

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form**

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This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

New Submission       Amended Submission

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Architectural and Historical Resources of the Elkader Downtown Historic District

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Early Settlement and County Seat Years, ca. 1846 - 1869  
Development and Improvement Years, 1870 - 1915  
Wars, Depression, and Natural Disasters, 1916 - 1960  
Commercial Architecture Forms and Styles, 1846 - 1960

**C. Form Prepared by**

name/title Marlys A. Svendsen

organization Svendsen Tyler, Inc.

Date May 2011

street & number N3834 Deep Lake Road

telephone (715) 469-3300

city or town Sarona state Wisconsin

zip code 54870

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ~~documentation form meets the National Register~~ documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional ~~requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.~~ ( see continuation sheet for additional comments)

Signature *Becky G. Russell, Secretary DSHPO* Date 1/25/12  
**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA**

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

***i. Introduction***

In 1994 the Clayton County Historic Preservation Commission and Main Street Elkader completed a Reconnaissance Survey of Elkader (HPB Contract No. 19-93-80044.016) designed to guide preservation survey and planning efforts for the city of Elkader. The report for the project prepared by consultant David C. Anderson in 1994 identified a series of historic contexts that could be used in future survey work in the community and historic district nominations. One context and accompanying intensive survey recommended was for “Elkader’s Commercial Architecture.” Elkader’s central business district on the west side of the Turkey River identified as a potential historic district eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as part of Anderson’s report.

The area recommended by Anderson for historic district designation extended along facing blocks of Main Street from Spruce Street on the north to just south of Mulberry Street, along facing blocks of First Street from Cedar Street on the north to Mulberry Street on the south, and the intersecting blocks of Mulberry, Bridge and Cedar Streets. This area is delineated on historic and contemporary maps in Figure 1 and Figure 2 at the end of this document.

In the spring of 2010 the City of Elkader received a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant as part of a Memorandum of Agreement between the City of Elkader, FEMA, and the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI) to survey and evaluate historic resources in Elkader’s downtown for listing in the NRHP, prepare a NRHP Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) form for the surveyed resources, and a NRHP historic district for an area qualifying for designation. That summer, the City of Elkader retained Marlys Svendsen with Svendsen Tyler, Inc. of Sarona, Wisconsin to complete the Elkader downtown survey and NRHP historic district nomination.

During late 2010, all of the buildings were photographed and historical research was completed on

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the area. A public meeting was held in September 2010 for owners of downtown buildings, business owners, and city officials with information shared regarding the historical and architectural survey process and what it means to have a historic district listed on the NRHP. Information compiled in the 1994 reconnaissance survey for downtown buildings and from research projects completed for downtown buildings by the Elkader Historical Society and Carter House Museum volunteers was reviewed. Preliminary boundaries were confirmed for a downtown historic district and evaluations of buildings in this area were made to determine eligibility for the NRHP listing under Criteria A, B and C.

In 2011 digital copies of Iowa Site Inventory Forms were prepared along with site maps and photographs for both contributing and noncontributing buildings in the potential district. Printed copies of each form were prepared from pdf files and forwarded to the State Historical Society of Iowa, the City of Elkader, and the Elkader Historical Society.

This project was produced and funded under the terms of a Memorandum of Agreement, pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, among the Federal Emergency Management Agency of the Department of Homeland Security, the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division, and the City of Elkader, Iowa regarding the demolition of historic properties in Elkader, Clayton County, Iowa. The Memorandum of Agreement relates to the provision of Federal disaster assistance administered through FEMA's Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act for the voluntary acquisition and demolition of historic properties substantially damaged as a result of flooding in July 2008 that resulted in declared disaster DR-1763-IA.

***ii. Description and Overview of Development of Elkader Downtown Survey Area***

Elkader, Iowa is the county seat for Clayton County, a largely agricultural county located near the geographic center of the county in northeast Iowa. The town is situated along both banks of the

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Turkey River approximately 16 miles upstream from the river's confluence with the Mississippi River and 65 miles northwest of Dubuque. The town was surveyed and laid out in 1845 by Timothy Davis, Chester Sage and John Thompson, friends and business partners. The new town was named for Abd el-Kader, an Algerian freedom fighter and world figure who was admired by Timothy Davis. The Original Town Plat was filed in June 22, 1846 (Figure 1: Original Town Plat of Elkader) with the proprietor listed as John Thompson.<sup>1</sup>

The original town plat (Figure 1: Original Town Plat of Elkader) comprised approximately 29 acres in Boardman Township. It was laid out in a rectangular shaped plat paralleling the northwest/southeast course of the Turkey River. The plat was divided into 18 city blocks including six half blocks along the western edge and another six fractional blocks abutting the west bank of the Turkey River on the eastern edge. The plat was bounded by the Turkey River on the east, Davis Street on the north, Second Street on the west, and on the south along the south edge of Lots 5 and 6 in Blocks 6, 7 and 8 between Mulberry and Mechanic streets. The picturesque site occupied a narrow, level strip of land between a steep bluff to the west and the Turkey River to the east.

The Elkader Downtown Survey Area comprises sections of Blocks 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9 along with Fractional Blocks 3, 4, 5, and 6 abutting the Turkey River. The main business blocks are located along Main Street north and south of Bridge Street and a two block section of First Street further west. Elkader City Hall is located in the lower level of the Opera House (207 North Main Street, NRHP listed) and the Elkader Public Library is located across the street to the south at 130 North Main Street, both at the north end of the survey area. Other resources near the business district listed on the NRHP include the Keystone Bridge across the Turkey River at Bridge Street and the Clayton County Court House (111 High Street NE) across the river opposite the downtown at the northwest corner of High Street and Bridge Street. The physical layout of the downtown is relatively flat with a slight downward slope from north to south towards Mechanic Street. The swift waters of the Turkey River and its steep banks are the most dramatic topographic feature near the survey area. The downtown contains two small parks - Keystone Park occupies the southeast

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<sup>1</sup>Clayton County Recorder, Book 1, Town Plats, p. 41.

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corner of South Main Street and Bridge Street overlooking the Turkey River and Mascara Park, named for Elkader's Sister City, Mascara, Algeria, is adjacent to the Elkader Opera House along North Main Street.

The Original Town Plat consisted of a grid system of streets paralleling the main course of the Turkey River and at 90 degree intersections. Main Street (Front Street) was laid out with a width of 70 feet for the two blocks between Cedar and Mulberry streets. To the north and south, the street widths narrowed to 66 feet. First Street as well as intersecting streets had widths of 60 feet and alleys had widths of 25 feet. The two blocks selected for wider widths along Main Street (Front Street) were upstream and downstream of the future bridge crossing at Bridge Street, originally named "Main Street." The two block-length signaled hopes for a prosperous business and milling district. No land was left for a public landing or future railroad alignment, the latter to be located on the east side of the river.

Alleys throughout the Original Town Plat measure 25 feet and run in a generally north-south direction leaving lots oriented towards the east or west. As development took place, parcels were carved out of the rear sections of platted lots and new buildings were constructed facing north and south along the intersecting streets. Preferable addresses for businesses were always closer to Main Street with the downtown's most favored intersection that of Bridge Street and Main Street.

By 2011, 165 years after Elkader was founded, the Elkader Downtown Survey Area has evolved to contain a series of fully developed commercial blocks. They consist of one and two-story masonry buildings with several contemporary one and two-story bank or drive-up bank facilities, a movie theater, an opera house, library, fire station, post office, grocery store, office buildings, two filling stations, several single or two-family dwellings, one large at-grade parking lot, and two small city parks. The blocks surrounding the business district contain a church campus, dozens of mid-19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century single-family dwellings, and recently vacated residential blocks. The county courthouse is located on the opposite side of the river. New uses for older buildings in the business district include municipal offices located in the lower level of the restored Opera House,

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one bed and breakfast operation occupying a former church and another located in a former riverfront mill and cooperage building, an antique mall that occupies a former hotel, and a manufacturing concern housed in two former auto dealerships.

**iii. *Development Patterns and Historic Contexts***

During the 165 years following Elkader's platting, the downtown survey area underwent several phases of commercial development. The physical development patterns and historic settlement trends sprang from the original decisions made in the platting of the town and changed in response to historic events. In 1994 "Elkader's Commercial Architecture" was identified as one of six potential historic contexts to explain the historic and architectural significance of Elkader's older buildings and historic districts.<sup>2</sup> A historic district on the south and west side of the Turkey River comprising the major blocks of the central business district was provisionally identified. The need for additional research was also identified in order to determine specific boundaries, time period(s) covered, development patterns represented, major historic trends and watershed events. An expanded discussion organized chronologically for "Architectural and Historical Resources of the Elkader Downtown H District" follows.

***Context: Settlement and County Seat Years (ca. 1846-1869)***

The *Settlement and County Seat Years* extend for just over two decades that spanned the build-up to and aftermath of the Civil War. They began with Elkader's founding and platting in 1846, saw the selection of the town as Clayton County's county seat in 1860, and witnessed the completion of the first section of the new Clayton County Court House in 1868. During that time, Elkader's commercial growth was largely focused on the principal industrial and commercial asset that prompted the town's founding – the abundant waterpower of the Turkey River and its first flour mill. Timothy Davis, Chester Sage and John Thompson began operating a sawmill in Elkader in 1845

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<sup>2</sup> David C. Anderson, *Historic Reconnaissance Survey of Elkader, Iowa*, Clayton County Historic Preservation Commission and Main Street Elkader, March 1, 1994.

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before the town was even platted. By 1849 they had a successful flour mill in operation. Local and regional newspapers provided some of the principal sources of commentary about Elkader's early years. During the 1850s and 1860s, four were established in Elkader. The *Elkader Tribune* began and operated only briefly during the mid-1850s. Similarly, the *Wildcat Tribune* began publication in 1858 and dissolved within the year after promoting Elkader's merits as a county seat to readers. In 1859, the *Clayton County Journal*, which was originally established by W.F. Howard in Guttenberg, was acquired by Alpheus Scott and moved to Elkader. The fourth paper established during the *Settlement and County Seat Years* was the idea of German immigrant Joseph Eiboek, who worked for the *Clayton County Journal* in Elkader. His idea was to publish a politically independent, German language paper. In 1868 he published the first issue of *Der Nord Iowa Herold* as an affiliate of the *Clayton County Journal*. It was the first German newspaper north of Dubuque publishing until the eve of World War I.<sup>3</sup> Writers for these local papers, several Dubuque papers, and one statewide publication provide insight into Elkader's business district development before and after the Civil War.

One of the first comprehensive observations was made by a writer for the *Clayton County Herald* in 1855. He described Elkader as located in a "pleasant valley... [its] inhabitants number about three hundred, and are of the most energetic and enterprising character." The writer further detailed the business community when he wrote the following:

"There are five stores, some of them having large stocks of dry goods groceries and hardware, two hotels, the printing office of the *Elkader Tribune*, one eating saloon, one tin shop, one foundry, two wagon shops, one chair and cabinet shop, three shoe shops, two harness shops, two brick yards—two lime kilns and several quarries of good building stone are within a convenient distance—two tailors, a Masonic Lodge, two ministers, three physicians, one attorney, four blacksmiths, one cooper, one store cutter, several carpenters and joiners, and one fruit nursery, and 32 dwelling houses."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Elkader had as many as five weekly newspapers operating at one time." *Clayton County Register*, ca. 1965; article based on a paper prepared by Charles Miller, April 1965; research copy located at the Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum, Elkader.

<sup>4</sup> Excerpt from "Historical Description and History of Clayton County, Iowa," *Clayton County Herald*, Elkader, Iowa, July 13, 1855.

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In 1860 when the county seat election officially voted Elkader as Clayton County's "center of justice," it was observed by county officials after an inspection trip was made to Elkader that in addition to its large stone flour mill Elkader and two hotels, the new county seat had "four stores operated by H. Carter, Coates & Co., Mr. Boardman and Mr. Ellsworth." Five years later in 1865 when the *Iowa Gazetteer* reported on the state of development in Clayton County's towns, its writers noted that Elkader was favored by the reliable flow of the Turkey River giving the community good waterpower. The *Gazetteer* also noted that the commercial district had four general stores, a drug store, a hardware and stove store, one hotel, one printing office and the normal number of blacksmith and carpenter shops.<sup>5</sup>

These separate descriptions by writers during the mid to late 1850s are consistent. They each describe Elkader's business district as still modest in size and fitting well within the original two-block section of Front Street (Main Street, today) located upstream and downstream of Main Street (Bridge Street, today) that had been intended for commercial development when the town plat was filed a decade earlier.

By the time the Federal Census figures were first recorded separately for Elkader in 1860, population of the town officially stood at 440. This figure confirms the optimistic observations that representatives of the *Republican* and *Staats Zeitung* newspapers of Dubuque made in 1856. They noted that Elkader's "inhabitants number some half a thousand, but we mistake greatly if they are not doubled e'er another year."<sup>6</sup> Though Clayton County's population contained the general mix of American-born and foreign-born, German immigrants made up an estimated 20 percent, a figure likely reflected in Elkader's population as well. The namesakes of early businesses confirm a goodly number of German surnames.

On the eve of the Civil War, both good news and disaster impacted downtown Elkader. In February 1860 the newly established Clayton County Board of Supervisors let a contract for the

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<sup>5</sup>Realto E. Price, editor, *History of Clayton County, Iowa* (Chicago: Robert O. Law Company), 1916, pp. 130 and 188.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 107.

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construction of the Elkader bridge, an important improvement for the town's future growth. The bridge would cross the Turkey River over present day Bridge Street, and solidify easy access to the downtown from both sides of the river. The vote for a bridge was followed several months later in April 1860 by the affirmative vote for Elkader to serve as the county seat, a decision that would set Elkader apart from other nearly equally sized and evenly dispersed inland communities in Clayton County.

As the year drew to an end in 1860, disaster struck downtown when fire ignited the upper floor of the Thompson and Davis Mill located in the 100 block of North Main Street. The fire soon engulfed the entire mill threatening to spread through the business district. An adjacent cooperage (most likely not the current building at 126 North Main Street) was spared through heroic efforts, as were several hundred barrels of flour stored in the lower level of the mill. Other businesses and residences were spared as well. The immediate loss was estimated at \$35,000 to \$40,000 for the mill owners or a more than \$1.4 million loss in inflation adjusted dollars. The fire saw mill hands left without work and local farmers left without a ready market for their wheat. Though rebuilt, the mill was destined to suffer more fires and floods before its final demise in 1939.

Government buildings were other assets found in county seat downtowns in many Iowa communities, particularly courthouses and jails. In the case of Elkader, these two large-scale buildings failed to locate in downtown during the Settlement Years. The continuing indecision about Clayton's County's county seat saw only rented quarters for county offices established in Elkader early in the 1860s. These temporary quarters proved unsatisfactory. Schemes to fund the purchase of a building for courthouse use or to construct a new building for county offices proved unsuccessful as well until after the county seat referendum of 1867 that settled the county seat in favor of Elkader permanently. By the summer of 1867, construction had commenced on a new courthouse. The building was located opposite the downtown on the northeast bank of the Turkey River. No provision for a courthouse square had been made in Elkader's original town plat. Because the final decision county seat debate was resolved so late, better courthouse sites located away from the downtown were occupied – one by a brewery and another by St. Joseph's

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Catholic Church. The completion of a number of frame, brick and stone commercial buildings in the two block business district simply did not allow for a suitable courthouse site west of the river.

No comprehensive set of drawings or photographs convey the physical make-up of Elkader's business district during the *Settlement and County Seat Years*. Written descriptions and a handful of early photos show examples of frame false-front one and two-story buildings with modest detailing. A few brick buildings of similar scale began to appear before and after the Civil War began. Among these were the group of three brick two-story buildings at 101, 103 (105) and 107 North Main Street erected in ca. 1866. Original or early owner/occupants of the three adjoining buildings included Louis Reuther's general store, brothers R.C. and Lucius H. Place's general store, and brothers Anton and John Kramers' meat market (*Photographs 1 and 2*). Note that the front façade of 107 North Main Street was rebuilt in 1959 following a fire.

Another brick commercial block from the 1860s was the Clayton County Journal Building at 127 N. Main Street (*Photographs 3 and 4*). Completed in ca. 1868 the building's Italianate Style design included semi-circular arched upper level windows and a bracketed cornice fabricated of pressed tin. The present day name block was changed in 1887 to identify the building's new business occupant - the Hodges and Brown Hardware Store. However, an earlier 1875 drawing from the *Andreas Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa* for the same building and property transfer records correctly identify the *Journal* as the building's owner and business occupant.

Several well-executed limestone two-story commercial buildings, warehouses and mill structures were erected by Elkader founders Thompson, Sage and Davis prior to the Civil War. They were remarked upon in most descriptions of Elkader's business district from the period. An extant example built in ca. 1853 was the three-story building occupied by the mercantile of Carter and Co. at 135 North Main Street (*Photographs 5 and 6*). Henry B. Carter and E.V. Carter became partners in the business. After the Civil War and E.V.'s death, a change in ownership saw the business re-form as Carter Mills and Company, which continued until H.B. Carter left Elkader in the mid-1880s.

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Other retail tenants of Front Street buildings changed with regularity during the 1850s and 1860s. Merchants faced difficulties in maintaining stocks without a local railhead and the lack of dependable shipments on the Mississippi River, especially after the advent of the Civil War. Inexperience of new business owners frequently led to hasty sales or closures of stores. These factors combined with the often cashless state of the frontier economy, made for rapid turnover among merchants.

***Context: Development and Improvement Years, 1870 – 1915***

Once the county seat issue was resolved and the Civil War concluded, Elkader saw its population expand for several decades at a steady rate. Between 1860 and 1870 Elkader's population rose 58 percent from 440 to 697. It continued to rise another 22 percent to 851 during the next decade. Between 1880 and 1890 population declined slightly by 13 percent to 745 before resuming growth at a brisk rate as the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century approached. In 1900 Federal Census records show Elkader stood at 1,321 – a growth rate of 77 percent for the decade. A decline of 11 percent during the following decade saw population leveling off at 1,181 in 1910 before rebounding slightly the next decade despite the effects of World War I.

The population changes of the *Development and Improvement Years* were reflected in Elkader's downtown. The beginning of the new era was signaled in 1870 by completion of the county-funded Truesdell iron bridge across the Turkey River into the downtown where business was flourishing. Two Elkader pioneers, Elisha Boardman and Horace D. Bronson, were cheered by citizens as they drove across the newly opened bridge when it was formally dedicated. Both men died in 1876, just one year before the second half of the Clayton County Court House saw its cornerstone on July 4<sup>th</sup>. The following January, the building was completed and occupied.

A second generation of more substantial business blocks began to appear during the 1870s joining a handful of existing stone and brick commercial blocks already in place along North and South Front Street (Main Street). The Valentine Boller Building at 129 North Main Street (*Photographs 7*

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and 8), a two-story stone commercial block originally constructed with two shop spaces and an upper hall, was one such example. Its construction story is well documented. On March 16, 1870 a local newspaper reported “Another Landmark Removed – one of the first buildings erected in this place and used for many years by Thompson, Sage and Davis for a store and warehouse, is being torn down to give place to a large store for Valentine Boller. When completed it will be a fine addition to Front Street.”<sup>7</sup>

A few months later the June 22, 1870 issue of the *Elkader Journal* reported that “Boller is making the dirt fly for a large building opposite the mill and has obstructed the sidewalk with his building material.” The *Journal* offices immediately to the south made the sidewalk observation a firsthand experience. When completed, another observer noted, the building will be “not only an ornament to the town, but one of the best business blocks in northern Iowa.”<sup>8</sup>

The following year in November 1871 when the building was completed, Boller leased one of the store spaces to A.F. Tipton & Co. for operation of a drug store. The following January, the Clayton County Board of Supervisors leased the upper level hall space at a rate of \$500 per year for use as a court room. During the balance of the decade the hall continued this use as well as serving as a social hall for concerts and dances. A March 28, 1877 newspaper account described an event that was typical – “The general Sociable at the Court Room last Thursday is reported to have been an exceedingly enjoyable occasion. Members of the ‘Little German Band’ and others gave a rich musical treat which was keenly appreciated by all. The supper, the joint product of the Elkader ladies, had to be seen and eaten to be appreciated, and it was seen and partaken of by a very large number.” In January 1878 when the second half of the Clayton County Court House was completed, the court room use was discontinued. In a fitting celebration, the Boller Building’s hall that had served as the county court room was used for a celebratory New Year’s ball to commemorate the completion of the second courthouse.

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<sup>7</sup>Unidentified and undated newspaper account, Carter House Research Files.

<sup>8</sup>Price, p. 236.

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Another pair of stone buildings was erected on the opposite side of the block during the decade. Elkader's first bank, the First National Bank of Elkader, was headed by H.B. Carter as president and F.H. Carter as cashier. The two-story stone building was constructed at 124 North Main Street and was completed in conjunction with the incorporation of the bank in 1871. Deposits grew steadily during the *Development and Improvement Years* from \$29,500 in 1872 to more than \$500,000 in 1915. Success of the First National Bank prompted construction of a new building in 1916-1917. Construction of the first stone bank was followed a few years later in 1875 by construction of the cooperage at 126 North Main Street (*Photographs 9 & 10*) that served the Elkader Mill. The same year the cooperage was completed, major improvements totaling \$8,000 were made to the Elkader Mill.

Before the end of the decade the B.S. Whitney Building was completed at 133 North Main Street (*Photographs 11, 12 and 13*). Other second generation building construction favored brick. Examples from the early 1870s included the Sneidergar & Stearns Building at 103-107 South Main Street. Later in the decade, the Schroeder Hotel was in operation at 103 Mulberry Street. Louis Schroeder leased the building in 1877 in order to operate it as a hotel suited for traveling salesman. A livery operated from the rear with the hotel kitchen, sample rooms and dining facilities on the first floor and sleeping rooms on the second floor. All the needs of a salesman and his clients could be taken care of from one location. After several ownership and name changes, the hotel was converted to several uses including a creamery.

During the next decade railroad development, or the lack there of, became a major source of conversation and promotional effort. Meetings were held, votes of support taken, money invested, local hopes assailed, and limited success achieved during the decade. The Iowa Eastern Railroad had extended a narrow gauge route as far as Beulah during the 1870s but by 1880 was described by local attorney Realto E. Price as "broken and bankrupt, and well nigh hopeless."<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad was making efforts to consolidate trackage in northeast Iowa. After considerable negotiation with the line and the insistence of the Iowa Railroad Commission,

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<sup>9</sup>Price, p. 261.

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the Milwaukee Railroad built a wide gauge that reached Elkader in September 1886. Location of the depot grounds on the east side of the Turkey River and the absence of telegraph lines lessened the impact of the arrival of the railroad on the business district.

While negotiations continued for railroad improvements, Elkader's main industrial operation – the Elkader Mill on North Main Street – saw several changes and setbacks. In 1880, ownership changed when it was sold to Wolfgang and J.B. Schmidt and began operation as W. Schmidt & Co. The following year in July 1881, the flooding river caused the rear wall to collapse. The mill was back in operation by December. Subsequent improvements were made to the mill introducing the roller process and by 1882, the mill had been rebuilt fully using the "Hungarian system," which used corrugated, iron rollers to replace traditional millstones used for grinding wheat into flour. The continued operation of the mill was an important factor in the health of Elkader's business district and drew patronage from farmers throughout Clayton County.

Development of the balance of Elkader's downtown continued to take place during the decade as second generation buildings accumulated along the two-block stretch north and south of the bridge. By the time the 1886 map of Elkader (Figure 2) was published, progress was clearly visible. New construction completed during the 1880s included the building at 129 South Main Street (*Photograph 14*), a rare front-gabled roof, Italianate Style building completed in ca. 1880, and the nearby two-story, narrow front building that features a fine ornamental pressed tin, bracketed cornice at 117 South Main Street (*Photograph 15*) built sometime after 1886 according to historic photographs. Another important building from the decade was the Elkader Turner Hall (nonextant) located just south of the present day site of the Opera House. It was completed in 1883 for a cost of \$2,500 by the local Turnverein, a German fraternal organization that supported the concept of gymnastic training for its members and their families as well as other cultural activities.

Perhaps the single most important improvement for the benefit of the downtown in the 1880s came near the end of the decade with completion of the stone arch bridge known today as the Keystone

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Bridge (*Photographs 16 and 17*). Its predecessor - the multi-span Truesdell iron bridge – was first declared unsafe in 1881. Problems with the iron bridge's design, construction and the damage it received from several Turkey River floods caused regular maintenance, replanking and shoring up. In June 1888 the Clayton County Board of Supervisors retained bridge engineer Matthew Tschirgi to evaluate the bridge's security and he, too, found it unsafe. The board then retained him to design a stone arched bridge to be built at the same point as the iron bridge. Rock was to come from Cole's quarry a short distance away and with a large workforce, the bridge was completed for a cost of \$16,000 in approximately nine months. It formally opened in August 1889 though a creative scheme had kept traffic flowing for most of its construction over the existing spans of the old bridge. A half-decade after its completion, a local newspaper writer counted the bridge among the community's most important assets. Looking back at 50 years of growth, he wrote that "The town has never had a boom, it has steadily grown, and today presents an appearance, with its plate glass fronted business houses and pleasant, substantial residences that few towns of its size can boast of. We have one of the finest stone arch bridges in the West, over 200 feet in length with two arches of 85 feet each, built of rock from a local quarry. It is the pride of the entire community."<sup>10</sup>

As the decade of the 1890s began, population stood at just 745 people, down slightly from the previous federal census. Nevertheless, Elkader moved forward to formally incorporate, a process that was completed in May 1891 while H.H. Hagensick was mayor. The beginning of the decade was marked by expansion of the business district to the northwest. The *Elkader Register*, later the *Clayton County Register*, moved into its own building at 106 Cedar Street (*Photographs 18, 19 and 20*). Construction of the building began in September 1890. When the building was occupied in early December 1891, the newspaper proprietors proudly stated that during the building's construction, "three points were kept constantly in view, namely light, convenience and heating. The new REGISTER building we believe combines all these essentials to a greater degree than possessed by any printing office in this part of the state."<sup>11</sup> The move for the *Register* a half-block

<sup>10</sup>"ELKADER - FIFTY YEARS - The Past, The Present, and of the Future - The Business and Social Interests of Our Town," *Elkader Register*, Dec. 6, 1895.

<sup>11</sup>"AT HOME. The Register Now Occupies its Own Building," *Elkader Register*, December 3, 1891.

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off Main Street indicated the scarcity of building sites along Elkader's main downtown blocks and healthy expansion for the commercial district. Its removal to Cedar Street also resulted in three local newspapers located along the street between North Main Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Street during the 1890s including the *Herold* just west of the *Register* (nonextant) and the *Argus* across the street to the south at 107 Cedar Street NW.

At the east end of Cedar Street, another building was erected in 1891 after a fire destroyed the Niemeyer Building that stood just south of the Turner Hall at the corner of North Front Street. The fire occurred early in the year and brothers Riley and John Glesne erected a new building on the site before year's end. The building held Glesne Brothers General Merchandise at 201 North Main Street (*Photograph 21*) and later focused on hardware sales. It is a two-story brick building featuring a canted corner at the intersection with the prime shop windows facing onto Main Street. The building had a one-story addition that was replaced by 1902 according to Sanborn maps with a two-story extension that held a separate storefront facing Cedar Street at the west end of the building. Together the two storefronts provided access to both Main Street trade and the growth that was anticipated along Cedar Street at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

At the end of the 1890s, Cedar Street saw another dramatic change take place. The three-decade old Methodist Episcopal Church building was moved to the vacant lot at 111 Cedar Street NW (*Photographs 22 and 23*) during the summer of 1898. A basement was added for the building and the frame exterior was clad in brick.<sup>12</sup> In May 1906 the Methodist Episcopal Church was sold to the Evangelical Freidens Church. The church was frequently referred to as the "German Church" though its name translated to "Peace Church." It continued at this location until the new Peace Church was completed in 1922-23 at 301 North Main Street on the north edge of the downtown.

The same year Cedar Street saw the Register and Glesne buildings completed, ownership of the Elkader Mill changed when Wolfgang and J.B. Schmidt sold it to their sons Christian, Fred and Robert. It became "Schmidt Brothers & Company" in 1891. Improvements for the mill during the

<sup>12</sup>*Elkader Register* story, December 15, 1898, Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum Research Files.

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decade included construction of a new dam in 1899. This followed a disastrous flood in 1898 that destroyed two-thirds of the existing dam structure and kept the mill from operating for eight months.

The decade saw a series of modern public works improvements introduced to bring Elkader and its downtown into the modern era. A municipal referendum was held in 1894 and voters approved the introduction of electrical power. The electric plant, however, was not completed until after a second franchise in 1900. In 1895 another municipal vote was taken on the establishment of a waterworks system. Though construction began on the waterworks the following year, it was not completed before a disastrous fire destroyed the Clark House on March 1896. Formerly known as the Boardman House, the two-story frame hotel stood at the southwest corner of Bridge and Main streets. Destruction of the hotel and four adjoining frame buildings, however, allowed for construction of several second-generation brick structures.

F.D. Bayless undertook the hotel replacement, reportedly using 200,000 bricks to complete the two-story building in 1897 based on a design by Martin Heer of Dubuque. The following year, another level containing 14 guest rooms was added completing the three-story Bayless Hotel building at 102 South Main Street (*Photographs 24, 25, 26 and 27*). A second post-fire building constructed next door the same year was the Molumby Block at 108-118 South Main Street (*Photographs 28, 29 and 30*). The new brick block cost \$14,000 to build and contained four storefronts that provided space for a number of businesses during the *Development and Improvement Years*. The *Elkader Register* account of the building completion in December 1898 described the rebuilding project and its economic success:

“The Molumby block erected by John Molumby, is situated on Front Street [Main Street] next to the Bayless and consists of four fine stores... with offices and flats on the second floor. The third floor contains a fine hall. The block is entirely occupied.”<sup>13</sup>

Local newspaper reports celebrated completion of not only the Bayless Hotel and the Molumby Block in 1897 but the Congregational Church and the start of the new St. Joseph's

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Catholic Church – a total of \$60,000 of construction in one year.<sup>14</sup>

The following year the McLaughlin and Humphrey Building at 111-115 North Main Street (*Photographs 31 and 32*) was underway replacing a group of older buildings. The building was designed by architect G.F. Guilbert of Dubuque with J. M. Jensen serving as contractor and Anton Willie as brick mason. A newspaper account from November 1898 described the fine plate glass windows in the building as the largest in town. As construction progressed, the building was described in greater detail:

“One of the handsome new fronts on Front Street is that of the new block of McLaughlin and Humphrey. It is of brick 44 by 80, containing a store and a room for a saloon on the first floor, while the second story will have two well arranged flats. The front elevation presents a fine appearance with its large plate glass windows and overhanging bay windows. The saloon is to be fitted up in the most modern style with the flooring and arched ceiling and new fixtures. The building is supplied with electric bells and will be heated with steam throughout.”<sup>15</sup>

In February of 1899 the Palace Saloon operated by McLaughlin and Humphrey opened in half of the building and a month later, Hempel and Klotzbach moved their clothing and furnishing store into the other half. Later that year, a concrete sidewalk and curb were installed in front of the McLaughlin and Humphrey Building extending south to Bridge Street leaving only one step between 101 and 115 North Main Street.

As the century drew to a close, another downtown disaster took place. The Borman Building at the northeast corner of Bridge and North Main streets burned to the ground in June 1899.<sup>16</sup> As with the Boardman House and Molumby Block fires in 1897, the Borman Building fire would represent an opportunity for improvement the following decade. At least 17 buildings erected during the 1890s are extant in 2011.

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<sup>13</sup> *Elkader Register*, December 15, 1898.

<sup>14</sup> Price, p. 264.

<sup>15</sup> Unidentified Elkader newspaper accounts, November 10 and December 15, 1898, Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum research files.

<sup>16</sup> Price, p. 264

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Population reached 1,321 in Elkader at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – a gain of 77 percent decade-over-decade. The number represents Elkader's largest period of growth by percentage during its entire existence. Public works projects begun in the previous century saw completion after 1900. The first involved the provision of electrical power throughout the community and most especially in the downtown. After the second electric franchise passed 1900, Schmidt Brothers & Company completed a plant the same year adjacent to its Elkader Mill site. A newspaper account from January 1900 made it clear that the franchise vote would be important for Elkader's future. With the newspaper headline reading "Progress Wins," the franchise victory became just one step in comprehensive civic plan.

"The material welfare, prosperity, progress and growth of Elkader should lie close to the heart of its citizens and if all pull together to that end its success will be certain. With each step the progress becomes easier, we have taken some steps, let us take others as fast as a secure foothold can be found. Let us endeavor to find manufactories and industries that we can induce to make Elkader their home and thus make substantial and permanent growth. United planning and working will do these things. Remember: - 'A long pull, a strong pull, a pull together,' accomplishes much."<sup>17</sup>

At a practical level, businesses saw their shops lighted more safely, and street lights were converted from gas to electricity. Electric poles and multi-line wiring soon appeared throughout the downtown. The original Schmidt Brothers & Company power plant (nonextant) was erected at 130 North Main Street. The first building to be powered with electricity was at the opposite end of the block - the Central State Bank at 102 North Main Street – currently Elkader State Bank in 2011. Street improvements fell under the category of a civic undertaking at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first local good roads association was established in 1905, just three years after the first automobile was observed in Elkader. Members met with the Elkader City Council and the result was a special appropriation of \$1,000 to improve city streets. This expenditure became a precedent for municipal expenditures that would be important for Elkader's Downtown – street paving, curb and gutter installation, sidewalks, street lighting and at least one drinking fountain. It should be noted that the first efforts to macadamize the streets in the downtown pushed by

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<sup>17</sup> "Progress Wins," Unidentified Elkader newspaper, January 1900, Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum research files.

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business leaders several years earlier had been “met with sharp protest.”<sup>18</sup>

The Borman Building site stood vacant for only a few months following the fire in the summer of 1899. By August the vacant site which stood north across the street from the Elkader State Bank, was taken over entirely by the bank and a new building was completed by late 1900. The new three-story brick building at 102 North Main Street (*Photographs 33, 34, 35 and 36*) held not only the bank but also rental offices on the second floor and the Masonic Hall on the third floor. One of only two banks in Elkader, the state bank was incorporated in 1892. The bank had \$200,000 in deposits by 1900, more than doubled to \$475,000 in 1910, and totaled over a half million by 1915.

H.H. Hagensick, Elkader's mayor when the town incorporated in 1891, was the bank's first president and H.S. McGahren was the cashier. The bank re-incorporated in 1912, and by 1915 its offices had doubled in size by growing within the bank's walls and taking over space on the second floor previously rented to office tenants. The growth of this bank and the First National Bank further up North Main Street reflected the economic health of Elkader's downtown during the decades before and after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Other civic improvements were popularly supported and privately funded during this period. The Turner Hall (nonextant) in the 200 block of North Main Street saw more than \$3,500 in improvements in 1901 for upgrading as an opera house. It was already a “paying concern” according to historian Realto E. Price. But in February 1903 the frame building was destroyed by fire. The Turners began making plans to rebuild, but just four days after the fire, an opera house company was formed instead to undertake a larger building scheme. \$10,000 was raised from subscriptions or the sale of stock to 139 shareholders and the Turnverein donated the property from the previous building. As a sign of the important farm-to-town link with Elkader and its downtown, \$600 in subscriptions came from rural Clayton County residents for the rebuilding project.

By April 1903, architects Schick and Roth of LaCrosse, Wisconsin completed plans for the three-

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<sup>18</sup> Price, p. 293.

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story Romanesque Revival Style building. It was to be fashioned of pressed brick and seat 300 in the auditorium with two boxes for 200 additional seats. Elkader contractor J.M. Jensen received the \$9,521 general contract and Nex and Willie were responsible for the elaborately patterned and well-executed brick work. Work was "pushed rapidly" according to historian Realto Price, and the Elkader Opera House at 207 North Main Street (*Photographs 37, 38, 39 and 40*) was completed for a grand opening in just nine months on November 17, 1903.<sup>19</sup> As part of the construction project, the 200 block of North Main Street was regraded and new walks installed.

Other issues facing the downtown during the decade were longstanding. A major flood in 1902 and another in 1906 did damage to the Elkader Mill. Then on May 22, 1908 the mill suffered a major fire for the second time in its six decade life. The monumental profile of the multi-storied limestone mill had dominated Elkader's downtown for over half century. The loss stood at \$30,000 for mill owners Schmidt Brothers & Company.

Having sustained such heavy damage, the future for the mill - one of Elkader's major employers and an important stimulus for other economic activity - was in question for a time. National agricultural trends in post-1900 America were shifting. Flour milling operations were being consolidated in major urban milling centers where skilled workers were available. Flour milling had been in a steady decline in Iowa since the 1870s, and cities such as Minneapolis and St. Paul were located closer to the wheat growing areas in the Dakotas now readily accessible by rail connections. Though it may not have been obvious at the time, small mills such as the Elkader Mill were the most threatened by these national trends.

Against this backdrop, plans were announced by Schmidt Brothers & Co. to rebuild. Following the fire, the mill's physical profile was changed. When the roof burned, the tall front-gabled facade was replaced with a stepped parapet of lower height. A few years later in 1912, Schmidt Brothers & Co. made plans for an even greater investment in the mill's operation. They intended to

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<sup>19</sup> Bob Griffith, "Many great memories involved in the story of the Elkader Opera House," *Clayton County Register*, July 21, 1971 and Katherine Griffith, "Elkader Opera House," Elkader Main Street, ca. 1992 brochure.

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construct a new concrete mill dam that would provide operating power as well as hydro electric power. Construction was nearing completion in January of 1915 when the coffer dams were being removed around the new dam. Two explosions caused rock and debris to spread for several hundred yards with many downtown buildings losing window lights and skylights as a result. Repairs were made and the new dam put into service.

Following a pattern seen in many other towns in Iowa, in 1909 the Elkader Booster Club was formed. Improved transportation connections were among its interests. The club promoted prospects for an electric inter-urban line to Oelwein as one of its first projects. A study was commissioned in 1909 but plans apparently were dropped for lack of interest. Efforts for improved train service were advocated by the club in 1912 when members demanded introduction of a third train on the Milwaukee Railroad line. Four years later following extensive damage to the rail line and its rolling stock following the flood of 1916, service was discontinued entirely to Elkader. In later years efforts for better roads replaced efforts for more trains.

By 1915 and the end of the *Development and Improvement Years*, Elkader's population stood at about 1,200 people having leveled off slightly from its peak of 1,321 in 1900. Downtown Elkader's progress was more obviously measured by the number of second generation brick and stone buildings spreading from the along and adjacent to the traditional two-block core. Public works improvements included completion of sewer lines, a municipal water system, and electrical service. Cement sidewalks, boardwalks and gutters, and street lights were completed throughout the core blocks. Paving of streets was just around the corner.

***Context: Wars, Depression, and Natural Disasters, 1916 -1960***

On the eve of World War I, Elkader's downtown was a well-established commercial district containing a full complement of business houses. Patrons included local residents as well as farm families from surrounding townships. Elkader was the third largest community in Clayton County in 1920 with a population of 1,223 behind Guttenberg with 1,666 and McGregor with 1,289. Dispersal

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of town and farm population evenly across the county resulted in a total of six communities with populations over 1,000, most with business districts smaller than Elkader's. Other communities of this size included Strawberry Point (1,101) and Monona (1,049), and Postville (partially in Clayton County - 1,101). Two decades later in 1940, Elkader was the second largest community in the county with a population of 1,556 behind Guttenberg with 1,860. By 1960 at the end of both World War II and several natural disasters, Elkader's position slipped slightly. Guttenberg remained the largest community with a population of 2,087 followed by Postville with 1,554. Elkader stood at 1,526 followed by Monona at 1,346 and Strawberry Point at 1,303.

Population shifts and relative sizes of Clayton County communities appear to have had less impact than in previous decades on business district growth in Elkader. A greatly improved system of county and state highways made it possible for rural residents to reach all corners of the county to purchase goods and services or seek out entertainment. It is likely that improvements in transportation for industrial and agricultural purposes had a greater impact. Upgrades in rail lines and the completion of a system of locks and dams on the Mississippi River in the 1930s to provide a nine foot channel for shipping, solidified Guttenberg's standing as the largest business center in the county during this period. Elkader's status as county seat continued its importance for the transaction of real estate, legal business, and related professional services.

On the eve of World War I, the Elkader Mill remained in operation with a new dam. As a sign of the times, by 1913 steps had begun to turn a portion of the mill into a feed grinding operation rather than a flour mill. In 1917 mill owners Schmidt Brothers & Company sold the mill property to Elkader Electric Light and Power Co. In 1922, the power company raised the concrete dam's height another six feet. Work was completed in November and the *Elkader Register* reported that month that the goal of the project was to increase the water power and enable the electric company to operate using water power instead of crude oil-powered engines.<sup>20</sup> In 1926 Elkader Light and Power transferred the mill property to Northeast Iowa Power Company and two years later Central States Light and Power Corporation took over ownership.

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<sup>20</sup>*Elkader Register*, November 16, 1922.

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The dam change completed in the 1920s proved to be a success and during the summer of 1930 the mill's operation was taken over by F.B. Fassbinder of Dubuque. He in turn retained the services of W.H. and J.J. Tierney of Waterloo to convert and upgrade the building for exclusive use as a feed grinding mill. The *Elkader Register* speculated that "farmers in this section will, no doubt, make good use of the plan, which Mr. Fassbinder is installing here."<sup>21</sup> New mill equipment included a grinder, huller, crusher and mixer. A double loading bin was installed on the front of the mill so that wagons or trucks could be efficiently loaded off Front Street. Fassbinder had the grinding mill fully in operation by September 1930 marking the end of one milling era.

In 1939 the Elkader Feed Mill was gutted by fire for a third time. Following the fire, the mill was not rebuilt. Instead, the building's owner, Central States Light and Power Corporation, built a one-story office and shop building in its place reusing parts of the original mill's lower level for the new structure. This building was completed in 1940 and remained in use by the power company until 1948 when the office building and former cooperage to the south were sold to Dr. Placido Ramos Vasquez Hommel who maintained his medical office in a portion of the former office building. In 1965 the Elkader Public Library took over the office building for library use.

Milling had been the heart of Elkader's downtown from its founding but banking was its life blood. In the years leading up to World War I, two local banks established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century became well-established. The First National Bank established in 1871 was the older of the two and reported \$553,000 in deposits in 1916. Riding on a wave of prosperity, the bank erected a new facility in 1916-17 on its existing 122 North Main Street (*Photographs 41, 42, 43 and 44*) site south of the stone cooperage building. In so doing, the bank more than doubled its footprint with the new Classical Revival Style building on the expanded site.

The bank's presidents and their terms in office were Henry B. Carter (1872-1882), prominent merchant and landholder; William Larrabee (1883-1903), governor of Iowa from 1886 to 1890 and a resident of Clermont, Iowa; Realto E. Price (1904-1923), a local attorney, civic promoter and

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., August 28, 1930.

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Clayton County historian-author; C.C. Oehring (1920-1923); R.E. Price (1924); Valmah T. Price (1925-1929), Realto's lawyer son; H.L. Swenson (1930-1931) and John O. Glesne (1930-1931), a downtown hardware merchant.

The second bank, the Elkader State Bank was similarly sized with \$575,000 in deposits in 1916. The two banks maintained a friendly competition during the pre and post-World War I years but both likely suffered setbacks during the statewide agricultural recession of the 1920s. In 1931 to avoid major difficulties, the two banks agreed to merge. The *Clayton County Register* published a statement from the officers of the new bank formed – the Central State Bank & Trust Company.

"We have the pleasure to announce to you that, effective on the morning of Thursday, the 12th of November, 1931, the business of the First National Bank and the Elkader State Bank will be merged into one institution and known as The Central State Bank & Trust Company of Elkader, Iowa. Men of known integrity, experience and financial ability are in charge, and we believe the future will show both the wisdom and the usefulness of the step, which has been taken."<sup>22</sup>

A decade later in 1941, the First National Bank Building was transferred to a receiver and then sold to Fidelity Investment and Real Estate Co. The bank building was leased for use as the Elkader Post Office in 1935. This continued until the post office relocated to 104 First St NW shortly before a new post office building was completed on Mulberry Street SW in 1968.

Central State Bank and Trust Company continued as Elkader's only bank during the Great Depression, World War II and the post-war years. Its location at the intersection of Bridge Street and Main Street remained one of the most visually prominent in the business district. In the late 1950s the bank began a period of growth that involved the acquisition of several other Clayton County banks including the St. Olaf State Bank in 1958, the Volga State Bank in 1966, and the First State Bank of McGregor and Marquette in 1990. Building changes in Elkader included opening of the Central State Bank drive-up facility at 200 North Main Street in 1989.

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<sup>22</sup>*Clayton County Register*, November 21, 1931. (available online at the Central State Bank website at: [http://www.bankatcentral.com/about\\_us.html](http://www.bankatcentral.com/about_us.html); accessed 2/5/11.

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A third bank opened in Elkader in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1978 Peoples State Bank opened at the south end of the business district. Its predecessor bank, the Farmersburg Savings Bank was re-chartered while leaving a branch office open in Farmersburg. At that time, the bank was held by a holding company that was also owned by the LeRoy C. Darby family. The Union State Bank-Monona was also held by the company. In 2005, the holding company purchased Postville State Bank. The following year, the three banks merged as a single bank and renamed the new bank "Freedom Bank." In 2007 a controlling interest of the bank's shares was sold to bank employees. The bank building was severely damaged by the flood of 2008 and rebuilt in 2009 on an adjacent site just outside of the Elkader Downtown Survey Area and historic district.

Unlike the 19<sup>th</sup> and turn-of-the-century years, business development between the wars saw most change take place within the walls of existing buildings along North and South Main Street. New owners or the appearance of entirely new businesses took place with regularity. In other instances successive generations of the same family maintained business or saw it evolve within the same building. An example of a building that demonstrates the complexity of inter-generational change in a single prominent building is the property at 105 North Main Street (*Photographs 1 and 2*). Constructed in ca. 1869 by brothers R.C. and Lucius H. Place, the building passed to Charles Leibrock in the 1870s. He operated a general store and dry goods business here with several different partners for nearly three decades. In 1899-1900, he retired and sold the business to L.M. Bink and M.J. Poull of Milwaukee. The October 26, 1899 *Elkader Argus* noted that the change would bring "two young enterprising business men and their families to our town."

In 1902, Charles Leibrock died. The Leibrock heirs decided to hold onto the building and Bink and Poull were able to retain this excellent Main Street business location. By 1908, Bink and Poull determined to move south on Main Street and the shop space was leased to Regan and Witt who operated a furniture and undertaking business there until 1923. At that time, Frank G. Leibrock, eldest son of Charles Leibrock, and his wife Louise Leibrock bought the building from the Leibrock heirs. They relocated his own four-decade old business "Leibrock's Ladies Ready-to-Wear Store" to the old family owned-building. Frank died in 1929, and Louise sold the business to her daughter,

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Ruby Katschkowsky. Recognizing the value of the long-standing family name, Ruby changed the business name only slightly to “Leibrock’s Store.” Ruby died during World War II.

The building changed ownership in 1949 when Walter Sauer acquired it from the Leibrock heirs. The business had several name changes during the 1940s and 1950s – “Phyll’s” for owner, Phyllis Patterson in 1943 and “Nancy’s” in 1953 when Harold and Louise Griffith bought the store and renamed it after their daughter. The Griffith’s business thrived and its prominent location drew a faithful customer base. Unlike the Charles Leibrock’s advertisements 90 years earlier claiming the availability of ladies and gents clothing, notions, fancy and staple groceries, trunks and valises all under one roof, the Griffith’s promoted their specialization in women’s apparel. They even advertised the fact that Louise Griffith was a full-time corsetiere, a graduate of the Gossard Foundation Fitting Clinic of Minneapolis. Specialization made their business indispensable in the 1950s and 1960s.

Elkader’s side streets handled dozens of other businesses with less dependence on well-defined retail locations including newspaper and printing shops along Cedar Street; cold storage, ice cream manufacturing and bottling firms on First Street NW and Cedar Street; a creamery and a produce business on Mulberry Street, and two telephone exchanges first on Bridge Street and after World War II on First Street NW. A third exchange location was on South Main Street for a short time.

The most well-defined specialty district within the downtown took shape along West Bridge Street beginning shortly before World War I. Sanborn maps for 1895 and 1902 show that the area west of Main Street’s business houses was populated by a mix of free-standing liveries, wagon and buggy shops, and small to medium sized single-family dwellings. With the arrival of the automobile in Elkader before World War I, these buildings gave way gradually over the next several decades to a collection of new automobile related structures including repair garages, implement dealerships, automobile dealerships, and filling stations. Proximity to the main highway into town over the Turkey River Bridge from the east and the highway entering town from the south made West Bridge Street the ideal location for the clustering of these automobile related businesses.

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Several of the new businesses erected one and two-story masonry commercial buildings. Most were typified by the organization of their first floors into wider storefronts and what is described by architectural historians as "Broad Fronts." The Allen Brothers/Allen Motor Company Building at 107 West Bridge Street (*Photograph 45*) is such a building. It was built in 1914 replacing a frame one-story and one-and-half-story livery stable. Proximity to the Boardman Hotel and later the Bayless Hotel to the east across the alley made this site an excellent livery location. Allen Brothers was established in 1903 and eventually handled Buick, Oldsmobile, Cadillac and Pontiac lines in Elkader. When completed, the new building had a capacity for 50 cars with a vehicle elevator located near the rear to provide service and storage on multiple levels. The building also featured curb-side gasoline pumps. Brothers Oley and Albert Allen founded the company and with Oley's sons, Walter and William, developed a faithful local clientele. Albert's sons, Ray and Albert, Jr., later operated a successful car dealership in Cedar Rapids. The Allen Motor Company remained in operation in Elkader through two world wars, the Great Depression, and the post-war years closing in 1960.

A second automobile related business to locate along West Bridge Street was the Wardell Chevrolet Company. Located next door to Allen Motor Company at 109 West Bridge Street (*Photograph 46*), the car dealership replaced an earlier downtown lumber company at the southeast corner of First and Bridge streets. The one-story brick Broad Front building was completed in 1930 and had a salesroom with a garage sized for 30 vehicles at the rear and a filling station. The pump area – a small canopied frame addition – was located at the diagonal corner of the building at the intersection of First and Bridge. Later the building was occupied by Hoschhaus Chevrolet and subsequently by Elmer Mieke and Sons handling John Deere implements. A large open-air display area was located on a vacant lot directly south of the building.

The third automobile-related building to appear along West Bridge Street was the Dittmer Brothers Building at 118 West Bridge Street (*Photograph 47 and 48*) in 1926. The family had a buggy and farm implement business earlier and acquired this parcel in 1923 when it held a one-story buggy

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and implement shed according to the 1913 Sanborn Map. Dittmer Brothers had the local Studebaker and Packard dealership that early on included a farm implement line as well. LeRoy Dittmer, one of the owners, served on the Studebaker board of directors for a time. Nationally, Studebaker sales expanded greatly during the 1920s with more than 50 models available in 1929. The Dittmer Building was constructed in the midst of this national expansion several years before the Great Depression would dramatically reduce sales. In 1938 the Dittmer Brothers partnership dissolved. Like the Wardell Chevrolet Building on the south side of Bridge Street, Dittmer Brothers also maintained a filling station at the corner of First and Bridge streets during the late 1920s and 1930s. It, too, used the diagonal space at the corner of the streets but a slightly different design allowed for a full second story with a diagonal cutaway section on the ground level for the filling station pumps. The upper level of the building contained a large meeting hall.

W.H. Walch and Sons was the fourth and last automobile and implement dealership to construct a building along West Bridge Street. William Walch made plans for an increase in auto sales by acquiring two residential lots in early 1946 before the war had concluded. In 1947 he completed construction for his Ford and Mercury dealership in a modern cream-colored brick building with a wide, curving display window at 104 First Street SW (*Photographs 49 and 50*). The architectural design for the building sometimes referred to as the Moderne or Streamline style, was intended to suggest minimal wind resistance when in motion, thus becoming especially suitable for automobile related buildings such as bus stations, filling stations and car dealerships, such as the Walch Building.

The W.H. Walch and Sons dealership replaced two single-family dwellings on its L-shaped building site that included an outdoor sales area/parking lot north of the building's west end. Such areas would be essential for successful automobile franchises during the 1950s and later. Walch and Sons initially did not operate its own filling station though a nearby station – the fourth at the corner of First and Bridge streets - was operated under separate ownership in a small addition to a private residence (nonextant).

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Two other filling stations along the West Bridge-First Street corridor brought the number of downtown gasoline outlets to six. The Sinclair Filling Station at 200 West Bridge Street erected by 1951 (nonextant), was replaced in 1983 by a combination convenience store-filling station that operates in 2011 as The Store. Another filling station at 107 First Street SW (nonextant) was established in 1928 by the Mid-Continent Oil Co. and later became a DX Filling Station. It was replaced in 1983 by the present Pronto Market that includes a convenience store and gas pumps.

At least three major vehicle and farm implement franchises were located outside of the West Bridge-First Street corridor. Hyde Implement Company located along the east side of the 200 block of South Main Street. The firm was started in the early 1920s by brothers P.J. and James F. Hyde. They eventually handled the International Harvester implement line from their riverfront location that included a large repair shop and an outdoor display yard south of the building. Michael Bente Implement built a new building nearby at 110 Mulberry Street where he handled John Deere and Oliver implements and a general farm implement repair operation beginning in 1930. The third auto business was located at 203 South Main Street in ca. 1948 when William Cheeseman and his sons Dale and Byron opened Cheeseman Garage. The business served as dealers for Kaiser, Frazer and Jeep cars in the late 1940s.

The automobile dealerships and filling stations were part of a national retailing trend that saw franchises appearing in downtowns across the country between the world wars. In Elkader these franchises were the most successful though others were experimented with on Main Street. In 1935 Melvin Glesne acquired the "Coast-to-Coast" franchise for the family hardware business at 201 North Main Street. In more recent years, the "True Value Hardware" franchise was added for the business to further expand product lines.

Across Cedar Street to the south at 133 North Main Street (*Photographs 11, 12 and 13*), John F. and William Becker had begun operating Becker Brothers Drugs in 1892. The pharmacy passed to George H. Schmidt in 1916. In 1923 Schmidt's Pharmacy became affiliated with the Rexall Drug franchise and a few years later in 1927, Schmidt added a new soda fountain. This was followed by

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installation of a “modern store front” in 1931 and a neon sign measuring 6 by 3 feet in 1936. “By these improvements, Mr. Schmidt has proven, without a shadow of a doubt that he is of the progressive type.”<sup>23</sup> In 1946 the business passed to George W. Schmidt and by the 1950s the value of the franchise was such that the store operated as “Schmidt Rexall Drugs.” Longevity for the family business continued under ownership of George W. Schmidt, grandnephew of the Becker brothers. In 1960 the business expanded into 135 North Main Street (*Photographs 3 and 4*). In 1990 the location was taken over by Jay and Kay Moser who moved the four-year old Moser Pharmacy to the 133-135 North Main street location. Though franchising played a role in the history of this pharmacy business, it was only part of a series of business decisions and adaptations made between the wars and in the post-World War II period.

Another experiment with franchising occurred next door at 129 North Main Street (*Photographs 7 and 8*). Built as one of two storefronts in the Valentine Boller Building, this space was first occupied by the A.F. Tipton & Co. as a drug store in 1871. After successive owners in the 1890s it operated as City Drug with Henry H. Hagensick as proprietor. He added one of the town’s first soda fountains in 1895 and in 1902 “wearied of the work of turning a crank for the ice cream freezer and ... put in a gasoline engine to do the work.”<sup>24</sup> In addition to running a successful drug store, Hagensick served as mayor for multiple terms beginning in 1891 and was president of the Elkader State Bank from its founding in 1892 until 1925. He also owned and operated the Bayless Hotel for a number of years. After his death in 1932 the drug store business continued under family ownership relocating to the Bayless Hotel block in November 1939, it. For a time it operated in affiliation with the Walgreen Drugstore chain.

The space at 129 North Main Street was then taken over in January 1940 by Avron Oleson who moved another franchise business here, his Ben Franklin Store that had been in operation for five years at the time. In 1945 the successful dime store expanded to a double-wide storefront. The

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<sup>23</sup> “Schmidt Observes 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary – Has Made Notable Improvements in Store,” *Clayton County Register*, May 25, 1937.

<sup>24</sup> Unidentified newspaper article dated May 14, 1902, Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum Research files.

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generous floor space was typical of variety store chains like Woolworth's, Kresge's and Ben Franklin that sought to stimulate purchasing by offering discount prices. Oleson retained ownership of the Ben Franklin Store until 1963.

Two other enterprises on Main Street were not technically national franchises, but the products they sold were national offerings – American movies. The first theater to open in Elkader was the Rivola Theatre at 119 North Main Street (*Photographs 32 and 51*) in the early 1920s in the former Henry Schoch Building. It had several owners/operators including Joe Lynch beginning in 1921, R. M. Bernau briefly served as operator prior to 1925, and T.H. Veenschoten beginning in the spring of 1925. By that fall, Veenschoten appears to have made substantial improvements making it a major draw in Elkader's downtown.

“Only the latest and best in motion pictures are featured at the Rivola Theatre at Elkader, since it became the property of T. Veenschoten early this spring. In fact the Rivola of Elkader is successful in securing first run pictures shortly after they are shown in the larger cities. This is due to his splendid booking connections.

“The Rivola Theatre here is considered to be one the best, for a city the size of Elkader, in this state. Its seating capacity is 250. These seats are all on the main floor which are arranged so as to afford every person the best possible view of the screen. Mr. Veenschoten purchased the theatre from Joe Lynch who had owned and operated it for a number of years. Although new in this territory Mr. Veenschoten is much pleased with the interest that the people here have shown in his efforts to bring the best in the motion picture world to them.

Featured by the Rivola are the best productions of First National and Paramount pictures together with all the popular comedies and news features. A great many attractions are first run pictures, and although these are most expensive, Mr. Veenschoten is of the belief that Elkader critics demand the best. Prices to see these attractions are oft time lower than in the larger cities...<sup>25</sup>

In 1927 Belma and Harold Hall purchased the Rivola Theatre and two years later in early April 1929 with new equipment installed, the Halls proudly presented the first “talkie” in Clayton County - *Alias Jimmy Valentine*. The local newspaper related that the Sunday crowds during

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<sup>25</sup>“Rivola Presenting Only the Best and Latest of Popular Attractions. Is Owned and Operated by Experienced Manager,” *Elkader Register*, September 10, 1925.

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the three-day run taxed the capacity of the theatre. Various formats of sound films were introduced at the Rivola in the 1920s and the first color films appeared by 1931. Movies continued in popularity during the Great Depression years, so much so that by 1935, a major improvement was made to the building front.

“Patrons of the Rivola Theatre here have been impressed with the new exterior decorations of this amusement place. A new steel ceiling has been placed on the canopy in front of the theatre, and this has been painted in aluminum. Numerous little lights have been added to the ceiling and around the edge of the canopy. The entire front of the theatre has been painted with aluminum and trimmed with black. The front is really attractive in its new dress.”<sup>26</sup>

By the end of World War II, the Rivola Theatre had closed and the building was adapted for use by Matt and Frye for the sale of electric goods. A second theater began operation across the street at 108 North Main Street (*Photographs 51, 52, 53 and 54*) in September 1941 while the Rivola remained in operation. The Elkader Theatre had the same owners, Harold and Belma Hall, and operated in an existing building that had previously housed a number of businesses including a clothing store, saloon and, during the 1920s, the Elkader Post Office. The building's double-wide storefront provided for a larger movie house seating 400 along with the capacity to show wide-screen films. Creative ticket sale promotions brought in hundreds of patrons each week including Wednesday “Bank Night” drawings timed to coincide with evening hours for downtown businesses that drew both local and farm families.

Other locations west of Main Street saw building development or expansions following World War I and II unrelated to franchises. One of the expansions took place along Cedar Street for the Register Building, paralleling a series of mergers for the newspaper. As noted above, the Register building was completed in 1891 at 106 Cedar Street NW (*Photographs 18, 19 and 20*). In 1907, D.G. and H.L. Griffith, owners of the *Register*, acquired their competitor paper, the *Argus*, which operated from a building located across the street to the south. The paper was known as the *Elkader Register-Argus* for about a decade after the consolidation but at the end of World War I, it took back the name *Elkader Register*. Prosperity continued for the Griffiths and in 1926, the

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*Clayton County Messenger* was acquired and merged into the *Register*. The new name was the *Clayton County Register*. Three years after the merger, the Griffiths built a modern brick addition on the rear of their 1891 building. It held substantial new equipment for their growing job printing trade as well as the *Register's* printing.<sup>27</sup>

Other building growth off Main Street during this period included the establishment of a telephone exchange on the second floor of the east half of the William Reimer Building at 110 West Bridge Street (*Photograph 55*). Reimer purchased the property in 1914 and erected a two-story concrete block building there a short time later replacing a one-story dwelling and an adjoining tailor and cobbler's shop. According to the 1913 Sanborn Map, a fire bell tower stood at the corner of the property adjacent to the alley at the time. This was removed when the east half of the Reimer Building was erected the following year.

This exchange was replaced during World War II when Northwestern Bell Telephone under its parent company American Telephone and Telegraph purchased a property at 107 First Street NW (*Photograph 56*) in June 1940. A building was completed two years later incorporating the stone foundation of the existing house on the site with several expansions made through the years. The building held the operator exchange that was in use until dial service was introduced in March 1967. Northwestern Bell traced its roots in Iowa to the Iowa Telephone Company that formed in 1896 and changed its name to Northwestern Bell Telephone in 1909. In 1921, it formally merged with other regional companies under the Northwestern Bell name. Headquarters were in Omaha for the telephone company's operations in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

Both local and toll line service along with customer service and technical equipment were provided at the Northwestern Bell Building in Elkader until 1969 when consolidation was completed at a regional level. The one-story brick building's simplified Classic Revival style suggested the

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<sup>26</sup>"Redecorate Front of Rivola Theatre,"

<sup>27</sup>"Register Has Served County Since Founding, Jan. 3 1878," *Clayton County Register*, December 11, 1996 [reprint of article in Clayton County Centennial issue, *The Register*, 1936].

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company's intention to have permanence in the community, but it remained in use for less than three decades. Its design for telephone equipment use included the installation of steel I-beams to reinforce the floors for heavy telephone equipment. Among the many related services provided by the local operator, Marian Barton, during her 27 years of employment here was the coordination of calls to Santa Claus each December. She forwarded calls from children to her mother who played the role of Mrs. Claus informing callers that Santa was with his elves and she would forward a message.<sup>28</sup>

Floods and fires were regular occurrences in Elkader's business district throughout its history. Fire forced the attrition of less substantial frame and masonry buildings while repairs of flood damage frequently stimulated improvements in the Elkader Mill itself, its milling equipment, and its dam across the Turkey River during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Major conflagrations at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century at the former Clark House/Boardman Hotel and Elkader State Bank at opposite corners of West Bridge and Main streets encouraged construction of new more substantial replacement buildings. The same was true when the Turner Hall on North Main Street burned and was replaced by the Elkader Opera House in 1903. Smaller scale fires continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century but municipal water service combined with improved building construction after 1900 saw their effects diminish.

The most important natural disaster to affect the downtown between 1916 and 1960 was the tornado that struck the south half of the business district on November 17, 1958. It was an unusually mild fall day when the tornado hit at mid-afternoon moving south through the business district. A total of 15 buildings on both sides of the 100 and 200 blocks of South Main Street were seriously damaged including upper level apartments for approximately 20 people. Initial damage estimates were for \$200,000 to \$250,000 or in 2011 dollars, \$1.5 to \$1.9 million. Severely damaged businesses included Grahams Department Store, Walke Hardware, Prouty Barber Shop, McTaggart Furniture, the Gamble Store, Halpin Tire Service, Burlingame's Grocery, two taverns,

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<sup>28</sup> Gamble, Larry W., "A History of the Building at 107 First Street, NW, Elkader, Iowa," unpublished paper by building owner, February 5, 2008.

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the Hyde Beverage Company, and the Bayless Hotel. Assistance for the disaster was initially provided by fire departments from Edgewood, Volga, Monona, Guttenberg, McGregor and Strawberry Point with a total of 17 departments from northeast Iowa eventually assisting.<sup>29</sup>

As another measure of the disaster, the Northwestern Bell Telephone exchange registered 4,669 calls from 3 p.m. until midnight when a normal day would be 3,000 calls. Damage was especially bad along the west side of the south end of the 100 block (*Photographs 57, 58 and 59*). Following the tornado, several buildings including the Molumby Block at 116-118 South Main Street and the Regan and Witt Building at 120 South Main Street were rebuilt without top floors or with major alterations. Others were replaced entirely including several buildings in the 200 block of South Main Street. A second tornado struck Elkader in 1985 but its damage was limited to section of town outside of the central business district.

Along with the 1958 tornado, the decades following World War I were marked by regular occasions of spring high water along the Turkey River. Intermittent floods of greater severity were occasioned by high water from spring melts in the Turkey River Watershed, ice dams at points downstream, spring rains on top of frozen ground in the watershed, and heavy summer rain storms in the watershed. Such occurrences caused major floods in Elkader in 1922, 1947, 1958, 1965, 1969, 1972, 1979, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1999, twice in 2000, 2004, and 2008. Among the most significant, was the flood that occurred in June 2008 when record overflows occurred along the Turkey River including in sections of the south half of downtown.

The 1922 flood caused 24 railroad bridges to be destroyed in Clayton County along with several miles of track. A rain storm with as much as 10 inches of rain in June 1947 inundated the towns of Volga, Littleport, Elkader and Elkport along the Turkey River. A locally intense rain fall struck in May 1958 and spring melts from record snow packs in April 1965 and April 1969 brought extensive flooding along the Turkey River. In July 1972 an 8 inch rainfall upstream of Elkader caused flooding and in March 1979 the spring snow melt was rapid on the lower Turkey River. In June

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<sup>29</sup> "Elkader Digs Out of Debris, City is Hit By Tornado; 20 Homeless," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, November 18, 1958.

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1991 the flood was attributable to rain falling on wet spring ground. Prolonged floods of late June and early July 1993 were caused by record rain falls in the watershed and throughout the state. In late May 1999, the record flooding on Turkey was precipitated by rainfall. The flood of June 2008 was caused by record rainfalls in the watershed.

The period of *Wars, Depression, and Natural Disasters* was bookended by World War I and the tornado of 1958 with its recovery extending into 1960, the concluding date for this historic context and the MPD. The 1960 date covers building conservation efforts made in the aftermath of the tornado considered to be a major watershed moment in the evolution of the downtown. In between 1916 and 1960, Elkader saw steady but modest population growth from 1,223 in 1920 to 1,526 in 1960. The downtown spread outward from North and South Main Street with most new buildings in place by the end of World War II. The impact of the automobile was seen in traffic patterns, parking patterns, and traffic signs and the introduction of electricity saw several generations of street lighting come and go. The popularity of the opera house waned and the first floor became the municipal fire station while movie houses came and stayed in the downtown drawing evening crowds for entertainment and shopping. As many as 130 people resided in downtown flats during this period. A good system of inter and intra-state highways connected Elkader and its downtown to other parts of the state and country in a way that railroads had never served the community. Elkader's reason for being, its flour mill, prospered during World War I, but disappeared altogether following a third and final fire at the mill near the end of the Great Depression. By 1960, downtown Elkader was well-established as one of several geographically dispersed retail centers serving Clayton County. Virtually every storefront was filled with new start-up businesses or multi-generational family stores continuing after World War II. Buildings erected well before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were retained and maintained by Main Street retailers who offered a vigorous campaign to retain and recruit new customers in the last half of the century.

In the years since 1960, the Elkader Downtown Survey Area has continued to evolve. Some changes are the result of shifts in national retailing trends that has seen franchise businesses come and go. Antique stores and specialty gift shops have become retail anchors. Niche

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restaurants and coffee shops have replaced traditional diners. Traditional Elkader businesses such as drug stores, hardware stores, banks, grocery stores and the downtown movie theatre remain to form the core of the downtown's offerings. New industries have been successfully recruited to the business district to fill former automobile dealerships. The last 25 years of development in particular have been set against a back drop of historic preservation efforts on the local level beginning with the establishment of the Elkader Main Street program in 1986. Pride, promotion and building preservation are evident in many building rehabilitations.

The impact of floods in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries on the stability of Elkader's downtown remains to be seen. Following the flood of 2008 in particular, the local economy was adversely impacted. Population declined 13 percent between 2000 and 2010 from 1,465 to 1,273 partially attributable to the flood. As with historic floods, concerns were expressed about the merit of reinvesting. A number of affected downtown retailers stayed in place, made necessary improvements or in a few instances, expanded their businesses. The City of Elkader in cooperation with the Elkader Main Street Program has undertaken an effort to identify a long-term solution for averting Turkey River floods. In 2011, it is unclear if the presence of a pro-active downtown promotion effort coupled with the experience of a working Main Street program and a careful consideration of flood protection options will provide the downtown with a stable future.

***Context: Commercial Architecture Forms and Styles (1846 to 1960)***

This historic context addresses the evolution in building styles and forms for the commercial buildings of Elkader's downtown extending through the overall period of significance for this MPD – ca. 1846 to 1960. The discussion is organized chronologically into time periods that parallel the three previous historic contexts. At the end, a general discussion of the professional architects is included to provide a general background for their work in Elkader and, where possible, a comparison with similar projects in other communities.

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**ca. 1846-1869**

Elkader's downtown saw its first generation of commercial building stock erected during the 1840s through the 1850s consisting mostly of vernacular frontier building types and forms. According to historic views and newspaper accounts, these included frame buildings that used variations of one-story and two-story Front-Gable and Side-Gable commercial forms or one-story and two-story False-Front commercial forms. No examples of these early frame buildings survive.

More permanent buildings were erected using abundant supplies of local limestone beginning by the late 1840s and 1850s. Over the next few decades variations of these limestone buildings ranging from the multi-story front-gable roofed Elkader Mill (only foundation and rear walls of first floor extant) to a series of two-story narrow-front commercial blocks to a stone cooperage were erected. Because of their similar form, scale and their shared use of local stone, these buildings are collectively referred to in this Multiple Property Documentation form as "Elkader Limestone Blocks." When originally constructed these single or multi-storied buildings had either front-gable, side-gable or flat roofs with low parapets or false-fronts. For false-front forms, the gable or hipped roofs were low and not visible from street levels. The walls were laid in coursed ashlar patterns with a few buildings having walls laid in uncoursed or random ashlar patterns. The Elkader Mill Cooper-Shops Building at 126 North Main Street is an example of a building that retains walls using both masonry patterns. The uncoursed ashlar stonework appears on an older section of the building (south end) while the coursed ashlar pattern was used for the main section of the building erected in ca. 1875 a (north end). The building quality limestone used in the Elkader Limestone Blocks was quarried from several locations near Elkader.

As in other Iowa communities the construction of early stone buildings requiring the efforts of highly skilled masons often drew craftsman who came for one large-scale or monumental project and stayed to do other work. Examples of this practice in eastern Iowa included the stone masons who were drawn to Iowa City in the mid-1840s to build Old Capitol, the Iowa territorial capitol, and then stayed to build commercial buildings, residences, mills, dams, barns, building foundations, and

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other secondary structures during the following decades.

Construction of the multi-storied Elkader Mill (limestone foundation sections, basement walls, and rear walls of first floor remain extant in 2011) for city founders and millers Timothy Davis, Chester Sage and John Thompson took place in 1845-1846. It was the type of major stone building enterprise that attracted highly skilled stone masons to the area. Other mill related buildings such as two cooperages and a mill store, other downtown commercial buildings, public buildings including the Clayton County Jail and St. Joseph's Catholic Church (NRHP-listed), the Keystone Bridge (NRHP-listed) and private residences kept skilled stone masons in Elkader and Clayton County for a half century.

Specific buildings in the downtown that are examples of the Elkader Limestone Block form were completed during the *Early Settlement and County Seat Years* included several also commissioned by Davis, Sage and Thompson. The Cooper-Shops Building at 126 North Main Street includes two sections built during their ownership and a building across the street frequently referred to by locals as the "Old Mill Store" – the Carter and Co. Building at 135 North Main Street (*Photographs 5 and 6*) completed in ca. 1853. Its corner location opposite the Elkader Mill combined with its full three-story height made it one of the downtown's most prominent commercial buildings built before the Civil War. The coursed ashlar stone walls terminated in a simple, corbelled parapet, a feature that would be repeated in other Elkader Limestone Block examples built into the 1870s that are discussed below.

Another vernacular building form to appear in the decade following the Civil War was the Brick Front. In Elkader, this narrow-front commercial building form was built of brick with two-stories featuring a ground level shop and flats or storage on the upper level. Large multi-light shop windows appeared on the lower level with the entrance either centered or to one side. Multiple courses of brick separated the levels with single or paired windows symmetrically spaced on the upper level. The front façade's parapet sometimes included corbelled patternwork evidencing the skill of the mason. In other cases, a simple stone coping terminated the wall. The group of three

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nearly identical Brick Front buildings erected at the northwest corner of West Bridge and North Main streets are the best examples of Brick Fronts from this period. The Reuther Building at 101 North Main Street and the R.C. and Lucius H. Place Building at 105 North Main Street (*Photographs 1 and 2*) had storefronts modified and windows changed in later years but the basic façade compositions remained the same. Note that the façade of the third Brick Front building at 107 North Main was destroyed by fire and rebuilt in 1959 without maintaining its Brick Front form.

**1870-1915**

The 45 years of the *Development and Improvement Years* gave downtown Elkader a rich collection of vernacular building types/forms and Victorian Era commercial architectural styles. Two of the vernacular forms that continued from the pre-1870 years were the Elkader Limestone Block and the Brick Front. Stone masons added the Valentine Boller Building (*Photographs 7 and 8*) at 129 North Main Street in 1871 and the B.S. Whitney Building (*Photographs 11, 12 and 13*) next door at 133 North Main Street about the same time. Both buildings had the same coursed ashlar stone walls, simple parapet corbelling, and façade arrangements of earlier examples of this form. The three-story Whitney Building was later modified by the removal of the top floor and the installation of an oriel window on the second floor. The well built stone walls sustained both modifications to the front façade.

Meanwhile on the opposite side of the street south of the Elkader Mill, the Limestone Block form was adopted for the Elkader Mill Cooper-Shops at 126 North Main Street in 1875. Given the use of the building as a cooperage for the mill rather than retail space, it was set back from the street to provide wagon delivery space. Nevertheless it shares the same coursed ashlar stone wall construction and finely corbelled parapet. A small section of the cooperage setback several feet has coursed rubble walls suggesting that this portion may have been built from left-over rock or predates the cooperage.

Few intact Brick Front buildings from the *Development and Improvement Years* survive. The best

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examples come from the boom period at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building at 125 South Main Street built in 1890 retains its decorative corbelled brick parapet. The Elkader Theatre Building (*Photographs 7 and 8*) erected a decade later in 1901 at 108-110 North Main Street incorporated a new material for the period – decorative unglazed terra cotta tiles as one of the masonry courses in the well-preserved parapet. A simpler design is also retained on the ca. 1900 building at 117 South Main Street.

The most important new building design introduced during the *Development and Improvement Years* was derived from the Italianate Style first introduced for domestic designs in Elkader and other Eastern Iowa communities in the 1850s and 1860s. Examples of Italianate Style commercial buildings in Elkader incorporated symmetrically spaced brackets in their cornices fashioned of scroll-cut laminated wood or more commonly, of embossed tin or galvanized metal. The earliest examples of Italianate Style commercial buildings in Elkader appeared after the Civil War with surviving examples from as early as the 1870s. Buildings at 117 and 129 South Main Street (*Photographs 14 and 15*) built in 1870 and 1880 respectively, are examples of the more typical narrow-front, two-story corniced form and the front-gable form. Upper level windows in the former have segmental arched windows while in the front-gable form, the upper level windows on both levels have semi-circular arched windows suggesting this building may have been originally used as a residence rather than a commercial shop.

North Main Street contains a representative group of Italianate Style commercial buildings. Among those with the best preserved upper levels and cornices are the Clayton County Journal Building (*Photographs 3 and 4*) at 127 North Main Street; the Adolph Eberhart Building next door at 123 North Main Street; the Glesne Building (*Photograph 21*) at 201 North Main Street; the Henry Schoch Building at 119 North Main Street; and the building at 116 North Main Street. The Journal Building is the oldest in this group and was originally in place by 1868. Its original design is well documented in an engraving featured in the *Andreas Illustrated Atlas* (1875) and later modified for a new hardware business in 1887. The principal change was the symmetrically placed name block that announced the new business product - "Hardware" - and the year this business was

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established. The Eberhart Building contains the original business name in the cornice level beneath the pediment-shaped date block centered above the parapet. Both buildings have semi-circular arched windows though the Eberhart Building's windows form a full colonnade. Both buildings have entrances leading to the upper floor flanking the shop space. The storefront for the Eberhart Building is better preserved than that of the Journal Building.

The Glesne Building (*Photograph 21*) was built in 1891 a short time after a fire destroyed a similar but smaller building at the same location. Its cornice brackets are "lighter" in size and shape than other Italianate Style cornices on North Main Street, tending towards Queen Anne Style domestic designs of the late Victorian period. Its second floor openings have segmental arches and window hoods. The Schoch Building completed in ca. 1899 has a traditional Italianate Style cornice with heavy embossed brackets but its paired windows opt for simpler, flat arched paired window openings. The building at 116 North Main Street dates from ca. 1900 and its cornice contains an series of semi-circular arches between brackets, all topped by a dentil course. The building at 116 North Main Street used one of the window options employed in Italianate Style buildings – a flat arch inset within a segmental opening. This window type was easier to build and therefore a slightly cheaper option than the semi-circular and segmental sash seen elsewhere on North Main Street.

The most elaborate example of an Italianate Style design in Elkader's downtown is actually a blend of the style with another from the turn of the century decades - the Romanesque Revival. The McLaughlin and Humphrey Building (*Photograph 31 and 32*) at 111-115 North Main Street was designed by architect G.F. Guilbert of Dubuque and constructed in 1898. The building has a wider storefront width but like the other Italianate Style narrow-front buildings, it has an elaborate bracketed cornice. In this case, it is identical to that of the Schoch Building next door at 119 North Main Street. The only difference is the presence of a large semi-circular parapet section announcing the building's owners and date. This is the earliest building identified in the downtown with an architect and as such it is not surprising that the design incorporates several modern features – symmetrically placed oriels on the second level and plate glass window glass in the twin

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shop spaces. The building design has a pair of semi-circular arched windows with limestone sills, keystones and footers centered beneath the round arched name-date block and above the three-door entrance way that leads to the shop spaces and upper level stairs. The hipped roof oriels were likely the first such window groups in the downtown and prompted installation of a similar window up the street at the B.S. Whitney Building a few years later.

As the use of the Italianate Style was disappearing in the 1890s, its successor style – the Romanesque Revival – came into full favor locally. Three large-scale buildings were erected at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century using this style, all coincidentally after fires destroyed predecessor buildings: the Bayless Hotel (*Photographs 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28*) at 102 South Main Street in 1898; the McLaughlin and Humphrey Building (*Photograph 31 and 32*) at 111-115 North Main Street in 1898; the Elkader State Bank (*Photographs 33, 34, 36 and 36*) at 102 North Main Street in 1900-1902; and the Elkader Opera House (*Photographs 37, 38, 39 and 40*) at 207 North Main Street in 1903. All four buildings involved the role of an architect – Martin Heer of Dubuque for the Bayless Hotel; G.F. Guilbert of Dubuque for the McLaughlin and Humphrey Building; Guido Beck of Dubuque for the bank; and Schick and Roth of LaCrosse, Wisconsin for the Opera House.

Features incorporated into each of the buildings include the use of contrasting arched openings between alternating building levels - semi-circular and flat or jack arches; the use of contrasting smooth and rock faced finishes for wall surfaces and trim; the use of decorative brick patternwork, corbelling and terra cotta panels for wall surfaces, cornice designs, and parapet levels; and the incorporation of a prominent tower or turret at the corner of the building or a prominent name-date block along the cornice.

The three-story Bayless Hotel features a continuous row of plate glass windows in the shop spaces along South Main Street. A projecting, angular tower was located at the upper levels of the corner overlooking West Bridge Street and originally had a mansard-roof topped by iron cresting set at the fourth floor level. Mottled reddish brown-colored brick is laid in a variety of patterns and contrast with a cream-colored brick and gray stone giving the building a polychromatic appearance.

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Diagonally across West Bridge Street, the Elkader State Bank (*Photographs 33, 34, 35, and 36*) was also a three-story building with a prominent corner treatment. Round arched openings of first floor windows intersected at the corner providing access to the bank lobby through a wide diagonal entrance. The rock-faced Redstone lower level contrasted with the smooth finish of the brick used for the upper level walls. The prominent corner feature was a raised cornice section with a metal finial atop a narrow, conical roofed turret (*Photograph 34*). Decorative terra cotta tile bands here and on the cornice level of the main building were intermixed with miniature colonnades, dentils and corbelling patterns. The use of the third floor as a hall for the Masonic Lodge was advertised in the building's pediment-shaped terra cotta parapet design panel (*Photograph 36*). Architect for the Elkader State Bank was Guido Beck of Dubuque who designed St. Joseph's Catholic Church in 1898-1900.

The Elkader Opera House was designed by architects Schick and Roth of LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Like each of the other buildings, the front façade of the Opera House featured elaborate brick patternwork. Sections of running bond, American bond, and basket weave bond were used in the walls with outline patterns of header courses and various combinations of projecting or recessed header or stretcher courses, vertical stacks and corbelling used to accomplish the architect-specified designs. One of the building's most important design features was the installation of a group of three semi-circular arched windows in the center bay beneath a larger round arch filled with patterned brick. The result of the well-executed brick patternwork and creative design was a highly decorative facade without the need for more expensive cut-stone or terra cotta tile work. A goal for the project had been prompt completion, and this design strategy successfully accomplished this goal.

**1916-1960**

From World War I through the post-World War II building boom, the vernacular forms and architectural styles of commercial building in Elkader generally followed national trends. Many of

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the new buildings constructed were examples of Broad Front forms that were typically built between the world wars, were usually one or two-story in height, had storefronts that were twice the width of commercial buildings built during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, featured large plate glass shop windows, and were built using traditional and newly developed masonry materials. Traditional masonry materials included common brick and cast concrete. Newly introduced materials included rock-faced concrete block, glazed and unglazed terra cotta block, pressed brick, and cast stone. Plate glass had been introduced before 1900 but did not become common until during the 1916 to 1960 period. Materials adopted for storefront remodeling included Carrara glass, glazed tile, embossed metal, and glass block.

The richly varied Victorian period architectural styles gave way to simpler vernacular building types and forms with the exception being one good example of the Neo-Classical Revival Style and one well-executed example of the Moderne or Modernistic Style. The First National Bank at 122-124 North Main Street (*Photographs 41, 42, 43 and 44*) was completed in 1917 as the country was at war. Its style was part of a wave of architectural designs for financial institutions intended to associate the solidity and soundness evoked by Classical architectural forms and decorative motifs with the economic soundness of the banks themselves. The rush to build new banks across Iowa in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw various styles adopted for bank building including the Prairie School, Arts and Crafts, but most importantly, the Neoclassical Style. Architect Enock Hill Turnock of Elkhart, Indiana (1857-1926) was retained for the project and came up with an unusual design solution that incorporated the original 1871 building into a major remodeling along with an adjacent building, both behind a new Indiana limestone façade. The material choice likely reflected his experience in working with his state's native stone. It is likely that Turnock became known to the First National Bank owners through his design efforts for the new Winneshiek Hotel in Decorah in 1905. The bank design has five fluted stone pilasters spaced across the front with pedimented entrance hoods supported by heavy stone brackets at each end serving separate entrances for the first floor and upper level offices. Elsewhere in the downtown, the Classical vocabulary was used for single building features such as an entrance opening installed with fluted columns and a decorative broken pediment at 202 South Main Street or multi-light windows and

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quoins at the Northwestern Bell Telephone Building at 107 First Street NW (*Photograph 56*). In still other locations, decorative architraves or cornices were installed as belt courses between shop levels and upper floors to retain vertical separations on storefronts when transom levels were removed or reduced in size.

The second style that became popular before and after World War II was the Moderne or Modernistic Style. Elkader's only example of this style is the Walch Ford Building (*Photographs 49 and 50*) at 104 First Street SW built in 1948. It features the principal aspects of the style – long smooth walls with one or more curved sections designed to suggest movement and a continuous band windows. The plate glass showed off new automobiles to passing motorists.

**Architects**

Five architects have been identified with commissions for buildings erected in the Elkader Downtown Historic District beginning in the 1890s. The first architect was Martin Heer of Dubuque. In February 1897 the *Dubuque Sunday Herald* identified Heer as having been engaged by ex-State Senator Bayless of Elkader to design a new hotel to replace the building that had recently burned. Heer was reportedly of German descent having settled in Dubuque in the mid-1840s. Among his many commissions were churches and schools for the Catholic Church within the Dubuque Diocese. He practiced independently at the time he designed the hotel having previously partnered with Guido Beck under the style "Beck and Heer" from ca. 1889-1895. It is presumed that Heer completed the hotel commission on his own. Other important works by Heer included the St. Boniface Church in Clinton, the Holy Ghost Catholic Church in Dubuque, the Fort Atkinson School and Convent, the Saints Peter and Paul Church in Petersburg, and the Eichhorn Building in Dubuque.

The second architect for a downtown building was G.F. Guilbert of Dubuque who practiced in the firm Guilbert & Littlefield at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Little is known about his practice and neither he nor his firm have been identified by architectural historians among the most prominent architects

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of Dubuque during the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. His only known work in Dubuque was the Late Queen Anne/Shingle Style residence of Dr. John A. and Jennie Meshinger at 265 Alpine St. completed in 1899-1900. It is included in the Langworthy Historic District (NRHP-listed). His commission in the Elkader Downtown Historic District in 1898 according to contemporary newspaper accounts was the McLaughlin and Humphrey Building (*Photograph 31 and 32*) at 111-115 North Main Street. As discussed previously, this building was a creative blending of Italianate and Romanesque Revival elements using brick and stone for the walls and trim, an embossed metal cornice, large oriels on the upper level, and plate glass shop windows.

Guido Beck (1853-1936), also of Dubuque was the third architect known to have worked in downtown Elkader. As noted above, he was briefly in partnership with Martin Heer of Dubuque. Beck's local commission was a landmark turn-of-the-century building at the entrance into the business district – the Elkader State Bank, 102 North Main Street. He was likely selected to complete this local commission because of the work he had underway in 1898-1900 on another prominent building in Elkader – St. Joseph's Catholic Church (NRHP-listed). Beck was involved in the design of more than 100 churches but less is known about his secular designs. Historian James Jacobsen in writing about Beck's architectural practice and prominence in Dubuque writes as follows:

"As of 1911 it was judged that Beck "has had much to do with the beauty and thoroughness of architecture of Dubuque." Beck was born in Germany and came to America in 1882. He worked first as a stone cutter at the Rock Island Arsenal, Rock Island, Illinois. In Dubuque he turned to architectural design and by the mid-1880s was specializing in church design. By 1911 he had designed 100 of these ranging from the "small to the cathedral." He first practiced with (probably) Fridolin J. Heer as Beck & Heer in 1886, practiced alone until he partnered with Martin Heer c.1889-1895. After 1899 he practiced by himself. Works included St. Josephs College Chapel and Auditorium, West Hill Roman Catholic Church, West Dubuque Roman Catholic Church Apartment house.<sup>30</sup>

It is likely that Beck borrowed the design concept from another prominent Dubuque building in preparing the design for the bank. The Bishop's Block at 90 W. Main Street was designed by

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<sup>30</sup>James E. Jacobsen, *History Pays!*, "Dubuque – The Key City, The Architectural and Historical Resources of Dubuque, Iowa, 1837-1955," *Post Phase III Version*, June 24, 2003, p. 150.

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Dubuque architect Franklin Hyde in 1889. Hyde left Dubuque by 1893 following the death of his partner and as a result in a precipitous decline in building following the Panic of 1893.<sup>31</sup> No professional relationship between Beck and Hyde is known. A view of the Bishop's Block is contained in *Photograph 62*.

The fourth firm identified with a building in the downtown was Schick and Roth, a partnership of architects Hugo Schick and Andrew Roth who worked out of LaCrosse, Wisconsin between 1901 and 1909. Roth had a private practice in LaCrosse preceding and following their partnership while Schick was in the partnership Stoltze & Schick between 1888 and 1899 before Schick and Roth formed. Schick and Roth were actively designing major commissions in LaCrosse and other Wisconsin communities during their eight-year partnership including the Sparta Free Library (1902), Park Store (1903) in LaCrosse, McDonald Flats (1904) in LaCrosse, and St. Joseph's Catholic Church (1908) in Rice Lake. Of note is the fact that the interior stair cases in the Park Store share similarities with the Elkader Opera House while the parapet design of St. Joseph's Catholic Church uses design elements seen in the parapet of the Opera House.

Enock Hill Turnock (ca.1856-1926) was the fifth architect identified with a building the downtown – the First National Bank at 122-124 North Main Street. By the time Turnock completed the bank commission he was a resident of Elkhart, Indiana. He grew up in Elkhart and started his design career in Chicago in the mid-1880s where he worked until 1890 with architect William Le Baron Jenney. That year he started a private practice. Among his important Chicago designs was Lincoln Park Palace, a noted apartment building. He returned to Elkhart in 1907 where he designed public and private buildings here and in other Indiana cities until his death in 1926. Important works in Elkhart included the Elkhart Water Works, Municipal and Superior Court Building, Elkhart Masonic Temple, several schools, a hospital, factory buildings, and a number of prominent residences including the Harter House and Ruthmere Mansion. Turnock is listed as the sole architect on 37

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<sup>31</sup>Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary*, (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press), 1999, pp. 85-86.

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buildings in Chicago dating from 1898 to 1907. He was also listed in the partnership “Turnock and Ohrenstein” between 1902 and 1905 as the architect on 40 additional buildings. Five Turnock-designed buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places in Elkhart and Nappanee, Indiana. As noted previously, his name is also identified with the design of the Winneshiek Hotel in Decorah, Iowa completed in 1905.

The Walch Ford Building at 104 First Street SW though not designed by a professional architect, has been identified as the work of two Elkader men – Milton Uecker, and W. H. Walch, owner of the building and Ford dealership. Uecker worked in the Clayton County Engineer’s Office and likely brought his design and drafting skills to bear on the project. Whether a coincidence or not, the Walch Ford Building’s shared its curved feature corner with the Art Moderne-style Ford Building built for the 1935-36 California Pacific International Exposition in Balboa Park in San Diego.

A list of representative buildings associated with the *Commercial Architecture Forms and Styles (1846 to 1960) Context* appears on the following page:

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**Elkader Downtown Historic District – Architectural Styles, Types and Forms**

Elkader Limestone Block

- 135 North Main Street, Carter & Co. Building, ca. 1853
- 133 North Main Street, B.S. Whitney Building, ca. 1870
- 129 North Main Street, Valentine Boller Building, 1871
- 126 North Main Street, Elkader Mill Cooper-Shops, ca. 1875

Brick Front

- 101 North Main Street, Reuther Building, ca. 1869
- 105 North Main Street, R.C. and Lucius H. Place Building, ca. 1869
- 103-107 South Main Street, Sneidigar and Stearns Building, ca. 1870
- 125 South Main Street, Kelly Building, 1890
- 108-114 South Main Street, Molumby Block – north half, 1898; 1959
- 116 -118 South Main Street, Molumby Block – south half, 1898; 1959
- 108-110 North Main Street, Elkader Theatre, 1901
- 119 South Main Street, Scovil Building, ca. 1882

Italianate Style

- 117 South Main Street, Stebor Building, 1870
- 127 North Main Street, Clayton County Journal Building, ca. 1868/1887
- 129 South Main Street, 1880
- 112 North Main Street, ca. 1890
- 201 North Main Street, Glesne Building, 1891
- 119 North Main Street, Henry Schoch Building/Rivola Theater, ca. 1899
- 116 North Main Street, ca. 1900
- 111-115 North Main Street, McLaughlin and Humphrey Building, 1898
- 123 North Main Street, Adolph Eberhart Building, 1901

False-Front

- 106 Cedar Street NW, Elkader Register Building, 1891 & 1929

Romanesque Revival Style

- 102 South Main Street, Bayless Hotel, 1898, 1900, & 1920
- 207 North Main Street, Elkader Opera House, 1903
- 102 North Main Street, Elkader State Bank, 1902

Broad Front

- 107 West Bridge Street, Allen Brothers/Allen Motor Company Building, 1914
- 114-118 West Bridge Street, Dittmer Brothers Building, 1916
- 109 West Bridge Street, Wardell Chevrolet Building, 1930

Neo-Classical Revival Style

- 200 South Main Street, McTaggart Funeral Home, 1937
- 107 First Street NW, Northwestern Bell Telephone Building, 1942
- 122-124 North Main Street, First National Bank, 1917

Moderne/Modernistic Style

- 104 First Street SW, W.H. Walch & Sons Building, 1947

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***Summary***

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, downtown Elkader continues in its role as the heart of the community. The Downtown Survey Area has evolved through nearly 17 decades to a stable land use pattern that includes a core of commercial properties along North and South Main Streets between Mulberry Street on the south and Spruce Street on the north. Multi-story retail and office buildings anchor the downtown with stable older residential neighborhoods to the west and northwest. To the south, the traditional South Elkader Addition residential neighborhood is in the process of disappearing following the flood of 2008 and subsequent demolitions and building moving efforts in the neighborhood. Elkader's decision to make its business district an Iowa Main Street community in 1986 and as well as an Iowa Cultural and Entertainment District in 2007, are part of a comprehensive plan to retain and enhance the downtown's historic character. *Figure 10* shows the number of buildings by decade within the proposed Elkader Downtown Historic District and *Figure 11* includes population figures for Elkader taken from U.S. Census figures for the respective years cited.

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**F. Associated Property Types of the Elkader Downtown Historic District (ca. 1846 – 1960)**

**i. Property Type:** Commercial, Public and Institutional Properties in Elkader Downtown Survey Area

**ii. Description:**

The historic resources in this property type are all located within the two full blocks and six half or fractional blocks included in the Elkader Downtown Survey Area. All resources date from the period 1850 to 1960 and are principally commercial buildings. The exceptions are typical of those that would be expected in a moderate sized business district that has historically included diverse uses. Historic commercial buildings include a theater, two banks, a hotel, auto dealerships and garages, and several dozen contiguous commercial blocks. Public buildings include a former church/fraternal hall, library and an opera house. Fewer than ten dwellings survive, many now leased and converted to duplex or apartment use.

The physical integrity of resources in the survey area ranges from well-preserved, nearly original condition, to substantially intact with minor alterations, to very altered or nearly unrecognizable. Nearly all of the buildings in the Downtown have been modified to some degree. Rehabilitations completed over the past two decades have retained original historic features.

**iii. Significance**

The historic resources for this property type represent noteworthy examples of vernacular commercial forms from the late 19<sup>th</sup> through early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as the work of architects from Dubuque, Iowa (G.F. Guilbert, Guido Beck and Martin Heer); LaCrosse, Wisconsin (Shick and Roth); and Elkhart, Indiana (Enock Hill Turnock). Their work and that of other designers and craftsmen whose names are not known include examples of Italianate, Romanesque Revival, and Classical Revival styles.

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Further research is recommended for buildings that were identified as significant examples of the Elkader Limestone Block vernacular building form. Because the construction of stone commercial buildings, mills, bridges, cooperages, churches, residences, barns, agricultural outbuildings or special purpose buildings and structures extends throughout Elkader, other towns in Clayton County, and rural areas of the county, preparation of a stone building historic context should be undertaken. This study could identify a period or periods for stone building, identify the quarries used for local projects, identify individual master craftsmen and/or groups of masons involved in projects in specific communities or townships, and investigate both the common and personal construction techniques identified with these individuals or groups. An investigation of the German stone masons from the village of Communia would also provide insight into techniques that may be associated with specific ethnic groups. Similar stone buildings and construction practices studied in Jones County and Madison County could provide models for a city-wide study in Elkader and other town and rural areas of Clayton County. With such a study the significance of Elkader's Limestone Block Buildings could be more thoroughly assessed under Criteria A, B and C.

***iv. Registration Requirements***

***a. Area of Significance***

Significant resources are found under National Register Criteria A, B and C or combinations of them. One example was found for Criterion D where recommendations for further study were made after consulting with the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office's staff archaeologist and the National Park Services' National Register staff. The property recommended as eligible under Criterion D involves a prominent example of early limestone building elements that are partially extant.

Criterion A: Properties and districts should be associated with important commercial development trends in Elkader's downtown commercial district, important shifts in land-use patterns, changing retail practices, construction of the Keystone Bridge, and the development of civic and fraternal

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institutions in the city center. Individual buildings may be associated with other areas of significance including industrial development, ethnic history, transportation, and social history.

Criterion B: Properties should be associated with persons who made significant individual contributions to Elkader's history, especially those associated with commercial development.

Criterion C: Individual properties should illustrate architectural styles, building forms, building types, materials, or construction practices that represent the various periods of development in the central business district. Individual properties may be associated with an architect or master craftsman. A historic district should include collections of properties, some of which may individually lack significance, but as a group demonstrate important trends in local or neighborhood development.

Criterion D: Properties should include those that are likely to yield important information about commercial and/or industrial building practices for which written documentation is absent. Significant elements under this criterion could include sub-surface evidence of earlier buildings such as foundations, cisterns, privies, waste pits, steam heating tunnels, etc. Because of the topographic pattern of the Turkey River's northwest bank, several foundation and riverfront walls of buildings that are no longer considered extant, still retain portions of walls and retain walls. In the case of one property, the SHPO has recommended considering partially extant building elements as significant under Criterion D. It involves the lower levels of the abandoned Elkader Mill at 130 North Main Street. A staff archaeologist with the SHPO indicated that historic archeological remains may exist that would provide documentation of how the mill had functioned and may have the potential to yield physical evidence of earlier mill equipment not fully removed from the premises. In other cases, tall limestone foundations facing the riverfront were retained in place when subsequent newer construction took place. The walls survive as archaeological evidence about a period of construction predating the later extant buildings or simply documenting a surviving element of an otherwise nonextant building. The building foundation that now serves as a retaining wall along the riverfront in Keystone Park is an example of the latter situation. In this

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case, the foundation/retaining wall was recommended by the National Park Service to be considered a contributing structure while the park be considered a noncontributing site.

**b. *Levels of Significance***

Properties will generally be found significant on a local rather than state or national level based on their association with local downtown development.

**c. *Integrity Considerations***

Individually significant buildings or contributing resources in a historic district in a commercial area are likely to have been altered more than residential properties. It is expected that commercial buildings (theatres, banks, retail buildings, office buildings, hotels, garages and service stations) will retain their original appearance in terms of basic shape, proportions, rooflines, and important features. The upper levels of their principal façade(s) should remain relatively unchanged in terms of placement and size of window openings, masonry detailing such as corbeling, and cornice design. Easily reversible alterations, such as the addition of fire escape ladders or covering of window, will not be defined as significant. The replacement of multi-pane sash with reconfigured windows is acceptable (e.g. 6/6 double-hung sash replaced by 1/1 double-hung sash), but changes in the shape or type of windows would be unacceptable (e.g. segmental arched double-hung sash by smaller, casement windows). Changes in window openings that are more than 50 years old will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine their impact.

Greater change is acceptable for storefront levels on commercial buildings because historically the average life of a storefront in the United States is only about ten years. The manner in which important storefront elements are treated will be evaluated. Such elements include the shop and/or upper level entrances, transoms, shop windows, beltcourses, ornamentation, and awnings. In general, modifications made to storefronts in commercial buildings more than 50 years ago will likely be considered significant in their own right if they have been preserved relatively intact.

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Sympathetic alterations made within the past 50 years will not automatically preclude a building from being eligible for the NRHP. These more recent alterations will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine if they support or detract from a building's overall design elements.

Alterations made to convert the use of commercial buildings are also commonplace in central business districts. They will likely be considered insignificant unless they resulted in the loss of important interior public spaces. In summary, integrity standards for commercial buildings assume that they have, by necessity, evolved and changed through time. This organic quality of business districts provides a slightly different set of integrity expectations for buildings.

Integrity standards for building types in the Downtown Survey Area other than commercial buildings anticipate somewhat less organic change. For example, a church would be expected to retain its original shape and proportions with original window openings, doors, spires, and other architectural features preserved. Construction materials for foundations, walls, and windows would need to be original. The use of some modern roofing materials is an acceptable alteration. In general, modifications made more than 50 years ago will be accepted as part of the historic appearance of a church. Additions or wings will be accepted if they are located along a non-principal façade, have sympathetic design elements and are constructed of compatible building materials. Treatment of entrances that have been altered to accommodate handicapped access will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine their impact on overall design.

Integrity standards for public buildings such as fraternal halls anticipate a fair amount of organic development. Like churches, fraternal halls are expected to retain their original shape and proportions with original window openings (not necessarily original sash), doors, and other important architectural features. Construction materials for foundations and walls should be original. The use of modern roofing materials is an acceptable alteration. In general, modifications made more than 50 years ago will be accepted as part of the historic appearance of one of these building types. Additions or wings will be accepted if they are located along a non-principal façade, have sympathetic design elements, are connected in a fashion that causes minimal alteration to

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the historic section of the building and are constructed of compatible building materials. The addition of exiting systems installed for public safety purposes is expected to be carried out on non-principal façades. Treatment of entrances that have been altered to accommodate handicapped access will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine their impact on overall design.

In 1958, a tornado caused severe building damage in the south end of the downtown. As a result, two substantial three-story buildings saw their third floors removed and sections of their front facades dramatically altered. These changes are more than 50 years old and the result of an important historic event. Taken on their own, these changes will not diminish integrity sufficiently to make a building noncontributing in a historic district but most likely would prevent a building from being considered individually National Register eligible.

A few residences remain within the Downtown Survey Area including several individually significant houses. Like individually significant commercial buildings, it is expected that residences should be relatively unaltered, retaining their original appearance in terms of basic shape, proportions, rooflines, and important features. Principal façades should remain relatively unchanged with placement and size of window openings and primary entrances consistent with the original design. Residential buildings should maintain original porches though sympathetic modifications made more than 50 years ago will be accepted.

The presence of unobtrusive additions on non-principal façades and modern roofing materials (including asphalt shingles and rubber membrane roofing systems) will not automatically preclude a building from being eligible for the NRHP. Alterations made to convert single-family residences to offices, retail shops, or apartment buildings will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine if the changes support or detract from a house's important design elements. Easily reversible alterations such as the addition of fire escape ladders will not be considered significant.

By definition, historic districts are collections of buildings that when considered as a group rather

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than individually possess a sense of time and place. They may share building type, style, form, or material. They have a common period of significance that may extend through a few years or several decades. They consist of contiguous properties or multi-block areas with relatively few intrusions. Integrity for individual buildings as well as the setting as a whole should be high.

Buildings within historic districts are divided by definition into two categories: noncontributing and contributing resources. Noncontributing resources are those buildings that do not share a common heritage with the district as evidenced in building type, architectural style(s), form, materials, or period of significance. Noncontributing buildings are generally considered to be intrusive in nature and would not be missed if removed from the district. Buildings less than 50 years old are generally considered noncontributing based on National Register requirements unless exceptional significance can be demonstrated.

The category of contributing resources can be further divided by definition into buildings that are individually eligible and those that are supportive buildings. Individually eligible buildings within historic districts are those buildings that meet the requirements of National Register of Historic Places listing on their own, apart from inclusion in a district. Integrity standards for these properties should be the same as those established for individually eligible buildings outside of historic districts. Architectural integrity of supportive buildings may be somewhat less. For example, changes in window and door openings, cornice and belt course trim, or storefront changes may be acceptable. The addition of fixed awnings and changes in signage would also be acceptable for most individually eligible buildings and all supportive buildings.

A final issue of building integrity involves moved buildings and relates equally to buildings being evaluated for individual significance or as a part of a historic district. Moved buildings are rarely found suitable for individual National Register listing. The assumption is that a move destroys a building's significance by altering its original setting and context. At least one moved building has been identified in the Downtown Survey Area. Should future research identify relocated buildings they should not automatically be precluded from being eligible for the National Register. Instead,

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they should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Moves made more than 50 years ago should be treated as historic alterations giving importance to other selection criteria. For moved buildings considered individually eligible or contributing under Criterion C, the new sites must be historically compatible. For buildings being considered under only Criteria A and/or B, consideration will need to be given to significance achieved more than 50 years ago but after the period of the move to determine whether or not a building retains eligibility under Criteria A and/or B. Moves should be considered detrimental if they resulted in the loss of significant architectural elements and may negate individual eligibility or contributing status in a historic district.

#### **v. *Historic District Properties***

The Elkader Downtown Survey Area contains 66 primary resources. Of this total, one building - the *Elkader Opera House*, 207 North Main Street – is presently listed on the National Register. Another historic structure – the Elkader Keystone Bridge that crosses the Turkey River on Bridge Street – is also National Register-listed. Six additional properties on the National Register, most with connections to the development of the downtown, are located near the survey area:

- *Realto Price House*, downtown promoter, lawyer and president of First National Bank, 206 Cedar Street NW
- *Davis, Timothy-Kramer, Anton, House*, Elkader founder and miller-meat market owner, 405 First Street NW
- *J.C. Stemmer House*, lumberman, 113 Oak Avenue NW
- *Johann and Wolfgang Schmidt House*, brewers and millers, 101 Oak Avenue NW
- *Clayton County Court House*, built following county seat battle, 111 High Street NW
- *Henry and Ernest Carter House*, merchants and bankers, 100 High Street SE

One potential historic district – the *Elkader Downtown Historic District* – extends along portions of the 100 and 200 blocks of North Main Street, 100 block of South Main Street, 100 blocks of First Street SW and NW, and intersecting blocks of Cedar, Bridge and Mulberry streets. The district

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contains 66 resources of which 20 could be categorized as individually eligible resources under Criteria A, C or D or a combination of criteria; 37 as contributing/supportive resources but not individually significant, and the remaining nine as noncontributing resources. For National Register purposes, the resource count is 57 total contributing resources (one site, two structures and 54 buildings) and nine noncontributing resources (seven buildings, one site and one structure). The contributing resources include two National Register-listed resources – the Opera House and the Keystone Bridge.

The *Elkader Downtown Historic District* contains the best preserved commercial buildings in the business district including good examples of Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Neo-Classical Revival style commercial building designs and several Queen Anne Style residential designs. In addition the downtown has a number of well-preserved vernacular commercial building types and forms including Elkader Limestone Blocks, Brick Fronts, Arcaded Blocks, Broad Fronts and False-Fronts. Built during a period of more than eleven decades from ca. 1846 to 1960, these buildings tell the story of Elkader's commercial and social center. As with most organically developed business districts, its buildings express the individual taste of their builders, the architectural styles and aesthetics popular over a considerable period of time, and the materials available for construction and subsequent remodeling. Approximately 87 percent of the (54 buildings, one site and three structures) are considered contributing, a sufficient number to qualify the downtown for National Register designation as a historic district.

**vi. *Properties in the Elkader Downtown Survey Area***

During 2011 individual Iowa Site Inventory Forms were prepared for all buildings within the potential *Elkader Downtown Historic District* to determine their individual importance based on their historical significance in relation to the history of the downtown or their architectural significance within the context of local commercial architectural styles, vernacular forms and important construction practices. An assessment was made of a building's appropriateness for inclusion in the district based on these factors as well as general location. Each form contains

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recommendations for a building's contributing or noncontributing status in a potential downtown district.

**Properties in the Elkader Downtown Survey Area and  
Proposed Elkader Downtown Historic District**

Site Number	Property Address	Historic Name & (Common Name)	Date built/ Modified	Historic District – IE/C/NC Individually Eligible /Contributing/Noncontributing		
				IE-C	C	NC
22-01346	101 N Main	Reuther-Lamm Building (Pedretti Bakery)	ca.1869	IE-C		
22-00264	102 N Main	Elkader State Bank Building (Central State Bank)	1900	IE-C		
22-01347	105 N Main	R.C. and Lucius H. Place/ Charles Leibrock Bldg. (Antiques on Main)	ca. 1869	IE-C		
22-01348	107 N Main	Kramer-Frick Building (Elkader General Store)	ca.1869; 1960		C	
22-00190	108-110 N Main	Elkader Theatre Building (Elkader Cinema)	1901; 1941; 2003		C	
22-01351	112 N Main	George C. Wolf Building (Ishman Jewelry)	ca. 1900		C	
22-00265	111-115 N Main	McLaughlin and Humphrey Building (Elkader Tech Bldg)	1898	IE-C		
22-01352	116 N Main	(Elkader Dry Cleaners)	1899		C	
22-01358	119 N Main	Henry Schoch Building/ Rivola Theater (Voss Realty)	ca. 1899	IE-C		
22-01353	122-124 N Main	First National Bank (Alan Heavens, atty./Community Chiropractic Center)	1917	IE-C		
22-01359	123 N Main	Adolph Eberhart Building (Gifford Insurance)	1901	IE-C		
22-01354/ 22-00266	126 N Main	Elkader Mill Cooper-Shops (Riverside Cooperage)	ca. 1875	IE-C		
22-01360	127 N Main	Clayton County Journal Building/Hodges and Brown Hardware Store (J-N-J Pizza)	1868/ 1887		C	
22-00268/ 22-00267	129 N Main	Valentine Boller Building (Elkader Floral Shop)	1871	IE-C		
22-01349	130 N Main	Elkader Mill Site-Elkader Public Library	ca. 1846/ 1940, 1965 and 1998		C Mill (site)	NC Library (building)
22-01362/ 22-00269	133 N Main	B.S. Whitney Building (Moser Family Pharmacy)	ca. 1870	IE-C		
22-01362/ 22-00269	135 N Main	Carter & Co. Building (Moser Family Pharmacy)	ca. 1853	IE-C		
22-01363/ 22-00270	201 N Main	Glesne Building (Elkader True Value/Coast-to-Coast)	1891	IE-C		
22-00271	207 N Main	Elkader Opera House	1903	IE-C (NRHP)		
22-01731	215 N Main	Schmidt, Fred, House (Maxine Kuehl)	ca. 1885		C	
	101 S Main	Keystone Park, Gazebo and	ca. 1995		C	NC, NC

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Site Number	Property Address	Historic Name & (Common Name)	Date built/ Modified	Historic District – IE/C/NC Individually Eligible /Contributing/Noncontributing		
					Riverfront Wall (structure)	Park & Gazebo (site & structure)
		Wall				
22-01355/ 22-00276	102 S Main	Bayless Hotel (Turkey River Mall)	1898, 1900, & 1920	IE-C		
22-00277	107 S Main	E.G. Rolf/Sneidigar and Stearns/Kleinpell & Schmidt Bldg. (Schera's Restaurant)	ca.1853/1870/1891		C	
22-01329	109 S Main	Mullen Building (Schera's Restaurant)	1892		C	
22-01356	108-114 S Main	Molumby Block – north half (The Back Stitch/Schnell Apartments)	1898; 1959		C	
22-01345	116 -118 S Main	Molumby Block – south half (Holly's Bridal/Dr. Joseph Stender, DDS Office)	1898; 1959		C	
22-01339	117 S Main	Stebor Building (Gene's Place)	ca.1892		C	
22-01340	119 S Main	Scovil Building (Vigen Apartments)	ca, 1892; 1974		C	
22-01342	120 S Main	Regan and Witt Building (J.L Subs & Clayton Co Extension)	1895; 1959		C	
22-01338	125 S Main	Kelly Building (Carnes Music)	ca. 1900		C	
22-01337	129 S Main	Friend, John, House (Neylan Law Office)	1879	IE-C		
22-01343	126 S Main	Poull & Bink Building (Clayton Co Abstract)	1847; 1973			NC
22-01336	131 S Main	Mangan Building (Bahls Insurance Co /Dave Bahls)	ca.1976			NC
22-01341	132 S Main (also 106 E Mulberry)	Olson Building (American Family Insurance/ Clayton County Development)	1978			NC
22-01335	133 S Main	Wagner Building (Northland Agency Meal Site)	ca.1954		C	
22-01326	200 S Main	McTaggart Funeral Home (NAPA Auto Parts Store)	1937		C	
22-01334	201 S Main	Falkenhainer Building (Olson's Appliance)	ca. 1890		C	
22-01333	203 S Main	Cheeseman Building (Drew's Bar and Grille)	1948		C	
22-01332	205 S Main	Fisko Building (Elkader Fitness Center)	1963			NC
22-01331	207 S Main	Central Plumbing & Heating Building (same)	1960		C	
22-01382	104 First St NW	Dittmer Garage Annex (Willow Creek Wine)	ca. 1926		C	
22-01383	105 First St NW	Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service Office Building (Fennellys' Irish Pub)	1961			NC
22-01385/ 22-00220	107 First St NW	Northwestern Bell Telephone Building (Gamble Apartments)	1942		C	
22-01384	108 First St NW	Koehn House (apartments, Tom Chandler, owner)	ca. 1885	IE-C		

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Site Number	Property Address	Historic Name & (Common Name)	Date built/ Modified	Historic District – IE/C/NC Individually Eligible /Contributing/Noncontributing		
22-01286	109 First St NW	Miller Ice Cream Store/ (apartments, Alan Johnson, owner)	1942		C	
22-00221	111 First St NW	Schoch Blacksmith and Wagon Shop/Lou Lenth Locker (Lutz Locker)	ca. 1866/ 1937; 1971		C	
22-01374	104 First St SW	W.H. Walch & Sons Building (Fire Farm, Inc.)	1947	IE-C		
22-01878	110 Spruce St NW	House (Merton Cook, owner)	ca.1890		C	
22-00247	106 Cedar St NW	Elkader Register Building (Clayton County Register)	1891 & 1929	IE-C		
22-01581	107 Cedar St NW	Elkader Argus Bldg. (ShareInCare)	ca. 1853; 1898		C	
22-02132	108 Cedar St NW	Dr. H.S. Patterson House (duplex, LaVera L VanDuyn, owner)	ca. 1900	IE-C		
22-02133	109 Cedar St NW	Methodist Episcopal Church Parsonage (Caroline Sparks/Garland Schanbeck)	ca. 1900		C	
22-01582	110 Cedar St NW	Elvers Building (State Farm Insurance-Helgerson Insurance)	1983			NC
22-02134	111 Cedar St NW	Methodist-Episcopal Church/Friedens Evangelical Church/Modern Woodman of America Hall (Cedar Street Suites)	1869 & moved in 1898/1906 /1925		C	
22-01262	107 W Bridge St	Allen Bros. Bldg./Allen Motor Co. Bldg. (Mirror Images/ Bridge Street Boutique)	1914	IE-C		
22-01385	109 W Bridge St	Wardell Chevrolet Company Building (Staw Center)	1930; 2007		C	
22-01522	110 W Bridge St	William C. Reimer Building – east half (Treats on Bridge Street)	1914		C	
22-01387	118 W Bridge St	William C. Reimer Building – west half (The Buttery)	ca.1921		C	
22-01518	114 W Bridge St	Dittmer Building/J.P. Fitzgerald Surge Co. (Best Foot Forward)	1926		C	
22-01325	103 Mulberry St SW	Schroeder's Hotel/Merchant's Hotel/Farmer's Cooperative Creamery (Elkader Carpet & Design)	ca.1854; 1877; 2000		C	
22-01785	108 Mulberry St SW	North Iowa Produce Building (Kristi's Tanning)	ca. 1925		C	
22-01580	110 Mulberry St SW	Michael Bente Implement Building (Fire Farm)	1930		C	
22-00235	Bridge St- St. Hwy 13, over Turkey River	Elkader Keystone Bridge	1889	IE-C (NRHP-structure)		
22-01357	130 N Main, across Turkey River	Elkader Mill Dam – Turkey River	1914;1922		C - Dam (structure)	
22-01381	N & S Main, 1 <sup>st</sup> NW, W Cedar, W Bridge, W Mulberry, W Spruce	Elkader Downtown Historic District	ca. 1846-1960			

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**G. Geographical Data**

The Elkader Downtown Survey involved completion of an intensive level architectural and historical survey for six full blocks and four fractional blocks. The Downtown Survey Area contained 65 resources located in Blocks 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9 and in Fractional Blocks 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the Original Town Plat of Elkader. The Downtown Survey Area extends along North and South Main Street from Mulberry Street on the south to Spruce Street on the north, along both sides of the 100 block of First Street NW, along the east side of the 100 block of First Street SW, and along intersecting blocks of Cedar, Bridge and Mulberry streets from Main Street west to First Street.

**H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

This Multiple Property Document Form (MPDF) "Architectural and Historical Resources of the Elkader Downtown Business District" was completed under the authority of the City of Elkader, Iowa with support from Elkader Main Street. This project was produced under the terms of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, among the Federal Emergency Management Agency of the Department of Homeland Security, the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division and the City of Elkader, Iowa regarding the demolition of historic properties in Elkader, Clayton County, Iowa for which FEMA proposes to administer Federal disaster assistance through FEMA's Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act for the voluntary acquisition and demolition of historic properties substantially damaged as a result of flooding in June 2008 that resulted in declared disaster DR-1763-IA.

This MPDF serves as the final report for the Elkader Downtown Survey, which was one of several projects called for in the MOA. Its findings will be used to prepare a National Register of Historic Places historic district nomination for submittal to the Iowa State Nominations Review Committee

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and the National Park Service in 2011.

Marlys A. Svendsen with Svendsen Tyler, Inc. of Sarona, Wisconsin was retained by the City of Elkader to complete the Elkader Downtown Survey. Svendsen served as principal for the project in the capacity of both historian and architectural historian. Svendsen holds a B.A. in history and political science from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Jennifer Cowser, city administrator for the City of Elkader, served as project director coordinating work on the contract on behalf of the City. Additional project direction was provided by Roger Thomas, executive director for Elkader Main Street. Other local assistance was provided by Betty Buchholz and Marge Costigan, volunteers with the Elkader Historical Society and Carter House Museum; Charlene Culbertson with Elkader Main Street; Dennis Freitag, Clayton County Auditor; Eli Garms, GIS Coordinator, Clayton County Engineer's Office; Andy Loan, Clayton County Assessor; Sue Meyer, Clayton County Recorder; and the staff of the Elkader Public Library.

Work on the Elkader Downtown Survey was completed during a 15-month period that began in August 2010 and concluded in December 2011. A business survey was developed for Downtown property owners and businesses focusing on recent history of building occupants. Elkader Main Street volunteers distributed and collected the data in August and September. In mid-September two public meetings were held to explain the survey process, answer questions and gather more information on potential historical photographs or documents.

Fieldwork on the survey extended from August through March 2011. Buildings were photographed in early September and late October by Marlys Svendsen. Individual site numbers provided by the State Historical Society were assigned to each property. Iowa Site Inventory forms for previously surveyed properties located in the Downtown Survey Area were reviewed. For the most part, the reconnaissance survey efforts completed by David Anderson in 1994 generated these forms. The most valuable information contained in these forms were the 15-year old photographs that helped document building changes and some bibliographic sources. A second set of Building Survey Forms were completed in 2006 by Elkader Main Street volunteers. This information though less

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useful in terms of historic information, provided a comprehensive set of photographs, property record cords from the Clayton County Assessor, and other information.

Svendsen completed archival research at the State Historical Society Library in Des Moines, the University of Iowa Library Map Collections in Iowa City, the State of Iowa Library's online Sanborn Map Collection, the Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum, and the Elkader Public Library. Research included compiling a chain of ownership for each property based on Property Transfer Records obtained from the Clayton County Auditor's Office. Sanborn fire insurance map records and dated historic photographs were used to confirm dates of construction. Sanborn maps proved valuable in determining the longevity of buildings, their expansions or modifications through time, and the types of businesses occupying specific properties. Other archival research included examination of county histories, biographical directories, and histories of local businesses. Information was cross-checked and compared with news accounts researched by Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum volunteers. A digital copy of completed research files of Marge Costigan proved especially useful.

In September and October Svendsen conducted field inspections of the properties in the Downtown Survey Area. A computer-based Iowa Site Inventory Form adopted by the Iowa State Historical Society was completed for each of the properties in the Survey Area. Each form included two pages of standardized information for inclusion in the computerized database for Iowa's Statewide Inventory and one or more pages containing an architectural description, statement of significance and list of major bibliographical references. The digital sketch map for each property inserted in the form was prepared by Eli Garms, GIS Coordinator for the Clayton County Engineer's Office. Digital color photograph(s) were inserted in each form and where possible, historic photographs and other historic documents were inserted.

Using the information gathered in the field and archival research, the development of the Downtown was evaluated and individual properties assessed to determine both their eligibility for the National Register and their role as a contributing or non-contributing structure in a downtown

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district. The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification and Evaluation, National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form, National Register Bulletin 16B: How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form* and Iowa's *Survey Procedures and Guidelines Manual* were used in these assessments.

Of critical importance in both individual and district assessments was the issue of building integrity. The assessments were based on knowledge of the existing condition of each of the properties and made with an understanding of building modification practices typically used in other parts of Iowa. This information was then weighed against integrity recommendations of the National Park Service for potential contributing and noncontributing resources in historic districts.

In the spring of 2011, copies of the draft MPD were circulated to the City of Elkader, Elkader Main Street, a representative of the Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum, the staff of the State Historic Preservation Office, and staff of the FEMA Environmental Historic Preservation section in West Des Moines. During the fall 2011, copies of the Iowa Site Inventory forms will be finalized in digital form and copies printed for submission to the State Historic Preservation Office's Iowa Inventory. Copies of the forms will also be made available to Downtown property owners. A second presentation for property owners, elected officials and other interested individuals was held in the summer of 2011 to discuss the survey results and explain the process underway for nominating the Elkader Downtown Historic District to the NRHP.

Future intensive historic and architectural survey work is likely to identify additional historic contexts, individually eligible resources, and historic districts outside of the business district. The reconnaissance survey completed in 1994 by David Anderson identified potential historic district blocks I north, west and south of the downtown as well as across the Turkey River to the east surrounding the Clayton County Court House and the Carter House Museum property. Sections south of the downtown no longer qualify due to demolitions following the 2008 flood that did considerable damage to this area of town known as the South Elkader Addition.

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In particular, residential neighborhoods along the north and west edges of the Original Town Plat contain a number of contiguous blocks with a substantial number of individually eligible houses and outbuildings as well as many potentially supportive resources that together could comprise one or more historic districts. Most of these blocks developed organically over a period of five to eight decades while having had few buildings removed. One or more intensive surveys of the east side and west side residential areas will need to be completed along with a building-by-building analysis of integrity to determine specific historic district boundaries and relevant historic contexts. Preliminary identification of a number of pattern book houses scattered throughout Elkader will need to be undertaken as a part of the district evaluation as well.

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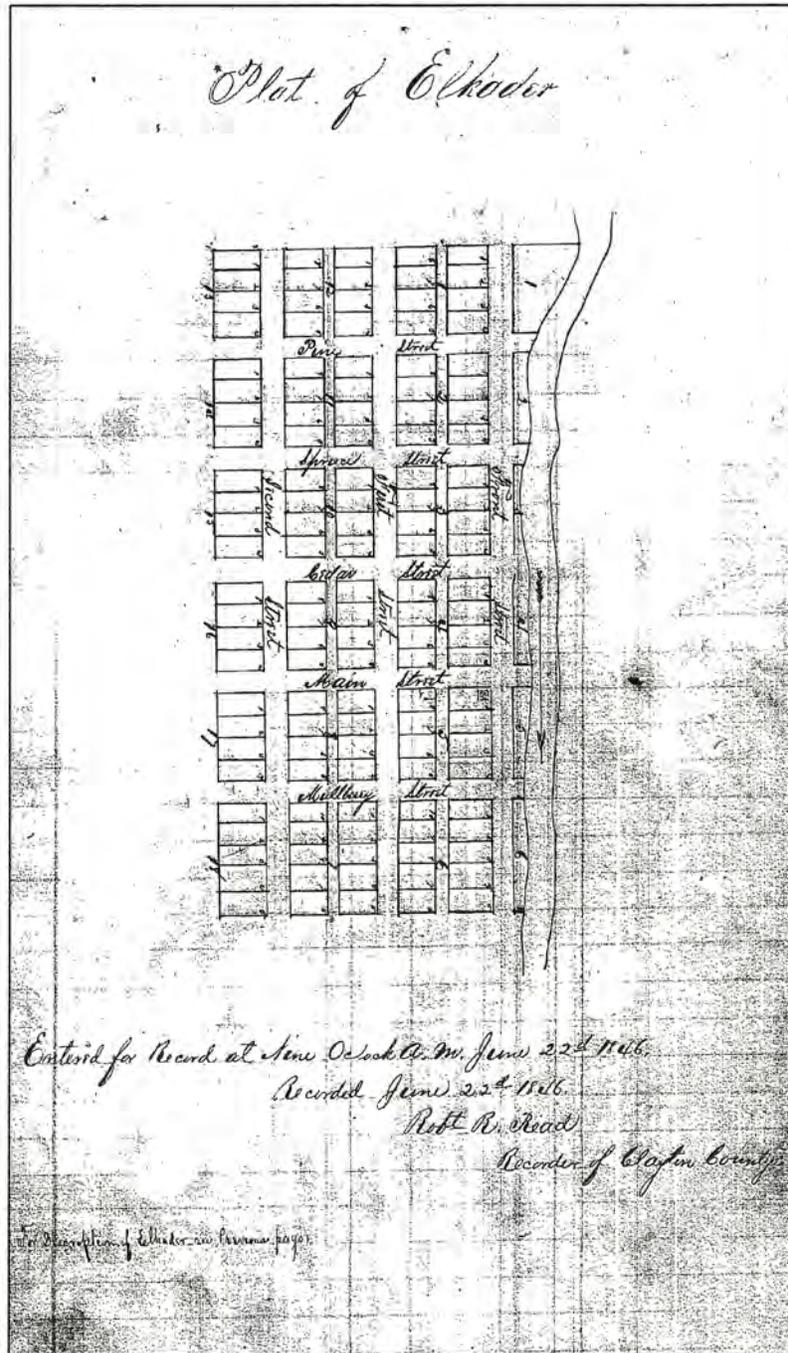
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List of Figures

Figure 1: Original Town Plat of Elkader, June 22, 1846<sup>32</sup>



<sup>32</sup>Original Town Plat of Elkader, June 22, 1846, Clayton County Recorder, Book 1, Town Plats, page 41.

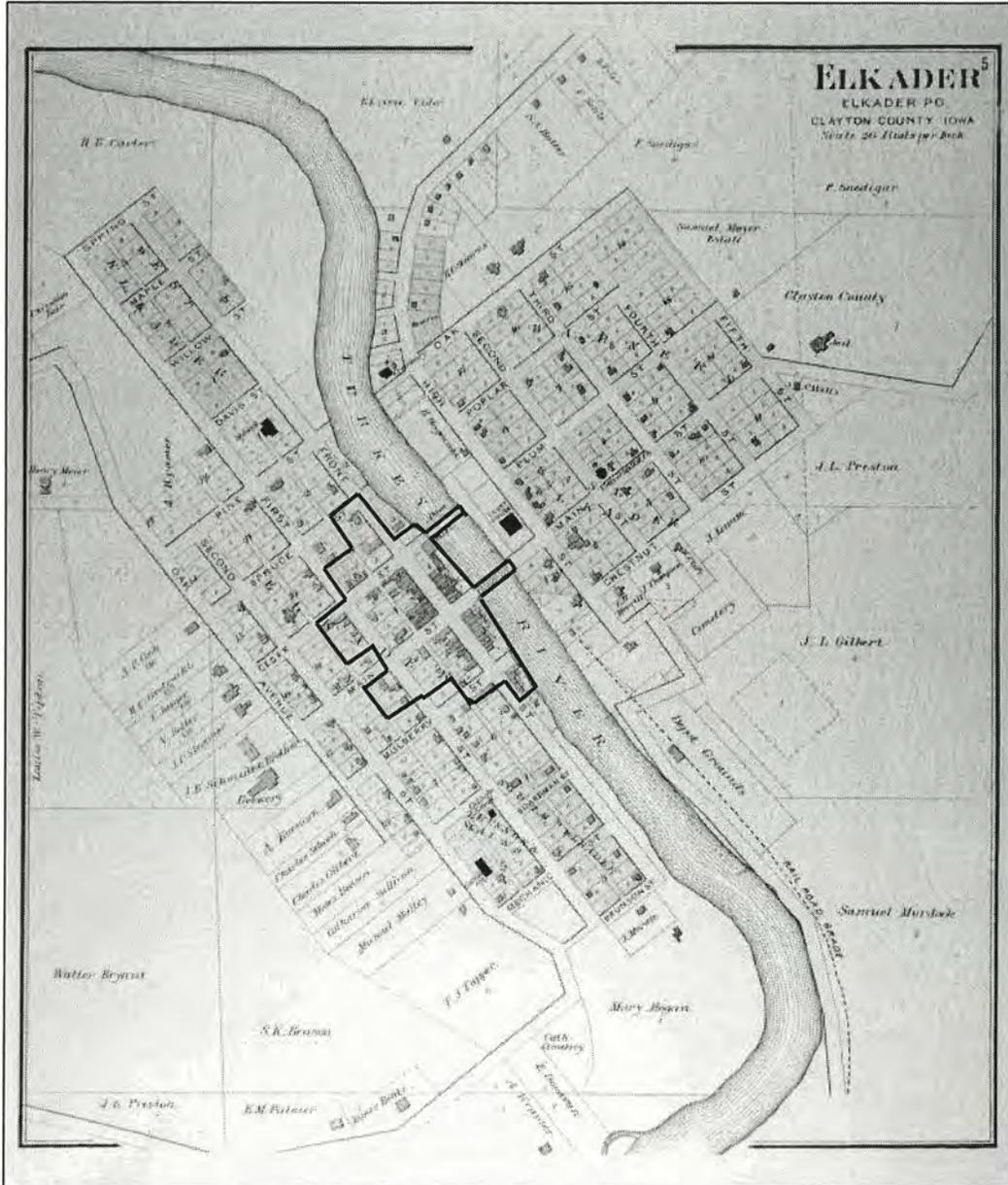
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Figure 2: 1886 Map of Elkader showing approximate Elkader Downtown Historic District boundaries<sup>33</sup>



<sup>33</sup>George E. Warner and C.M. Foote, surveyors, *Plat Book of Clayton County, Iowa*, (Minneapolis: Warner & Foote Publishing Co., 1886, page 5; available online at: <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/atlases&CISOPTR=5143&REC=1>; accessed 9/28/2010.

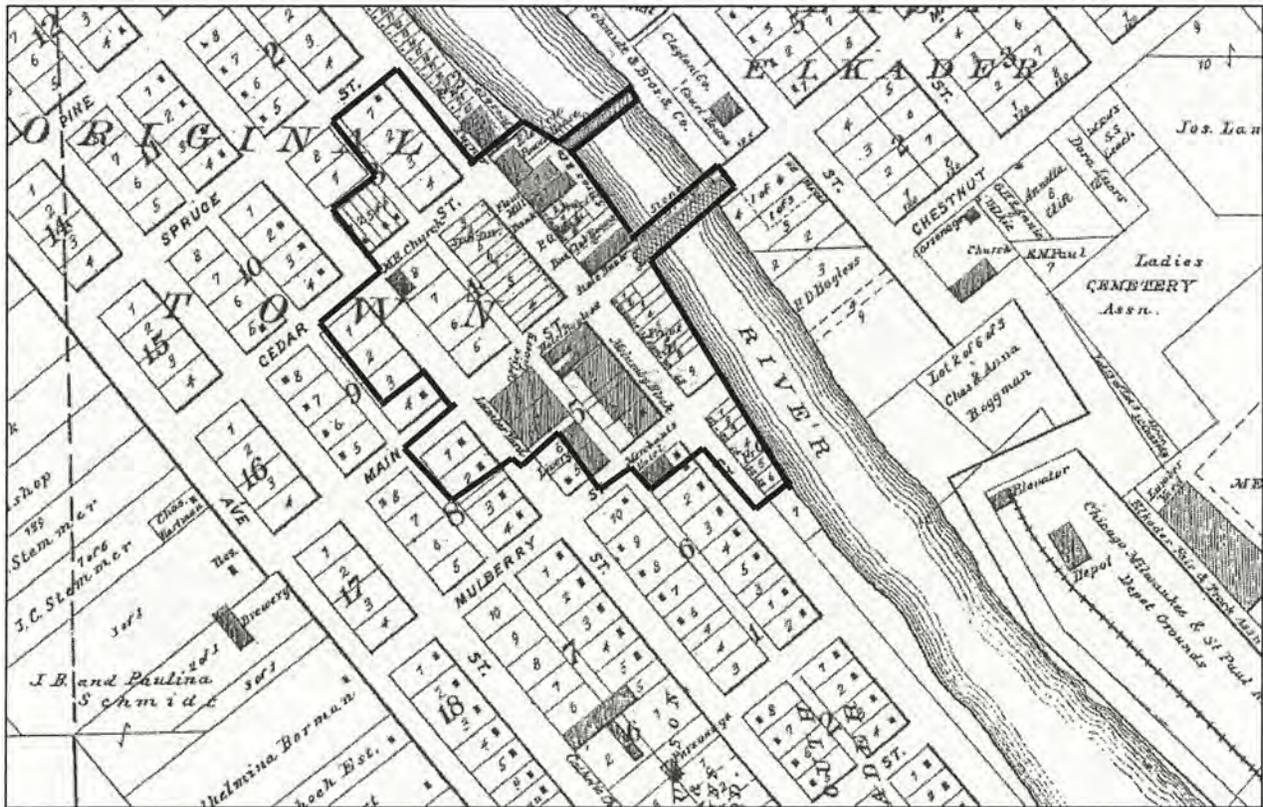
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**Figure 3: 1902 Map of Elkader showing approximate Elkader Downtown Historic District boundaries<sup>34</sup>**



<sup>34</sup>Plat of Town of Elkader, *Standard Atlas of Clayton County, Iowa*, (Chicago: George A. Ogle & Co.), 1902, p. 9.

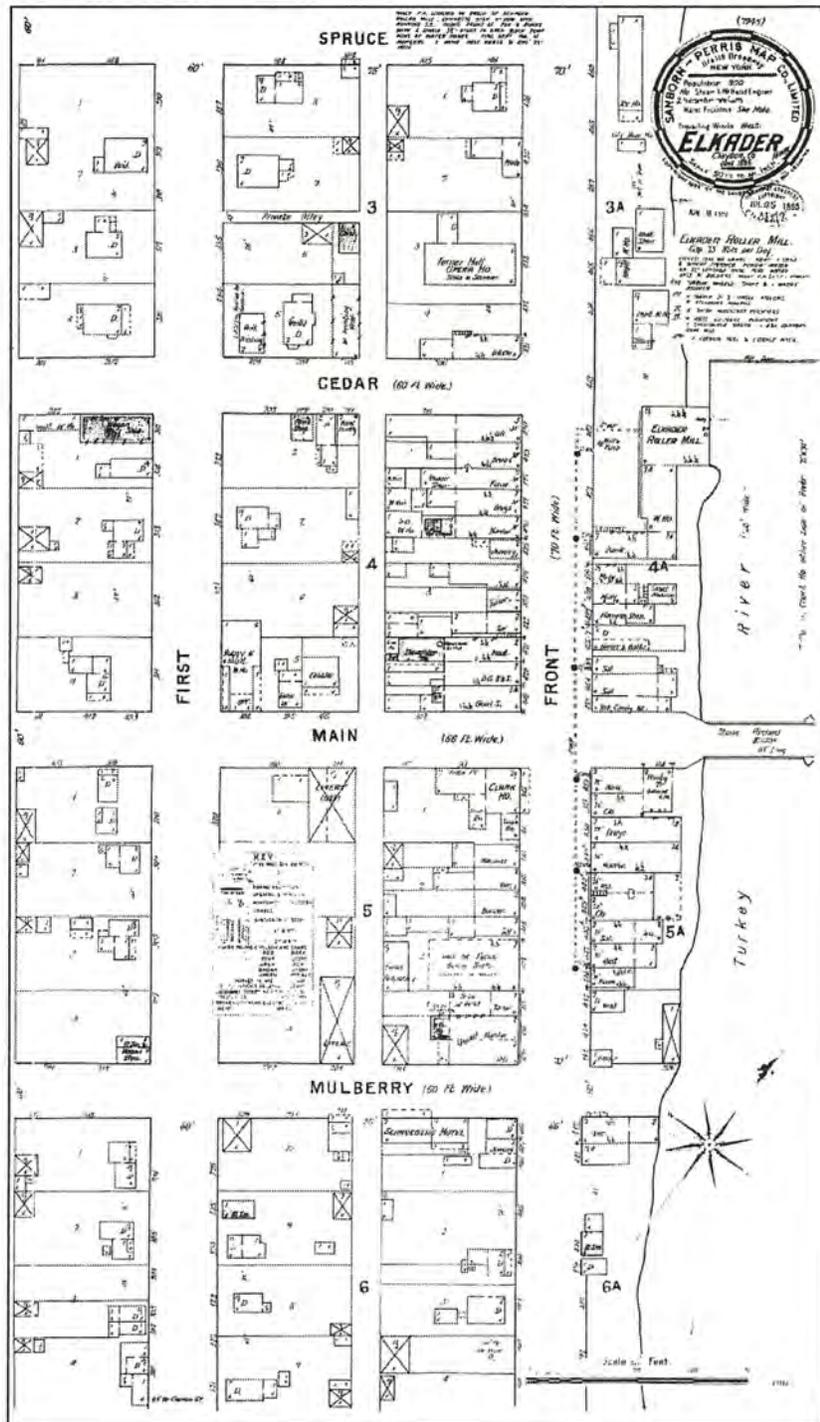
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**Figure 4:** 1895 Elkader Sanborn Map showing downtown blocks  
(Insurance Maps, Elkader, Iowa. New York: The Sanborn Company, 1895)



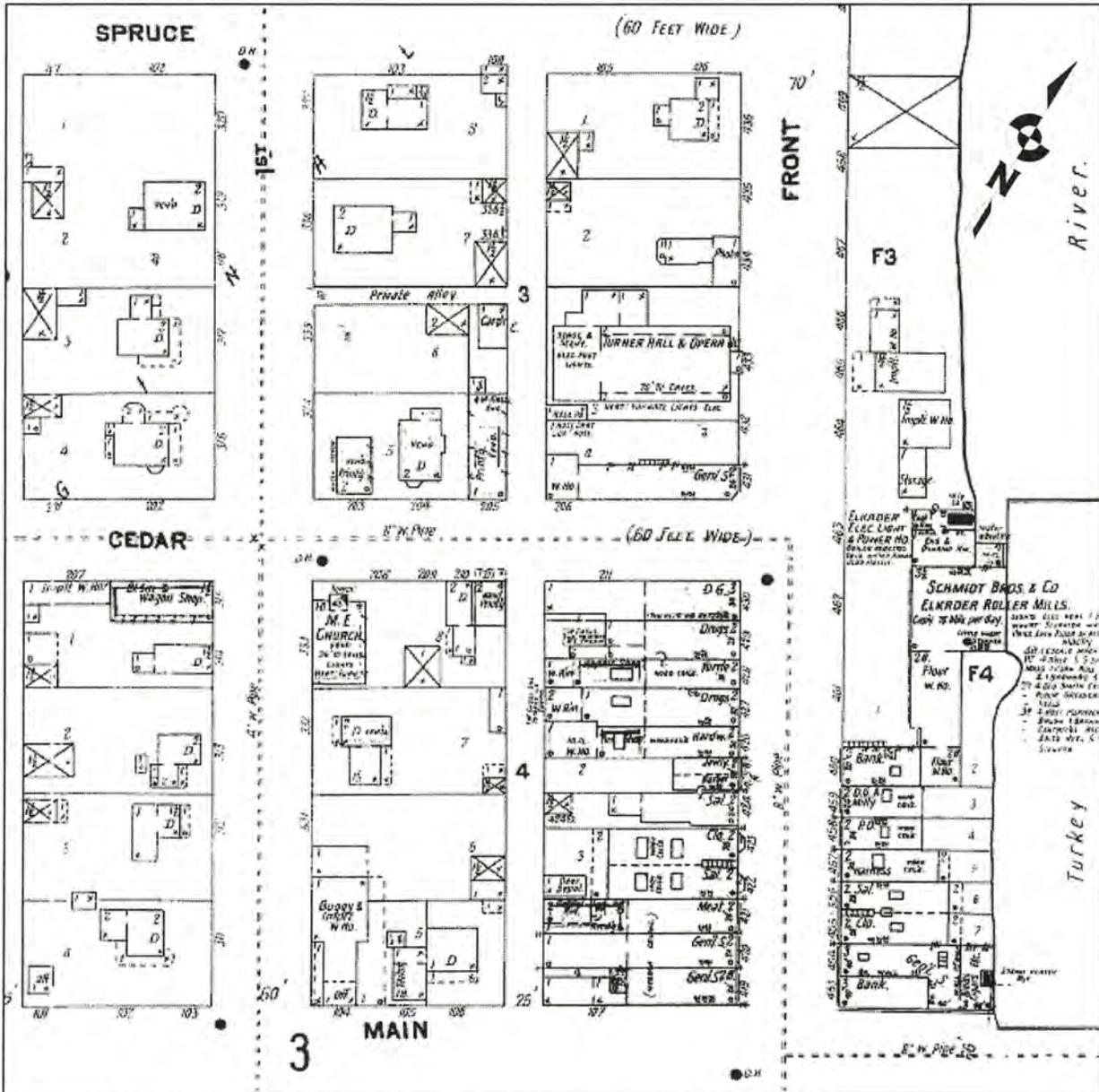
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**Figure 5a:** 1902 Elkader Sanborn Map showing north half downtown  
(Insurance Maps, Elkader, Iowa. New York: The Sanborn Company, 1902)



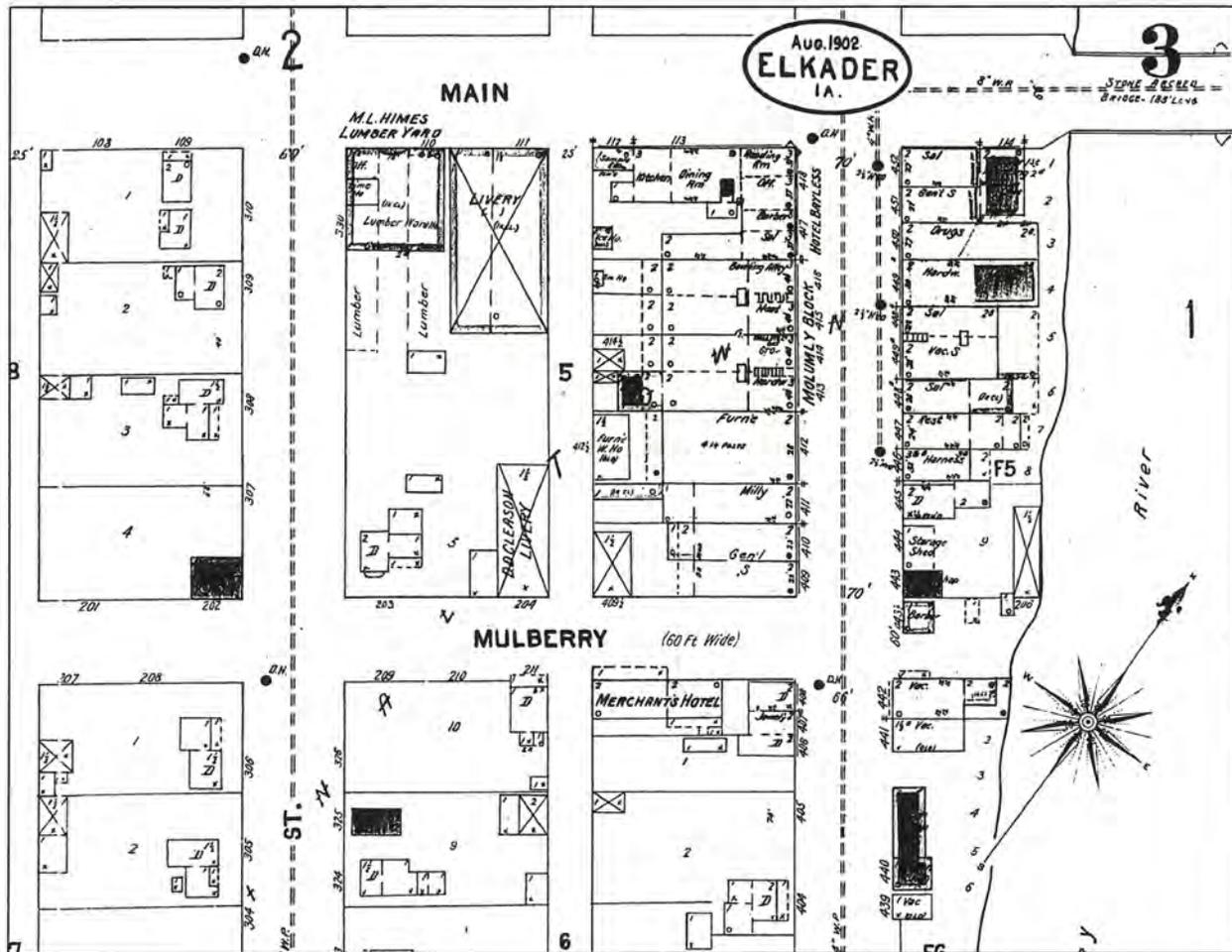
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**Figure 5b:** 1902 Elkader Sanborn Map showing south half downtown  
(Insurance Maps, Elkader, Iowa. New York: The Sanborn Company, 1902)





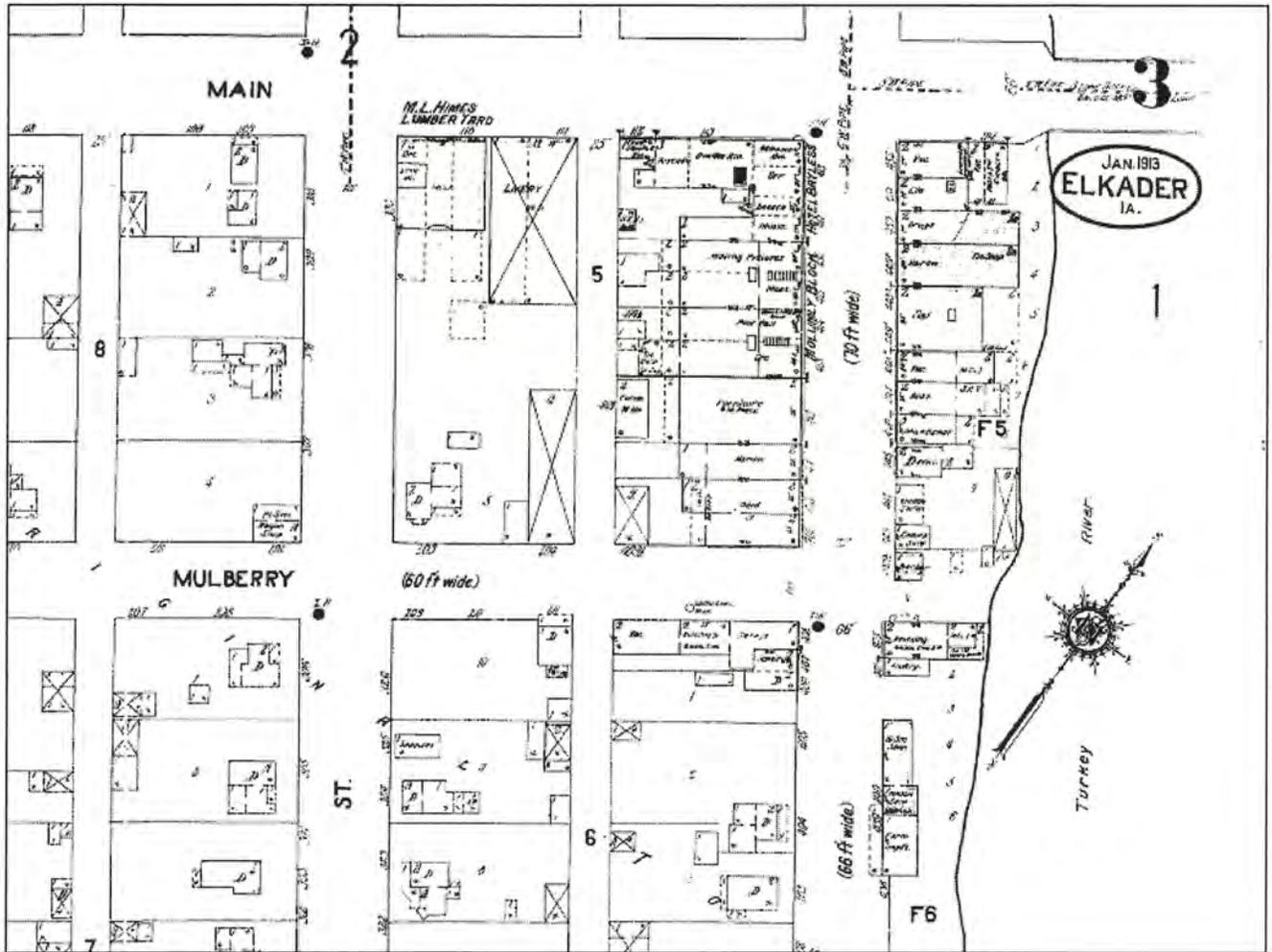
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**Figure 6b:** 1913 Elkader Sanborn Map showing south half Downtown  
(Insurance Maps, Elkader, Iowa. New York: The Sanborn Company, 1913)



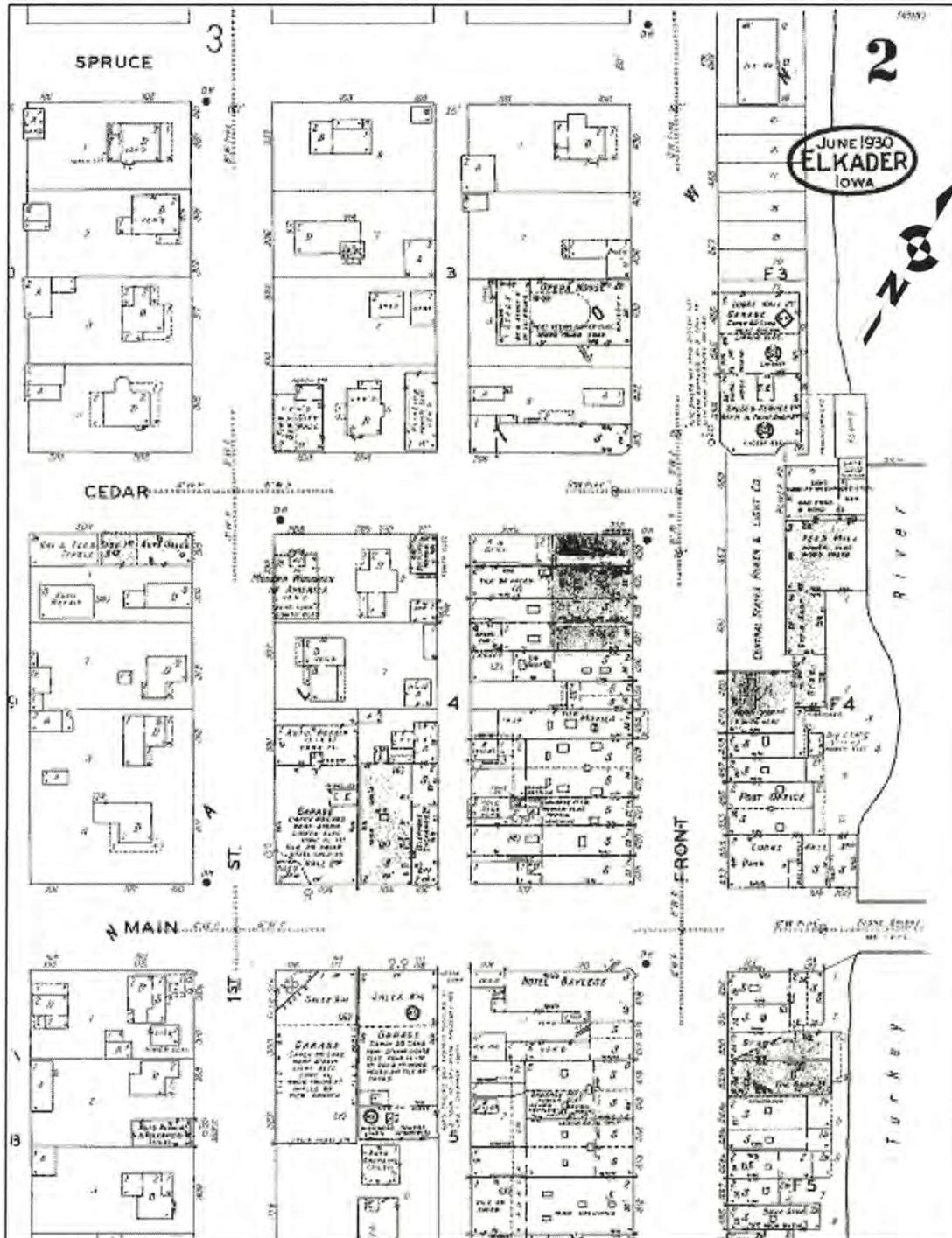
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**Figure 7a:** 1930 Elkader Sanborn Map showing north half downtown  
(Insurance Maps, Elkader, Iowa. New York The Sanborn Company, 1930)



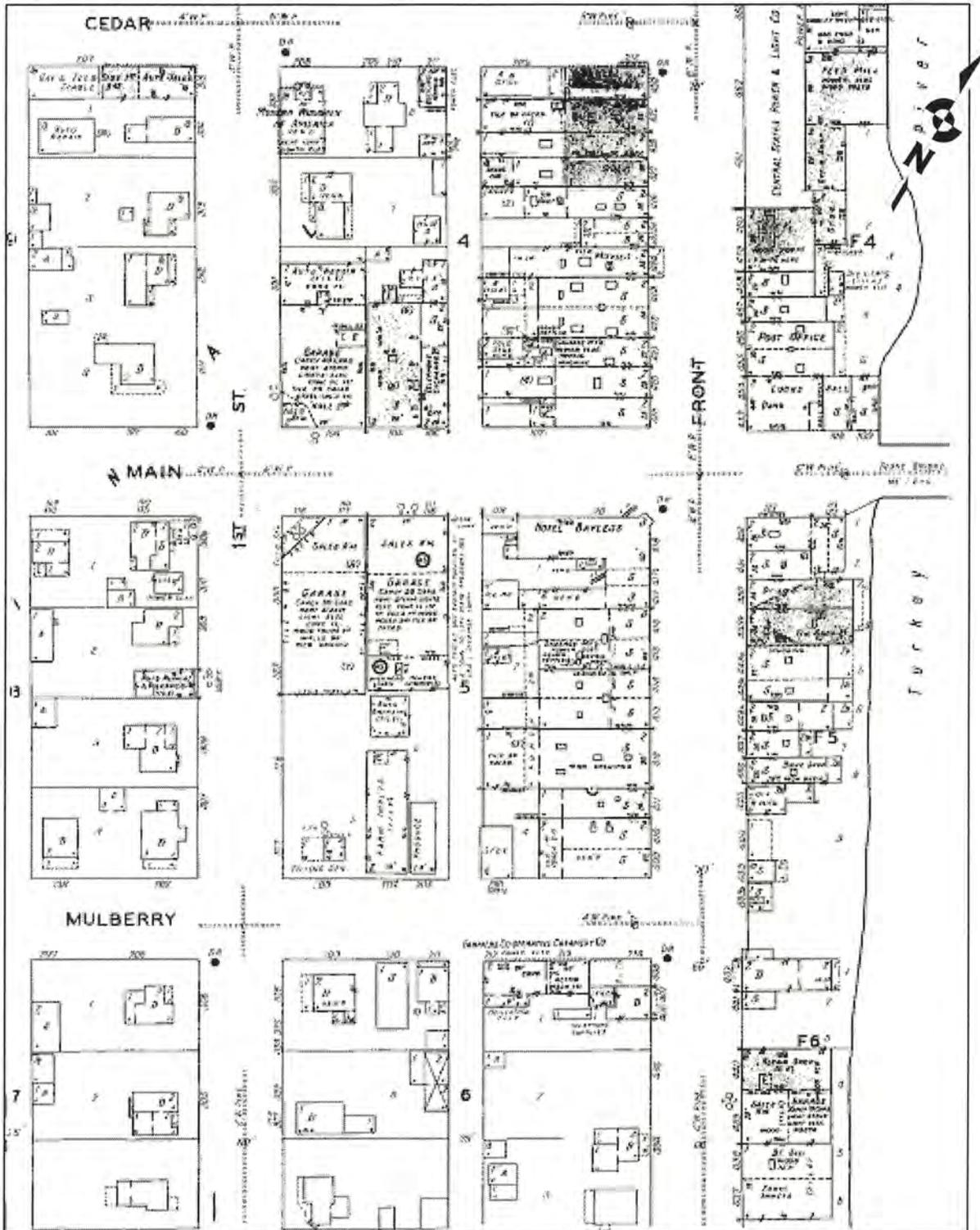
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**Figure 7b:** 1930 Elkader Sanborn Map showing south half downtown  
(Insurance Maps, Elkader, Iowa. New York: The Sanborn Company, 1930)

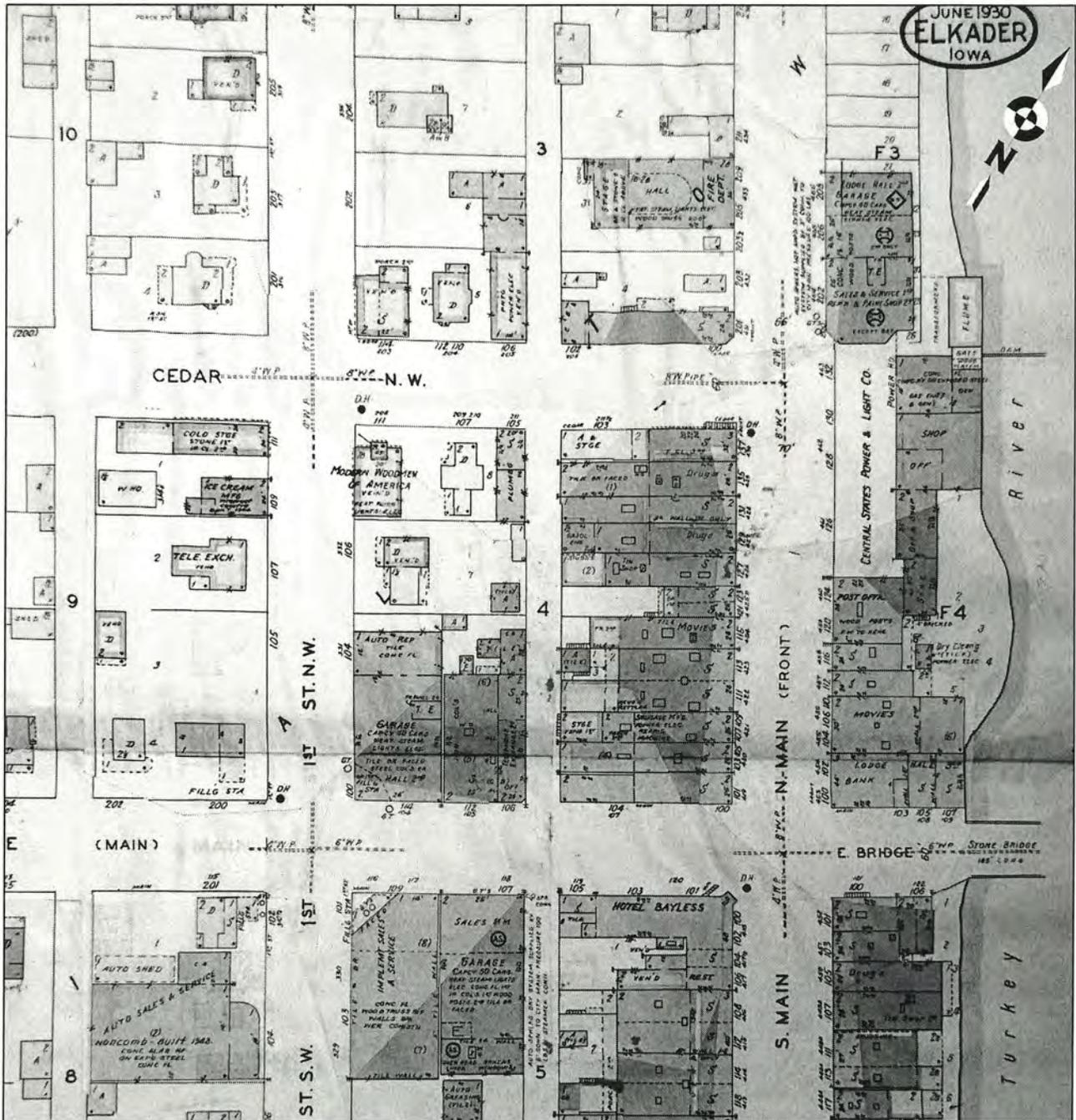


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Figure 8a: 1930 Elkader Sanborn Map updated to 1951 showing north half downtown  
(Insurance Maps, Elkader, Iowa. New York: The Sanborn Company, 1951)



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**Figure 8b:** 1930 Elkader Sanborn Map updated to 1951 showing south half downtown  
(Insurance Maps, Elkader, Iowa. New York: The Sanborn Company, 1951)



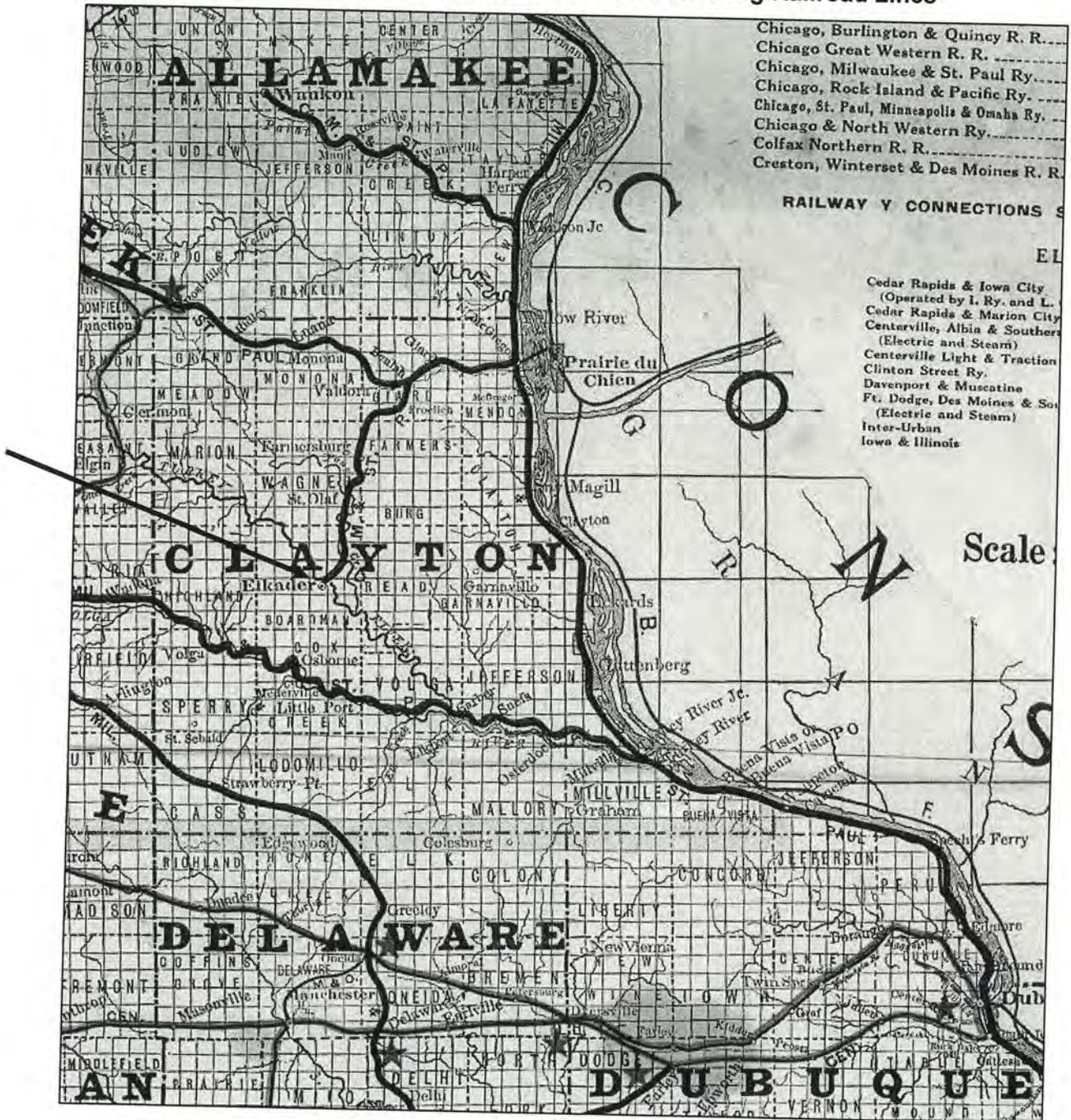
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Figure 9: 1915 Map of Northeast Iowa showing Railroad Lines<sup>35</sup>



<sup>35</sup> University of Iowa Digital Library, *Map of Iowa*, issued by the Board of Railroad Commissioners, 1915, available online at: [http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/cdm4/item\\_viewer.php?CISOROOT=%2Fatlases&CISOPTR=3797&DMSCALE=50&DMWIDTH=1000&DMHEIGHT=1600&DMMODE=viewer&DMFULL=0&DMX=3062&DMY=800&DMTEXT=&DMTHUMB=1&REC=4&DMROTATE=0&x=499&y=439](http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=%2Fatlases&CISOPTR=3797&DMSCALE=50&DMWIDTH=1000&DMHEIGHT=1600&DMMODE=viewer&DMFULL=0&DMX=3062&DMY=800&DMTEXT=&DMTHUMB=1&REC=4&DMROTATE=0&x=499&y=439); accessed 9/28/2010.

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**Figures 10 and 11:** Elkader Downtown Historic District Buildings by Decade and Population by Decade

Downtown Historic District Buildings by Decade	
ecade	Number of Buildings
Pre-1870	11
1870-1879	6
1880-1889	3
1890-1899	17
1900-1909	8
1910-1919	3
1920-1929	5
1930-1939	3
1940-1949	4
1950-1959	1
1960-2011	5
Total	66

Population by Decade <sup>36</sup>		
Year	Population	Percent Change
1860	440	—
1870	697	58.4%
1880	851	22.1%
1890	745	-12.5%
1900	1,321	77.3%
1910	1,181	-10.6%
1920	1,223	3.6%
1930	1,382	13.0%
1940	1,556	12.6%
1950	1,584	1.8%
1960	1,526	-3.7%
1970	1,592	4.3%
1980	1,688	6.0%
1990	1,510	-10.5%
2000	1,465	-3.0%
2010	1,273	-13.1%

<sup>36</sup>"American FactFinder." United States Census Bureau; available at: <http://factfinder.census.gov> and the City of Elkader, City Administrator, March 2011.

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**Figure 12:** Map of Elkader Downtown Historic District (Base map prepared by Eli Garms, Clayton County GIS, 1910); Contributing resources are unmarked and noncontributing resources are designated by NC



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**Photographs 1 and 2:** Historic view, 101, 105 and 107 North Main Street, post-1876 when buildings contained Joe Lamm Store, C.L. Leibrock Store and Kramer's Market with I.O.O.F. No. 304 on upper level (Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum Collection) and contemporary view, 101-105 North Main Street with 1959 front façade for Kramer's Market Building at 107 North Main Street (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)

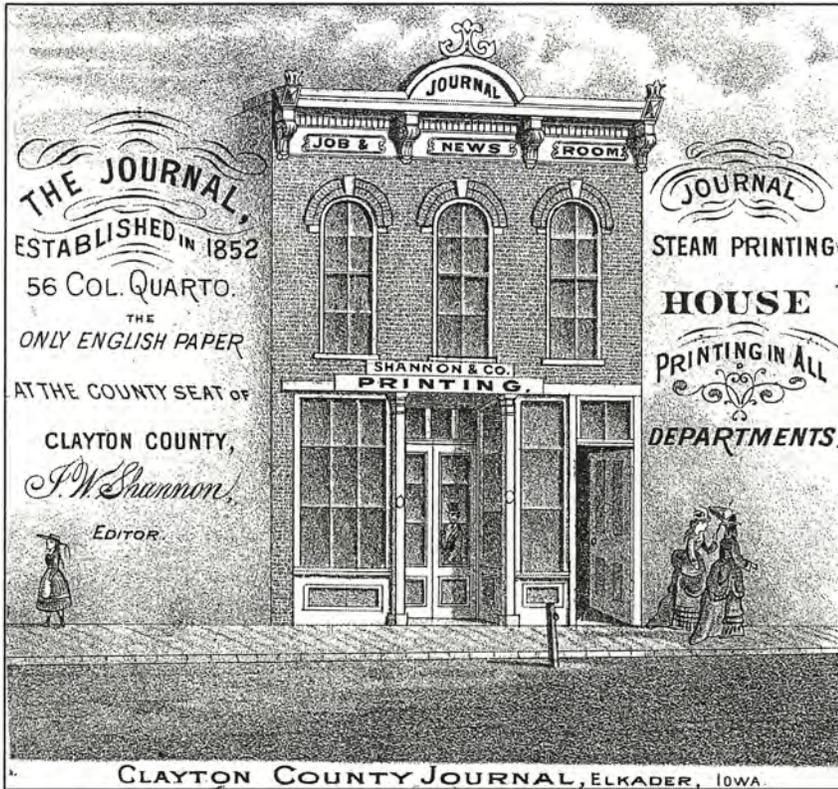


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**Photographs 3 and 4:** Historic views, 127 North Main Street, 1875 (*Atlas of Iowa*, Andreas Publishing, 1875) and contemporary view, looking west (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer).



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**Photographs 5 and 6:** Historic view, 135 North Main Street (right edge of photo), taken 1912 when building contained H.W. Wilke Store (Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum Collection) and contemporary view, 133 and 135 North Main Street (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)



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**Photographs 7 and 8:** Historic view, Valentine Boller Building, 129 Main Street, ca. 1885 (Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum Collection) and contemporary view (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)



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**Photographs 9 and 10:** Historic view, Elkader Mill originally developed by Thompson, Sage and Davis and taken over in 1880 by Wolfgang Schmidt and Co. (nonextant) and Mill Cooper Shops on right, 126 North Main Street, ca. 1885 (Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum Collection) and contemporary view Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)



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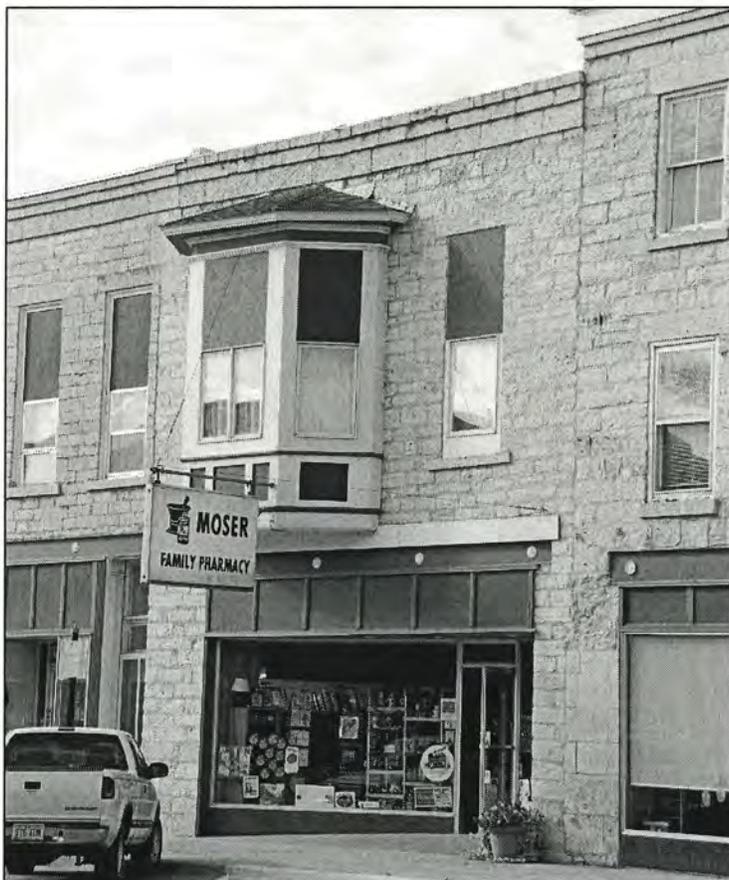
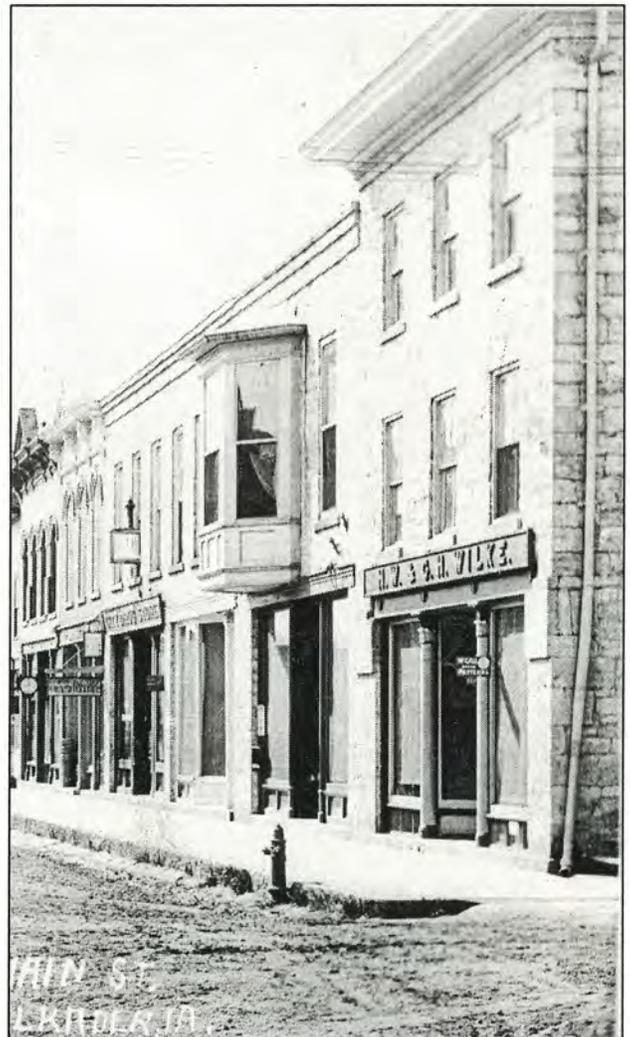
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**Photographs 11, 12 and 13:** B.S. Whitney Building, Historic views, 133 North Main Street, pre-1885 (left) and 1912 (below, Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum Collection) and contemporary view after second floor alterations (bottom left, Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer).



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**Photographs 14 and 15:** 129 South Main Street and 117 South Main Street, looking east (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer).



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**Photographs 16 and 17:** historic view, stone arch bridge under construction with Truesdell bridge spans in place behind the arch, 1889 (Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum Collection); contemporary view, looking northeast with Clayton County Court House in the background (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer).



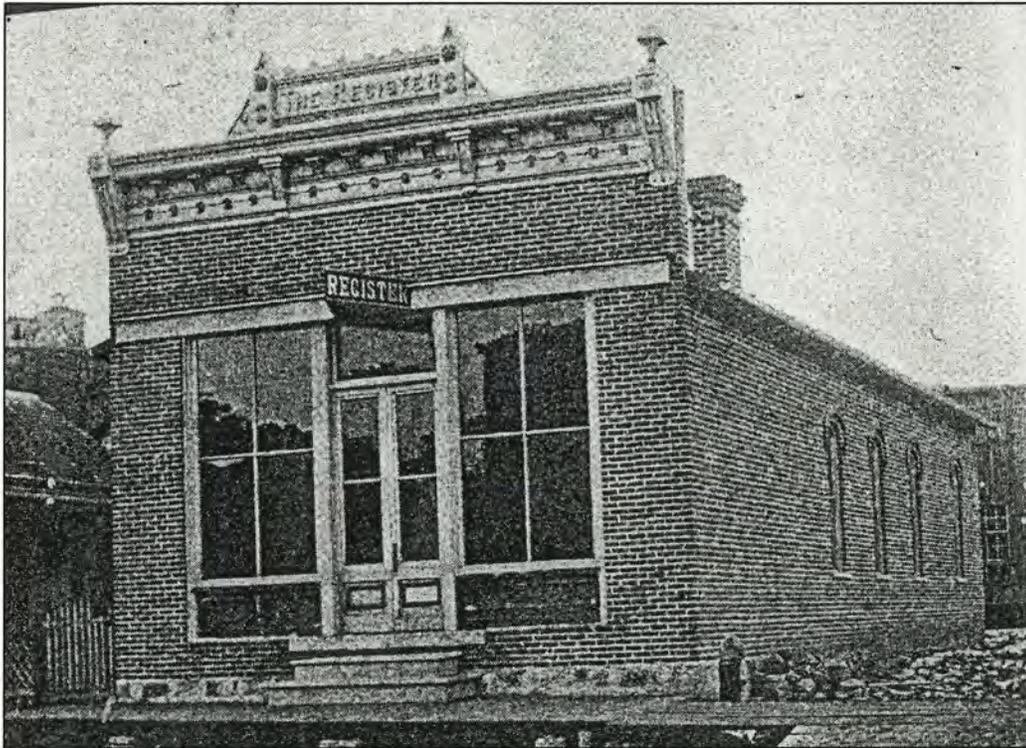
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**Photographs 18, 19 and 20:** historic view, Register Building, 106 Cedar Street NW, ca. 1900 (undated *Register* article); contemporary view, looking north (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer).



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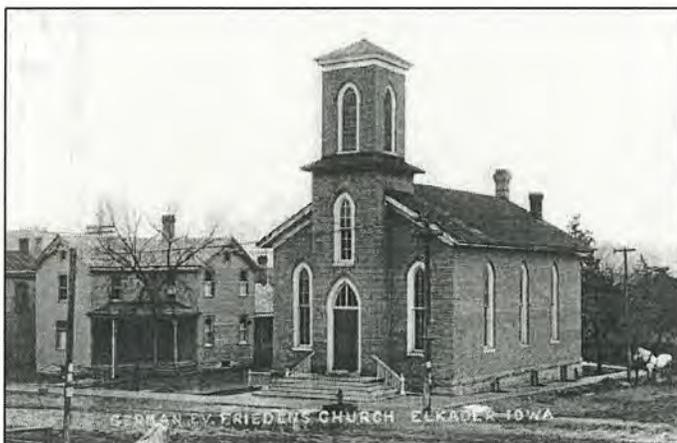
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**Photograph 21:** 201 North Main Street, looking northwest (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)



**Photographs 22 and 23:** historic view of Methodist Episcopal Church-Friedens Church, (Elkader Public Library collection); contemporary view, 111 Cedar Street NW, looking southeast (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)



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*Photographs 24, 25, 26 and 27:* historic view, Bayless Hotel, 102 South Main Street, ca. 1900 (Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum Collection); contemporary views of exterior, looking southwest, and interior details of former ceiling and staircase (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer).



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**Photographs 28, 29 and 30:** historic view with Bayless Hotel, 102 South Main Street, right, and Molumby Building, 116-118 South Main Street, left, ca. 1910 (Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum Collection); contemporary views of Molumby Building exterior following 1958 tornado and north shop window detail, looking southwest, (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer).



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**Photographs 31 and 32:** 111-113-115 North Main Street and 119 North Main Street, historic view along North Main Street following the fire that destroyed the Borman corner in June 1899. The newly completed McLaughlin and Humphrey Building is visible across the street (Myra Voss, Voss Realty); contemporary view (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer).

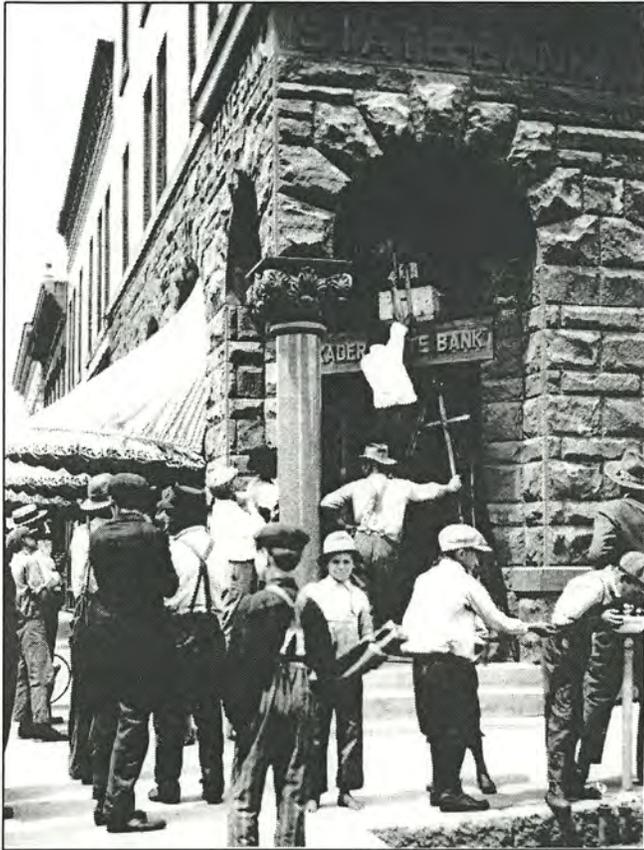


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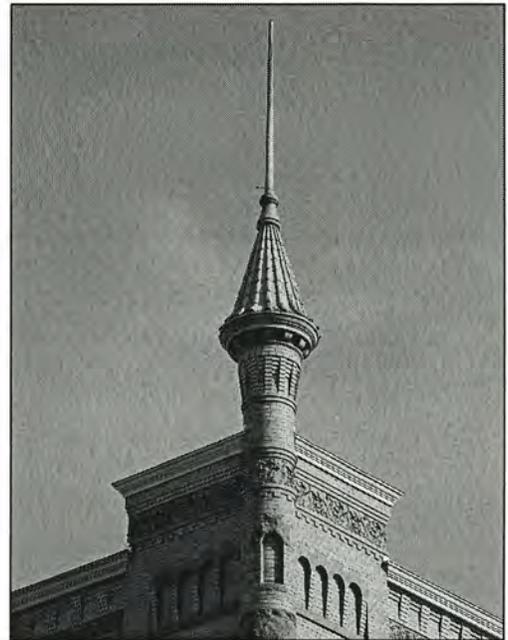
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*Photographs 33, 34, 35 and 36:* 102 North Main Street, historic view, crowd gathered at bank entrance, undated (Roger Thomas, Elkader Main Street); contemporary views of finial detail, Masonic symbols detail, and full view, looking northeast (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer).



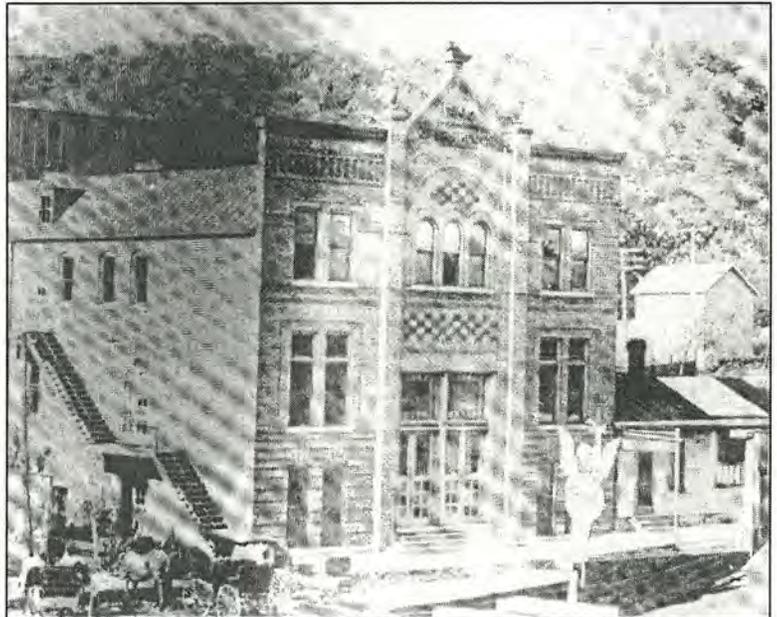
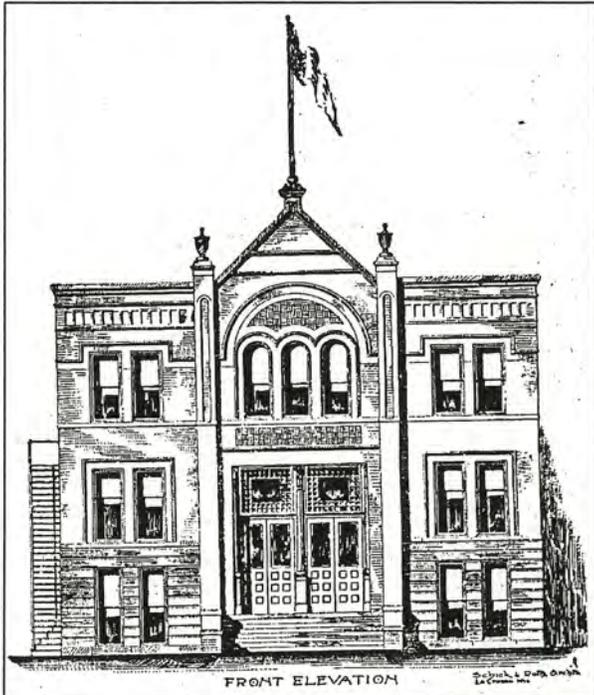
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**Photographs 37, 38, 39 and 40:** 207 North Main Street, architect's drawing, April 1903 and historic view, ca. 1905 (Katherine Griffith, "Elkader Opera House," Elkader Main Street, undated brochure); contemporary view (Elkader Main Street, 8/5/2009) and entrance detail, looking west (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)



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**Photographs 41, 42, 43 and 44:** 122-124 North Main Street, historic view, ca. 1917, looking southeast along North Main Street (Elkader Public Library photo collection) and contemporary views, looking east and south with detail of south entrance (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010 and 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)



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**Photograph 45:** 107 West Bridge Street, looking southeast (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)



**Photograph 46:** 109 West Bridge Street, looking southeast (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)



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**Photograph 47 and 48:** 114-118 West Bridge Street, historic, ca. 1930 (Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum Collection); contemporary view, looking northeast (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)



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**Photographs 49 and 50:** 104 First Street SW, looking southwest and display window detail (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)



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**Photographs 51, 52, 53 and 54:** Historic view – Elkader Theatre and Rivola Theatre, 100 block of North Main Street looking south, 1942 according to date for two movies showing on the Elkader Theater marquee - *Lucky Jordan* and Alan Ladd in *March of Time* – both appeared in 1942 (Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum photo collection); 110 North Main Street, contemporary view & details (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)



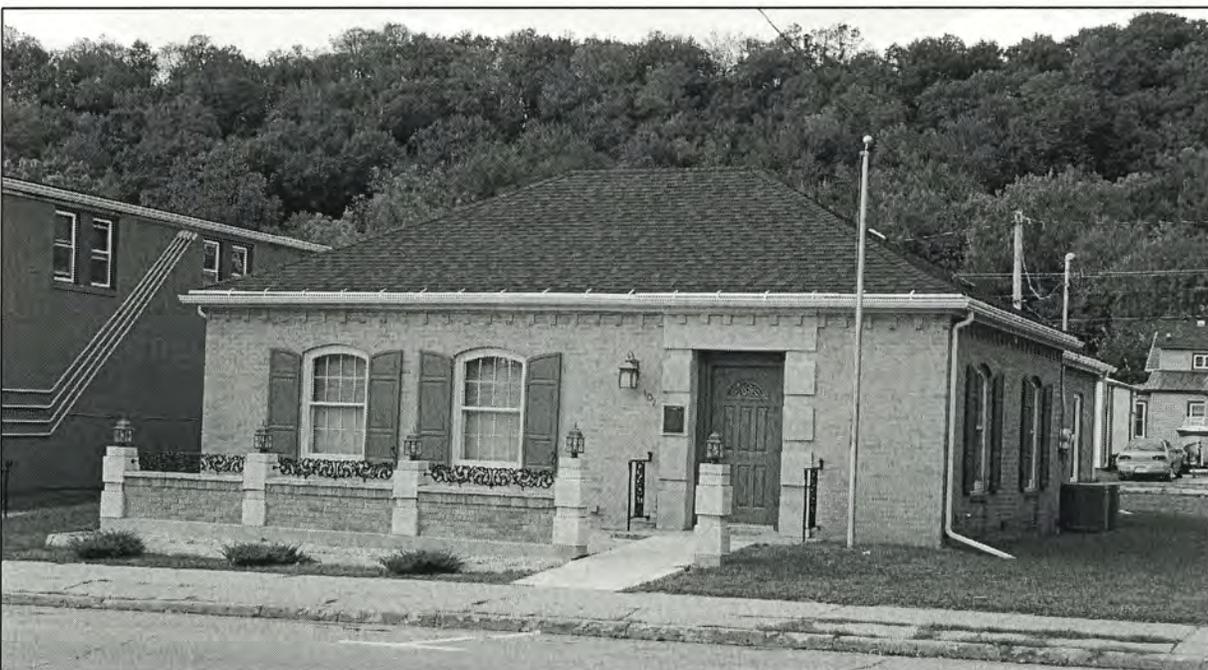
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**Photographs 55 and 56:** 110 West Bridge Street, looking northwest and 107 First Street NW, looking west (Elkader Downtown Survey Photographs, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)



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**Photographs 57, 58 and 59:** Historic view (top) – west side of 100 block of South Main Street looking northwest, ca. 1900 (Elkader Public Library photo collection); Historic view (bottom, left) Graham's Department Store at 120 South Main Street, contemporary view of damaged and rebuilt buildings at 120 and 130 South Main Street (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer); see also *Photographs 28, 29 and 30.*



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**Photographs 60 and 61:** Historic view (top) – 100 block of South Main Street looking south, ca. 1920; Historic view (bottom) – Decoration Day parade, 1913, 100 block of North Main Street, west side, looking northwest (Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum Collection)



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**Photograph 62:** Comparative design for Elkader State Bank at 102 North Main Street - Bishop's Block, 90 W. Main Street, Dubuque, built in 1889 and listed on the National Register in 1994 (Photograph Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photograph Division HABS: IOWA,31-DUBU,13-BA-1; available online at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bishop's\\_Block.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bishop's_Block.jpg); accessed 4/30/2011).





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## United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

**The attached form, the Elkader Downtown MPS Cover document, (Clayton County, Iowa, reference number 64501137), was accepted by in the National Register of Historic Places by the Keeper of the National Register on 3/13/2012. The attached nomination form is a copy of the original documentation provided to the Keeper at the time of listing.**