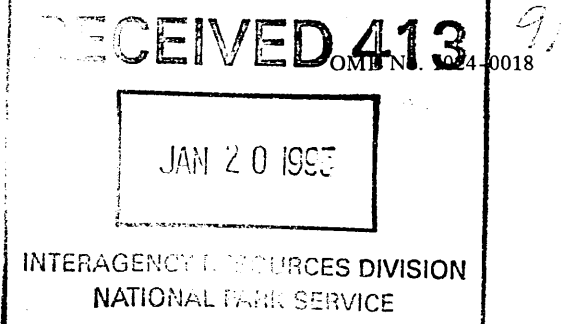


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name N/A  
other names/site number Fremont Historic Commercial District; DD05:multiple

#### 2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by 3rd & Military and Park & D Sts. not for publication [n/a]  
city or town Fremont vicinity [n/a]  
state Nebraska code NE county Dodge code 053 zip code 68025

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
Lawrence Sommer Date 1/11/95  
Signature of certifying official  
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register. Edson H. Beall 2/17/95  
 [ ] See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 [ ] See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
for Entered in the National Register  
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

Fremont Historic Commercial District  
Name of Property

Dodge County, Nebraska  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
43	27	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
43	27	Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Commerce/specialty store
- Commerce/financial institution
- Commerce/department store
- Commerce/warehouse
- Commerce/professional
- Social/meeting hall
- Domestic/hotel
- Recreation/theater

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Commerce/specialty store
- Commerce/financial institution
- Commerce/department store
- Commerce/business
- Commerce/professional
- Commerce/restaurant
- Domestic/multiple dwelling
- Social/meeting hall

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Late Victorian/Italianate, Romanesque Revival
- Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals/Italian Renaissance
- Late 19th & 20th Century American Movements
- Modern Movement/Art Moderne

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation Limestone, Brick, Concrete
- walls Brick, Concrete
- roof Wood
- other Pressed-metal, Cast-iron

**Narrative Description**

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1878-1938  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Multiple  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Fremont Historic Commercial District  
Name of Property

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property 7.5

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	709280	4589900	3.	14	709110	4589530
2.	14	709260	4589520	4.	14	709130	4589910

[ ] See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

---

name/title John Kay, Principal Investigator.; Lonnie Dickson, Survey Asst.; Kathy Fimple, Hist. Geographer

organization Save America's Heritage date July 29, 1994

street & number 2714 Rathbone Road telephone (402) 483-0418

city or town Lincoln, NE state NE zip code 68502

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

---

**Property Owner**

---

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Multiple

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

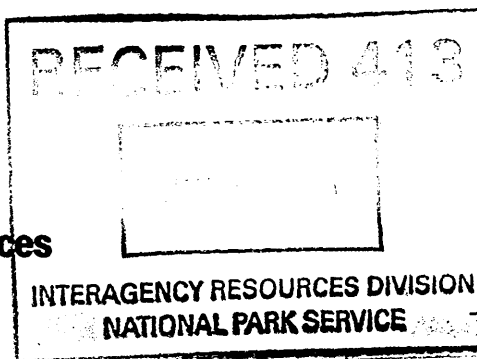
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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing 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 the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**



Fremont Historic Commercial District

Name of Property

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Section 7 Page 1

**DESCRIPTION**

The Fremont Historic Commercial District consists of an enclave of late 19th- and early 20th-century buildings which represent Fremont's role as a regional center of wholesale and retail commerce. Fremont (1990 population: 23,980) is the county seat of Dodge County and is located on the north side of the Platte River in east-central Nebraska. The asymmetrical-shaped district includes portions of seven city blocks in Fremont's central business district. These blocks are part of the original town plat filed in 1856 by the Fremont Town Lot Company. Historic buildings in the district are concentrated on two primary district streets: East 6th and North Main. Commercial and light warehouse buildings predominate the district which includes 43 contributing and 27 non-contributing buildings. The 43 contributing buildings are primarily multi-story masonry and masonry-clad buildings constructed between 1878 and 1938. The nominated area represents the most intact collection of buildings related to the period of significance (1878-1938). These buildings reflect architectural styles popular during the period of significance including Italianate, Romanesque Revival, and Art Moderne. The dense pattern of development and exclusive use of masonry construction are distinctive features of the district. While alterations to first-floor storefronts have occurred through time, the district still conveys a strong sense of historic character.

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The Fremont Historic Commercial District is located in a portion of the central business district (CBD) of Fremont, Nebraska. Fremont is located in southeast Dodge County near the north bank of the Platte River. The location of the city in the Platte River valley greatly benefitted the district's role as a regional commercial center. Rail lines and highways servicing northeast and north-central Nebraska were forced through the narrow six-mile valley between the Elkhorn and Platte rivers resulting in Fremont's development as a center of wholesale and retail commerce. This role is most apparent when viewing the city from the bluffs above the valley. The broad horizon of the valley is interrupted by the outline of large factories and grain elevators that rise above the tree-lined streets of the city.

The historic commercial district encompasses a seven-and-one-half acre portion of the CBD on city blocks first platted for commercial use in 1856 by the Fremont Town Lot Company. Originally located in the center of the city, extensive 20th-century growth around the district has now placed it in the south-central part of Fremont. Historic buildings are concentrated on the sides of two district streets in an L-shaped configuration (see boundary map). The nominated area is comprised of a one block portion of 6th Street (east-west) and three-and-one-half blocks on Main Street (north-south), and is roughly bounded by 3rd Street on the south, Military Avenue on the north, and the alleys adjacent to Main Street on the east and west.

Commercial development in the district was consistent with the pattern established by town builders during the westward expansion of the mid-nineteenth century. Businesses were clustered in loosely defined areas with an initial emphasis on a single primary street (i.e. "Main Street"). This route served as the anchor of the district with narrow-front commercial buildings constructed on each side of the "spine". In Fremont, a two-block portion of 6th Street between Main and Broad was the first primary commercial street in the city. Development began on 6th Street in the late 1850s due to its location one block south of Military Avenue, an important supply route from Omaha to Fort Kearny. By 1874, commercial buildings were concentrated on 6th Street between Main and Broad. This pattern of growth continued in the early 1880s, and by 1885, uninterrupted rows of commercial buildings had been constructed on both sides of 6th Street between Main and Broad.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Fremont Historic Commercial District

Name of Property

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### DESCRIPTION (continued)

The economic prosperity that led to the development of 6th Street also encouraged the lateral expansion of other commercial streets in the district. During the 1870s and 1880s, Main Street emerged as an important commercial corridor. Bolstered by the location of railroad depots near 1st and Main, commercial buildings were constructed on both sides of Main from 5th to 6th. Evidence of this growth is reflected in the nominated resources. Five of the nine contributing buildings on Main Street between 5th and 6th streets were constructed between 1878 and 1893. This includes the H.J. Lee Building, the oldest structure in the district (photo 16). The Lee Building, constructed in 1878, anchors the southeast corner of the 6th and Main intersection. Current owners of the building have initiated a certified rehabilitation through the Tax Incentive Program administered by the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office.

During the prosperity of the 1880s, Broad Street also developed into an important commercial street. However, Broad Street was also a historically well-traveled transportation route that provided access to an important Platte River crossing two-miles south of Fremont. Consequently, small retail shops clustered on both 6th and Main streets, where the slower speed of travel was more conducive to the development of retail commerce.

As commercial development increased on Main Street, special emphasis was placed on the 6th and Main intersection which linked the two commercial streets and provided access to Broad Street. The importance of this intersection was illustrated in the 1880s with the construction of a streetcar system which used 6th and Main to connect two well-traveled lines. The streetcar eventually yielded to the automobile, but 6th and Main continued to be an important intersection. In 1913, the transcontinental Lincoln Highway was designated through Fremont; and by 1920, 6th and Main was a pivotal highway intersection.

The pattern of growth on 6th and Main streets is still evident within the nominated area. Late 19th-century buildings are concentrated on Main between 5th and 6th streets and on 6th from Main to Park. Ten of the sixteen contributing buildings constructed during the 19th-century are located on these two blocks. All of the late 19th-century buildings were constructed of brick with first-floor storefronts and offices or lodge halls on the upper levels. These buildings exhibit a relatively high degree of ornamentation such as pressed-metal cornices, brick corbeling, facebrick veneer fronts, cast-iron storefronts, leaded glass transoms, and limestone window surrounds.

In contrast, 20th-century buildings are more widely dispersed throughout the district. This is attributed to the fact that buildings constructed after 1900 were second- or third-generation structures built on sites previously occupied by late 19th-century buildings. These buildings exhibit characteristics similar to 19th-century district buildings, but are generally more subdued in their detailing.

One of the most notable qualities of the district is the continuity of materials. All of the 43 contributing buildings utilized masonry construction, and 40 of 43 are brick or brick-clad buildings. Virtually all of the district buildings constructed after 1900 are masonry fireproof structures.

The district boundaries define the most well-preserved contiguous portion of what was once a larger, more dense central business district (CBD). The CBD originally consisted of a large 17-block area from Broad Street east to Main and from Military Avenue south to the railroads. Street front commercial lots on 12 of the 17 blocks were completely developed with very few lots vacant on five other blocks. This area formed the nucleus of the CBD which included the courthouse block and several important railroad related

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Fremont Historic Commercial District

Name of Property

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Section 7 Page 3

### DESCRIPTION (continued)

buildings. The development of entire blocks created a dense commercial grid reminiscent of large urban districts (photos 1,2).

Reinforcing the "urban grid" pattern were multi-story (3 or more) commercial blocks. The scale of these large masonry buildings, in comparison to the more typical two-story buildings, created a more monumental sense of enclosure on the street. Pivotal examples of remaining multi-story district buildings include the May Brothers Wholesale Grocery Building (DD05:E-059, photo 8), the Quinn Dry Goods Building (DD05:E-055, photo 6), the First National-Union National Bank (DD05:E-019, photo 11, 12), the IOOF Building (DD05:E-025, photo 7), the Lee-Havens Building (DD05:E-062, photo 10), Gumpert's Department Store (DD05:E-069, photo 22), and the Dexter Hotel/Hotel Terry (DD05:E-071, photo 24).

The construction of multi-story buildings on 6th Street resulted in a staggered pattern of cornice lines (photo 3). The staggered building scale is particularly evident on the south side of 6th Street where none of the buildings share the same stringcourse or cornice line. This individuality illustrates the use of building facades as advertisements. The mass production of ornamental building materials provided the building owners the opportunity to create a distinctive appearance. In contrast to the staggered scale on 6th Street, the buildings on Main Street share nearly equal cornice lines creating a sense of continuity and a strong linear streetscape.

While the majority of the nominated area is comprised of multi-story buildings, six single-story buildings are located within the district. Two of these were built adjacent the alleys parallel to Main Street (photo 15, 21). The remaining one-story buildings are located on Main Street between 3rd and 5th.

While some aspects of the district's integrity have been compromised, the buildings within the nominated area still convey a strong sense of historic character. The enclave of late 19th- and early 20th-century commercial and light warehouse buildings provide a strong association with the city's role as a regional center of wholesale and retail commerce.

Interest in National Register designation for the Fremont commercial district was first expressed by the Dodge County Historical Society (DCHS). Due to local interest, preparation of the district nomination was incorporated into the 1994 Historic Buildings Survey of Dodge County conducted by the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office. With assistance from the DCHS, a public meeting regarding the survey and potential district designation was held at the Love-Larson Opera House (NRHP, 1974) in March, 1994. Following the meeting, fieldwork was conducted and a draft nomination completed in July, 1994.

Concurrent to the district research, the University of Nebraska College of Architecture conducted a three-week planning and design study of downtown Fremont. The study was requested by the Fremont Downtown Improvement District (DID) and consisted of proposals to enhance commercial vitality and historic preservation activities in the district.

Contributing buildings in the Fremont Historic Commercial District are described in the following inventory which includes site numbers, historic names(s), construction dates, architectural descriptions, and current conditions. For definition of building facades, Richard Longstreth's The Buildings of Main Street, (1987) was used where appropriate.

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Continuation Sheet**

Fremont Historic Commercial District  
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**DESCRIPTION (continued)**

Historic names and building histories were derived from available primary sources such as deed records, newspaper research, NEHBS site files, pictorial view books, historic photographs, and Sanborn Insurance Maps dated 1885, 1888, 1892, 1897, 1903, 1909, 1914, 1920, and 1928. Descriptions are organized in a block by block sequence starting in the north portion of the district. If a building is located on a corner lot, the description will appear relative to the street the building faces.

**Inventory of Contributing Buildings**

*Block 124*

*East Side N. Park Ave. between E. 6th St. and the North District Boundary*

**DD05: E-045: Northwestern Bell Telephone Company Building & Garage, c1912, (photo 4).** This two-story brick building was constructed circa 1912 by the Northwestern Bell Telephone Company. It is located adjacent the Block 124 alley and is the only district building with a primary (front) facade facing Park Avenue. The building was constructed in two phases. The original two-story L-shaped structure (c1912) was enlarged in the mid 1920s with a 32-foot east (rear) addition. The west (front) facade is finished with a dark facebrick veneer while the north, south, and east facades are of common brick. Telephone terminals were located on the first floor with phone operator space on the second floor. Elements of Neo-Classical Revival style architecture are incorporated in the design of the west facade. These include an engaged stone and brick entry, raised brick foundation with limestone stringcourse, a limestone false cornice with exaggerated dentils, and semi-circular brick window hoods with limestone lintels and keystones. The south (alley) facade includes multiple segmental-shaped window openings with original window frames. A one-story brick garage building is located immediately east of the telephone building. This structure was built between 1920 and 1928 and was purportedly used for storage of telephone maintenance vehicles.

*North Side E. 6th St. between N. Park Ave. and N. Main Street*

**DD05: E-054: May Block-Nebraska State Building & Loan Association, c1905, (photo 3, 5).** This two-story brick and stone building anchors the northeast corner of 6th and Park Avenue and helps define the northwest edge of the district. Upon its completion in 1905, the building was known as the May Block (see DD05: E-059). The first floor was divided longitudinally into two separate rooms with the Nebraska State Building and Loan Association (NSBLA), the first tenants of the east room, and a tobacco store occupying the west portion. By 1920, the building was purchased by the NSBLA and a temple-front Greek Revival facade was added to the existing building. The limestone front includes oversized fluted columns supporting an engaged pedimented entablature. Large corbeled stringcourses and a stone cornice dating to the May Block are visible on the west facade. Alterations to the building include aluminum frame windows and a partially infilled west entrance.

**DD05: E-055: Thad Quinn Building, c1914, (photo 3, 6).** This exceptional four-story building was constructed c1914 by Thad H. Quinn for use in his retail dry goods business. The Quinn Building is the second tallest (56-feet) district building and lends a sense of dense commercial development to the district. The construction of the building on a narrow 44-foot lot resulted in the need for a multi-story design. The open floors of the building are made possible by large interior iron columns which support all floors. The building retains a high degree of integrity with alterations confined to the first-floor storefront. Engaged brick pilasters divide the south (front) facade into a three-part composition and accentuate the



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### DESCRIPTION (continued)

sense of verticality created by the tall narrow building front. Original windows are extant on the upper floors, with Chicago Style windows on the fourth floor. An embossed copper cornice with exaggerated brackets and dentils crowns the symmetrical south facade. Alterations to the first floor include the removal of the original storefront and the addition of an aluminum canopy.

**DD05: E-056: Commercial Building, c1905, c1925, (photo 3).** Brick and limestone two-story, two-part compositional facade with Mission style detailing. Sanborn maps indicate that this building was originally constructed c1905 as a limestone building with a brick storefront. However, the style of the facade suggests that the storefront was replaced c1925. A pent roof with Mission style clay tile shingles dominates the facade. Two pairs of windows on the second level have only window sills as embellishment. The first level is sheltered by a modern fabric awning, but the recessed entry storefront retains its original configuration.

**DD05: E-057: Commercial Building, c1900, (photo 3).** Two-story brick compositional facade designed in the Romanesque Revival style. Indications of its style include the large semi-circular second-floor window openings and embossed copper ornamentation. Details on this building are similar to those found on the Loomis-Miller Building (DD05: E-034). Engaged pilasters are located above the second-floor windows. Brick corbeling and two embossed copper relief panels are located below a curvilinear brick parapet wall. The first-floor storefront has been altered with the application of horizontal wood siding and aluminum frame windows.

**DD05: E-058: Commercial Building, c1887, (photo 3).** Two-story compositional facade with a rough-faced limestone veneer facade. Constructed c1887, this building exemplifies the two-part compositional facade and includes Commercial Italianate style detailing. This is most evident in the large concrete decorative window hoods and exaggerated pressed-metal cornice with floral motifs. Alterations to the first-floor storefront have compromised part of the historic integrity of the building. These alterations include the application of a brick veneer, and the covering of the transom with corrugated aluminum siding. The scale of this building matches that of the adjacent two-story buildings on the north side of 6th street between Park and Main.

**DD05: E-024: Fremont National Bank, c1888, c1938, (photo 3).** The Fremont National Bank Building is located on the northwest corner of 6th and Main streets and serves as a visual anchor to this important intersection. The building consists of a c1890 two-story brick structure with a later (c1938) smooth limestone veneer added over the east (side), south (front), and north (rear) facades. This technique eliminated the cost of new building construction and was performed on at least five other district buildings. The limestone front incorporates Art Moderne style motifs as seen in the smooth-faced stone and banded entry detail. Evidence of common brick walls dating to the c1890 building are visible on the west firewall. Later expansion of the bank also resulted in the construction of Art Moderne style facades over three adjacent brick commercial buildings to the west. These buildings were also constructed during the turn of the century. Alterations are primarily limited to the introduction of aluminum-frame windows on the south and east facades.

*West Side of N. Main St. between E. 6th St. and the North District Boundary*

**DD05: E-025: International Order of Odd Fellows Lodge #59 Building, 1927, (photo 7).** The IOOF Building consists of a three-story concrete frame structure with brick and tile curtain walls. The concrete

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### DESCRIPTION (continued)

floors and roof are supported by a reinforced concrete frame that is sheathed with common brick curtain walls on the west, south, and north facades, and a highly decorative polychromatic facebrick facade on the east (front) facade. The east facade features a marble veneer base with terra-cotta veneer above, polychromatic brickwork, and terra-cotta window surrounds. A large cornice is highlighted by terra-cotta reliefs bearing the IOOF letters and interconnecting chain symbol. Leaded stained glass windows are located on the third floor above a central arched entry. The symmetrical east facade has engaged pilasters that divide the building into a five-part vertical composition. Offices were located on the first and second floors with the lodge hall on the third floor. An elevator located on the east end of the north wall provided access to the upper floors. The IOOF Building retains a high degree of historic integrity with the exterior facades virtually unchanged. Unaltered exterior features in addition to those mentioned above include the original wood frame windows and moveable awning hardware. However, c1955 alterations on the interior of the first floor are evident.

#### *Block 143*

*South Side of East 6th St. between N. Park Ave. and N. Main Street*

**DD05: E-059: May Brothers Wholesale Grocers Building, 1881, c1883, (photo 8).** The May Brothers Building is a large three-story commercial block located on the southeast corner of 6th and Park Avenue. This monumental brick structure housed the offices and warehouse of the May Brothers Wholesale Grain Company. The L-shaped building encompasses nearly 27,000 square feet and is constructed of brick load-bearing walls with large open interior spaces on the upper floors supported by massive timber columns. Distinctive features of the building include embellished entries with pressed-metal decorative transoms, limestone window sills, and polychromatic brick window hoods and surrounds. Constructed on the site of their original grocery building (c1869-70), the May Building is one of the more pivotal district structures. The massive building was constructed in two phases with the north 44- x 95-foot portion completed first (1881). This was followed by a c1886 three-story south addition (37 x 130 feet) that incorporated many of the details of the original building. The first-floor storefront has been slightly altered, but the pressed-metal cornice surrounding the first-floor transom is still intact. Original window openings and frames are intact on both the second and third floors with changes limited to the brick infill of those on the first floor of the west facade. A large bracketed pressed-metal cornice rests atop the third floor of the building. Alterations include the removal of the original storefront, and the covering of the transom with vinyl sheathed insulation panels. A suspended bronze canopy is still located over the stairwell entry on the east partition wall.

In 1920, the building was sold to Greek immigrant James J. Petrow and was subsequently known as the Petrow Building. Petrow leased portions of the building to the S.S. Kresge Company in 1924. Kresge's remained in the building until their closing in 1969. During the early 1930s, Petrow constructed a number of small professional offices on the second floor.

**DD05: E-060: Francis Ellick/Mandaville Havens Building, 1888, (photo 9).** This two-story masonry building was constructed in 1888 for local businessman Francis Ellick and is another district example of the two-part compositional facade. The 40- x 80-foot structure is constructed of brick load-bearing walls with common brick on the south (rear) and facebrick on the north (front) facade. The first-floor storefront has been altered, but the second floor has retained much of the pressed-metal ornamentation dating to its construction. This ornamentation consists of pressed-metal window frames and a large bracketed pressed-metal cornice with a central pedimented parapet. Decorative brick panels are located

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### DESCRIPTION (continued)

below the cornice and tripartite window frames with steel lintels are extant on the second story. Engaged columns separate the individual window frames. A central stairwell and partition wall divided the first-floor plan into two narrow commercial rooms measuring 20 x 80 feet. Engaged brick pilasters on the second story reveal the original width of the stairwell. Alterations to the first floor include the covering of the transom with vertical wood siding and replacement of the original storefront.

**DD05: E-061: John Sherwin/Nicholas Ronin Building, 1887.** This two-story masonry building was constructed in 1887 by local businessman John Sherwin. The rectangular-shaped building measures 22 x 80 feet and is located immediately west of the Block 143 alley. The two-part north (front) facade contains a first-floor storefront and three rectangular openings on the second story. First-floor retail space was first occupied by a harness shop with leased offices located on the second floor. The facade contains decorative elements associated with Italianate style architecture including an elaborate pressed metal cornice and large ornamental hood moldings. Engaged second-story pilasters and brick corbeling further articulate the facade. Nicholas J. Ronin purchased the building in 1901; and by 1903, converted the first floor into a saloon. By 1920, the first floor was used as an automobile sales room in response to the designation of 6th Street as part of the transcontinental Lincoln Highway. While alterations to the storefront have occurred, the second-story facade retains much of its historic integrity.

**DD05: E-062: H.J. Lee & M.J. Havens Building, c1905, (photo 10).** The Lee & Havens Building was constructed as part of a cooperative venture between prominent businessmen Mandaville Havens and Henry J. Lee. The three-story brick building consists of a square-shaped floor plan measuring 66 x 66 feet with a stairwell and partition wall dividing the first floor into two separate retail spaces. The Havens Building occupied a double-store 44-foot portion on the west side of the first floor leaving a more narrow 22-foot wide space on the H.J. Lee side. The east, south, and west facades are constructed of load-bearing common brick walls, with segmental-shaped window openings. The north (front) facade, however, is reminiscent of Chicago School style architecture. The second and third stories of the north facade consist of a trabeated structural system using cast-iron lintels and columns to support the wall. Because of the minimal use of heavy masonry materials, the load-bearing capacity of the wall was reduced. This allowed large areas of non-load bearing glass to be placed in the spans between the columns. The result is essentially two "window-walls" on the upper floors spanning the 66-foot width of the building. These "window-walls" have been infilled with brick on the Havens side, but are only partially covered with wood siding on the Lee portion of the structure. The first-floor storefronts have also been replaced, but the original recessed stairwell and horizontal pressed-metal cornice bearing the owners names remain intact.

*West Side N. Main St. between E. 5th and E. 6th Street*

**DD05: E-023: Weiland & Son Building, c1893.** The Weiland Building is a two-story brick masonry structure built c1893 by Fremont businessman J.F. Weiland. The rectangular-shaped building occupies a narrow 22-foot lot near the southwest corner of 6th and Main streets. The east (front) facade is divided into a two-part composition with a first-floor storefront located below second-story leased offices. The second story contains a large central window opening surmounted by a semi-circular window molding. This is flanked by two narrow rectangular windows with similar semi-circular window hoods. Original window frames in these openings have been removed and replaced with opaque glass blocks. The first-floor storefront has also been altered, but the recessed entry is intact. A large pressed-metal cornice with engaged columns and garland reliefs is also extant.

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### DESCRIPTION (continued)

**DD05: E-022: Union Block, 1890.** The Union Block Building consists of a two-story brick structure with Romanesque Revival style details. The rectangular-shaped building is comprised of a 50- x 120-foot plan that is divided on the first floor into two separate commercial rooms by a central stairwell. The stairwell provided access to second-floor leased professional offices. The Union Block is a significant district example of the elaboration of building facades made possible by mass produced ornamental materials. Decorative elements on the facade include engaged marble columns supporting a full pediment and an elaborately corbeled brick cornice. The central-stair detail is flanked by three narrow window openings with semi-circular window surrounds bearing egg and dart reliefs. While the second story retains much of its original character, the first-floor storefront has been altered with the application of vertical aluminum siding and aluminum frame windows.

**DD05: E-019: First National-Union National-Stephens National Bank Building, 1914,** (photo 11, 12). Architect A.H. Dyer designed this five-story office and bank building in 1912 for the First National Bank of Fremont. This building is the most prominent visual landmark in the Fremont CBD and is a pivotal district building. Structurally, the fireproof building is comprised of a reinforced concrete frame clad with 12-inch brick curtain walls. Earth-tone facebrick is used on the east and south facades with common brick on the west and north sides. Designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style, the building is exceptionally well-preserved with only minor alterations to the first-floor windows. The upper four floors are virtually unaltered, retaining their original paired wood double-hung windows, terra-cotta ornamental stringcourse, and large stone cornice. The 44- x 140-foot plan contained first-floor banking rooms with offices on the upper four floors. The Union National Bank purchased the building in 1921 and retained ownership until 1932 when the bank failed during the Great Depression. It was sold in 1933 to Nebraska legislator Daniel Stephens for use as the Stephens National Bank.

#### *Block 144*

*East Side N. Main St. between E. 5th and E. 6th Street*

**DD05: E-063: H.J. Lee Building, 1878,** (photo 13, 16). This two-story brick building anchors the southeast corner of the primary district intersection (6th and Main). The building was commissioned by the H.J. Lee Hardware Company in 1878 making it the oldest contributing district building. It is comprised of a two-story west (front) wing measuring 22 x 80 feet with an attached three-story east (rear) wing measuring 40 x 40 feet. The west wing originally housed the Lee hardware and tin shop, with the east wing used for hardware storage. Henry J. Lee later became the president of the Lee-Glass-Andreesen Hardware Company who conducted an extensive wholesale business in eastern Nebraska and owned large warehouse facilities in the Jobbers Canyon District of Omaha (NRHP, 1986). The building is significant for its use of Italianate style detailing such as the pressed-metal cornice with paired brackets and smooth ornamental stone window lintels. This pivotal district building is currently undergoing certified rehabilitation using the Tax Incentive Program administered by the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office.

**DD05: E-064: Commercial Building, c1925,** (photo 13). Brick two-story, two-part compositional facade with Chicago School style influenced detailing. The second level of the facade retains a high degree of historic integrity with a stepped parapet, Neo-Classical style influenced cornice and Chicago School style windows. Brick and limestone corbeling is also used to articulate the facade. Although aluminum and porcelain panels have been installed on the first-level facade, the storefront retains its recessed entry and separate second-level entry. With minimal effort and little cost, the historic appearance could be restored to return this building to original condition.

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**DD05: E-065: Commercial Building, c1886, (photo 13).** Brick two-story, two-part compositional facade. A pressed-metal cornice on top of the parapet and a cast-iron storefront highlight the facade. Exaggerated pressed-metal window hoods are located above three single windows in the second level. Despite the alteration of the first-level storefront with aluminum frame doors and windows, this building retains a high degree of historic integrity and is an important contributor to the district.

**DD05: E-066: Commercial Building, c1905, c1937, (photo 13).** This two-story compositional facade consists of a c1905 brick structure with a 1930s limestone facade. The application of a new facade to an existing building was also employed in the c1938 remodeling of the Fremont National Bank (DD05: E-024). Like the bank, a smooth-limestone Art Moderne facade with a two-part composition was applied over an existing two-story rectangular-shaped brick building constructed during the early 20th century. The structure is typical of other two-part district buildings with first-floor retail space below second-floor offices. Alterations to the building since the 1930s are limited to aluminum frame display windows on the recessed first-floor storefront.

**DD05: E-067: Commercial Building, c1917, (photo 13).** Brick two-story, two-part compositional facade. A pressed-metal cornice highlights the parapet and brick corbeling is used to articulate the facade. Although alterations to the first level have occurred, the storefront retains the original recessed entry.

**DD05: E-068: Christensen Building, c1880, (photo 13, 14).** The Christensen Building is a large two-story brick structure located on the northeast corner of 5th and Main streets. Commissioned in 1880 by local businessman Christen Christensen, the 44- x 100-foot building provides a important sense of enclosure on both the 5th and Main streetscapes. Italianate style details were incorporated into the facade design as seen in the bracketed pressed-metal cornice and large ornamental window hoods. Minor alterations to the building have occurred but are largely reversible. These include the plywood covering of second-story windows and a stucco storefront veneer.

**DD05: E-051: Professional Building, c1910, (photo 15).** This diminutive one-story brick professional building is attached to the east (rear) facade of the Christensen Building (DD05: E-068). This places the 20- x 25-foot structure immediately adjacent the east boundary of the district. The simple one-story facade consists of an offset entry flanked by a large window opening and surmounted by a corbeled brick parapet wall. Minimal interior alterations have occurred, but the exterior facades remain unchanged.

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*West Side of N. Main St. between E. 4th St. and E. 5th Street*

**DD05: E-027: Commercial Building, c1880, (photo 17, 19).** This building, known locally as the Kerlin-Christensen Building, is located on the southwest corner of 5th and Main and consists of a two-story rectangular-shaped brick structure. The narrow-front facade of the building faces Main Street and is another district example of the two-part compositional type. An altered corner entry provides access to the first floor which was originally occupied by a wholesale grocer business. Offices were located on the second floor which was accessed by a stairwell located adjacent to the south firewall. By 1892, the first floor was converted to a saloon with a wholesale liquor business on the second floor. Alterations to the building include the application of a stucco veneer on the east (front) and north (side) facades, and the partial infill of second-story window openings.

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### DESCRIPTION (continued)

**DD05: E-028: Commercial Building, c1905,** (photo 17, 19). This commercial building was constructed c1905 and occupies a double-lot site on the west side of Main Street between 4th and 5th streets. The two-story brick structure is comprised of a 44- x 100-foot plan which was originally divided into two separately accessed commercial rooms. From 1905 to 1914, a billiard hall occupied the north side and a meat market leased the south side. Following this, the interior partition was removed and the billiard hall expanded into the south half. Ornamentation on the east (front) facade is limited to a simple engaged cornice and two stringcourse moldings. Alterations to the building have occurred with the glass block infill of six second-story windows and the replacement of the original storefront with aluminum frame display windows.

**DD05: E-030: Commercial Building, c1918,** (photo 17, 19). This simple brick structure is one of only four contributing single-story buildings on Main Street. Concrete block load-bearing walls support the structure which is one of the smallest district buildings. The narrow-front facade is comprised of little more than a large plate glass entry surmounted by a brick parapet wall. White glazed facebrick was used to finish the east (front) facade. Alterations to the building are limited to the replacement of the original entry with an aluminum storefront.

**DD05: E-031: Commercial Building, c1914,** (photo 17, 18, 19). This simple one-story brick structure is comprised of a small 12- x 25-foot floor plan making it the smallest contributing building in the district. The east (front) facade is comprised of a large plate-glass entry with a stepped brick parapet wall above. The storefront has been minimally altered with the application of vinyl-sheathed insulation panels and aluminum frame windows.

**DD05: E-032: Empress Theater, 1913,** (photo 17, 18, 19). The Empress Theater consists of a three-story rectangular-shaped brick building constructed in 1913 as a vaudeville and motion picture house. The theater incorporates elements of Period Revival architecture as seen in the clay-tile pent roof, segmental-shaped parapet walls, and recessed arched entry. Polychromatic earth-tone facebrick highlights the east (front) facade with common brick used on the south, west, and north facades. The 44- x 122-foot building contains a large first-floor seating hall below a curvilinear balcony. A raised stage and scenery platform are located in the west portion of the first floor. This area of the building has been converted to a hair salon with an alley entrance in the west wall. The central entry was flanked by two small retail spaces which were originally occupied by shoe shine and cigar shops. Reversible alterations to the building include a perma-stone veneer on the entry and plywood covered windows on the third floor. With steam heat, electric lighting, and a seating capacity of 920, the Empress became a major rival of the Love-Larson Opera House (NRHP, 1974) during the early 20th century.

**DD05: E-033: Commercial Building, c1890,** (photo 17,19). Brick two-story, two-part compositional facade. The building is noteworthy for its extensive use of pressed-metal ornamentation. A pedimented parapet crowns a bracketed cornice and pedimented window hoods highlight the second-level windows. Although the storefront retains its recessed entry, the transom windows and first-level facade have been altered with non-contributing vertical siding. As is typical of many of the district buildings, the second level retains a high degree of historic integrity.

**DD05: E-034: Loomis-Miller Block, c1890,** (photo 19, 20). Two-story brick commercial building constructed in the early 1890s by prominent local businessman George Loomis. The building is comprised of a rectangular-shaped plan measuring 44 x 100 feet and is a significant example of Romanesque Revival

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style architecture. Elements of his style are evident in the large semi-circular window openings and rusticated terra-cotta ornamentation. Additional features on the east (front) facade include an embossed copper cornice and decorative relief panels. Horizontal wood siding has been placed over the first-floor storefront, but the second-story facade retains its historic integrity. In 1901, Loomis sold a one-half interest in the building to John Miller. Between 1903 and 1913, the south half of the building was converted to use as a nickelodeon/theater.

**DD05: E-035: Commercial National Bank, c1890, (photo 19, 20).** Brick two-story, two-part compositional facade with Romanesque Revival style detailing. Many brick and limestone textures are used throughout the facade of the building. The first level has a highly rusticated limestone facade with narrow limestone window archivolt. Limestone stringcourses separate the first- and second-level facades with a rusticated course above the first level windows, a smooth window sill course at the second level, and diamond-shaped relief panels under each of the second level windows. In contrast to the first-story facade, the second-level facade is finished with smooth facebrick. Windows in the second level have arched openings on the Main Street facade with rusticated window surrounds and rectangular window openings with limestone lintels on the 4th Street facade. Visually, the first and second levels are unified by the two-story bay window projection. The parapet is articulated from the rest of the facade with a limestone filigree stringcourse and an arcaded entablature, both under a narrow cornice molding. A variety of alterations have affected the historic integrity of the building. These include vertical sided panels over the second level windows, and several first level windows infilled with brick. Likewise, the Main Street storefront facade is altered with smooth-faced brick infill and full height aluminum frame windows.

**DD05: E-036: Commercial Building, c1922, (photo 21).** This one-story brick commercial building is attached to the west (rear) wall of the Commercial National Bank Building (DD05: E-035). The simple rectangular-shaped building is divided by an interior partition wall into two separately accessed commercial rooms. Each storefront is comprised of large plate-glass display windows surmounted by simple brick corbeled parapet walls. Reversible alterations have occurred with the covering of horizontal transom windows and the insertion of aluminum frame storefronts.

#### *Block 153*

*East Side N. Main St. between E. 4th & E. 5th St.*

**DD05: E-069: Gumpert's Department Store, c1920, (photo 22).** Brick two-and-one-half story, three-part compositional facade located at the southeast corner of 5th and Main Street. As a former department store, this building has one of the largest floor plans in the district and its mass overwhelms the size of adjacent buildings. The second and third stories have a symmetrical fenestration pattern and are articulated by a brick stringcourse at the sills. A pressed-metal cornice reinforces the rectangular mass of the building. As is typical of buildings throughout the district, nearly all of the alterations on the exterior have occurred on the first-level facade. Transom windows are covered with aluminum panels and full-length storefront windows have altered the appearance of the entry. On the second level, one window has been infilled with brick and all windows are covered with opaque panels.

**DD05: E-070: Commercial Building, c1880.** Brick two-story, two-part compositional facade with Commercial Italianate style detailing. A large overhanging pressed-metal cornice with exaggerated brackets crowns the facade of the building and pressed-metal window hoods define the segmental arch window openings at the second level. While some alterations to the storefront have occurred, the original

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recessed entry is still extant. Other minor alterations have altered the historic appearance of the building, such as the louvered panels covering the second-level windows, and the transom windows covered with panels and a shingle sided awning.

#### *Block 173*

*West Side N. Main St. between E. 3rd St. and E. 4th Street*

**DD05:E-037 Commercial Building, c1905**, (photo 26). Brick one-story, one-part compositional facade located on the west side of Main Street. Notable features include the elaborate pressed-metal cornice and stained glass transom window. Although the storefront has been altered, the small retail shop building retains a significant portion of its historic character.

**DD05:E-038 Conrad Hollenbeck Building, c1900**, (photo 26). Brick two-story, two-part compositional facade whose narrow 25-foot width emphasizes the vertical facade. Brick corbeling highlights the second-level facade surrounding the two sets of paired double hung windows. The building retains its historic character, although the transom window has been covered and the first-level storefront altered with aluminum frame entry doors.

**DD05:E-039 Commercial Building, c1900**, (photo 26, 27). Brick two-story, two-part compositional facade with a double storefront and Romanesque Revival style detailing. The most prominent features of the building are the paired oriel windows in the second level flanked by a single arched window, each with a pressed-metal window hood. Pressed-metal was also used to highlight the facade with a cornice above the transom windows, trim along the parapet wall, and panels along the base of the oriel window. A central entry to the second level separates the double storefronts. The south storefront retains its recessed entry, but the north storefront has been infilled with a aluminum frame door and window facade.

**DD05:E-040 Commercial Building, c1890, c1917**, (photo 26). Brick one-story, one-part compositional facade that is unique for exhibiting two distinct building episodes. The c1890 building, evident in the arched opening of the side entry, has a c1917 brick storefront. Brick corbeling at the parapet is the only embellishment on the main facade. Aside from the minor alteration of the transom window, the building retains a high degree of historic integrity.

#### *Block 174*

*East Side N. Main St. between E. 3rd St. and E. 4th Street*

**DD05:E-071 Dexter Hotel-Hotel Terry, c1912**, (photo 23, 24). Three-story, brick hotel building located at the southeast corner of 4th and Main streets. Designed with symmetrical facades that are articulated with brick corbeling on the parapet and in a wide textured band between the second- and third-level windows. The only alterations to the building have been exclusively in the first-level storefronts. The Main Street facade was altered with glazed tile and non-contributing windows that reduced the height of the original window openings. A second storefront entry on the 4th Street facade has minor alterations.

**DD05:E-072 Commercial Building, c1912**, (photo 23, 24). Two-story, two-part compositional facade with a stepped parapet wall and brick corbeling. A Neo-Classical style cornice with oversized dentils is located under the parapet and brick corbeling is used to form the remaining portion of the entablature. Corbeling also surrounds the three sets of paired windows in the second level. A non-contributing awning shelters



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the first-level storefront which has been altered with full-length aluminum frame windows. The original second-level window openings have been infilled with glass block.

**DD05:E-073 Commercial Building, c1912, (photo 23).** Two-story, two-part compositional facade with Neo-Classical style detailing. A cornice is located under the parapet and is framed by two bands of brick rectangular corbeling. Segmental window hoods with keystones highlight the second-story facade. A non-contributing awning shelters the first-level storefront, which has full-length windows and the original recessed entry and doors. The second-level windows have been replaced with glass block with in the original openings.

**DD05:E-074 Commercial Building, (Former Vasholz Building), c1914, (photo 23, 25).** Brick two-story, two-part compositional facade with a stepped brick parapet. The most notable feature is the second-level oriel window with pressed-metal siding. Minimal detailing is found on the building with a limestone stringcourse along the parapet and limestone window sills in the second level. A recessed entry storefront remains but the transom windows have been altered with opaque panels.

**DD05:E-075 Commercial Building, c1888, (photo 23, 25).** Brick two-story, two-part compositional facade located at the northeast corner of 3rd and Main, this building is located adjacent the southern boundary of the district. Notable for its segmental arched windows, second-level window hoods, and pressed-metal cornice. Although the first-level recessed storefront has been covered with vertical siding and the second-level windows have been reduced in height by half the size of the original opening, the building retains its historical character.

**Non-contributing Inventory**

*Block 124*

*North Side E. 6th St between N. Park Ave & N. Main St.*

120 E. 6th Street: Commercial Building

\* 152 E. 6th Street: Commercial Building

\* 152 E. 6th Street: Commercial Building

\* 152 E. 6th Street: Commercial Building

Note: The three non-contributing buildings marked with an asterisk were constructed as individual structures but are now part of the Fremont National Bank & Trust (DD05: E-024).

*Block 143*

*South Side E. 6th St. between N. Park Ave. & N. Main St.*

\* 109 E. 6th Street: Commercial Building

Note: This non-contributing building is now part of the Ellick/Havens Building (DD05: E-060) but was originally built as a separate structure.

*West Side N. Main St between E. 5th and E. 6th Street*

549 N. Main St.: Commercial Building

529 N. Main St.: Commercial Building

523 N. Main St.: Commercial Building

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**DESCRIPTION (continued)**

*Block 144*

*East Side N. Main St. between E. 5th and E. 6th Street*

- 540 N. Main St.: Commercial Building
- 530 N. Main St.: Commercial Building
- 522-26 N. Main St.: Commercial Building
- 520 N. Main St.: Commercial Building

*Block 154*

*West Side N. Main St. between E. 4th and E. 5th Street*

- \* 447 N. Main St.: Commercial Building  
Note: This non-contributing building is now part of DD05: E-028 but was originally built as a separate structure.
- 439 N. Main St.: Former Professional Building

*Block 153*

*East Side N. Main St. between E. 4th and E. 5th Street*

- 434-36 N. Main St.: Commercial Building
  - 424 N. Main St.: Commercial Building
  - \* 406 N. Main St.: Commercial Building
  - \* 406 N. Main St.: Commercial Building
  - \* 406 N. Main St.: Commercial Building
  - \* 406 N. Main St.: Commercial Building
- Note: The four non-contributing buildings marked with an asterisk were originally built as separate structures but are now part of a single business.

*Block 173*

*West Side N. Main St. between E. 3rd and E. 4th Street*

- 349 N. Main St.: Former Cigar Factory
- 345 N. Main St.: Commercial Building
- 343 N. Main St.: Commercial Building
- 325 N. Main St.: Commercial Building
- 321 N. Main St.: Commercial Building

*Block 174*

*East Side N. Main St. between E. 3rd and E. 4th Street*

- \* 330 N. Main St.: Commercial Building  
Note: This non-contributing building is now part of DD05: E-073 but was originally built as a separate structure.
- 312 N. Main St.: Commercial Building

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Fremont Historic Commercial District is significant on the local level under National Register Criterion A in the area of commerce for its role as a major retail and wholesale center for much of the Platte and Elkhorn River valleys. These functions developed over a thirty-year period, beginning with the opening of the town's first retail stores shortly after its platting in 1856 and culminating with the establishment of wholesaling and manufacturing during the 1880s. Once in place, these functions maintained a prominent place in the city's economy throughout the early 20th century. The period of significance, 1878 to 1938, is derived from the date of construction of the oldest extant building in the district to the date of the last significant construction in the district.

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**History of Commerce in Fremont**

Fremont was platted in 1856 by the Fremont Town Lot Company. The U.S. government land survey had not yet reached the area, so the Military Road (present day Military Avenue) that ran from the Missouri River to Fort Kearny was used as the base line for the town's survey. Fremont's first boundaries were Nye Avenue (formerly J Street) on the west, Union Street on the east, 1st Street on the south, and 12th Street on the north.

Shortly after platting, population growth was not what the founders had expected. To attract new residents they offered a variety of inducements for construction of both residential and commercial buildings, including shares in the town company and free lots. As business owners began to take advantage of the inducements, they concentrated their endeavors south of Military Avenue, the primary east-west thoroughfare in Fremont. The new commercial establishments were located predominately along 6th Street with scattered development on Broad, Park, and Main streets. In 1858, the first significant episode of commercial prosperity was started through the provision of supplies to gold seekers destined for Colorado. The following year, petitions were filed requesting official incorporation of the town.

Just ten years after the town was founded, construction of the Union Pacific Railroad was completed to Fremont with the line running along the south edge of town. The tracks were laid in a diagonal orientation bordering the district on 1st Street to the east and 3rd Street on the west. By the end of the decade, two more railroads had joined the Union Pacific. The Sioux City and Pacific, serving Iowa and Minnesota, reached Fremont in 1869. That same year ground was broken for the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad (FEMVRR). The FEMVRR's route proceeded northwest following the Elkhorn River. The arrival of these three rail lines marked the beginning of Fremont's role as a trade center for the developing agricultural regions of the Platte and Elkhorn River valleys.

The prosperous 1880s witnessed the establishment of numerous agriculture-related industries in Fremont, including meat processing, milling, and farm implement manufacturing, most of which were located on the south and west sides of town near the railroad. By the end of the decade, retail trade declined due to changes in freight rates and the establishment of branch elevators in smaller towns. But the agricultural industries, along with new non-agricultural manufacturing and wholesaling, increased in number and level of production. The wholesale manufacturers, or jobbers, were especially prosperous. Serving businesses in surrounding towns, the companies often sent salesmen on the road to negotiate the sale of groceries, dry goods, produce, hardware, liquor, horses, and numerous other items. In addition to serving the immediate region, some of Fremont's wholesale houses had ties to commercial interests in Nebraska's

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largest cities. These included H.J. Lee, who was a major hardware wholesaler in Omaha, and H.P. Lau, successor to May Brothers Grocery, headquartered in Lincoln.

Adding to the prosperity brought about by industry and wholesaling was Fremont's location at the junction of the Union Pacific and Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroads. This made the city an important regional transfer center. Passengers and goods were transferred from the Union Pacific to points north and west, including the Black Hills of South Dakota which were served by the FEMVRR. In 1888, the Chicago and North Western Railroad, which had acquired the Sioux City and Pacific and the FEMVRR in 1884, decided to transfer all baggage and passengers at Fremont instead of Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Fremont's growth slowed in the 1890s, but the impact of the depression of the decade was much less severe in the community than it was in many other locations. Some businesses closed, but new ones opened and none of the city's banks failed. In the later years of the decade the town became a feeding-in-transit center. Stock from the west, bound for stockyards in Omaha or Chicago, were held over briefly in Fremont to be fattened for maximum profit at sale.

With the turn of the century, growth in Fremont accelerated. As the first decade began, the town was home to 86 manufacturing establishments. The arrival of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad in 1906 brought the number of rail lines to four and reinforced Fremont's position as a transfer point and commercial center. When automobile transportation became popular, shoppers could easily drive to Fremont and the town's role as a retail center was further reinforced. Numerous highways crossed the county, including the Lincoln Highway, which, in 1913, followed Main Street from 1st to 4th streets. By 1925, the Lincoln Highway followed Military Avenue, Park, 6th, and Broad streets. As a result, new buildings infilled with existing buildings to create a dense urban landscape. Although railroad traffic declined in later decades, Fremont remained a primary rail center, and in the 1990s prevails as a regional retail service center.

### Fremont Historic Commercial District

The original plat of Fremont provided an unusually large number of narrow lots designed for the business district. The district envisioned by the town founders encompassed approximately 17 city blocks, bounded by Military Avenue on the north, the present-day railroad tracks on the south, the alley west of Broad Street on the west, and the alley east of Main Street on the east. In the first years of the town's existence, however, businesses concentrated along 6th Street between Main and Broad. The development on 6th Street was encouraged by the use of Military Avenue as a supply route from Omaha to Ft. Kearny. From 1856 to 1866, an enclave of modest frame buildings were constructed on 6th Street and comprised the first commercial district in Fremont.

Events in the late 1860s, however, influenced the direction of commercial growth in the district. The arrival of the Union Pacific Railroad (1866) and the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad (1869) initiated a dramatic period of development. As the rail companies built through Fremont, they laid their tracks on the southern edge of town (near 1st and 2nd streets) and built depots in an area between Broad and Union streets. With the proximity of the railroad to the CBD, a mix of commercial establishments and warehouse facilities located towards the southern edge of the downtown. As a result, growth in the business district was encouraged south from 6th on Broad, Park, and Main streets in the direction of the rail lines.

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

Commercial enterprises were also located on the streets that intersected 6th. Broad Street played a significant role in the development of the central business district. This road was the primary north-south route through Fremont and provided access to an important Platte River crossing. On Broad Street, the commercial development extended between Military Avenue and 5th Street, with the first store/post office combination (non-extant) in the community located on the southeast corner of Broad and Military Avenue and the first bank (non-extant) located on 5th and Broad. Commercial development also occurred on Park Avenue and stretched between Military Avenue and 4th Street. However, of the streets with lateral development, Main Street supported the greatest concentration of businesses. Commercial buildings began just south of Military Avenue and extended to 3rd Street, with the town's first hotel (non-extant) located on 5th and Main.

The 6th Street portion of the business district continued to grow in the late 1870s and the 1880s. With the emergence of Main Street as a second primary commercial street, the intersection of 6th and Main became the primary district intersection. When the street car line was built in the early 1880s, 6th and Main streets retained their positions as the primary district thoroughfares. Substantial commercial blocks were constructed on the 6th and Main intersection including the H.J. Lee Hardware Store (DD05:E-063, photo 16). The Lee building was built on the southeast corner in 1878 and is the oldest contributing building in the district. The May Brothers Wholesale Grocery Building (DD05:E-059, photo 8), a pillar of the commercial community, was built on the southeast corner of 6th and Park in 1881. Other significant district buildings constructed on 6th during this period include the Sherwin-Ronin Building (DD05:E-061), in the middle of the block, and the Ellick-Havens building (DD05:E-060, photo 9), adjacent May Brothers in 1888.

There was limited new construction during the 1890s in downtown Fremont. But in the first years of the 20th century, new commercial buildings once again appeared, concentrated in the 6th Street area and southward on Main Street.

In its role as a major retail center, Fremont provided a variety of business enterprises to the consumer. Dry goods and clothing stores, groceries, meat markets, saloons, barber shops, billiard parlors, drug stores, shoe shops, and even a candy kitchen were present in the district. These businesses joined the more traditional property types found in business districts such as banks, hotels, and professional offices. Many of the amenities of large urban centers were available in Fremont. One could purchase sewing machines, phonographs, bicycles, typewriters, and second-hand furniture, go to see a moving picture, or even shop in a department store. Many of the buildings that housed these commercial enterprises are extant and contribute to the historic district. Examples of the businesses include Quinn Dry Goods (DD05:E-055, photo 6), Dexter Hotel/Hotel Terry (DD05:E-071, photo 24), the Empress Theater (DD05:E-032, photo 18), Petrow's Fremont Candy Kitchen (DD05:E-023), Gumpert's Department Store (DD05:E-069, photo 22), The People's Store (clothing) (DD05:E-073), and the Nebraska State Building and Loan Association (DD05:E-054, photo 5).

The majority of the commercial activity is concentrated in the northern part of the district, near 6th and Main streets. The southern portions reflect mixed use and decreasing activity, especially with the decline in railroad passenger service and the move of some businesses to outlying areas more accessible by highway. The historic district reflects the area of Fremont in which the town's role as a major commercial center first emerged and which continued to serve as the core of the business district throughout the 20th century. With 6th Street and Main Street as the focal point, the business district

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

evolved into a commercial center serving a wide geographic area. Providing retail and wholesale services to much of the Platte and Elkhorn River valleys and supported by its manufacturing and railroad transfer functions, Fremont was the primary commercial center for east central Nebraska. While this role was established very early in the town's history, it endured throughout the 20th century.

The period of significance, therefore, dates from the oldest extant building in the district, the Lee Building (DD05:E-063), constructed in 1878. The ending date of the period is determined by the end of the construction that created the dense urban landscape of the 1920s and 1930s. This time span represents Fremont's active growth in commercial activity and includes the majority of construction dates for contributing buildings.

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the area whose vertices are marked by the following UTM reference points: 1. 14 709280 4589900; 2. 14 709260 4589520; 3. 14 709110 4589530; 4. 14 709130 4589910. The district includes the following parcels in the Original Town Plat of Fremont, Dodge County: all of Lots 5, 6, 7, & 8, and the south 45 feet of Lots 1, 2 3, & 4 on Block 124; Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 & 8 on Block 143; Lots 3, 4, 5, & 6 on Block 144; Lots 1, 2, 7 & 8 on Block 154; Lots 3, 4, 5 & 6 on Block 153; Lots 1, 2, 7 & 8 on Block 173; and Lots 3, 4, 5 & 6 on Block 174. Boundary lines for the district are shown on the accompanying map entitled "Fremont Historic Commercial District."

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary for the Fremont Historic Commercial District includes the highest concentration of significant resources within the central business district (CBD) that retain historic integrity and are associated with the city's role as a regional center of retail and wholesale commerce. The asymmetrical-shaped boundary includes the initial commercial development that occurred on 6th Street as well as the subsequent linear development south on Main Street. Although the central business district was historically comprised of a larger area, a lack of historic integrity exists on the blocks adjacent to the defined boundary. For example, during the early 20th century, Main Street contained a virtually uninterrupted row of commercial buildings from Military Avenue south to 1st Street. However, the southern boundary of the district was drawn on 3rd Street due to the large vacant lots now found on the west side of Main between 1st and 3rd (Blocks 184 & 203). The west side of Main south of 3rd Street lacks the double-sided enclosure found in the nominated area and has a higher concentration of non-contributing buildings. Reinforcing the south boundary are the large number of non-contributing buildings found on the east side of Main between 2nd and 3rd street.

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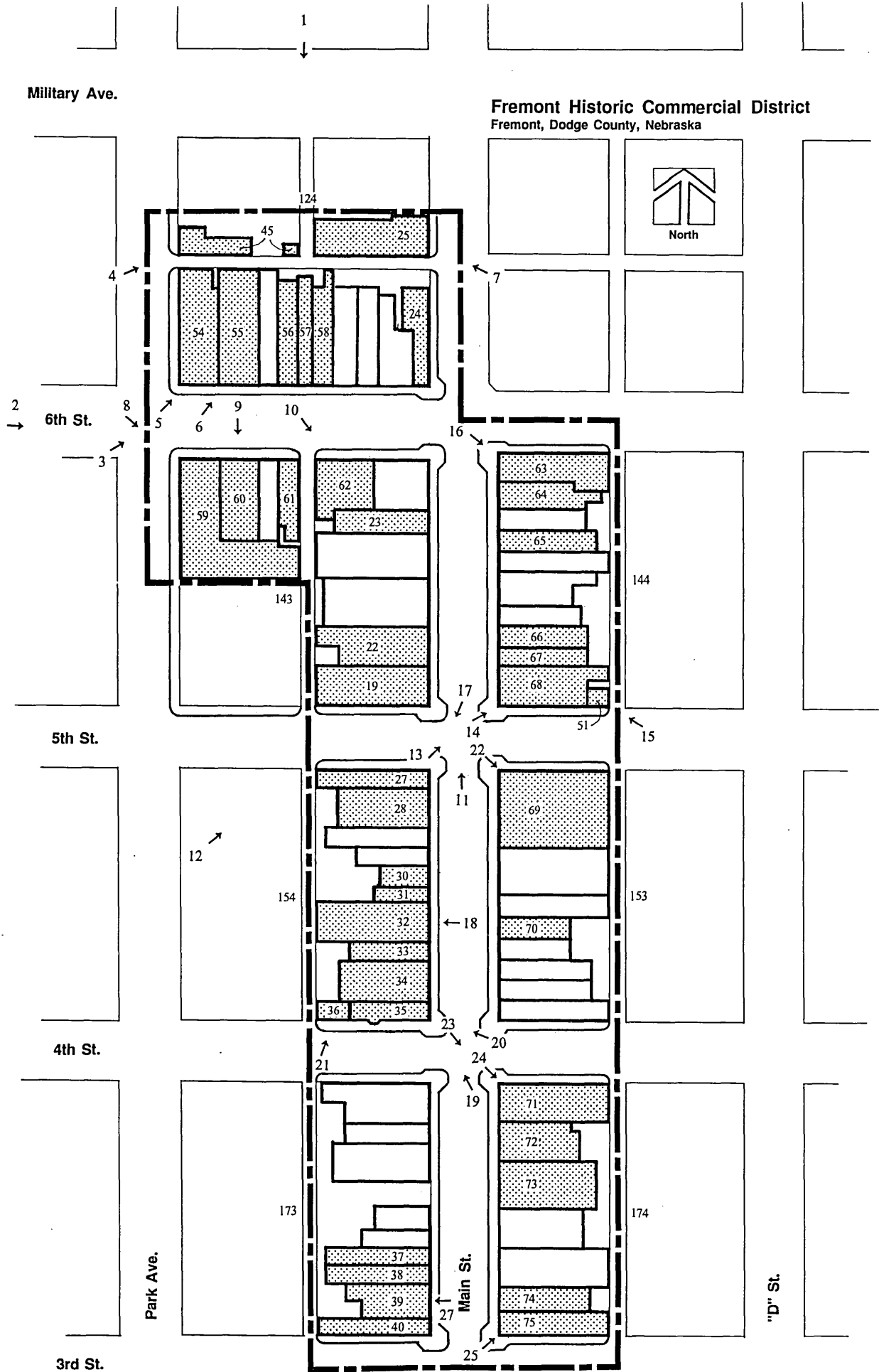
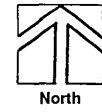
**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION (continued)**



The west and east boundaries of the district were drawn with respect to the linear orientation of commercial development on Main Street. These boundaries are located on the alleys adjacent Main Street, and also include the one-story buildings constructed on the cross-streets. After proceeding along the alley, the west boundary of the district is shifted over to Park Avenue to include the greatest concentration of buildings constructed on 6th Street. This street was not only the first commercial "spine" in the CBD, but was also the most heavily traveled route leading from Broad Street (now Highway #77) to Main Street. Because of this, 6th Street became the east-west connection between commercial activities on parallel north-south streets (Main, Park, and Broad). However, the boundary only includes a one-block portion of 6th Street (between Park and Main) due to the vacant lots present on 6th between Park and Broad. These vacant lots are the result of a natural gas explosion in the Pathfinder Hotel (Jan. 10, 1976) formerly located on the southeast corner of 6th and Broad. The explosion severely damaged buildings on 6th between Park and Broad. Many were subsequently razed leaving large gaps in what was once a continuous row of two- and three-story masonry commercial buildings. Recent development on these lots (Park Place Mall c1985, American National Bank, 1983) have reinforced the visual boundary on Park Avenue. The north boundary of the district is located on the Block 124 alley to include those buildings facing south onto 6th Street. In addition, buildings north of this boundary on Military Avenue are not exclusively associated with the commercial aspect of the district.



Military Ave.

**Fremont Historic Commercial District**  
Fremont, Dodge County, Nebraska



Contributing Buildings =   
 Non-contributing Buildings = 

Drawn by: Lonnie Dickson 7/25/94