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NPS Form 10-900
(January 1992)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Pomeroy and Pelton Tobacco Warehouse

other names/site number Dickinson Tobacco Warehouse

2. Location

street & number 1 West Fulton Street N/A not for publication

city or town Edgerton N/A vicinity

state WI code 55 county Rock code 105 zip code 53534

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

5/29/98

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

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

Pomeroy and Pelton Tobacco Warehouse
Name of Property

Rock County, WI
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
 - entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
 - determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper: Edson A. Boell Date of Action: 7.9.98

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include listed resources within as the count)		
Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	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

n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE-warehouse
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/
EXTRACTION-manufacturing
facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE-business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Boomtown

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone
walls Brick
roof Asphalt
other Wood

Narrative Description

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

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Edgerton, Rock County, WI

INTRODUCTION

The Pomeroy and Pelton Tobacco Warehouse, in Edgerton, Wisconsin, is being nominated for its association with the Pomeroy family, who were the first to successfully grow tobacco into Wisconsin. The warehouse is one of the oldest and best preserved brick tobacco warehouses in Edgerton, a city once dominated by the tobacco industry. Constructed in 1885¹ by W.T. Pomeroy, the top floor of the warehouse provided space where tobacco was "sweated," or partially fermented, prior to being sold for use in manufacturing cigars. The first floor of the warehouse contains an office where the business of the firm was conducted, and storage space for tobacco as it was received from the growers or that had been processed and was awaiting shipment. In the raised basement, workers, mostly women, sorted the tobacco into bundles. The warehouse is constructed with load-bearing brick walls on a stone basement. Located at the north edge of a district that once contained 50 tobacco warehouses, and adjacent to the railroad depot, it faces Fulton Street, historically the main business district of Edgerton.

EXTERIOR

The warehouse is rectangular, 96' north to south and 40' east to west. It is two stories high, with a raised basement giving an additional floor of work space. It has a gable roof, and stepped brick parapets trimmed with a modest row of brick corbelling at the gable ends facing Fulton Street (north) and the tracks of the (former) Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific railroad (south). A chimney rises approximately 2' above the center of the front (north) parapet from the roof, immediately behind it. Below the chimney, in the center of the parapet a stone plaque reads "1885." Mounted on the roof ridge are two large wooden cupolas with gable roofs which provide ventilation to the top floor. (A photo c1889 shows a small hatch in the location of the front cupola. Adjacent warehouses built a few years later are seen in a photo c1900 to

¹ Information from an interview with Thomas Dickinson, October 21, 1997, and from the Portrait and Biographical Album of Rock County (Chicago: Acme Publishing Company, 1889): 951. The Album implies that both Pomeroy and his partner, Milford Pelton, were responsible for building the warehouse, and Thomas Dickinson confirms this.

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have cupolas similar to the ones now seen on the Pomeroy and Pelton warehouse. In the photos the roof appears to be galvanized iron with standing seams. It is now covered in asphalt shingles.)

The warehouse is built of locally manufactured cream brick. Brick manufacturing began in Edgerton prior to location of the railroad and subsequent growth of the hamlet into a town. The brickyards were located nearby, to the west of the business district. Across the front (north) wall of the warehouse, between the first and top floors, painted on the brick in white on a black ground, a sign reads "T.W. Dickinson and Sons."² On the rear (south) wall a similar sign just below the parapet has been faded by the sun. Painted directly on the brick between the first and top floors on the rear wall are the words "Leaf Tobacco."

On its top floor, the warehouse is lit with two regularly spaced windows along the east wall, and two windows in both the front and rear walls. These window openings are slightly arched, with stone sills and 2/2 wooden sash. On the west wall there are two original and two modern second floor windows. On the rear (south) wall, the prints of louvered shutters have been left by the sun on the wall next to the windows. Shutters are also seen on the first floor windows in a c1900 photo. Hardware for the shutters is still mounted in the brick walls.

The first floor is raised about five feet from ground level at the front, sloping to about two feet at the rear, above a rusticated stone foundation which has been painted white. In the east wall there are four closely spaced first floor windows at the north end where the office is located, and four additional windows regularly spaced in the remaining wall. At the rear (south) there is one first floor window in the center of the wall and a large freight door to the left (west). At the front (north) of the building there are two windows to the right (west) and a window and door to the

² Thomas Dickinson relates that the sign read, originally, "W. Dickinson," for his grandfather, Weetman Dickinson. Later, it became "W. Dickinson and Son," Still later, a "T." was added when Thomas Dickinson joined his father in the business. The sign was repainted when Weetman's grandson, also Thomas Dickinson, became the owner. The sign painter, who knew Dickinson's two sons, added the "And Sons," although neither went into the tobacco business.

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left (east). An outside wooden stair with a platform begins near the center of the building and rises from the sidewalk to the first floor entrance. In the west wall there are two loading doors, one of which has wooden steps and a small platform, and a wooden awning. Plaster near the center of the west wall shows the location of a wooden addition that once led to doors into the first floor and the basement and contained lavatories that, before the installation of sewers, had to be emptied daily. There is now a modern window replacing the first floor entrance in this area. To the left (north) is an original window. A shed with a pent roof covers a door into the basement. At the north end of the west wall is a door which has been boarded up.

The stone basement is lit on all sides by large windows set in segmental-arched openings and spaced at regular intervals of about 14', except at the southwest corner of the building, where the ground level is highest and there are no windows. Brick window arches break the line of a brick water table above the rusticated stone foundation. Each opening contains a pair of double-hung windows with 2/2 glazing. The window openings are covered with metal mesh. Outside access to the basement for the 25-30 workers who sorted the tobacco and some 20 men who worked putting it in cases and moving it for storage and shipping was through the addition on the west side of the building.

INTERIOR

The warehouse is notable for its excellent preservation of the mechanical trappings of tobacco storage and processing. The upper floors of the warehouse are unfinished, with exposed brick walls and timber framing supporting the floors and roof members. In the center of the building a wooden, mechanical elevator serving all three floors was used to move the tobacco. A narrow stair next to the elevator also connects the levels of the building. The top floor, under the roof, was designed to hold the tobacco in wooden cases, where the summer sun would heat the room and cause the tobacco to "sweat," i.e. ferment slightly so that the cell structure of the leaves was partially broken down. On the first floor are three doors for receiving and shipping. Tobacco was piled here prior to being taken to the basement for sorting and grading; after sweating on the top floor, the cased (boxed) tobacco was brought down for shipment. At the front (north) end of the first floor are two office rooms in nearly original condition. The east room, containing the outside entrance, has a small lavatory

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sink near the door, and a wooden counter perpendicular to the front wall. Behind it, to the south, is a small private office. This part of the building is finished with plastered walls and wide, dark woodwork framing the openings. The northwest corner of the first floor was originally part of the warehouse area but more recently was finished to provide another office, accessible from the east room.

To keep the tobacco supple during handling, the basement was designed to be damp--not too difficult in a location which several writers have remarked was a swamp prior to the founding of the town--and has suffered more degradation over time than the upper floors. The wooden floor, in particular, has some rot and buckling. Tables for sorting were placed against the whitewashed walls, where the natural light was strongest. Here workers, mostly women,³ sat to do the painstaking work of sorting the tobacco. Near the elevator was the bundle room, where the tobacco was weighed loose and stacked for sorting. At the southeast corner of the basement was the packing room, where the tobacco was sealed in wooden cases before being taken on the elevator to the top floor for sweating. A large press, for pressing the tobacco into the cases, is preserved here. (A second press, acquired from another warehouse in the 1940s, is located on the first floor.) Close to the front (north) wall of the basement is an oil fired boiler which replaced the original coal fired boiler about 1950.

SITE

The warehouse is located at the corner of Fulton and Main Streets,

³ Reference to the female workforce was made in interviews with Tom Dickinson, October 21, 1997 and with Betty Witzel, October 13, 1997, and other sources. The Tobacco Reporter, January 1, 1900: "Mr. H.E. Polley, one of the state factory inspectors, was in Edgerton several days this week going through the tobacco warehouses to see if children were employed there and also if the factory laws relating to fire escapes were observed." Robert C. Nesbit, in "Making a Living in Wisconsin, 1873-1893," Wisconsin Magazine of History, 69:275, 1985, quotes a Wisconsin Bureau of Labor Report for 1886, which states that tobacco provided four to six months work a year for women and girls who earned \$6 to \$12 a week sorting tobacco; "...the work is done in basements, or on lower floors..."

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the main intersection of Edgerton, a town of about 4500. To its south and west is the railroad yard, originally a 20 acre tract given to the railroad in exchange for a promise to locate a depot here. Today a 1906 depot, listed in the National Register, stands on the north side of the tracks adjacent to the warehouse. Across the tracks to the south are brick tobacco warehouses, including the Eisenlohr warehouse, located on the east side of Main Street. Between 1890 and the 1970s there was a row of tobacco warehouses, including the Jensen warehouse, also built in 1885, occupying the two blocks west of the Pomeroy and Pelton warehouse. Today this area is used for parking. A group of smaller buildings, including the police station, several businesses and the town's original fire station are located west of the parking area. Farther to the west on both sides of the tracks are more brick tobacco warehouses.

The 49 Tobacco Warehouses in Edgerton were numbered by the railroad according to Tom Dickinson. The Pomeroy Pelton Warehouse is #30 in that system.

Across Fulton Street (formerly also known as Front Street) from the Pomeroy and Pelton Warehouse is the historic business district of Edgerton, a 3 1/2-block-long strip of mostly two-story buildings, which is being nominated to the National Register concurrently with the Pomeroy and Pelton Warehouse. To the east of the warehouse, across Main Street, the corner is occupied by a gas station. East of it is a former tobacco warehouse, covered in metal siding. South of it is one of the several lumber yards which once prospered making cases for tobacco.

CONCLUSION

Located between the historic tobacco warehouse district and the town's historic business district, the Pomeroy and Pelton Warehouse provides a visible reminder of the unique history of the town, and through its excellent integrity of materials, workmanship, design, setting, feeling and association recalls the history of tobacco growing, processing and shipping in Edgerton, as well as the seminal role of the Pomeroy family in the development of that industry.

Pomeroy and Pelton Tobacco Warehouse
Name of Property

Rock County, WI
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from
instructions)

A Property is associated with events
that have made a significant
contribution to the broad patterns of
our history.

Commerce
Industry

B Property is associated with the lives
of persons significant in our past.

Period of Significance

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.

1885-1918

D Property has yielded, or is likely to
yield, information important in
prehistory or history.

Significant Dates

n/a

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

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is
marked above)

Pomeroy, William T.

A owned by a religious institution or
used for religious purposes.

Cultural Affiliation

B removed from its original location.

n/a

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

Architect/Builder

E a reconstructed building, object, or
structure.

unknown

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age achieved
significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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Edgerton, Rock County, WI

INTRODUCTION

The Pomeroy and Pelton Tobacco Warehouse, in Edgerton, Wisconsin, is significant at the state level under Criterion B for its association with the Pomeroy family, the tobacco growers who introduced commercial tobacco growing into Wisconsin.

While other warehouses survive in several Wisconsin locations, including nearby Stoughton, Edgerton was historically the largest shipping point for cigar leaf tobacco, which comprised nearly the entire Wisconsin production. In addition to being the center of the largest Wisconsin tobacco growing area, where tobacco from surrounding farms was brought to be sold, sorted and cured before being sold to eastern tobacco firms through a number of local agents, Edgerton became a "concentration point" where tobacco that had been cased and cured elsewhere was brought for sale and shipment.¹ Of the warehouses in Edgerton, the Pomeroy and Pelton warehouse is unique in being the first to be constructed of brick, and in being located at Edgerton's main intersection, facing a row of commercial buildings that is being nominated to the National Register concurrently with this nomination. The 1906 railroad depot, also listed in the National Register, is immediately

¹ The role of Edgerton as the "concentration point" for the shipment of tobacco cured in warehouses in other towns is described in an essay by F.W. Coon in the History of Rock County, Wisconsin, William Fiske Brown, ed. (Chicago, C.F. Cooper, 1908): 414. Coon states that the railroad granted better rates to tobacco shipped from Edgerton, "making it convenient for buyers to purchase leaf in the outside sections and ship into Edgerton in less than carload lots, for concentration." This advantage was important as, "The tobacco crop in recent years has reached about 40,000 acres, of which Rock County produces hardly one-fifth," while "There is expended in handling the crop after it comes from the farmer and before it reaches the manufacturer very close to a million dollars annually; that contributes to the support of the tobacco handling centers." In the same essay Coon points out that Edgerton was the headquarters of agents for the large manufacturing firms, the location of the Tobacco Reporter, as well as "49 large tobacco warehouses where is handled and stored from a third to a half the whole (Wisconsin) crop grown each year," employing 2500 people with a weekly payroll of \$15,000 to \$20,000.

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adjacent. Thus the warehouse has been and remains a prominent feature of Edgerton's downtown streetscape. It was the first and is now the sole survivor of a row of warehouses of similar appearance which fronted on Fulton Street, with the depot and rail yards immediately behind them. Unlike many of the other remaining warehouses which are visible to the south and west of it, it is virtually unaltered since its construction in 1885. Most, if not all, of the other warehouses remaining in Edgerton are of brick veneer construction;² the Pomeroy and Pelton warehouse is built with load-bearing brick walls, in a style believed to be copied from the New England customs houses of the 17th century.³ The nearby Eisenlohr warehouse, constructed in 1912, is also potentially eligible but, it is atypical in being much larger and is of steel beam construction.

THE POMEROY FAMILY AND WISCONSIN TOBACCO

Born in Sheffield, Connecticut, W.T. Pomeroy settled near Edgerton in 1853, the same year that the railroad stop that became Edgerton was established. He and his brothers, Ralph and Orrin, brought with them a knowledge of tobacco culture and handling as it was

² This can be seen in the accompanying 1904 Sanborn map, which shows the Pomeroy and Pelton warehouse in a solid color, i.e. coded as an all-brick building, while nearby warehouses are shown with a colored border, indicating brick veneer.

³ Questionnaire submitted to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin by Thomas Dickinson, 1979. The same document asserts that the warehouse is the oldest brick tobacco warehouse in Wisconsin. Mr. Dickinson explains that he has observed warehouses in Hamburg, Germany, and noticed similarities to warehouses in Pennsylvania. While both have more stories than this warehouse, they are similar in design. Even more similar are some warehouses in Salem, Massachusetts. A feature common to all of these warehouses is the raised basement with large windows giving natural light. Mr. Dickinson was told in Europe that the design was to provide natural light for the inspection of spices. Similarly, natural light is needed for the sorting of tobacco leaves. That the Pomeroy and Pelton warehouse is the oldest brick tobacco warehouse in Wisconsin is family tradition passed down from Mr. Dickinson's grandfather, Weetman Dickinson, who acquired the building from W.T. Pomeroy in 1918.

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practiced in Connecticut. W.T. grew his first crop of tobacco the following year, 1854. "It was his successful pioneer effort together with his attempts to introduce it among other farmers and in other districts that are largely responsible for the firm establishment of the tobacco industry in this state."⁴ The son of his brother Ralph, also known as W.T. Pomeroy, was born near Edgerton, in the Town of Fulton, in 1854. "In his early life, Mr. Pomeroy was a tobacco grower, later operated a warehouse and finally went into the sale of tobacco seed."⁵

F.W. Coon, publisher and editor of Edgerton's Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter, and the acknowledged authority on all aspects of tobacco growing and marketing, wrote in 1885 this account of the Pomeroy contribution:

"The name of Pomeroy is intimately connected with the history of tobacco growing in the West. In the year 1838 Thomas and Ralph Pomeroy raised the first crop of Connecticut seed leaf ever grown in Wayne township, in the Miami Valley, Ohio. About twelve years later the two brothers, Ralph and Orrin, and a cousin, Chester Pomeroy, journeyed across the country by wagon to Rock County, Wisconsin, taking the Connecticut seed with them. They settled upon a beautiful prairie two miles south of Edgerton, where two of the brothers still reside (i.e., 1885).⁶ Ralph Pomeroy grew

⁴ Obituary, Janesville Gazette, 13 March 1912.

⁵ Obituary Janesville Daily Gazette, 25 October 1933. The obituary identifies him as "W.T. Pomeroy, pioneer tobacco man, son of the late Ralph Pomeroy who introduced tobacco growing into Wisconsin."

⁶ The Capitol Times, 6 March 1940, carried a story, "Say Pomeroy Family Was First to Market Tobacco Crop in State," which gives a brief history of tobacco culture in the state, starting with the discovery of the Indian custom by the French explorer Allouez, in 1640, and including a description of the Norwegian connection to tobacco growing. (Because it was a quick cash crop, it was useful to Norwegian immigrants who often arrived penniless, especially so because it was labor intensive and could be worked on shares with a landowner.) The article mentions Elias Hibbard, who brought "two professional tobacco culturists from Connecticut" to his farm near Troy in 1843, and who raised and sold tobacco there from 1844 to 1866, and Abel, the brother of Elisha Keyes, who raised it for home use in Jefferson County as early as 1838. "Pomeroy Street," the article states, "an extensive area of tobacco raising territory south of Edgerton was named for the pioneer Pomeroy...Edgerton's fame as the Badger state's tobacco capital must be credited to this hardy agriculturist family."

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his first crop of Wisconsin tobacco on rented land on the prairie near Syene, Dane County, in 1854. The next season he located at his present home in Fulton. Chester Pomeroy grew his first tobacco crop in the State in 1857, and a crop has been grown on the farm every year since that date. A still earlier date is claimed by S.S. Richmond, of East Troy, Walworth County, who raised a crop of tobacco in 1847 and in each succeeding year, except 1860. His crop was generally small and sold to manufacturers..." (That is, directly to the manufacturer rather than through a warehouse.) "...From the beginning of this industry in the State...the tobacco interest has grown until it now stands to-day only second" (i.e, in 1885) "in the list of cigar leaf producing states. For the first few years those engaged in tobacco culture met with but indifferent success. It took years to establish a market and to demonstrate that Wisconsin tobacco was of more than average quality. A few New York buyers controlled the market and held the prices down, so that the grower realized but a small proportion of the profits on his industry. To free this monopoly the "Wisconsin Tobacco Growers' Association" was formed and samples of Wisconsin leaf were sent to all the large manufacturers, opening the eyes of the trade to the fact that Wisconsin tobacco was equal if not superior to the seed leaf of any other state. New buyers came into the market, and from that time on the area devoted to its culture increased with each succeeding year. In 1874 the total acreage reported by the different county clerks was 1,444 acres. Ten years later the same records show an increase to 15,836 acres. About fourteen-fifteenths of the entire crop is cultivated in Dane and Rock counties...The village of Edgerton being the geographical center of the tobacco district, was the first shipping point and market, and is yet the principal receiving place for this product. There are located there twenty-five packing houses, which handle from 8,000 to 20,000 cases each year. In addition there were ten new warehouses constructed. (NOTE: in 1885?) Stoughton has fifteen, Janesville

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sixteen, Evansville three, and Madison four tobacco warehouses, while two are located at Milton Junction, one each at Milton, Ft. Atkinson, Albany, Marshall, Sun Prairie, De Forest, Brooklyn, London and two at Deerfield. Thus there are not less than seventy packing houses in the State."⁷

Allowing for the partisanship of Coon, whose newspaper was an important factor in making Edgerton the leading market for tobacco, this passage indicates the statewide pre-eminence of Edgerton and the important role of the Pomeroy family in introducing the superior Connecticut seed, growing it in sufficient volume to create a center of tobacco marketing. The Pomeroy and Pelton warehouse is the building most associated with the Pomeroy family in their role as buyers, processors and sellers of tobacco.⁸

Tobacco was also important in Dane County. Since Edgerton sits

⁷ F.W. Coon, Tobacco Growers' Guide-a compilation of hints, suggestions and experience of the most practical and successful Tobacco Growers (Edgerton, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter Steam Press, 1885): 8.

⁸ Three miles south and west of Edgerton in Section 17 of Fulton township, the name Pomeroy survives on the township road leading to their farms, once known as "Pomeroy Street." The 1873 Combination Atlas Map of Rock County, Wisconsin, by Everts, Baskin and Stewart, Chicago, was consulted for the location of the Pomeroy farms. Three houses are extant. The house of Ralph Pomeroy, at the southwest corner of the intersection of Pomeroy and Dallman roads, retains its original siding and fenestration. The marks of an entry porch are visible. Behind the house is a dairy barn. Across Pomeroy Road to the northeast, the house of Chester Pomeroy is well preserved but with modern siding and windows. Here too, there is a dairy barn, and a very large tobacco curing shed. Across the road, on the south side of Pomeroy Road, the house of Orrin Pomeroy is barely recognizable as a 19th century building under an array of additions and siding. This house, the smallest of the three, is pictured in the Atlas. There is a large tobacco shed on this property, also. The warehouse is the building associated with the Pomeroy family having the greatest degree of integrity and most clearly associated with their role in the development of Wisconsin tobacco growing, processing and marketing.

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almost on the line between Rock and Dane counties, this does not contradict the claim that Edgerton is the center of tobacco processing. The 1906 History of Dane County⁹ states:

"...Dane County holds a unique place in the history of (tobacco) in the north. It was a pioneer county in the extensive raising of tobacco in Wisconsin, and not only produces more tobacco than any of the other counties, but holds the record for the United States as the largest producing county...Madison contains a score or more of enormous warehouses in which tobacco packing is carried on. The tobacco packing industry was begun here in 1880...One-third of the entire crop of the state is taken care of in Madison. In Stoughton, also, there is a large number of warehouses employing hundreds of hands. Tobacco is today the favorite crop of the Dane county farmers."

The Edgerton Tobacco Reporter is quoted:

"It was in March, 1853, that Ralph Pomeroy came to Madison from the Miami Valley, Ohio, where Pomeroy had previously grown tobacco. In company with J.R. Heistad they rented ten acres...five miles southwest of Madison. The field was planted with the old Connecticut seedless variety...This was undoubtedly the first tobacco ever marketed in the state. The next season (1854) they (Ralph and Orrin Pomeroy) raised their first crop of tobacco in Rock county.

"So it was the Ohio people, likewise, who introduced tobacco culture as well as sheep raising in Dane County. The price of tobacco was high in 1860 but the price of wheat apparently promised better and a general "tobacco craze" was averted. Naturally, the war lowered the price again, but in 1868 it soared again to twenty cents a pound. In 1871, another slump occurred, the price being but one-third of what it had been the previous year. Tobacco failed to pay for ten years thereafter and the acreage declined proportionately, low water mark being reached in 1876...From that time the price continued to rise until in 1883 it had reached twenty-five cents a pound. Within two years...the acreage had doubled...The natural result followed,--the quality of the tobacco was poor and the market overstocked...in 1886 the

⁹ Keyes, Elisha W., ed., Madison, Western Historical Society, p.277-8

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quantity was reduced again. It took fourteen years for the acreage to get back to what it was in 1885, while the price remained steady."¹⁰

By the turn of the century, tobacco growing was also established in the western part of the state, and advertisements for growers and warehouses there appeared among the ads on the front page of the Reporter.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE POMEROY AND PELTON WAREHOUSE IN THE GROWTH OF TOBACCO MARKETING

The ups and downs caused by growing conditions and the market favored the expert grower and dealer over the newcomer. Under the guidance of F.W. Coon and the Pomeroy's, tobacco men in Edgerton used their expertise to advantage: "Let the planters of tobacco lay this verity to their hearts--Tobacco never stands still! It will not wait your convenience, in the seed, in the field, or in the shed."¹¹ Coon inveighed against the thought that just anyone could be a tobacco grower. And he was equally certain that warehousing was a matter of expertise: "From the experience of many years I believe it is best that the average tobacco grower should sell his crop in the bundle. As a rule, he is not sufficiently versed in the business to assort the crop in a proper manner. He does not fully understand the requirements of the trade. Though assorted ever so well by the growers, such tobacco will sell as farmers' packing. Again, the leaf requires to be packed at a uniform degree of moisture, at least when of the same quality. Nice discrimination is needed to secure the best results. The average farmer, who raises from one to three acres of the weed annually, probably only packs his own crop, and often this is done in a very unworkmanlike manner, thus causing considerable damage to what might otherwise, with good packing, sell for from one to three cents more per pound...Under the packing of experts, the boxes will be of the proper size and uniform in appearance, each box

¹⁰ The historic importance of tobacco among Wisconsin's agricultural products is discussed in Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, Vol. II, Barabara Wyatt, ed. (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986).

¹¹ Tobacco Growers' Guide, p.53.

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Section 8 Page 8 Pomeroy & Pelton Tobacco Warehouse
Edgerton, Rock County, WI

containing just so many pounds...¹²
Once packed in cases and slightly fermented in the warehouse, however, the tobacco would "wait on convenience" and could be held for a better price.¹³ The importance of the sorting process that took place in the warehouses is emphasized in the first pages of the Tobacco Growers' Guide where Coon states, "Only about one half of an average crop of tobacco is fitted for wrappers and that grade alone can be produced at a profit...with the expectation of its continued successful production, farmers have invested millions of dollars in buildings for curing tobacco, warehouses, sorting rooms and appliances to fit the crop for market; these would be mostly useless for any other purpose."

According to the 1879 History of Rock County, Wisconsin¹⁴ the first of the New York tobacco companies to establish a permanent agency in Edgerton was Messrs. Sholin and Ritzenstein, who commissioned W.T. Pomeroy to buy for them about 1866. The Portrait and Biographical Album of Rock County¹⁵ says of W.T. Pomeroy:

"...a representative of one of the early families of Rock County and is a son of Ralph Pomeroy, who settled in the town of Fulton in 1853...The family has been identified with the tobacco interests of Rock County from the earliest days of the cultivation of that plant in Wisconsin, W.T. Pomeroy, an uncle...having been one of the first to engage in the growing and shipping...Pomeroy and Pelton¹⁶ are among the most extensive and successful dealers in leaf tobacco in Wisconsin. To them belongs the credit of introducing "Comstock's Spanish Tobacco," the leaf most largely cultivated at the present time...The partnership was formed in 1870. When the firm began operation at Edgerton they

¹² ibid, p 51.

¹³ Information from Thomas Dickinson interview.

¹⁴ (Chicago: Western Historical Society): 677.

¹⁵ (Chicago: Acme Publishing Company, 1889): 951.

¹⁶ ibid: "Milford Pelton, the other member of the firm, ...became a resident of the town of Fulton in 1869, and was joined in wedlock with Miss Mary Pomeroy, a sister of his partner."

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Section 8 Page 9 Pomeroy & Pelton Tobacco Warehouse
Edgerton, Rock County, WI

received their merchandise at the depot, but business increasing, they later rented a warehouse, and in 1879 erected a building, which they occupied until 1885, when, finding the capacity there insufficient, they erected their present warehouse. It is built of brick, constructed upon the most modern plan, and its dimensions are 40 x 96 feet, and three stories in height, including the basement, with a capacity of 2,500 cases. In the packing room, during the busy portion of the season, fifty hands are employed, and the enterprise has become one of the leading industries of Edgerton..."

Weetman Dickinson was one of the many representatives of eastern tobacco firms based in Edgerton. He first worked for T.B. Earle, a local dealer whose warehouse still stands at the west end of Fulton Street. In 1913 Dickinson was asked to take over one of Earle's accounts. He then became the Wisconsin agent for Joseph Cullman, a New York broker who supplied to the Eisenlohr firm. By 1918, when Pomeroy wished to retire from warehousing, Dickinson was managing the huge, new Eisenlohr warehouse. He bought the historic Pomeroy and Pelton building at this time. Weetman Dickinson was wearing many hats, buying and selling tobacco, running or renting out warehouses, representing Cullman. Weetman Dickinson died in 1941. The Reporter wrote of him:

"(He was) closely identified with the life of this city...a charter member of the Knights of Pythias, former President of the Wisconsin Leaf Tobacco Dealers and Growers Association, and Alderman for many years, one of the founders of the Edgerton Country Club, Vice-president of the National Bank of Edgerton, and various Masonic orders....Long after these statistics are forgotten he will be remembered for his real worth to the community,...his infectious sense of humour, a saving grace in many difficult and trying situations...He took the side of the underdog, ever seeking and giving fair play...A large number of tobacco men throughout the state were in attendance at the services...."

His son, T.W. Dickinson, acquired the warehouse. By that time the heyday of the cigar tobacco trade was long over, although many in Edgerton believed that it would one day recover. Toward the end of the 1970s, the warehouse was acquired by Weetman's grandson, Thomas Dickinson, who has endeavored to preserve it. For a time the office space at the front was rented out. The warehouse is used for storage of memorabilia. Besides the two tobacco presses and

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Section 8 Page 10 Pomeroy & Pelton Tobacco Warehouse
Edgerton, Rock County, WI

the hand-operated elevator, mentioned in Section 7, it also houses samples of the tobacco cases and the cured cigar leaf that once made it a generator of wealth and fame.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

The Pomeroy and Pelton Tobacco Warehouse is a unique property which recalls an era when tobacco was one of the most lucrative crops grown in Dane and Rock counties, and in Wisconsin. It was the first brick warehouse in Edgerton, the "cigar leaf capitol of the world,"¹⁸ and probably the first in Wisconsin. Its load-bearing brick walls and raised basement with large windows, to admit light for sorting, distinguish it from most other surviving tobacco warehouses, while its interior preserves the technology of cigar leaf production. Advanced techniques of sorting, grading, curing and marketing cigar leaf tobacco transformed Wisconsin tobacco into a high quality, uniform product which commanded high prices in a world market. These techniques would not have been possible without the tobacco warehouses and the concentration of capital, expertise and commercial activity which centered around them.

According to Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, tobacco provided a lucrative alternative crop for many Wisconsin farmers. Following the success of the Pomeroy and other early growers, tobacco cultivation spread through southern Wisconsin in the late 19th century. After this initial success, tobacco production spread to western Wisconsin by the early 20th century. To guarantee the best prices and uniformity of grades, tobacco buyers and manufacturers built warehouses to sort, package and store the tobacco. As noted in the text, once the tobacco industry was established in Wisconsin, the state made significant contributions in the national production of tobacco. The Pomeroy and Pelton warehouse is of statewide significance as the building most associated with the Pomeroy family and their role in the development of the tobacco industry in Wisconsin.

¹⁷ Information from Thomas Dickinson interview 10/13/97, and phone interview 12/4/97.

¹⁸ So called in the 1908 history edited by William Fiske Brown, Rock County Wisconsin: a New History (Chicago: C.F. Cooper), and other sources of the period.

Pomeroy and Pelton Tobacco Warehouse
Name of Property

Rock County, WI
County and State

9. Major Bibliographic 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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than 1 acre

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

1	<u>1/6</u>	<u>3/3/0/8/6/0</u>	<u>4/7/4/4/1/8/0</u>	3	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>
	Zone Easting	Northing			Zone Easting	Northing					
2	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	4	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>
	Zone Easting	Northing			Zone Easting	Northing					

_____ see continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jane Eiseley
organization _____ date January 9, 1998
street & number 3433 Richard Street telephone 608-249-8818
city or town Madison state WI zip code 53714

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representitive black and white photographs of the property.

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

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Pomeroy & Pelton Tobacco Warehouse

Section 9 Page 1 Edgerton, Rock County, WI

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The Capitol Times, Madison, Wisconsin, March 6, 1940.

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Combination Atlas Map of Rock County, Wisconsin, Chicago, Everts, Baskin and Stewart, 1873.

The Edgerton Tobacco Reporter, Edgerton, Wisconsin, 1/26/1900; Centennial issue, July 7-8, 1953; May 8, 1941.

History of Rock County, Wisconsin, Chicago, Western Historical Society, 1879.

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Thomas Dickinson, Edgerton, October 21, 1997 and 12/4/97

Betty Witzel, Edgerton, October 13, 1997

Janesville Gazette, March 13, 1912.

Janesville Daily Gazette, October 25, 1933.

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Pomeroy & Pelton Tobacco Warehouse

Section 10 Page 1 Edgerton, Rock County, WI

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The warehouse property consists of two parcels: the original plot occupied by the building, and a strip of land along the railroad tracks on the south side of the building. To understand the boundary and its justification it is helpful to realize that the warehouse, like many others, was built on unplatted land rented from the railroad. Fulton Street, the north (front) boundary of the property, was also originally railroad land.

Title to the platform behind the warehouse was acquired by Thomas Dickenson, the current owner, in a Quit Claim Indenture from the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific railroad in 1979. That parcel is: "Part of SW 1/4 of Section 3, T4N, R12E, City of Edgerton, commencing at the SE corner of Lot 1, Block 11, Swift's Addition to the City of Edgerton, said point being the boundary of said Depot grounds and the northwesterly right-of-way of Main Street." The parcel boundaries are described in volume 729, page 67 of the Rock County Register of Deeds, Janesville. This parcel is 1,295 square feet, "more or less." The grantee guarantees to maintain a split rail fence along the south boundary of the parcel (next to the tracks) and not to keep junked cars on the property.

The land occupied by the warehouse was acquired by T.W. Dickinson on May 5, 1977, in a Quit Claim Deed from the railroad. Its boundaries are described in book 648, page 417, records of the Rock County Register of Deeds. The land described therein is a parcel 72' by 99'. The warehouse building itself is 40' by 96'. The property includes three feet of the sidewalk in front (north) of the building to accommodate an outside wooden stair that gives access from the sidewalk along Fulton Street to a first floor entrance, and land along the west side of the building which allows access to an enclosed entry porch leading to the workroom in the basement of the building. This space can be seen in a photo, c1900, as a gap between the Dickinson warehouse and another warehouse, now demolished, which stood to the west.

Thus the boundaries of the property being nominated are 72' east and west, parallel to Fulton Street and the railroad tracks, and approximately 117' north and south, parallel to Main Street. Fulton Street and Main street border the property to the north and east, respectively.

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Pomeroy & Pelton Tobacco Warehouse

Section 10 Page 2 Edgerton, Rock County, WI

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This is all the land historically associated with the Dickinson warehouse.

Pomeroy and Pelton Tobacco Warehouse
Name of Property

Rock County, WI
County and State

Property Owner

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

name Thomas Dickinson

street & number 1 W. Fulton St. telephone 608 884-6271

city or town Edgerton state WI zip code 53534

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

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

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Section Photos Page 1 Pomeroy and Pelton Tobacco Warehouse
Edgerton, Rock County, WI

Photo 1 of 7
POMEROY AND PELTON TOBACCO WAREHOUSE
Edgerton, Rock County, WI
Photo by Jane Eiseley, February, 1997
Neg. at State Historical Society of Wisconsin
View from NE

Photo 2 of 7
View from SW

Photo 3 of 7
View from NW

Photo 4 of 7
Detail, east wall loading dock, cupolas, parapet

Photo 5 of 7
Detail, window and shutter hardware, west wall

Photo 6 of 7
Interior, basement sorting room

Photo 7 of 7
Interior, first floor office

Attachment: Sanborn Map of Edgerton, 1909

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Pomeroy & Pelton Tobacco Warehouse

Section Owner Page 1 Edgerton, Rock County, WI

The owner of the Dickinson Tobacco Warehouse is:

Thomas Dickinson
1 West Fulton Street
Edgerton, WI 53534

Historic District

Fulton Street

↑
N

Property Boundary ↘

Parking

Parking

Pickinson Warehouse

Main Street

Warehouse

Depot

Railroad tracks

Warehouse

Warehouse

Warehouse

Pomeroy & Pelton Tobacco Warehouse
Edgerton, Rock County, WI

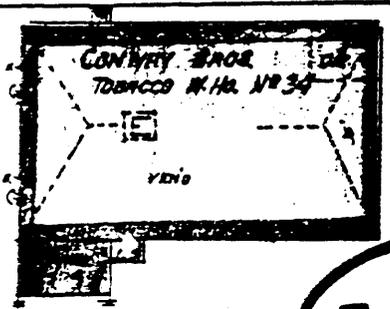
1" = 50'

Pomeroy & Pelton Tobacco Warehouse
Edgerton, Rock Co., WI

HENRY

66'

12

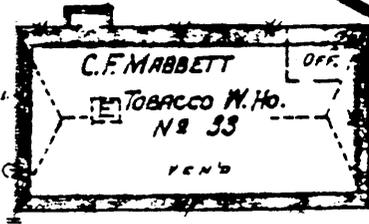
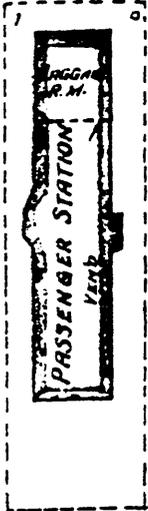


570

6" W. PIPE

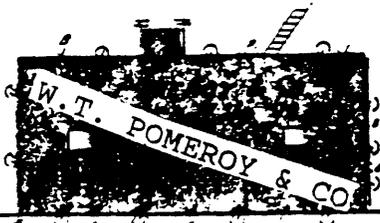
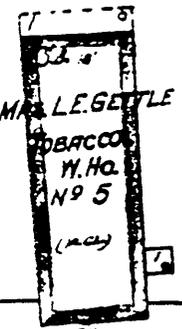
DEC. 1909
EDGERTON
WIS.

CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE & ST. PAUL R. R.



525

G



125

Fulton Street

701 702

703

704

Main Street

10" W. PIPE

66'

10

710

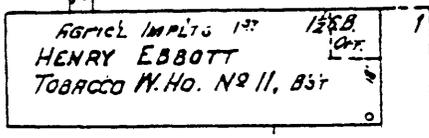
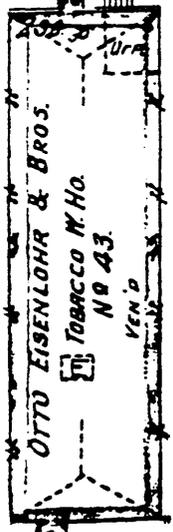
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ON BROS. CO No 20.

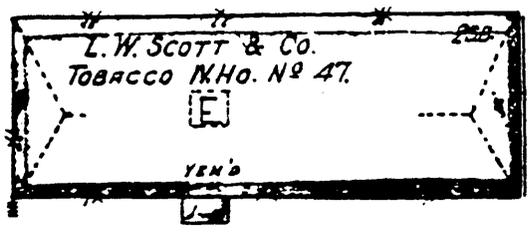


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Sanborn Map of
EDGERTON 1909

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