-glass windows and small sliding vertical-sash windows at the bottom of the openings. The arched space at the top of the opening is filled with plywood or metal. Two metal doors are located at street level, and the southernmost opening has a large shingled awning.

A tin shop and a dry cleaning business were originally located in this building. There were also three private garages, one on the west end, one in the middle, and one on the southeast end of the building. In the 1930s, the Coca-Cola Company used the building for a bottling works, but by 1950 Coca-Cola had left and two businesses, a printing company and a band instrument repair company, had moved in. In the 1950s, the YMCA occupied the facility and remained until the 1970s, when an accounting firm, Bertram, Cooper and Company, relocated

²³ "Trades Publishing Co. Descended From Albert Lea First Newspaper," *Albert Lea Community Scene*, April 5, 1978, clipping available at FCHS.

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to the building. The firm was recently replaced with Larson Allen, CPA.

40. Historic Name: Emstad's Liquors
Current Name: Midtown Liquor
Address: 101 South Newton Avenue
Date: 1964
Noncontributing

Built in 1964, this concrete building is surrounded by a parking lot. The northwest facade consists of a plate-glass door flanked by sidelights. The west and north facades each have one display window, although most of the north window has been enclosed with plywood. The remainder of the north and west facades are solid concrete scored to look like tile and ornamented with gold-painted concrete spheres.

When originally constructed, the building was occupied by Emstad's Liquors, but in the 1970s Emstad's was replaced by Midtown Liquor, which recently went out of business. Before the liquor store was built, there were two wood-frame buildings on the site. These buildings were built between 1899 and 1905 and were clad in iron. The one-story building on the east housed a plumbing business, and the neighboring two-story building housed a billiards parlor and a notions and confectionary shop. A cigar factory also operated out of the building for a short period of time. In the 1920s, the billiards parlor was replaced with a stone-cutting business, and a barbershop occupied the one-story building. This shop was operated by S. O. Severson into the 1950s. A tavern named *The Spot* and the *Randall Electric Company* moved into the two-story building. In the 1950s, the tavern was renamed *Wiley and Lou's*, which would later move down the street to 216 East Clark. The other half of the two-story building was vacant. The one-story building was occupied by a painter, Hjalma Haaland.

These were the last occupants of the buildings before the demolition. Because the current building was constructed after the period of significance, it is noncontributing to the historic district.

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- 41. Historic Name: S. M. Severson, Blacksmith**
Current Name: Farmers Insurance Group
Address: 109 South Newton Avenue
Date: between 1899 and 1905
Noncontributing

Built between 1899 and 1905, this concrete-block building originally housed a blacksmith's shop. In 1977 it was remodeled into offices. The asymmetrical storefront dates from that period. The plate-glass door is flanked by six narrow plate-glass windows. Gravelstone covers the storefront and metal has been applied to the upper half of the facade.

This building was originally constructed for a blacksmith, and from the 1910s to the 1950s, blacksmith S. M. Severson occupied the building. He shared the space with the Albert Lea Auto Electric and Battery Service Station in the 1920s. In the 1930s, the Henderson Sign Company moved into the building. In the 1950s, the Kycek Radiator Shop took over the entire building and operated in it until the 1970s. At that point the building was remodeled into offices and ERA Reichl Realty moved in. The present occupants, Farmers Insurance Group, replaced the real estate agency in the 1980s. The building's facade has been altered and its historic integrity compromised; therefore, it is noncontributing to the historic district.

- 42. Historic Name: Commercial building**
Current Name: Knutson Building
Address: 113-115 South Newton Avenue
Date: between 1899 and 1918
Contributing

The two southern sections of this brick building were built between 1899 and 1905, and the northern third was constructed between 1910 and 1918. In 2000 the storefront was remodeled using historically inappropriate materials, the facade was painted, and a date plaque was added. The southern storefront was reconstructed with brick, while the two remaining storefronts have a more historic configuration, but with contemporary plate-glass windows and doors. A non-historic metal sign band covers the transom windows of all three storefronts. The nine second-story window openings hold replacement double- or triple-pane windows. The brick frieze, stone lintels and sills, and metal cornice are uniform across the entire second

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story.

The two southern sections of the building originally housed the Northern Creamery Supply House and two other businesses. After the northern section was built, four separate businesses operated out of the building on the first floor. William Nelson's general store was on the north end, the Syvrud Brothers' harness manufacturing business was in the middle, and the Northern Creamery Supply House was on the south end. The Albert Lea Corset Company occupied the entire second floor, manufacturing the "Alberta" corset. While the dairy supply business remained, the Dreblow Tire House and a bakery moved into the other storefronts in the 1920s. The upstairs appears to have been left vacant. In the 1940s, an automobile supply store occupied the two northern storefronts, the dairy supply store the southern storefront, and the upstairs was used by eight different unions as meeting rooms. The dairy supply store moved out in the 1950s, and a sewing center took its place. The local Teamsters' Union met in the second floor on the north side, but the rest of the second story was vacant. During the 1960s and 1970s, the auto supply store was the only occupant. In the 1980s, the second floor was used as the Malco Parts Warehouse No. 2, while the auto supply store occupied the first floor. After its remodeling in 2000, Farmer's Insurance Group, Knutson Development Company, Commodity Marketing, Prudential Insurance, American Residential Mortgage, and Power 96 radio moved into the building.²⁴

43. Historic Name: Gas station

Current Name: One-Hour Martinizing Dry Cleaners

Address: 114 South Newton Avenue

Date: between 1918 and 1926

Noncontributing

Built between 1918 and 1926 as a gas station, this building was extensively remodeled in 1968 and 1977. The concrete-block walls were covered with vertical wood siding, and the garage door openings were enclosed. The current storefront reflects these later alterations. A plate-glass door and display windows form the northeast corner of the building. Three square window openings are located on the east facade. A wood-shingled overhang wraps around the east and north facades.

²⁴ Curtiss-Wedge, 295; Inspection of Buildings Record for 113 South Newton Avenue.

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This gas station was operated by M. J. Jorgenson in the 1930s. In the 1940s, it was known as Rollie and Ray Standard Service, and in the 1950s as Riney and Dick's Standard Service. In 1968 the present occupant, One Hour Martinizing, moved in. Because the building has been altered and its historic integrity lost, it is noncontributing to the historic district.

- 44. Historic Name: United States Post Office**
Current Name: United States Post Office
Address: 141 South Newton Avenue
Date: 1936-1937
Contributing

Constructed in 1936-1937 under the jurisdiction of the Works Progress Administration, this reinforced-concrete building is an excellent example of the Moderne architecture used by the federal government during the Great Depression. The two-story section of the building houses a public lobby, service counters, post office boxes, and offices. A one-story wing on the east (rear) facade contains work space and a loading dock. The building is clad in varying shades of cream limestone. The west and south facades of the two-story section display several classical characteristics including a raised first story, rusticated basement level, and federal-inspired ornamentation. Limestone plaques depicting transportation motifs are situated between the first- and second-story windows. The window bays are separated by fluted limestone pilasters. On the south facade a stylized limestone screen protects the second-story stairwell window, which is stained glass. The six first-story window openings on the west facade and the two first-story window openings on the north facade hold original paired four-over-eight double-hung-sash windows. The seven second-story window openings on the west facade and the two second-story window openings on the south facade still hold original paired four-over-four double-hung-sash windows. An additional four-light window acts as a transom over the first-story entrance, which also has a plaque featuring a federal eagle. The curvilinear granite entrance stoop with wrought-iron and cast-bronze hand railings and lamp posts is also original. A handicap-access ramp is located on the north side of the front facade is not original, but blends in with the building.

Albert Lea's post office has occupied this site since 1910. Before that time, a multi-story brick building, constructed in 1884, was on the site. That building housed a wagon shop, a blacksmith shop, and a mill for grinding feed. By 1899 the Northern Creamery Supply

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Company moved into the building. After the company built a new brick building at 115-117 South Newton Avenue, the old building was torn down. The first post office building on the site was a one-story brick building on a raised basement. The building was Romanesque in style, and fairly small in size. It was replaced in the mid-1930s by a new building that was erected, like over four hundred other post offices around the country, as a federal relief project. The designing architect was LeRoy Gaarder, who was born in Wisconsin in 1891 and attended Saint Olaf College and the University of Minnesota. After serving with an engineering division in France in World War I, he opened architecture offices in Dodgeville, Wisconsin, in 1918, and in Albert Lea in 1920. In 1933, he moved to Washington, D.C., to work for the federal government. During World War II, he continued his government career in Seattle. Gaarder returned to Albert Lea in 1945, where he was responsible for designing a number of churches and other buildings until his retirement in 1969. Louis A. Simon, the supervising architect for the Albert Lea post office, oversaw construction of a number of post offices in Minnesota, as well as the post office and courthouse in Los Angeles and the Appraisers Building in San Francisco.²⁵

The C. M. Tapager Company, a prominent Albert Lea contractor, received a \$147,674 contract to erect Albert Lea's post office in October 1935. In April 1937, the new facility was dedicated. It has continued to serve the same function since that time.²⁶

45. Historic Name: Knudsen Chevrolet Company

Current Name: Freeborn County Shopper

Address: 110 West Pearl Street

Date: between 1914 and 1926

Contributing

Constructed between 1914 and 1926, this fireproof terra-cotta-tile building was originally two buildings with similar dark-brown-brick veneers. The west facade, the building's original front, has modest brick pilasters and stepped parapets. The storefronts on the west and south

²⁵ "Post Office, Albert Lea," postcard, ca. 1910, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul; "Designer of Area Churches LeRoy Gaarder Dies at 92," *Albert Lea Tribune*, January 29, 1984; Gilbert Stanley Underwood, "Post Offices and Custom Houses," in *Forms and Functions of Twentieth-century Architecture*, ed. Talbot Hamilton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 3:909-931.

²⁶ *Freeborn County Heritage*, n.p.; "Designer of Area Churches Dies."

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facades have large window openings holding plate glass, but the transom-window openings are covered with wood siding. Each facade has two plate-glass doors and a garage-door opening with a modern garage door. The second-story window openings have been filled with brick panels that are recessed behind the original reveals. A brick stringcourse forms the lintels for the second-story window openings.

Knudson Chevrolet and the Motor Inn built and occupied the two buildings, which have been combined to form 110 West Pearl Street. The Motor Inn was the first automobile business at the site; the northern half of the building, at 415 South Washington Avenue, was an addition to its showroom building at 418-420 South Broadway. During the 1930s, The Motor Inn moved to a new location on West College Street. In 1926 the southern half of the building, known as 419 South Washington Avenue, was constructed by Knudsen Chevrolet. The northern half was briefly run as the Zetterholm Garage, but in the 1950s it was absorbed into Knudson Chevrolet. In the 1960s, the business was bought and became the Bill Olson Chevrolet Company. By 1980 two related businesses, Nordaas-American Import Shoppe and the Nordaas American Distributing Company, had moved into the building. Presently, the *Freeborn County Shopper* occupies the entire property. This publishing business moved into the space in the 1980s and changed the address from South Washington Avenue to 110 West Pearl Street.²⁷

- 46. Historic Name: Minnesota National Guard Armory**
Current Name: Freeborn County Dept. of Human Services
Address: 104 South Washington Avenue
Date: 1939-1940
Contributing

Constructed between 1939 and 1940, this reinforced-concrete building has a brown-brick veneer. Entrance sections project from the east and north facades. Concrete panels over the north facade entrance contribute to the building's Moderne style. The rectangular window openings contain one-over-one single-hung-sash windows, and the entrances have modern plate-glass doors. The building is adorned with polychromatic bands of brickwork that wrap around the entire building at the levels of the first- and second-story windows.

²⁷ *Freeborn County Heritage*, 85.

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This site once held a wood-frame building that was constructed as a hospital in the late 1800s by Dr. Hamilton Wilcox. In the 1920s, the building was converted into the West Hotel. The hotel was demolished by the late 1930s and the property acquired for use by the Minnesota National Guard. The armory was built at a cost of approximately \$110,000 by the Minnesota State Armory Building Commission, which also produced armories in Minneapolis, Brainerd, Moorhead, Crookston, and Camp Ripley during the 1930s. All of these were funded by federal relief programs, and all were designed by architect and engineer Philip C. Bettenburg, principal of a Saint Paul firm bearing his name. At the time of his death in 1968, the firm was known as Bettenburg, Townsend, Stolte and Comb. George C. Townsend had apparently worked with Bettenburg for some time; he drew the plans for the Albert Lea armory in the fall of 1939. Sidney Stolte directed operations of the Minnesota Works Progress Administration from 1935 to 1939 and administered the successor agency, the Works Projects Administration, until the program ended in 1943. At that time, he joined Bettenburg's practice. Stolte, Townsend, and Combs became named partners in 1946. Bettenburg's office was responsible for designing many public and private buildings throughout the state. His federal relief work included the Minneapolis Armory (1935) and the Brainerd Armory (1936). He later designed the armory in Saint Paul. Bettenburg received a degree in civil engineering from Saint Thomas College in 1933 and set up his own practice two years later. One of his first commissions was at the Minnesota National Guard camp at Fort Ripley. From 1930 to 1934, he was based at Camp Ripley as the chief engineer for the state's military department. Bettenburg had a long personal involvement with the military, having served in a special army unit in World War I and as a lieutenant colonel in the African theater in World War II. In 1946 he was appointed assistant commander of the National Guard's 47th Infantry, later becoming its commander.²⁸

The Albert Lea Armory housed the Minnesota National Guard for almost half a century. It was also used for a variety of community events—from union meetings to wedding dances, from pancake breakfasts to wrestling matches. The guard moved to a new facility at the east edge of the city in 1988. The following year, the old armory was remodeled and transferred to the State Department of Human Services. It is now owned by Freeborn County.²⁹

²⁸ "Philip Bettenburg of Architect Firm Dies," *Minneapolis Star*, March 21, 1968; Bernice White, ed., *Who's Who in Minnesota, 1958* (N.p.: Hugh L. White, 1958), 217, 532; David Gebhard and Tom Martinson, *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 38, 184; blueprints and drawings of the Albert Lea Armory, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

²⁹ *Freeborn County Heritage*, 87; Inspection of Buildings Record for 203 West Clark Street.

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- 47. Historic Name: Commercial buildings**
Current Name: Parking lot
Address: 115-119 South Washington Avenue
Date: 1973
Noncontributing

Two one-story tile buildings were constructed on the southwest corner of the lot in 1930 and 1931. The northern building, 117 South Washington, housed the Holcher and Styve plate-glass works. Johnson's Sheet Metal Shop was located in the southern building. In the 1940s, the northern building became the Glass Shop, which occupied the building until it was torn down. Johnson changed the focus of his business to heating and air conditioning in the 1950s. In 1973 both buildings were demolished to expand the parking lot of 143 West Clark Street. This compromised the site's historic integrity and made it noncontributing to the historic district.³⁰

- 48. Historic Name: Commercial building**
Current Name: Clothing Care Center
Address: 116-118 South Washington Avenue
Date: 1948-1950
Contributing

Constructed between 1948 and 1950, this reinforced-concrete building has a rectangular plan. The asymmetrical storefront, which is original, is clad in cream-colored limestone with aluminum trim. Plate-glass display windows flank the storefront's entrance and a doorway to the second floor is located on the southern end. The second story is faced with black structural glass and has corrugated-aluminum panels between the five window openings. Four of the openings have contemporary sliding vertical-sash windows, which are replacements, and the fifth opening has an original two-over-two single-hung-sash window. The remnants of a sign for Allied Adjusters, Inc. can be seen above the second-story windows.

A one-story livery stable occupied the site until the 1920s when it was demolished. The site remained vacant until the current building was constructed between 1948 and 1950. Jewel's Home Appliance Center was the first occupant, but by 1961 the Industrial Credit Company

³⁰ Inspection of Buildings Records for 117 and 119 South Washington Avenue.

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had moved into the building and shared space with dentist Mervin A. Aus, the Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association, and Edythe's Beauty Center. The Industrial Credit Company remained in the building until the 1970s and Hovland and Associates, a sporting-goods manufacturer, also had offices in the building. By 1980 the Chamber of Commerce and Allied Adjusters had moved into the building. In the 1980s, the present occupant, the Clothing Care Center, a dry-cleaning business, took over the building. There is no historic documentation of residential use of the second floor.³¹

49. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Abrego's Cafe

Address: 120 South Washington Avenue

Date: between 1918 and 1926

Noncontributing

This fireproof terra-cotta-tile building was constructed between 1918 and 1926. The storefront was remodeled in 1955 and 1976 into a deeply recessed entrance flanked by plate-glass windows. The storefront's bulkheads and ends are clad in historically inappropriate Gravelstone. Corrugated-steel siding covers the parapet and the upper portion of the storefront.

Before the present building was constructed, a carriage house and livery stable occupied the site. These were torn down in the late 1910s or early 1920s to make way for the new building. The basement level, which is accessible from the west side, was used for a garage. O. I. Evenson, a grocer, was the first occupant of the present building. The grocery store was followed by Dr. O. W. Hansen, a veterinarian, in the 1930s. In the 1940s, the building housed three separate businesses, the Alumatic Window Company, Dr. Hansen, and the Surge Dairy Equipment Store. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the B&W Cafe occupied the first floor, and the Gilbert Refrigeration and Motor Service was located in the basement. In 1990 only the B&W Cafe remained, but this has since been replaced by Abrego's Cafe. The facade has been significantly altered and the building's historic integrity compromised; it is noncontributing to the historic district.

³¹ Inspection of Buildings Record for 118 South Washington Avenue.

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50. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Edward Jones Investments; H&R Block Company

Address: 126 South Washington Avenue

Date: between 1926 and 1931

Contributing

Built between 1926 and 1931, this fireproof terra-cotta-tile building has a rectangular plan. In 1957 the storefront was remodeled to its current configuration. Two large plate-glass windows flank a modern plate-glass entrance, all added in the 1980s. A section of green and tan stucco ornaments the cornice, while the rest of the storefront is faced with tan brick. Originally, a one-story wood-frame carpenter's shop and lumber shed occupied this lot and the lot to the south. In the 1920s, these buildings were torn down, along with several others on this side of Washington Avenue. The present building first housed the offices of B. I. Jenson. In the 1940s, the Park Inn, a restaurant and bar, moved into the building. By 1961 the building had returned to office use and was occupied by the Credit Bureau of Albert Lea, the Security Insurance Agency, the Security Corporation, and the Carlsen Distributing Company, a novelties wholesale business. All of the businesses, except Carlsen Distributing, remained in the building until the 1970s. Three new businesses moved in by 1980, Home Realty, Holton Insurance Agency and the H&R Block Company. H&R Block continues to occupy the building along with Edward Jones, an investment-consulting firm.

51. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Parking lot

Address: 130 South Washington Avenue

Date: 1968

Noncontributing

This corner lot, now used for parking, was occupied until 1968 by a large one-story concrete-block and wood-frame building with a small one-story storefront. The building's first occupants were Tollof Tweten, a plumber, and Johnson Gullek's sheet metal business. While the ownership changed in the 1930s, the larger section of the building continued to be used as a sheet metal works. In the 1940s, a barber, Benjamin H. Felling, moved into the storefront and Jacobson's Grocery moved into the larger section of the building. The grocery was replaced by Mike's Radio and TV business in the 1950s, but Ben's Barber Shop was still in

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operation. These businesses were the last occupants of the building before it was demolished in 1968. Because the historic buildings associated with the site were razed, the property lost its historic integrity and is noncontributing to the historic district.³²

52. Historic Name: Commercial building
Current Name: Albert Lea Abstract Company
Address: 201-205 South Washington Avenue
Date: 1948
Contributing

This fireproof terra-cotta-tile building was constructed in 1948. The tan-brick facades have been slightly altered. The large display-window openings were enclosed in the 1970s with board-and-batten siding to form smaller openings, which hold narrow casement windows. Two doorways are centered in the west facade and have contemporary doors.

Before the present building was constructed, a small one-story building occupied the corner. This housed a printing company until 1899, when the American Gas Machine Company operated from the building. Following American Gas, a paint store occupied the building. Sometime between 1910 and 1918 the building was torn down and a one-story stucco gas station constructed. The Seeger Standard Service station was demolished in 1948. The first occupants of the current building were the Hellie and Wendt Paint Store and the Western Auto Associate Store. In the 1950s, Floorcrafters, a carpeting and flooring business, took over the entire building. The Jacobson Music Company occupied the northern half of the building in the 1960s. This business was replaced in the 1970s by Hugh O'Byrne Realty, the Albert Lea Abstract Company, and Courtney A. Slife, an attorney. The abstract company is the only occupant today.³³

³² Inspection of Buildings Record for 130 South Washington Avenue.

³³ Inspection of Buildings Record for 201-207 South Washington Avenue.

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53. Historic Name: Eagle Building

Current Name: Security Insurance Agency; Swenson Law Office; Allied Adjustors, Inc.

Address: 204-208 South Washington Avenue

Date: 1948

Contributing

Built in 1948, this two-story fireproof terra-cotta-tile building has a rectangular plan. The building is clad in brown brick and has no decoration. The storefront is clad in stone and sheltered by a metal awning. The replacement plate-glass display windows and entrance are designed to complement the original facade. The five second-story window openings on the east facade and the nine second-story openings on the north facade hold one-over-one single-hung-sash windows. On the western end of the north facade is the entrance to the Fraternal Order of Eagles' (FOE) clubroom. It consists of a metal door below a wall-mounted internally lit sign.

Before the present building was constructed, a one-story wood-frame blacksmith and wagon shop occupied the corner. The first occupants of the present building were an A & P Food Store and the clubhouse for the FOE. The second floor was rented out as apartments. In the 1950s, a Piggly Wiggly Store moved into the building. The FOE continued to occupy the rear of the building, and the second floor was renamed the Eagle Apartments. The Piggly Wiggly operated until the 1970s, when the FOE divided the first floor into several commercial spaces. The Barbers, the Security Insurance Agency, Gunderson and Swenson (a law firm), the Overgaard-Arends Insurance Agency, and Saint Paul Investors moved into the first floor. By 1990 the Security Insurance Agency, Gunderson, Swenson and Zander, and Allied Adjustors were the only first-floor occupants. The FOE clubhouse continues to occupy the rear of the building, and the second floor is still rented as apartments.

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54. Historic Name: Washington Apartments

Current Name: Uniq Data; Strong Insurance Agency, Inc.

Address: 209-221 South Washington Avenue

Date: 1904; 1949-1950

Contributing

The original component of this property, a two-story brick apartment building, was constructed in 1904. Because it was erected on a hill, part of the front facade is still visible despite additions along the street frontage. The dark-brown-brick Classical Revival-style building has several one-over-one double-hung-sash windows with transoms. Brick quoins adorn the building's corners, and a stamped-metal cornice, swags, and medallion ornament the second story. In 1949-1950 a one-story brick section was added to the northwest corner of the building. It has a red-tapestry-brick bulkhead with large display-window openings that have been enclosed with plywood to create smaller openings. Metal sheathing surrounds the storefront. During the same time period, a two-story red-tapestry-brick addition centered on the front of the apartment building was also constructed. It has four window openings filled with glass block and a plate-glass door, and serves as the entrance to the apartment building. A band of cream-colored brick wraps around the addition at the second-story windows. An unornamented, single-story, brick addition to the southwest corner of the apartment building, now bearing the address 221, was constructed in 1949 and 1950. Metal sheathing surrounds the storefront, which holds four large plate-glass windows. In 1947 the northernmost street-level section, 209 South Washington Avenue, was constructed of fireproof terra-cotta tile. It is faced in a light-red brick; the glass-block transoms, display-window opening, and doorway are original. A non-historic internally lit sign projects from the facade above the storefront. Brick quoins similar to the apartment building decorate the corners.

The Washington Apartments has offered rental housing continuously since the two-story building was constructed. In 1947 the owner began to develop the front of the property to increase revenue, demonstrating the strength of commerce in downtown Albert Lea following World War II. No. 209 South Washington, built for the Strong Insurance Agency which still occupies the building, was the first storefront to be built. The southernmost storefront at 221 South Washington was built by 1950 and Duke's Linoleum Store was the first occupant. In the 1950s, Field's Pizza Cellar moved into the building and remained until the 1970s when the Budget Shop, a thrift store, took over. World Travel of Albert Lea was the next occupant, and

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presently a business called Uniq Data uses the space. The first occupant of the storefront at 211 South Washington was Armon J. Helvig, a chiropractor. In the 1960s, Carroll's Barber Shop rented the space. In the 1970s, the business changed to the Golden Shears, a beauty shop. In 1981 the Strong Insurance Agency expanded into this section.³⁴

55. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Salvation Army Thrift Store

Address: 214 South Washington Avenue

Date: between 1910 and 1918

Contributing

Built between 1910 and 1918, this fireproof terra-cotta-tile building has a dark-red-brick veneer. The storefront was altered with display windows and a recessed entrance. While the replacement plate-glass windows and door are sympathetic to the building's historic facade, the transoms have been covered with vertical wood siding. The black structural-glass pilasters on the storefront, added in the 1930s, are still intact. On the north end of the first story is a doorway leading to the second floor. The second story has five window openings, each containing a one-over-one double-hung-sash window. Stone sills and lintels, a brick frieze, and a corbelled-brick cornice ornament the second-story facade.

The present building was originally a garage with a capacity for forty automobiles. An open elevator, located inside the building on the north wall, transported automobiles to the second floor. In the 1930s, the building housed the Washington Welding Shop, Hans and Ike's garage, and the Minneapolis Journal in addition to three apartments. The offices and apartments were probably on the second floor. In 1950 the Robbins Furniture Company operated from the first floor, and the second floor was divided into ten apartments. By 1961 the Western Auto Associate Store and the Ess Sewing Company occupied the first floor, and the second floor had been renamed the Hellie Garage Apartments. In the late 1960s, the first floor sat vacant; the Knot Shoppe became a tenant in the 1970s. The current occupant, the Salvation Army Thrift Store, took over the first floor in the 1980s. The ten apartments on the second floor are still rented as the Hellie Apartments.³⁵

³⁴ Inspection of Buildings Records for 209, 213, 215, 217, and 219 South Washington Avenue.

³⁵ *Freeborn County Heritage*, 82.

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56. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: The Next Step Clubhouse

Address: 216 South Washington Avenue

Date: between 1910 and 1918

Noncontributing

This brick building was constructed between 1910 and 1918. The facade has since been altered and has an asymmetrical storefront with plate-glass display windows and door. The parapet is covered with brown metal siding.

This building originally housed the Albert Lea Vulcanizing Company, a tire repair business. In the 1930s, the name changed to Smith Tire and Electric Shop, and changed again in the 1940s to the Turnbull Tire Company, which remained in the building until the 1960s. Floorcrafters, a carpeting and flooring business, occupied the building after leaving 201-205 South Washington, and in the 1970s a business called Bedder Sleep used the space. ITT Financial Services moved into the building in the 1980s, but the building now houses the Next Step Clubhouse. The facade has been altered with historically inappropriate materials and the building's historic integrity has been compromised; it is noncontributing to the historic district.

57. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Antiques of the Midwest; Full Draw Archery

Address: 218 South Washington Avenue

Date: between 1910 and 1918

Contributing

Constructed between 1910 and 1918, this fireproof terra-cotta-tile building has a dark-brown-brick veneer. The storefront was constructed in the 1940s, when the building ceased operating as a garage. The entrance is recessed and the display-window openings follow a mid-twentieth century configuration. A corrugated-metal sign band has been added above the storefront. Of note is the second-floor entrance bay on the north end of the first story. The builders continued the brick pilasters up to the corbelled-brick cornice, creating a narrow bay on the second story that does not have a window and causes the facade to be asymmetrical. The second story has four window openings, two of which have been covered with plywood panels. The remaining two are partially covered with plywood and have small sliding vertical-sash windows.

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This building originally housed the Henderson and Hellie automobile manufacturing and repairing business. Like the garage at 214 South Washington, this building had an open elevator on the interior of the south wall to transport vehicles to the second floor. In the 1920s the Farm Implement Company moved into the space. The basement was converted to a private garage in the 1930s, and the upper stories were modified for commercial use. The Works Projects Administration Sewing Room and the National Youth Agency rented space, as did the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation. Following World War II, Lageson Hardware occupied the first floor and the Albert Lea Bowling Center was located on the second floor. In the 1950s, the entire building was used for a dance hall called the Palm Garden. This business was short-lived and in the 1960s Westrum's of Albert Lea, a family clothing store, moved into the building. Westrum's stayed in the building until the 1980s, when the building sat vacant. Presently, Antiques of the Midwest occupies the first floor and Full Draw Archery occupies the second floor.

58. Historic Name: Sears Roebuck and Company

Current Name: Litho Printing and Graphics; Hill, Larson, Walth & Buhs (CPAs)

Address: 230-232 South Washington Avenue

Date: 1946

Contributing

Built in 1946, this one-story steel and concrete building has a partially exposed reinforced-concrete basement, because the ground slopes down to the west. The facades are clad in a light-brown-brick veneer. The display window and door openings are original, but corrugated metal siding was added to the parapet sometime after the period of significance. Most of the basement window openings have been enclosed with plywood panels. The remainder of the openings hold modern sliding vertical-sash windows. There are two entrances to the building, one on the front facade and one leading into the basement on the south facade.

This building was constructed for Sears, Roebuck and Company, which remained in the building until the 1980s. An automobile sales and service business operated from the basement. Following Sears, the building sat vacant until the arrival of Litho Printing and Graphics in the 1990s. This business still occupies the building, and an accounting firm, Hill, Larson, Walth, and Buhs, is located in the rear basement space.

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- 59. Historic Name: Commercial buildings
Current Name: Municipal parking lot
Address: 123-133 East William Street
Date: between 1960 and 1975
Noncontributing**

Once the site of four commercial buildings, this area is now a municipal parking lot. In 1905, a two-story brick building at 123 East William Street housed a saloon on the first floor and a cigar factory on the second. By 1918 three buildings had been constructed at 125-127, 129, and 133 East William Street, and the massive six-story Home Improvement Building occupied the southeast corner of the block. From the 1930s until its demolition, the building at 123 East William housed Phil's Cafe. The building at 125-127 East William held a jewelry shop until the 1950s, when it was replaced by the Albert Lea Clothing store. The store remained until the building was demolished. The Style Shop, a women's clothing store, occupied 129 East William. In the 1950s, the business's name changed to the Christensen Sisters Shop, which was the last business at the address. The building at 133 East William housed a variety of businesses, beginning with a hairdresser's salon. In the 1930s, the Peoples Building and Loan Association moved into the building. This business, along with various others, occupied the building until it was razed. In the 1960s and 1970s, the four commercial buildings, along with the Hotel Freeborn at 120 East Clark Street, were demolished. The property is noncontributing to the historic district because the buildings associated with the site no longer exist.

- 60. Historic Name: Hatteberg Building
Current Name: Wayne's TV Service and Satellite Sales; vacant
Address: 126-130 East William Street
Date: 1922-1923
Contributing**

This three-story brick building was constructed between 1922 and 1923. The eastern storefront, with brick and cream-colored stone pilasters, has large display windows with multi-light transoms and is original to the building. The western storefront has been enclosed with stucco-covered brick and has a wood-shingled overhang and smaller plate-glass windows, all of which date from the 1930s. The first story contains three doorways, one to each storefront and one to the upper floors. The second and third stories are faced in dark-brown tapestry

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brick with basket-weave patterns around the four window openings. Each opening holds paired one-over-one single-hung-sash windows. The brick cornice repeats the basket-weave pattern.

Before the present building was erected, there was a two-story wood-frame garage on the site. During the night of May 21, 1922, a fire broke out in the building and spread to other buildings facing Broadway Avenue. Nine businesses were destroyed by the fire, including the Albert Lea Hardware store, Jensen Brothers Clothing Store, Central Electric Company, Borland's Grocery, and Henry J. Harm's Jewelry Store. The property owner, A. T. Hatteberg, constructed a new brick three-story building with two storefronts divided by a glass and wood partition wall. Red Owl Stores and the Albert Lea Shoe Store were the first of the storefront occupants. The second and third stories were rented as the Hatteberg Apartments. In the 1930s, the Gamble Clinic and the Motor Supply store moved into the first floor. The upper floors were each divided into five apartments and renamed the Hansen Apartments. In the 1940s, while the Gamble Clinic remained in the western storefront, the eastern section was divided so the Blooming Prairie Production Credit Association and the John F. Hansen Construction Company, the building's owner, could occupy that space. The 1950s saw the same layout, but the Prescription Shop replaced the credit association. Ray Hansen, who had taken over the construction company, renamed the business after himself. The western half of the first floor was subdivided into office areas in the 1960s, while the eastern half held the Ferguson Company, an advertising firm, and Ed Ernest Realty. The real estate company was replaced in the 1970s by Farmers Insurance Group. In the 1980s, the eastern half housed a telephone equipment business called Dave's Phone Booth, and the western half remained office space. In the 1990s, American Pest Control moved into the western half, which is now vacant, and Wayne's TV Service and Satellite Sales moved into the eastern half. The upper floors are still residential apartments.³⁶

³⁶ "City Has Worst Fire in Its History," n.p., May 22, 1922, clipping available at FCHS.

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61. Historic Name: Home Improvement Building

Current Name: Lea Center

Address: 135-141 East William Street

Date: 1916

Contributing

Constructed between 1915 and 1916, this six-story building is the tallest in downtown Albert Lea. Sections of the dark-red brick facades on the east and south were painted green in the 1960s. White metal sheathing was applied on either side of these green bands to emphasize the building's verticality. The storefronts were also remodeled in the 1960s when the transoms were covered with stucco, several of the large display openings enclosed, and new aluminum-frame windows and doors installed. One section of display windows remains on the east facade. On the south and east facades the doorways are on the first story; three doorways in the south facade and one doorway in the east facade. White terra-cotta plaques ornament the red-brick sections between the window bays on the east and south facades. White terra-cotta tile stringcourses are situated above the storefronts and below the cornice on the same facades. The stamped-metal cornice with a dentil and egg-and-dart motif is intact, and the original openings for light fixtures remain on the underside of the cornice. The second through sixth stories on the south facade each have four window bays. Each bay contains three window openings holding one-over-one double-hung-sash windows. The east facade has four bays of three window openings flanked by single bays of two window openings. Each opening holds a one-over-one double-hung-sash window. The north and west facades were finished in a common brick that has been painted light green. The north facade has two doorways located on the first story and one doorway, with a fire escape, between the first and second stories. Both of the north and west facades have multiple rectangular window openings on each floor. The building's light well, which allows natural light to penetrate the five upper stories and gives the building a distinct C-shaped plan, is visible on the building's west side.

As Albert Lea prospered in the early twentieth century, the demand for modern office and retail space grew. Dense development along Broadway Avenue, the city's main commercial street, made it difficult to assemble a parcel large enough to hold a more substantial building. Given a precedent for commercial activity along Broadway's side streets, it is not surprising that an underutilized lot at the corner of East William Street and Newton Avenue, just a short block from the city's "100-percent corner" at Broadway and William, caught the attention of

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some local investors.

On March 31, 1915, a newspaper headline proclaimed: "Greatest Building Improvement in City's History. \$150,000.00 Erickson, Harm, Subby Office Building to have 6 Floors of Modern Fireproof Construction. Demands for Space are Flooding Owners. Will Bring Many People Here." The three instigators behind the building's construction were "all home grown, and self made." Alex C. Erickson was president of the Albert Lea State Bank. Henry J. Harm had a jewelry store on Broadway and was serving as the city's mayor. Oscar Subby, a Danish immigrant, joined the Albert Lea police force in 1899 and held the office of Freeborn County sheriff from 1904 to 1914. During the 1910s, he was also president of the Albert Lea Grader Manufacturing Company, which made horse-drawn graders and other equipment; Erickson was secretary and treasurer of the firm. "For several years [the three men] have been connected with almost every big local enterprise," the article observed. "And what is much better, they have been successful. Their success means a bigger and better Albert Lea." They had registered a corporation, the Albert Lea Home Investment Company, with Minnesota's secretary of state on May 3, 1912. They later teamed up to develop a large subdivision on the north side of town.³⁷

The article included a sketch of the building by Hoffman and Mosse, architects in nearby Rochester, Minnesota. The plans were produced during the partnership's short period of existence from February 1914 to April 1916. Little is known about George J. Hoffman, who died in November 1918. He met Frederick Hurd Mosse between 1912 and 1914 when both worked in the office of prominent Minneapolis architect William Channing Whitney. Mosse was born in Rochester in 1890 and graduated from that city's high school in 1910. He attended Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, for two years before transferring to the College of Architecture at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. After separating from Hoffman, Mosse worked on his own in Rochester from 1916 to 1936. He was then employed by the federal government in Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and Louisville until 1947, when he returned to

³⁷ 1914 *City of Albert Lea Directory*, n.p., 1914; Ed Shannon, "Oscar Subby and the Broadway Gun Battle," *Albert Lea Tribune*, April 6, 2002; Albert Lea Home Investment Company Filing Number 5259-AA, Minnesota Secretary of State web site, available from da.sos.state.mn.us/Minnesota/corp_inquiry; and "Greatest Building Improvement," March 31, 1915.

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private practice in Minneapolis.³⁸

The design that appeared in the 1915 article was much like what was subsequently constructed, although the proposed cornice was more ornate and prominent quoins trimming each corner were eliminated from the final version. The article described interior and exterior materials, amenities, and the general configuration of each floor. "This building without exception," the article continued, "will be the finest and largest of its kind in the state outside of the twin cities and Duluth." The building's prominent site was noted in an article several months later: "Situated as it is, across from the post office and in the heart of the business section, it is an ideal location."³⁹

Plans and specifications were to be ready by the first week of April 1915, with construction expected to start in May and be finished within nine months. Due to a delay in finalizing the specifications, however, work did not begin until July, when contractor W. S. Kinsley of Faribault, Minnesota, started excavating the basement. Construction also took longer than anticipated. It was not until September 1916 that tenants began moving in.⁴⁰

The Home Improvement Building enjoyed good occupancy rates during the early decades of its existence. Its success helped sustain the momentum of development in the vicinity, some of which was initiated by the building's investors. When Henry Harm's jewelry store at 211 South Broadway, just south of William, was damaged by fire in 1922, he decided to renovate the two-story ruins into a new four-story building. His store would occupy the first floor, with residential apartments on the floors above. According to a contemporary newspaper article, "Mr. Harm is one of Albert Lea's progressive business men, who has done much to make the city the most modern and attractive in Southern Minnesota."⁴¹

Construction did not start on Harm's building until a year later. By that time, the adjacent Albert Lea State Bank Building was nearing completion. Established in 1902, the bank had

³⁸ Frederick Hurd Mosse, application for corporate membership in the American Institute of Architects, February 19, 1950, available at Manuscripts Division, Elmer L. Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; George J. Hoffman, Minnesota Death Certificate Index, available at <http://people.mnhs.org/dci>.

³⁹ "Greatest Building Improvement"; "Big Building Going Up," July 7, 1915, clipping at FCHS.

⁴⁰ "Big Building Going Up"; Tom Patterson, "Hyde Building Sold; To Become Modern Motel," *Albert Lea Evening Tribune*, May 30, 1965.

⁴¹ "Henry Harm Will Erect Four Story Business Block," *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, October 4, 1922; "Harm Building Work Started," *Freeborn County Standard*, October 18, 1923.

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been housed at 119 South Broadway before moving to its new building at 201-203 South Broadway, on the southeast corner of Broadway and William, in the fall of 1923. The property had become available in May 1922 when a fire—apparently the same one that struck Harm's building—destroyed a two-story brick building, "one of the city's oldest business house landmarks." A local newspaper pronounced the site "one of the most ideal in the city for a building of this kind as it is centrally located." The new building fronted on Broadway and extended 122 feet along East William to the alley line midway between Broadway and Newton, almost across the street from the Home Improvement Building. The construction was overseen by bank president A. C. Erickson, who had risen to that position in 1914 after the sudden death of the previous president. Henry Harm was on the bank's board of directors.⁴²

The Albert Lea State Bank joined another financial institution at that intersection, the First National Bank, which had erected an imposing two-story building on the northeast corner of Broadway and William in 1902. In the same year, First National Bank had merged with the Albert Lea National Bank whose vice president, D. R. P. Hibbs, resigned and became president of an upstart competitor—the Albert Lea State Bank.⁴³

The First National Bank's original entrance faced William Street, on the east end of the building's south facade, until a Broadway entrance was created in 1920. This underscores the importance of downtown streets perpendicular to Broadway. When the Home Improvement Building opened, its main entry was just down the block from First National's front door. To the east of the Home Improvement Building another downtown fixture, the post office, stood on the northeast corner of the intersection of William Street and Newton Avenue.⁴⁴

The Home Improvement Building's central location drew many locally prominent tenants. The third floor held administrative offices of Wilson and Company's meatpacking plant, a major source of employment in Albert Lea, until new offices were built at the plant. Many doctors, dentists, chiropractors, insurance salesmen, and real estate agents, as well as organizations like

⁴² "Harm Building Work Started"; "Fine Four Story Brick Structure to Rise from Ruins of Bank Block," *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, May 31, 1922; "Corner Stone of New Bank Building Laid," *Albert Lea Evening Tribune*, March 5, 1923; "Bank Building Formal Opening," *Freeborn County Standard*, November 22, 1923; "Albert Lea State Bank Home Formally Opened," *Albert Lea Evening Tribune*, November 26, 1923.

⁴³ Curtiss-Wedge, 118-119; Norene Roberts, "First National Bank," Minnesota Historic Properties Inventory Form, 1984, available at State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

⁴⁴ A new post office replaced the original building in 1935.

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the YMCA and Sons of Norway, had offices in the building. The first floor was filled by restaurants, a newsstand, clothing shops, a music store, and other retail outlets. Basement tenants included a bowling alley, pool hall, bar, and barber shop. When the Brunswick Balke Collander Company of Chicago was installing the bowling alley's five lanes in October 1916, the local newspaper reported that "Albert Lea will have the best bowling hall in the state." To celebrate the alley's opening, owners Haisley and Gaston, planned to bring "a team of all star bowlers from St. Paul to play the best talent that Albert Lea can muster together."⁴⁵

Through the first decades of its existence, the Home Improvement Building held a large concentration of the community's medical practitioners. One of the original second-floor tenants was Gerhard M. Morreim, Albert Lea's first chiropractor. Within a year the city's second chiropractor, Dwight A. Armstrong, had also opened an office in the building. Both men maintained their practices there into the late 1950s. Chiropractic medicine was quite novel in the early twentieth century. Although similar techniques were probably employed in ancient times, they fell from use for centuries and were first introduced to the United States in the 1890s. Daniel David Palmer founded the country's first training school in Davenport, Iowa, in 1898, from which Dr. Armstrong graduated in 1916.⁴⁶

A number of traditional medical doctors were also located in the Home Improvement Building. In 1940, five joined together to form the Albert Lea Medical and Surgical Center. The group's first home was the remodeled office of two of its members, W. L. Palmer and C. F. Palmer, on the building's fifth floor. W. L. Palmer, a member of the American College of Surgeons, had graduated from Rush Medical College in Chicago in 1896 and practiced in Freeborn County for over four decades. His son, C. F. Palmer, completed his training at Rush in 1920 and joined his father two years later. One of the other partners, Harry Neel, had attended medical schools at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Minnesota before becoming a fellow in surgery with the Mayo Foundation in Rochester, Minnesota. When he moved to Albert Lea to join the new clinic, "outside of the physicians at the Mayo Clinic . . . and certain of those on the University of Minnesota staff, he was probably the first board-certified general surgeon in Southern Minnesota," a newspaper reported. This connection with Mayo

⁴⁵ Bidney Bergie, "Lea Center, Albert Lea, Minn.," typescript, April 1988, at FCHS; "New Bowling Hall," *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, October 11, 1916.

⁴⁶ 1921 *City of Albert Lea Directory*, n.p., 1921; "Snapshot of Albert Lea Chiropractors," *Albert Lea Tribune*, March 31, 1992.

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was an important influence on the Albert Lea doctors, who adopted the clinic model at a time when other local physicians were sole practitioners or had small partnerships. The concept proved so successful that the clinic expanded into its own building in 1959.⁴⁷

Several years later the Southern Minnesota Mental Health Center moved to the fifth floor. Established in about 1951, the center's staff included a psychiatrist, psychologists, and a psychiatric social worker. The center was supported and administered by Freeborn and neighboring Faribault Counties. It also qualified for state-administered grants-in-aid from the federal Mental Health Services Act passed in 1957, one of a series of laws promulgated during that period that changed the nation's approach to mental health treatment. Patients were charged on a sliding scale based on income; the center served even those who could not pay.⁴⁸ The building's most significant tenant was Albert Lea Lodge No. 813, an affiliate of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. Fraternal organizations were popular in Freeborn County. The Masonic Western Star Lodge No. 26 was chartered in 1858, the year Minnesota obtained statehood. From the seven founders, its membership grew to 419 by 1933, making it one of the largest Masonic lodges in southern Minnesota. The Masons erected a building on the corner of Broadway and Water Street in 1909. Another fraternal group, the Lodge Zare Zapadu No. 44, part of the Zapadni Cesko-bratrska Jednota (Western Bohemian Fraternal Association), built a hall in rural Freeborn County that was listed in the National Register in 1986.⁴⁹

Albert Lea Lodge No. 816, better known locally as the Elks Club, was established in 1903. Henry Harm was one of the charter members. After occupying several locations downtown, the Elks moved their lodge and social rooms to the sixth floor of the Home Improvement Building in September 1916, before work on the building was entirely completed. Opening

⁴⁷ "Albert Lea Medical and Surgical Center," n.p., August 30, 1940, clipping at FCHS; Michael Dapper, "Medical and Surgical Center Founders Reminisce on Clinic's 40th Anniversary," *Albert Lea Evening Tribune*, August 13, 1980; Andrew Gullixon, "Notes on Medicine in Freeborn County, 1857-1900," *Minnesota Medicine*, February 1949, 183-185; Kevin Sweeney, "Longtime Area Physicians Honored for Service," *Albert Lea Evening Tribune*, March 19, 1979; Love Cruikshank, "Takes Up Practice in Wells, Continues Notable Career," March 5, 1978, clipping at FCHS.

⁴⁸ *The Community Magazine*, July 1962, 5; *Allow Us to Introduce Albert Lea* (Albert Lea: League of Women Voters of Albert Lea, February 1969), 18-19.

⁴⁹ J. F. D. Meighen, "Masonry in Freeborn County," *Albert Lea Evening Tribune*, December 22, 1933; "Blue Lodge of Albert Lea is 74 Years Old," [1933], clipping at FCHS.

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festivities included a reception in the afternoon and a dance that night with "between seventy-five and one hundred couples . . . in attendance," the *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise* reported. "Casey's orchestra furnished delightful music and the dancing was enjoyed until an early hour. . . . The formal opening of the Elks Home will long be remembered as one of the most brilliant affairs in the social history of Albert Lea."⁵⁰

The Albert Lea Elks, one of the largest lodges in Minnesota, enjoyed the unobstructed panorama that the top floor of the tallest building in the city offered. The central location made it a particularly popular lunch spot for downtown businessmen. Profits from club operations were donated to local charities. The club also invested money to improve the sixth-floor space. One of the biggest initiatives occurred in the early 1960s when the club spent \$40,000 on substantial remodeling.⁵¹

The Elks justified this expense because they planned to buy the building when it went on the market. The Albert Lea Home Improvement Company, with Oscar Subby serving as president and Walter Subby, Jr., as secretary, had lost the building in the waning years of the Depression by defaulting on a mortgage with the Minnesota Mutual Life Insurance Company. Title was transferred by a warrantee deed dated December 30, 1939, to Charles Hyde. By the 1960s, Hyde was getting old, and the Elks assumed that he would be selling the Albert Lea property, then known as the Hyde Building, in the near future. Instead, he died, and in May 1965 his heirs sold the building to a local businessman and real estate investor, Homer Blake.⁵²

Blake planned to convert the Home Improvement Building into a "luxurious uptown motel" affiliated with a major chain. His proposal caused a major upheaval in Albert Lea's real estate market by forcing most of the tenants in the building to leave. He gave the Elks ninety days to find new accommodations. When they moved, they took the furniture, fixtures, and even a bar. "We lost a lot of members in the move," wrote a long-time member, "as nobody wanted

⁵⁰ "History of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Albert Lea Lodge #813," typescript, n.d., with addendum by Dale Sorenson October 1995, at FCHC; Dale Sorenson, "#813 Elks History of Good Deeds in One Hundred Years," typescript, June 2002, at FCHS; "Elk Lodge Holds Formal Opening," *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, September 27, 1916.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*; warrantee deed, Albert Lea Home Improvement Company to Charles Lee Hyde, December 30, 1939, recorded in Deed Book 77, page 256, at Freeborn County Courthouse, Albert Lea.

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to drive for noon lunch. The story was, we were too from downtown." At least one tenant, dentist Clarence Watland, had been in the building since it opened its doors forty-nine years earlier; many others had worked there for decades. Although the American Legion was already planning to move to new quarters before the sale of the building was announced, a number of prominent local organizations and businesses were unwillingly displaced including the Mental Health Center, the Knights of Columbus, and chiropractor Niles Shoff, the city's mayor at the time. State Senator Rudolph Hanson, whose law firm, Hanson and Grinley, had an office in the building, wrote a long poem entitled "Thoughts on the Hyde Building Exodus." A local newspaper published the "unique piece of poetry" in October 1965 "as the last goodbyes are said to a building which has really been the heart of Albert Lea business activity for many years."⁵³

A year later, after being unable to obtain a motel franchise, Blake announced plans to convert the upper two or three floors into two-bedroom apartments, modernize the remaining offices, and install a cafeteria and meeting room on the ground floor. This scheme was as unsuccessful as the first. In November 1966 the building was acquired by James Sadler, an investor from Rochester, who attempted to return office and retail tenants to the building. It was apparently at this time that aluminum-frame storefronts replaced the originals on the first floor and other alterations were completed. The residential concept was not entirely dropped: a pro forma for the "Nel-Sa Building" included air-conditioned "modern sleeping rooms" on the third floor and "rooms"—not air-conditioned—on the fourth floor. Both were to be available for daily or weekly rental. These floors, however, were never renovated for this use. A few commercial tenants occupied the lower stories.⁵⁴

In 1999, Minneapolis investor Steve Osdahl bought the building hoping to rehabilitate it. Unable to raise sufficient funds for the project, he sold the building to the city of Albert Lea in August 2002. The city is now discussing a possible renovation for commercial and residential

⁵³ "History of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks"; Sorenson; "Blake Makes Changes in Hyde Plans," May 19, 1966, clipping at FCHC; Tom Patterson, "Much Yet to Be Decided: Sale of Hyde Building Causes Much Real Estate Commotion Here," *Albert Lea Evening Tribune*, July 4, 1965; "Poem Dedicated to Hyde Building Memories," October 29, 1965, clipping at FCHC.

⁵⁴ "Blake Makes Changes"; "The Story of the Lea Center Building (Hyde Bldg.)," typescript prepared by Island Park Realty, Fargo, North Dakota, [1968], at FCHS; warrantee deed, Homer and Leone Blake to James R. Sadler, September 21, 1967, recorded in Deed Records Book 198, page 133, at Freeborn County Courthouse, Albert Lea.

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use with Saint Paul developer MetroPlains.⁵⁵

Throughout its long life, the building has carried many names. Originally christened the Home Improvement Building, it was also known as the H.E.S. Building in honor of its developers (Harms, Erickson, Subby). It acquired the name “Hyde Building” during the several decades that it was owned by an investor with that surname. It was later designated the Nel-Sa Building. Most recently, it has been called the Lea Center Building. One name has endured from 1916 to the present day, the “Six Story Building,” acknowledging one of the characteristics that established it as a local landmark.⁵⁶

The building’s height made it a symbol of Albert Lea’s aspirations in the early twentieth century. When it was constructed, it was one of the tallest—if not the tallest—buildings in the state outside of the Twin Cities and Duluth. It introduced a major new technology to the region, the passenger elevator. “The smooth ride up and down in the elevators was something new and exciting for many people,” a local historian observed. The building flaunted its big-city image with its use of another relatively new technology, decorative electric lighting. Fixtures installed in the soffit of the building’s broad cornice bathed the exterior in brilliant light. The effect of the light was amplified by downtown Albert Lea’s elevated perch: the illuminated building was visible for miles, a beacon drawing all near and far to the bustling commercial center.⁵⁷

The Home Improvement Building held the city’s greatest concentration of non-retail businesses, and did a busy retail and entertainment trade as well. Its primary entry on East William Street was less than a short block from the “100-percent corner” of William’s intersection with Broadway Avenue, Albert Lea’s main retail street.

⁵⁵ Dylan Belden, “Downtown Project Nears Point of No Return,” *Albert Lea Tribune*, July 19, 2002; Paul Sparks, Albert Lea city manager, interview by Charlene K. Roise, August 20, 2002.

⁵⁶ “The Story of the Lea Center Building (Hyde Bldg.)”; Bergie, n.p.

⁵⁷ Bergie, n.p.

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62. Historic Name: Commercial building

Current Name: Chinese Tea House

Address: 126 West William Street

Date: between 1886 and 1891

Contributing

Built between 1886 and 1891, this two-story red-brick building has a rectangular plan and a facade similar to 130 West William Street. The storefront was remodeled in 1981 with black brick, contemporary plate-glass windows, and a French door. The second story has a red-brick facade with three segmental-arch window openings, each holding a one-over-one double-hung-sash window. The segmental-arch lintels and corbelled-brick cornice are similar to those on 130 West William Street. A non-historic internally lit sign projects from the second-story facade.

One of the oldest buildings on this block of West William Street, this building was first occupied by a hardware store and tin shop. By 1899 the first floor held the Simonsen and Whitcomb press rooms and Blank Book and Job Printers, while the second floor housed the town's telephone exchange. In the 1910s, a music store operated by J. E. Simms moved into the building. Sometime in the 1920s, a soda fountain owned by Albert Fedge replaced the music business, and the second floor was rented as boarding rooms. In the 1930s, the first tavern to occupy the building, The Hub, moved in. The name eventually changed to Charley and Maynards Place, and then to the Pine Liquor Store. In the 1960s, the Hamburger Inn moved to the site from East Main Street, where it had operated since the 1930s. It was open twenty-four hours a day and the owner, George Kappas, was known for covering the cost of a meal if the customer could not afford to pay. The Hamburger Inn went out of business in 1981, and the present occupant, the Chinese Tea House, moved in. The second floor continues to be rented as residential apartments.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Ibid., 82.

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- 63. Historic Name: Commercial building**
Current Name: Nasty Habit Bar and Grill
Address: 130 West William Street
Date: between 1884 and 1886
Contributing

Built between 1884 and 1886, this two-story brick building has a rectangular plan. The storefront has been altered using wood-plank siding and a non-historic sign band. A single plate-glass window is situated in the western side of the storefront. Two doorways are located on the eastern end of the storefront; the easternmost leads to the second floor. The second story has three segmental-arch window openings containing one-over-one double-hung-sash windows. Brick segmental-arch lintels and a corbelled-brick cornice ornament the second-story facade, which has been painted brown. The ornament is similar to that on 126 West William Street.

This building housed a harness shop for several years, but by 1905 the Geissler Plumbing and Heating Company had moved into the building. In the 1920s, J. M. Madson took over the business and named it after himself. A barbershop, operated by Edward R. Hanson, opened on the second floor in the 1940s, and an optometrist took over the barbershop space in the 1950s. Madson Plumbing and Heating Company continued to operate out of the storefront until the 1960s, when the Clip and Curl Beauty Shop moved into the building. When the Palace Bar at 134 West William Street expanded into 130 West William in the 1980s, openings were made in the party wall separating the buildings.

- 64. Historic Name: Hellie Apartments**
Current Name: Downtown Homes
Address: 133 West William Street
Date: 1926
Contributing

Built in 1926, this four-story fireproof terra-cotta-tile and concrete building has a dark-brown-brick veneer and a rusticated-stone raised basement. The north (primary) facade has six window bays; the four central window openings each holding three one-over-one double-hung-

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sash windows. The two end openings each contain a single one-over-one double-hung-sash window. The first story follows this fenestration except for the central entrance bay. Tiled canopies shield the doorway and the window opening immediately to the west. Another tiled canopy is supported by brackets above the four central windows on the fourth story. Terracotta panels are situated below the brackets between each of the fourth-story window openings. The west facade has eight window bays on each story. Like the primary facade, the openings contains one-over-one double-hung-sash windows and have stone sills and soldier-brick lintels. The exterior has not been altered, except for replacement of the original door with a modern plate-glass model.

This building has always had twenty-six apartments, two in the basement and six on each floor. It was known as the Hellie Apartments from its construction until the 1960s, when it became the Ruud Apartments. In the 1980s, the name changed to the Lee Apartments, and currently the building is called Downtown Homes. Before this building was constructed, a farm implement business operated from a two-story wood-frame building on the site.⁵⁹

65. Historic Name: Commercial building
Current Name: Nasty Habit Bar and Grill
Address: 134 West William Street
Date: between 1918 and 1926
Contributing

This two-story brick building was built between 1918 and 1926. The storefront has been significantly altered with wood-plank siding and a non-historic cornice and sign band. A plate-glass door is set in the eastern end of the storefront and a window opening containing three one-over-one single-hung-sash windows is located on the western end. The second-story facade has the original brown-brick veneer and the original window configuration. The original window openings are asymmetrical with two one-over-one double-hung-sash windows in the western opening and three one-over-one double-hung-sash windows in the eastern opening. A row of brick dentils and a corbelled-brick cornice are located above the second-story windows. A non-historic internally lit sign projects from the second-story facade.

Robert Meyer's harness manufacturing and retail business was the building's first occupant.

⁵⁹ "Flat Building for William Street," n.p., n.d., clipping available at FCHS.

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The Albert Lea Hardware Company moved into the building in the 1930s and remained until the 1960s, when Guiney's Bar took over. The Palace Bar occupied the building from the 1970s to the late 1990s, and expanded into 130 West William Street in the 1980s. The current occupant is the Nasty Habit Bar and Grill, which expanded into this location from the adjacent 130 West William Street. The second floor has always been rented as a single residential apartment.

- 66. Historic Name: Commercial building**
Current Name: TNT Used Appliance Sales and Repair
Address: 138 West William Street
Date: between 1910 and 1918
Contributing

Built between 1910 and 1918, this two-story brick building has a rectangular plan. The storefront has been altered and is now clad in corrugated steel and plywood. Two plate-glass windows are located on the western end of the storefront and two doorways are located on the eastern end. The easternmost door leads to the second floor. The second story is clad in the original dark-red brick and has stone sills below the window openings, a brick stringcourse above the windows, and a corbelled-brick cornice. The three second-story window openings contain one-over-one double-hung-sash windows.

This building first housed a liquor store owned by A. E. Shields, but Prohibition in the 1920s put the liquor store out of business and the Salvation Army moved in. The officer in charge of the mission lived in the second-floor apartment. In the 1950s, the Albert Lea Camera Shop moved into the building, but was replaced in the 1960s by two law firms: Hanson and Grinley, and Courtney A. Slife. In the 1970s, Lindsay Soft Water of Albert Lea, Ulrickson's Tax Service, and Sparkle Wash of Southern Minnesota moved in. In the 1980s, Equitable Financial Companies, Pat's Upholstery, and Bette J. Berg, a tax preparer, were the occupants. Currently, TNT Used Appliance Sales and Repair uses the storefront. The second floor continues to serve as a rental apartment.

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67. Historic Name: Roy's Drive-in Liquor
Current Name: vacant
Address: 142-150 West William Street
Date: 1957
Noncontributing

This 1957 concrete-block building and its parking lot are located on the site of two former wood-frame buildings. The simple one-story building has two storefronts. The west facade has two large plate-glass windows and a modern plate-glass door. The southwest storefront contains a plate-glass door flanked by sidelights. The large display-window opening on the south facade has been enclosed with plywood and contains a smaller plate-glass window. Finished concrete forms hexagonal imprints on the wall of the west facade.

Before Roy's Drive-In Liquor constructed the present building, two nineteenth-century buildings occupied the site. The western building was two stories and the eastern building only one story. A variety of businesses operated from these buildings over the course of seventy-five years. These included a saloon, harness shop, drug store, restaurant, tailor's shop, confectionery, tobacco shop, dry cleaner, and the Corner Inn, a tavern. The second floor was rented out as two residential apartments. After the departure of Roy's in the 1980s, this building was occupied by Olde World Optical. In the 1990s, Moneytree Financial Services and the American Red Cross had offices in the building. The most recent occupant was a restaurant called Yolanda's Place, which is now closed. Because the building was constructed after the period of significance, it is noncontributing to the historic district.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Inspection of Buildings Record for 146 West William Street.

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Period of Significance: 1874-1953

Architect/Builder: Philip C. Bettenburg, LeRoy Gaarder, George J. Hoffman, W. S. Kinsley, Frederick Hurd Mosse, Schick and Ross, Louis A. Simon, C. M. Tapager Construction Company, Tapager and Hanson, George C. Townsend

Statement of Significance

The Albert Lea Commercial Historic District was listed in the National Register on July 16, 1987, under Criterion A and Criterion C. The period of significance extended from 1874 to 1926. The following documentation justifies an expansion of the period of significance to 1953 and an enlargement of the boundaries to add fifty contributing and twelve noncontributing buildings to the district. The revised boundaries also exclude one property, 212 North Broadway Avenue, which was included in the original nomination but has been so substantially altered that it is no longer contributing.

Introduction

Albert Lea is located in southern Minnesota only twelve miles from the Iowa border. The city benefited from this location and became a rural commercial center for southern Minnesota and northern Iowa. Its importance grew in the late nineteenth century when it became a junction for several railroad lines, which flanked the central business district. The downtown began south of Fountain Lake at Water Street and spanned fifteen blocks, including Broadway, Washington, and Newton Avenues and Water, Clark, William, Main, College, and Pearl Streets. The businesses on these streets provided all the services and goods an early twentieth-century consumer could want or need. As railroads declined in the 1940s and automobile use increased in the 1950s, businesses moved out of downtown and the commercial district's importance waned. The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings constructed in the downtown's heyday remain intact and recall the district's past. The existing Albert Lea Commercial Historic District encompasses only three blocks on Broadway Avenue, while an expanded district better represents the downtown commercial history from the 1870s to the 1950s. The amended Albert Lea Commercial Historic District continues to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criterion A for local significance in the area of Commerce and under Criterion C for Architecture.

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The City on a Hill

Geologically, Albert Lea sits “near the east margin of the youngest sheet of glacial drift,” accounting for the undulating terrain that characterizes the area. “Most of the city is built on a strip of land between Fountain Lake and Lake Albert Lea,” according to *Minnesota’s Rocks and Waters: A Geological Story*. “The lakes of Freeborn County lie in a zone of recessional moraines . . . composed largely of clayey till with a few gravelly knolls and concentrations of course boulders.” Downtown Albert Lea developed on one of these knolls.¹

The town of Albert Lea was designated the county seat when Freeborn County was created in 1857, a year before Minnesota achieved statehood. Albert Lea officially became a village in 1870 and a city in 1878. The local economy benefited in the late nineteenth century from the city’s location at the junction of several major east-west and north-south railroad lines including the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul, and the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific. The availability of convenient transportation helped local manufacturers, jobbers, and other businesses flourish.²

The industrial and commercial base, in turn, stimulated the growth of retail and services downtown. Unlike most prairie towns in southern Minnesota, downtown Albert Lea could not easily sprawl along a linear main street. Fountain Lake blocked Albert Lea’s main street, Broadway Avenue, to the north, and only a few blocks to the south Broadway descended the other side of the knoll. By the turn of the century, the elevated section of the street was walled by two- to four-story brick buildings. There were only limited opportunities for new construction on this part of Broadway, mostly when fire removed older buildings. Rather than locating downhill, businesses grew on streets perpendicular to Broadway, concentrating within two blocks to the east and west. Until the proliferation of automobiles spread development to outlying areas, the heart of the city’s commerce was concentrated on the few blocks atop the

¹ George M. Schwartz and George A. Thiel, *Minnesota’s Rocks and Waters: A Geological Story* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954, 1963), 312-313.

² Loucks and Associates and Lanier Oxton, “City of Albert Lea Historical Survey of the Central Business District,” 1981, prepared for the city of Albert Lea; John F. Stover, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of the American Railroads* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 46-47, 96-99, 102-103. Albert Lea continues to be an important crossroads in the automobile age: Interstate Highways 35 and 90 intersect just northeast of the city.

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knoll.³

Like most downtowns, Albert Lea's held a wide variety of services and goods. The buildings on Broadway Avenue housed established businesses owned by many of the city's leading families, and the architecture reflected the wealth and prominence of these businessmen. Banks, drug stores, jewelry stores, offices, an opera house, and a department store occupied the blocks from Main Street to Water Street. South of Main Street were the Gulbrandson Hardware Company, the Albert Lea Evening-Tribune, the Philpott and Palmer music store, the Mier Wulff and Sons furniture store, the Freeborn County courthouse, and the Hotel Albert (now demolished). Most of the two- to four-story buildings were constructed by 1899, although some sections of the street were replaced in the early twentieth century after fires.

As the city continued to prosper in the early twentieth century, the demand for modern office and retail space grew. The dense development along Broadway made it difficult to assemble a parcel large enough to hold more substantial buildings and businesses. The nineteenth-century buildings on the busy side streets were considered expendable and were razed to accommodate new construction.

Clark Street, which divides Broadway into north and south segments, was actually the first developed street in the city. In 1856, the first store in Albert Lea was constructed by Julius Clark at what is now 119 East Clark Street. Although Clark left the region in 1858, the street was given his name and became the second commercial artery in downtown.⁴ Several of the city's hotels were located on Clark Street, including the Hotel Freeborn, the City Hotel, the West Hotel, and the La Crosse House, which have all been demolished, and the Metropolitan Hotel and the Goodwin Hotel, which occupied the buildings still standing at 119-123 and 224 East Clark Street. Until the turn of the century, saloons, restaurants, and billiards parlors also lined the 100 blocks of East Clark and West Clark. Most were replaced in the 1910s and

³ Detailed information about the evolution of Broadway Avenue is in the "Albert Lea Commercial Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1986, by Norene Roberts, prepared by Historical Research, available at the State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

⁴ Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge, *History of Freeborn County, Minnesota* (Chicago: H. C. Cooper, Jr. and Company, 1911), 249-250.

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1920s when Prohibition restricted the sale of alcohol. The vacancies caused by Prohibition were filled by other businesses, and by 1953 an eclectic mix of stores, restaurants, hotels, taverns, and apartments occupied the street. Like Broadway Avenue, there was rarely a vacant storefront, and some businesses, like the Hotel Freeborn, had existed for several decades. The 100 block of South Newton Avenue was an extension of East Clark Street. The buildings at 109 and 115-117 South Newton were constructed at the turn of the century to house a blacksmith and a creamery-supply store. A post office was built on the northeast corner of Newton and William in the early 1900s; it was replaced with the present building in the 1930s.⁵

William Street was also dominated by two-story buildings that held hardware stores, harness makers, and farm implement dealers. As the saloons and restaurants moved south from Clark, some relocated to West William Street. In 1926 the Hellie Apartments (133 West William Street), a four-story building with twenty-six units, was constructed on the south side of the street and brought upscale living to downtown. East William Street remained undeveloped until the early twentieth century, when plats behind the Hotel Freeborn were sold off for development. Two- and three-story brick buildings similar to those on Broadway were constructed on both sides of the street, and the six-story Home Improvement Building (135-141 East William Street), the area's tallest building, was also erected. This block of East William became a powerful commercial zone anchored by two banks on the city's "100-percent corner" at Broadway and William and by the Home Improvement Building at the corner of William and Newton. The Home Improvement Building housed a number of the city's doctors, dentists, chiropractors, insurance salesmen, and real estate agents, in addition to the YMCA, Sons of Norway, and the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. The first floor was occupied by restaurants, a newsstand, clothing shops, a music store, and other retail outlets, and the basement held a bowling alley, pool hall, bar, and barber shop. The smaller buildings on the street held similar businesses at street level and often had residences on the upper floors. In 1953 all of the buildings on William were occupied, and the street was

⁵ Albert Lea, Minnesota City Directories, various publishers, 1899, 1914, 1928-1929, 1939, 1940, 1950, 1961, 1970, 1980, 1990, 1999, located at the Freeborn County Historical; Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Albert Lea, Minnesota* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1884, 1886, 1891, 1899, 1905, 1910, 1918, 1926, 1931-38, 1931-48), available at the Albert Lea Community Development Division, City Center, Albert Lea, Minnesota, and at the Minneapolis Public Library website, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Society (FCHS), Albert Lea, Minnesota.

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physically dominated by the Hellie Apartments on the west end and by the Home Improvement Building on the east end.⁶

The businesses at the southern end and the western edge of the commercial district required more open space than what was available on Broadway, Clark, and William. Livery stables, blacksmiths, and residences vied for space on the 100 and 200 blocks of South Washington and the 100 block of West Main in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most residences were replaced in the 1910s and 1920s by automobile garages, vulcanizing and tire stores, sheet-metal works, glass companies, grocers, and gas stations. The exception was the Washington Apartments, 209 South Washington Avenue, which was a four-unit apartment building constructed in 1904. While it is still in residential use, the early twentieth-century service industries that once surrounded it have moved out of downtown and the buildings were converted to other retail and office uses. Even the front lawn of the Washington Apartments was pressed into commercial use as land values rose, with storefronts lining the property's street frontage.

College and Pearl Streets also held a variety of livery and lumberyard businesses, as well as a church and residences by 1900. As commerce grew in the 1910s and 1920s and the northern streets were built up, garages, the public library, a nickelodeon, a car dealership, and the Western Union Telegraph office moved into the south end. Most of these businesses remained in the downtown until the 1960s.⁷

Businesses throughout the commercial district suffered in the mid-twentieth century. The district's commercial success relied on a delicate balance of transportation. In the 1950s and 1960s, the automobile altered this balance and downtown Albert Lea experienced a commercial exodus as established businesses left for highway strip developments and a shopping mall on the edge of town. Especially hard hit by this trend were the buildings on South Broadway Avenue; the Hotel Albert was demolished in the 1960s and occupancy of the buildings in the 300 block of South Broadway Avenue lagged. The Home Improvement Building on East William Street was also struck hard. A developer purchased the building and evicted all of the occupants as part of a plan to turn the building into a hotel. The plan fell

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Albert Lea City Directories; Sanborn Maps of Albert Lea, Minnesota.

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through and the evicted tenants, many of whom had relocated away from downtown, would not return. After that, the central business district's commercial prominence continued to fall.

The Amended Historic District

The high concentration of properties in the streets surrounding Broadway Avenue reflects the same historical themes for which the existing historic district is significant, arguing in favor of expanding the district's boundaries. Most of the properties retain their historic integrity and are visually, physically, and contextually linked to the historic district.

The sixty-seven properties flanking the existing district should be added to the Albert Lea Commercial Historic District. Five of these properties are vacant lots now used for parking, and do not contribute to the district. Sixty-two of the properties are buildings, fifty of which contribute to the district. Like most of the properties in the existing district, many of these buildings feature altered storefronts. Most of the changes are reversible, however, and some are historic in their own right. Assessment of a building's integrity (excellent, good, fair, poor) often considered primarily the upper level(s) of a building. Buildings were determined to be noncontributing if they had been so substantially altered that their historic integrity was lost, or if they were built after the period of significance. The original district's period of significance began in 1874 and ended in 1928. This period should be extended to 1953, a nearly eighty-year period that witnessed the height of construction in Albert Lea and its most successful commercial era.

Since the Albert Lea Commercial Historic District was nominated to the National Register in 1987, the physical integrity of the Johnson Laundry Company Building at 212 North Broadway Avenue, listed in the original nomination as 206 North Broadway Avenue, has been compromised by alterations. The building's original facade was brown brick with yellow stone decoration. The five second-story window openings were rectangular and the first story had three display windows flanked by two doorways. In 1990 the building was remodeled into condominiums and the building's appearance was substantially transformed. It is now clad in tan brick and has two masonry pilasters with yellow stone capitals. Recessed vinyl-clad additions have been constructed on the south and north sides of the building. The second story has three window openings that are smaller than the five original openings, and the original doorways on the first floor are now window openings. These openings hold sliding vertical-sash, fixed-pane, and round-arch windows. Although the building's location and setting remain

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intact, the design, workmanship, feeling, association, and materials associated with the building have been greatly compromised. It is now a noncontributing building and can be removed from the district since it is located on the northern periphery. With the addition of the proposed properties, the amended Albert Lea Commercial Historic District will include ninety-one contributing buildings, eighteen noncontributing buildings, and five noncontributing parking lots. The 114 properties in the amended district better represent the historic and existing boundaries of the downtown. The amended district is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criterion A for local significance in the area of Commerce and under Criterion C for Architecture.

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Acreeage of District: 24.5 acres (includes 7 acres in existing district)

UTM Reference Points: Albert Lea East, Minn., 1982

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>470120</u>	<u>4832920</u>
2	<u>15</u>	<u>470490</u>	<u>4832920</u>
3	<u>15</u>	<u>470490</u>	<u>4832620</u>
4	<u>15</u>	<u>470260</u>	<u>4832620</u>
5	<u>15</u>	<u>470260</u>	<u>4832400</u>
6	<u>15</u>	<u>470160</u>	<u>4832400</u>
7	<u>15</u>	<u>470160</u>	<u>4832620</u>
8	<u>15</u>	<u>470120</u>	<u>4832620</u>

Verbal Boundary Description

The amended Albert Lea Commercial Historic District includes all of Blocks 9, 13, 14, 21, and 30 of the Original Plat of the city of Albert Lea. It also encompasses lots one and two of Block 7; lots one through eight and fourteen through sixteen of Block 8; lots three through sixteen of Block 12; lots one, two, and eight of Block 15; lots one through four of Block 20; lots six through sixteen of Block 22; lots two through eight of Block 32; and Out Lot 2, all in the Original Plat of the city of Albert Lea.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the amended Albert Lea Commercial Historic District represent extent properties of the historic downtown that retain historic integrity. Originally the downtown encompassed fifteen blocks; however, the historic integrity of the southeast edge has deteriorated and those blocks do not contribute. While the boundaries are expanded on the east, south, and west, the northern boundary is reduced to exclude a noncontributing building located on the upper half of lots five through eight of Block 9. The buildings within the amended district are a continuation of the original Albert Lea Commercial Historic District.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 10 Page 2

Albert Lea Commercial Historic District (amended)
name of property

Freeborn County, Minnesota
county and state

Index to Photographs

Photographers: Robert Ewings and Elizabeth A. Gales, Hess Roise and Company

Date: October 2002; March and April 2003

Negatives: Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, and Hess, Roise and Company,
Minneapolis

- 1 Clark Street from Broadway Avenue. View to east.
- 2 Clark Street from Broadway Avenue. View to west.
- 3 William Street from Broadway Avenue. View to east.
- 4 William Street from Washington Avenue. View to east.
- 5 212 North Broadway Avenue. View to east.
- 6 314 South Broadway Avenue. View to west.
- 7 336-346 South Broadway Avenue. View to northwest.
- 8 400-410 South Broadway Avenue. View to southwest.
- 9 111-113 East Clark Street. View to north.
- 10 119-123 East Clark Street. View to north.
- 11 137 East Clark Street. View to north.
- 12 130-132 and 134-140 West Clark Street. View to north.
- 13 143 West Clark Street. View to southeast.
- 14 206 West Clark Street. View to north.
- 15 115 West College Street. View to south.
- 16 130 West College Street. View to north.
- 17 146 West College Street. View to northeast.
- 18 132-136 West Main Street. View to north.
- 19 101 South Newton Avenue. View to southeast.
- 20 109 South Newton Avenue. View to east.
- 21 113-115 South Newton Avenue. View to east.
- 22 141 South Newton Avenue. View to northeast.
- 23 110 West Pearl Street. View to northeast.
- 24 104 South Washington Avenue. View to west.
- 25 116-118 South Washington Avenue. View to west.
- 26 209-221 South Washington Avenue. View to east.
- 27 214 South Washington Avenue. View to west.
- 28 230-232 South Washington Avenue. View to northwest.
- 29 126-130 East William Street. View to south.
- 30 135-141 East William Street. View to northwest.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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Albert Lea Commercial Historic District (amended)
name of property

Freeborn County, Minnesota
county and state

-
- 31 135-141 East William Street. View to southwest.
 - 32 135-141 East William Street. View to northeast.
 - 33 133 West William Street. View to south.
 - 34 134 West William Street. View to north.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section 11 Page 1

Albert Lea Commercial Historic District (amended)
name of property

Freeborn County, Minnesota
county and state

Form prepared by:

Elizabeth A. Gales and Charlene K. Roise
Hess, Roise and Company
100 North First Street
Minneapolis, MN 55401
(612) 338-1987
August 2003

Additional Documentation

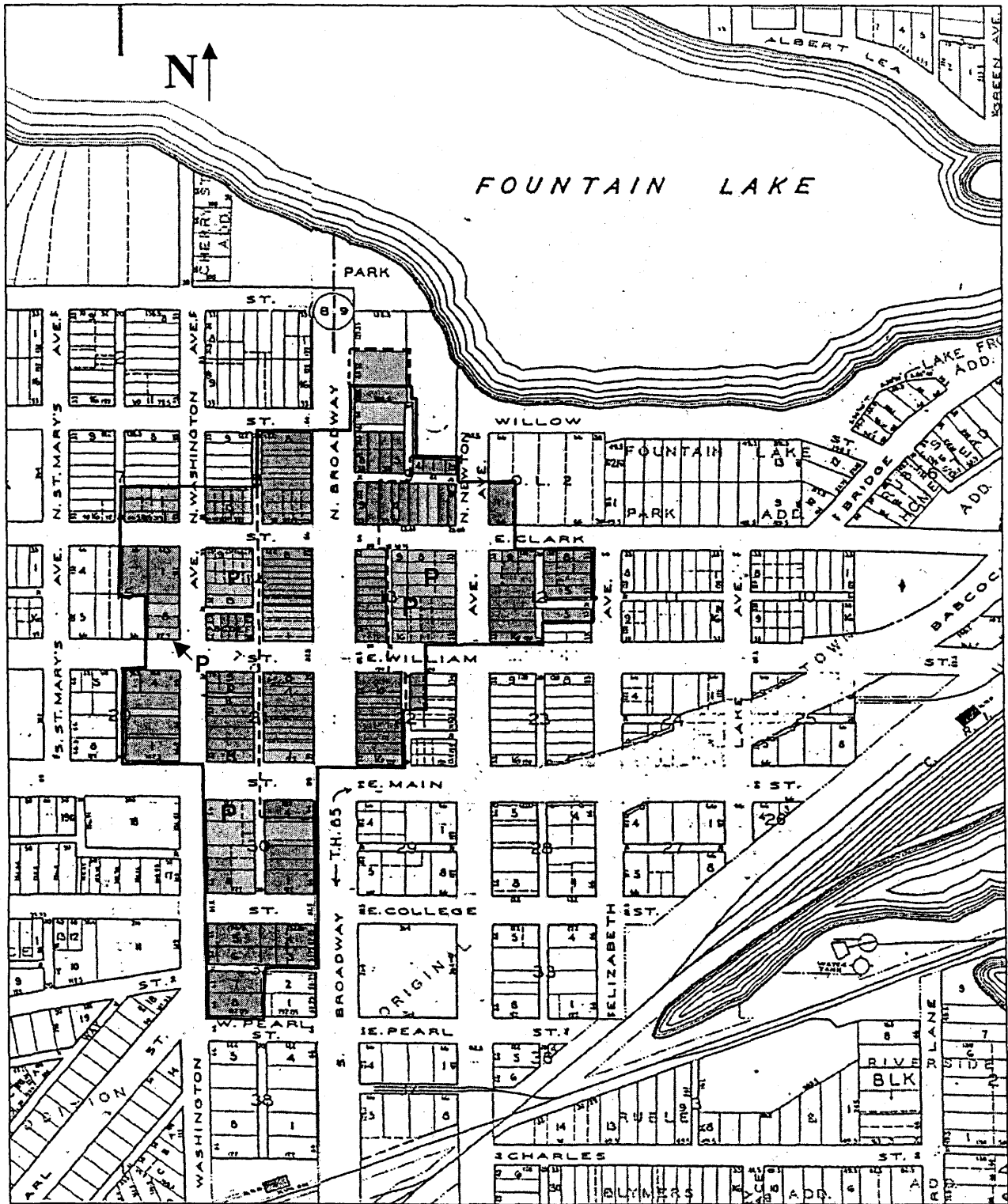
Maps

- A USGS map (7.5-minute series) indicating the district's location.
- A sketch map showing the boundaries of the original and amended historic district.

Photographs

- Representative black and white photographs of the buildings in the historic district.

Albert Lea Commercial Historic District (amended)
Freeborn County, Minnesota
August 2003



Scale: 1" equals 528'

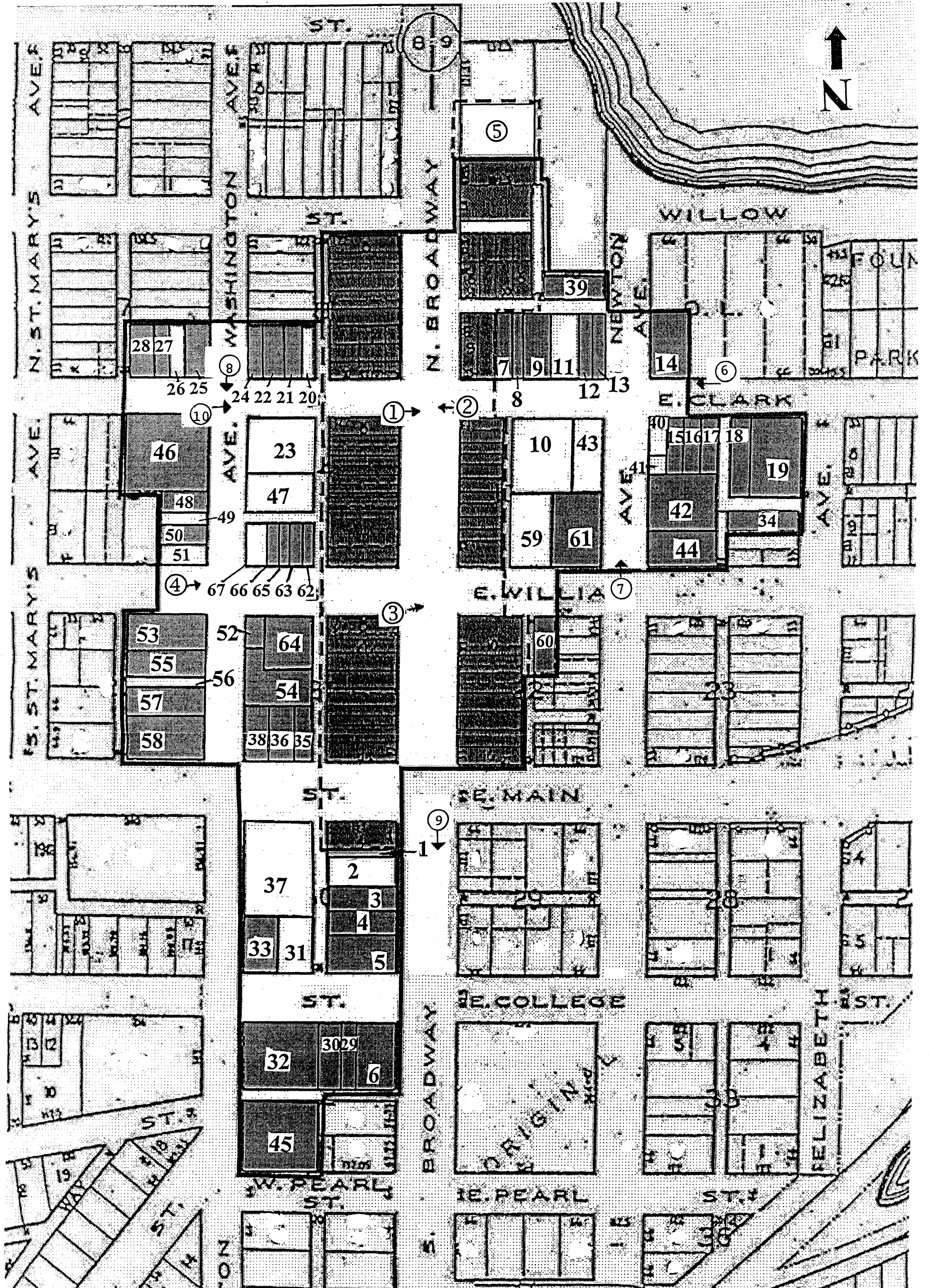
P Parking Lot

— Amended District Boundary

- - - Original District Boundary

■ Contributing

▨ Noncontributing



Albert Lea Commercial Historic District
 (amended)
 Freeborn County, Minnesota
 August 2003

- 1-Refer to Section 7
- Amended district boundary
- - - Original district boundary
- Buildings within original district
- Contributing Buildings
- Noncontributing Buildings