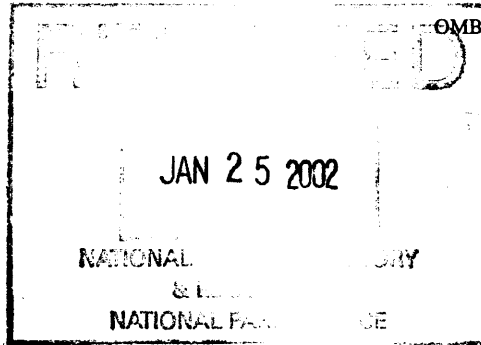


United States Department of Interior
National Park Service

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 North Main Street Historic District
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number	various, see inventory	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Fond du Lac	N/A	vicinity
state	Wisconsin	code	WI
county	Fond du Lac	code	039
zip code	53935	zip code	53935

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.)

Alicia J. Carr
Signature of certifying official/Title

January 17, 2002
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 commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

North Main Street Historic District

Fond du Lac

Wisconsin

Name of Property

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:)

Edson H. Beall 3/6/02

[Signature]

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

structure

site

object

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

contributing noncontributing

21 9 buildings

sites

structures

objects

21 9 total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources is previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

RECREATION/theater

DOMESTIC/hotel

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

RECREATION/theater

DOMESTIC/hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate

Late 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/

Classical Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation stone

walls brick

terra cotta

roof asphalt

other limestone

Narrative Description

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The North Main Street Historic District is made up of almost one complete block of North Main Street and one side of one-half of a block of South Main Street at the north end of Fond du Lac's downtown commercial district. Fond du Lac is a medium-sized city in east central Wisconsin, sitting at the tip of large Lake Winnebago. It is one of several medium-sized cities that are located on the south and west sides of Lake Winnebago that make up a large urban area in east-central Wisconsin. Several major highways run through and near Fond du Lac, including U. S. Highway 41, which runs along the west side of the city, and U. S. Highway 151 and State Highway 23, both of which run through the city near the downtown commercial district. These highways bring traffic into Fond du Lac and have helped it become a center of commerce and industry for the region.

The historic buildings in Fond du Lac's downtown commercial district are divided into two sections, the buildings in this historic district and the buildings in the already-listed South Main Street Historic District. These two groups of historic buildings are separated by almost a block of new construction and intensive remodeling that breaks up the old historic downtown streetscape. Because of this physical interruption, the city's historic downtown buildings had to be divided into two different historic districts.

Main Street is a wide, urban street that can support two lanes of traffic with parallel parking on both sides of the street. The wide concrete sidewalks cover the space between the buildings and the modern concrete curbs and gutters. The topography of the district is flat and the part of the district that runs along South Main Street is more formally landscaped with trees planted in the sidewalks between the buildings and the street. Also in this area, the streetlights are smaller and stylish. The trees only extend past a few buildings along North Main Street, and from this part of the district until its northern boundary, there is no landscaping and streetlights are attached to standard tall poles.

The district has a cohesive appearance for several reasons. Most of the buildings share party walls. Also, few buildings in the district sit on free-standing lots, so there are very few vacant spaces in the streetscape. Most of the buildings are constructed of brick and are two or three stories in height. Only the old Retlaw Hotel is an exception, being an eight-story building. Many of the buildings in the district have terra cotta decoration, which helps unify the buildings. Also, there are several large buildings in the district that have multiple storefronts and take up much of the space in the district. Another cohesive aspect of this district are its building styles. They are heavily classically-influenced due to the fact that most of the larger buildings were constructed after 1900.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 2 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

The district has clearly defined boundaries. To the south is a block of modern construction and remodeled buildings that forms a distinct barrier between this district and the South Main Street Historic District. To the north, there is a significant increase in the size and number of open spaces interspersed with primarily modern commercial buildings. To the west, there is mostly open spaces and a small group of public buildings that are not closely related to the commercial buildings along Main Street. And, to the east, the area has mixed uses and quickly changes into a residential part of the city.

The percentage of contributing to non-contributing buildings in this district is fairly good for a commercial district. Of the 31 buildings in the district, only 9, or less than one-third, are non-contributing. Most of these non-contributing buildings are small and do not detract from the overall historic streetscape of the district. Many of the buildings have late twentieth century storefronts, but, in most cases, the rest of the building has retained its integrity. The city of Fond du Lac and the downtown improvement district are working with building owners to improve and restore downtown buildings and it is hoped that the tax credit availability that comes with National Register listing will help in this effort.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 3 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

DESCRIPTION OF SELECTED BUILDINGS

Greek Revival

2 N. Main St.
Schmidt Sample Room
1852

The Schmidt Sample Room is a one-story building with a hip roof covered with standing seam metal and a metal cornice. The main block of the building is constructed of cut limestone in a random ashlar pattern. An addition to the rear of the building is constructed of bricks that have been painted. The main entrance sits at the corner of the building and is framed by two Corinthian columns. The modern entry door is topped with a transom and a modern, wood-shingled circular overhang. The other openings of the main block consist of large single lights and enclosed transoms topped with large wood cornice moldings. An opening in the rear ell is enclosed, but an old entrance is still extant. It has an enclosed transom and cornice molding.

Augustus McRae and William Bell of Milwaukee constructed this building for an early bank; it failed during the financial panic of 1857. Since that time, the building has primarily housed a saloon (soft drinks during Prohibition years) and is locally known as the Schmidt Sample Room, the name it had when one of Fond du Lac's most notorious events took place in the building.

In 1902, controversial temperance figure, Carry Nation, came to Fond du Lac to lecture on prohibition. She spoke to a group at a local park, glorifying her legendary "saloon smashing" escapades. The next day, after lecturing to railroad workers in North Fond du Lac, she came to downtown Fond du Lac, where she attempted to lecture again. Rain forced her and her entourage onto the streetcar and she stopped at this building, E. J. Schmidt's Saloon or Sample Room, and asked to speak. Schmidt agreed since he thought it would draw more customers. As Nation lectured about evil Germans and beer drinking, a patron confronted her and gave her a bottle of whiskey. She took out her famous hatchet and smashed the liquor bottle, and was reportedly restrained from doing more damage. The incident has sometimes been exaggerated to suggest that she smashed up the bar, but the newspapers only reported that she smashed a bottle. Since that time, this building has been an historic attraction and local landmark.¹

¹Newspaper clipping from the *Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter*, 12 December 1972, on file in the historical landmarks clipping files of the Fond du Lac Public Library, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin; Stan Gores, "The Night Carry Nation Pulled Out Her Hatchet at E. J. Schmidt's Bar," *Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter*, 25 June 1986, clipping on file in the historical landmarks clipping files of the Fond du Lac Public Library, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 4 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

Italianate

15 N. Main St.
Bischoff Block
1874

This three-story Italianate style commercial block is constructed of cream brick and has a brick corbelled cornice with inset panels and brick corbelled brackets. The third story of the building has tall, round-arched openings filled with two-over-two-light double-hung sashes decorated with heavy round-arched stone hoodmoldings with unusual arched keystones and corbel stops. Under the openings there are footed stone sills. The two central windows are narrower round-arched openings with similar round-arched hoodmoldings. Decorating these hoodmoldings is a tall round-arched molding with a small opening at the center. The arched openings of the third story have an arcaded effect. The second story also features tall openings filled with two-over-two-light double-hung sashes. These sashes are decorated with segmentally-arched stone label moldings with crown-shaped keystones and corbel stops. Again, the two central windows are narrower and have label moldings with a small opening like the ones that decorate the central windows of the third story.

Part of this building's storefront dates from a 1925 remodeling by the Wisconsin Power and Light Company, which was using it as its Public Service Building. The storefront was architecturally joined with new construction to the north that included a large brick arch that led to a bus depot, and a one-story building on the other side of the arch that was used as the bus depot waiting room. The storefront has retained its brick border above the transom, which was covered with metal paneling that has been removed revealing a wood surface. Based on a historic photograph, the 1925 storefront also appears to have been modified with new openings, probably during the late twentieth century. These openings are large, modern show windows flanking a large entrance.

This building was constructed in 1874 for Sophia Bischoff, who lost the building a few years later in a Sheriff's sale. Horace Brown owned it briefly until 1883, when Stephen Oberreich acquired it. Oberreich was the proprietor of the Lewis House, a long-time hotel that sat on the lot to the north of this building. Oberreich used the north half of the Bischoff block as part of the Lewis House for a few years, then converted it back to a retail storefront. The south half of the Bischoff Block housed the G. Block General Store during the 1880s and early 1890s. In 1913, the Oberreich family sold the building to the Eastern Wisconsin Railway and Light Company,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

later the Wisconsin Power and Light Company, and it was named the "Public Service Building." As indicated by its original name, the Eastern Wisconsin Railway and Light Company also operated the old electric interurban and local streetcar lines. In 1925, interurban service was being phased out in favor of bus service. In that year, the Wisconsin Power and Light company built the bus terminal to the north of the Bischoff Block and united the two buildings with similar architectural details at the storefront level. The Wisconsin Power and Light Company remained in this building until well into the 1960s.²

17-19 S. Main St.
Radford-Reinig Block
1876

The Radford-Reinig Block is also a three-story building constructed of cream brick and heavily decorated in the Italianate commercial style. The pressed metal cornice features a pediment and heavy brackets and modillions. It is attached to a brick corbelled cornice that features inset panels and a row of dentils. The third story openings are tall, round-arched, windows filled with two-over-two-light double-hung sashes. Topping the windows are massive round-arched stone hoodmoldings that feature carved decoration, tall keystones, and corbel stops. The central windows are narrower and have identical hoodmoldings. The windows have stone sills and the arches on the third story have an arcaded effect. The second story openings are tall, segmentally-arched windows filled with two-over-two-light, double-hung sashes. Topping the windows are massive segmentally-arched stone label moldings that have carved decoration, tall keystones, and corbel stops. The central windows are narrower and have identical label moldings. Thin pilasters accent the central windows on both stories.

The building has two storefronts that are both partially enclosed. The upper part of the north storefront is enclosed with vertical wood siding, as is the area underneath the medium-sized show windows. The south storefront has slightly larger modern show windows and a period entrance with a transom. An entrance to the upper floors is also extant to the south of the storefronts.

Local mason and brick manufacturer, Joseph Radford constructed this building in 1876. One of the first tenants in the building was John Reinig, a hardware merchant who had been located in

² Datestone; Deeds, Vol. 70, p. 164, Vol. 187, pp. 461-643, on file in the Register of Deeds Office, Fond du Lac City-County Building, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin; Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps for the City of Fond du Lac, on file in the Archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin; City Directories for the City of Fond du Lac, on file in the Fond du Lac Public Library, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin; "Public Opening Tonight," *The Daily Commonwealth*, 31 July 1925, p. 12.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 6 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

the old building on the site. Radford appears to have received a mortgage from Reinig to help construct the building, then in 1877 John Reinig purchased the building from Radford. After John Reinig ended his hardware store business in the late 1890s, the principal business located here through the early 1920s was the plumbing shop of David Ahern & Son, although John Reinig's son, William, still owned the building. After this time, one of the storefronts was occupied by several different businesses, while the other was a long-time restaurant under several different owners. William Reinig owned the building until his death in 1935.³

32-46 N. Main St.	50-54 N. Main St.
Reinig Block	Reinig Block II
1901	c.1910
Builder: Matthew Dreis	

The Reinig Block and the Reinig Block II are late examples of the Italianate style with some elements of the Classical Revival Style. They are large, commercial, three-story buildings that are separated by a small two-story block that was built shortly after the first Reinig Block, around 1901. The first Reinig Block is a three-story building constructed of red brick that has five individual storefronts and one double storefront. The building is topped by a simple, pressed metal cornice that has two projecting pediments, dentils, and large paneled brackets that sit on top of shallow brick pilasters. Under the cornice is a row of brick corbelling that suggests small brackets. The third story openings are filled with medium-sized segmentally-arched windows filled with both historic and replacement single-light, double-hung sashes. The openings are decorated with narrow brick segmental arches. The second story openings are much taller, but are also segmentally-arched and decorated with segmental brick arches. Three-quarters of these openings are filled with replacement single-light, double-hung sashes. In the south section of the building, the openings are partially enclosed with wood panels and modern single-light sashes.

Most of the storefronts of this building have seen some alterations, particularly the enclosure of transoms, but the two northernmost storefronts still have large period transoms filled with panels of small glass panes and large period show windows below. Their central, recessed entrances and an entry to the upper floors are also extant. The neighboring storefront to the south has an enclosed transom and larger show windows, along with some extant iron columns and a recessed central entry. The large double-storefront has been remodeled with a modern awning covering the transom, and large, modern show windows. The last storefront to the south features an

³ Datestone; Deeds, Vol. 39, p. 311, Vol. 247, p. 396; Mortgage Deeds, Vol. 39, p. 636, party wall agreement; Sanborn-Perris Maps; City Directories.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 7 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

enclosed transom, large, modern show windows and an extant entrance to the upper floors of the building.

The Reinig Block II has many of the same details as the original Reinig Block, except that its upper level openings are all enclosed with bricks, although the outline of these windows can still be seen. The storefront is long and modern and is attached to the building at 48 N. Main Street that sits between the two Reinig Blocks. The storefront has an enclosed transom, modern large show windows and a modern entrance. The current owner of the Reinig Block II is interested in using the tax credits to restore this building.

John Reinig was a local entrepreneur who came to Fond du Lac in 1866. He operated a hardware store (stoves and tinwork) until around 1890, then organized the Fond du Lac Malt and Grain Company, which was located in this part of North Main Street. In the summer of 1900, Reinig contracted with builder Matthew Dreis to erect a large building with five single storefronts and one double storefront on the land along Main Street that was just east of his Malt and Grain factory. The cost of building was estimated at \$35,000. The building was completed in 1901, but Reinig died in 1905 after a fall from the roof of his house.⁴

After the Reinig Block was completed, one of the largest tenants, taking up three storefronts, was the Fond du Lac House Furnishing Company, but, by 1907, it had been replaced by the Kremer Brothers Furniture Store, which was located in the double storefront and remained there for several years. Another early business in the block was the Yabroff Dry Goods store, which remained there for a short time. A number of storefront tenants came and went in this big block during the twentieth century, the most long-lived being a plumbing shop, a Gambles Store, a grocery, and a paint store.⁵

The Reinig II Block was probably completed by John Reinig's son, William, who took over his father's interest in the Malt and Grain factory. The Reinig II Block was constructed around 1910 and one of its early tenants was the same Yabroff Dry Goods store that had been located in the older Reinig Block. But the most important firm to be housed in this block was the Leath Furniture Store. In 1926, the manager of A. Leath and Company announced that they would establish a branch of their furniture stores in the Reinig II Block. He stated the store would occupy all three floors of the building with large furniture and accessories departments. The Leath Company has remained in this building from 1926 up to the present time. Some time after

⁴ Maurice McKenna, ed., *Fond du Lac County Wisconsin Past and Present, Vol. II*, Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912, p. 262; "Will Build Reinig Stores," *Fond du Lac Daily Reporter*, 24 July 1900, p. 3.

⁵ Sanborn-Perris Maps; City Directories.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 8 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

World War II, the store expanded into the small building at 48 N. Main Street and a new storefront was constructed that spanned both buildings. This storefront is still extant today.⁶

Classical Revival

1-3 S. Main St.
Collins Building
c.1910

The Collins Building is a two-story commercial block with details from the Classical Revival style. The front and side elevations are built with glazed terra cotta bricks and there is a projecting terra cotta cornice that spans both elevations. Between the openings of the second story on the front or west elevation and wrapping around the south or side elevation are several large classically-decorated terra cotta shields. The second story openings are tripartite windows consisting of a large single pane flanked by two single-light, double-hung sashes. A narrow cornice runs across the front and side elevations under these windows. On the front or main elevation, the windows flank a larger opening at the center of the second story.

The storefront has been modernized with an enclosed transom covered by a modern awning, medium-sized show windows, and a high, modern, brick apron. The corner entrance is a modern glass and metal door with a transom. To the south of the modern storefront is an entrance to the second floor. It still features its terra cotta surround that includes an elaborate entablature cornice decorated with dentils and brackets. A transom sits above this entrance. Along the side elevation of the first story there are five small windows that lead to a rear storefront at the northeast corner of the building. This storefront has also been remodeled with modern windows and paneling.

The Collins Building was constructed primarily as a "modern" office and commercial building of the early twentieth century. Initially, the first floor housed a saloon, but during Prohibition in 1920 the saloon changed to a restaurant, then a drug store, then back to a restaurant. The second floor housed medical, dental, insurance, and real estate offices, among other professionals, over the years.⁷

⁶ McKenna, p. 263; City Directories; "A. Leath and Co. Will Open Furniture Store on Saturday; Building Completely Changed," *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 26 May 1926, p. 5.

⁷ Sanborn-Perris Maps; City Directories.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 9 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

1 N. Main St.
Hotel Retlaw
1922
Architect: Herbert W. Tullgren

The eight-story Hotel Retlaw, currently known as the Ramada Plaza, is a Classical Revival building constructed primarily of red brick with limestone accents. The building has a flat roof and a generally rectangular plan. The south and west elevations of the main block have similar details. The two-story base of the west elevation has four bays faced in limestone with flat pilasters separating each bay. The two central bays project slightly from the rest of the wall and are part of a shallow pavilion that rises to the top of the building. The ground floor has large rectilinear plate glass windows. The area above the windows is decorated with three stone inset panels. The second story has banks of three six-over-six-light double-hung sash windows surmounted by a heavy limestone cornice. Hanging over the main entrance on the west elevation is a modern stainless steel canopy.

The upper five stories of the west elevation have six windows across, with four central windows in the shallow projecting pavilion. The lintel of each window is limestone, as are the tabbed surrounds that form vertical bands rising the full height of the midsection. The top floor is demarcated by a stone belt course and a cornice. The windows of the top floor also have brick lintels decorated with tabbed surrounds. Thick tabbed limestone bands decorate the corners of the central pavilion and the corners of the building on this level, as well. Above the top floor is a high brick parapet with a simple stone cap.

The south elevation has a two-story base with eight bays punctuated with large rectilinear openings decorated with small sidelights. Above the large openings are four inset stone panels. The second story has three window bands of six-over-six light double-hung sashes. The upper floors of the building on this elevation also have a shallow projecting pavilion along the eastern part of the wall. Similar limestone details seen on the upper floors of the west elevation decorate the windows of the upper floors of the south elevation, except in a slightly different pattern. Instead of decorating all of the windows of the elevation, the decoration extends only to the second and third, sixth, seventh, and eighth, and twelfth and fourteenth windows along the wall.

In 1923, a year after the main block was completed, an addition was made to the building at the rear. It was placed at a right angle to the main block and was originally to be a combination apartment house-hotel addition. The construction of this addition was identical to the main block except that no limestone trim was used other than for window lintels. This treatment matches the east and north elevations of the main block.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 10 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

Within the space formed by the 1923 addition and the main block, another addition was made in 1927. This new two-story section was also designed by Tullgren and faced East Division Street. The two bays of the main elevation of the addition are separated by flat, limestone pilasters with an inset panel faced in red brick. The first floor of each bay has three six-over-six-light sashes with an inset panel below each window filled with red brick laid in a basket weave bond. The window surrounds and window heads are dark wood, imitating half-timbering and there is a large panel above each window group filled with half-timbering. The second floor of each bay has a small window with sidelights and the roofline is accented with a stone cornice and brick parapet.

Walter Schroeder of Milwaukee built the Hotel Retlaw in 1922. Schroeder inherited his father's finance and insurance business in 1897 and, in 1912, he purchased the new Wisconsin Hotel in Milwaukee. In 1914, Schroeder took active management of the Wisconsin Hotel and made it a successful venture, spawning a hotel career that included the ownership of the Hotel Astor in Milwaukee (1918-20), the Hotel Northland in Green Bay (1923), the Hotel Wausau in Wausau (1923), the Hotel Loraine in Madison (1924), the Hotel Duluth, Duluth, Minnesota (1924), the Hotel Schroeder in Milwaukee (1926-28), and the Hotel Retlaw. Schroeder used noted Milwaukee architect Herbert Tullgren for his hotel designs, including this building. The Retlaw was a showplace when it opened in Fond du Lac. At eight stories in height, it towered over the downtown commercial district, and essentially drove out all of the downtown competition. For much of the twentieth century, the Retlaw was a prominent location for visiting dignitaries such as John F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey, during their campaigns for President. The hotel also hosted Eleanor Roosevelt and numerous entertainers until it began to decline in the 1970s. During the 1980s, plans to turn the hotel into housing for the elderly fell through, and it was acquired by the Sheraton hotel chain and renovated. In recent years, it was again renovated and it is currently known as the Ramada Plaza, catering to business, convention, and general public clientele.⁸ The Hotel Retlaw was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

⁸ National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Hotel Retlaw, 1984, on file in the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 11 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

27 N. Main St.
Fischer Fond du Lac Theater Building
1925
Architect: R. Levine & Company
Builder: Gohman & Levine
Interior Designer: H. Lionel Webster

The Fischer Fond du Lac Theater Building is a long, three-story, commercial, apartment and movie theater building adorned with Classical Revival details. There are seven storefronts in the commercial section of the building and a later-added storefront in the movie theater section of the building at the south end. The second and third stories of the commercial building house apartments and there is an apartment on the third story of the theater section of the building. The main or west elevation of the building is constructed of a warm, light brown brick and heavily accented with white terra cotta details. The small theater section at the south end of the building is totally covered on the upper level by terra cotta.

The commercial section of the building is decorated with a raised parapet punctuated with eight short, classical pilasters of terra cotta. Under the parapet is a terra cotta cornice that has a frieze decorated with small, carved panels. Terra cotta beltcourses run on the top and bottoms of the windows and form a spandrel between the two stories. Each story has four sets of three double-hung sash windows with a single lower light and vertically-divided upper lights. Between each set of three windows are two identical sashes and single sashes flank each end of each upper story. On the third story, all of the openings are decorated with terra cotta arches filled in with raised foliage.

Over the four sets of triple windows, the arch is elliptically shaped and filled in with a central wreath flanked by foliated scrolls. The sash that sits at the center of the commercial elevation, as well as the two end sashes are decorated with large round arches filled with another variation of the wreath and foliage design. The other windows on this story have smaller round arches filled in with a similar raised terra cotta motif. The spandrels between the second and third story triple windows are accented with plaques decorated with a swag and shield motif. Smaller plaques sit between each of the individual windows. The windows of the second story are identical to those on the third story, but are decorated only with the terra cotta belt courses.

Another terra cotta belt course sits above the storefronts, and terra cotta panels decorate the tops of columns between storefront units. The storefronts, themselves have been somewhat altered with paneling enclosing the transoms. At the center of the building on the first story is the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 12 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

entrance to the upstairs apartments. It is arched and decorated with a terra cotta cornice supported by brackets. The entry door has an extant transom.

The movie theater section of the building is covered with terra cotta that is lavishly decorated with classical motifs. A cornice tops this part of the building and at each end of the third story, there are fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals decorated with wreaths. Next to these pilasters are two sashes with single lower lights topped with vertically-divided upper lights. Topping these windows are panels with a swag and ribbon motif sitting on a molding decorated with Xs. Above these panels and running vertically along the interior side of each window are bands of small panels that match the cornice decoration on the commercial part of the building. At the center of the third floor is a set of three windows that are framed with an elaborate classical hoodmolding and surround. The hoodmolding features a segmented pediment that is filled with raised terra cotta decoration, including a shield and scroll foliage. The "X" molding surrounds the windows on the top and sides and an inset panel sits under the window unit.

Below the third floor windows there are two large terra cotta eagles with shields that sit over a large inset panel decorated with a heavy rope molding. Inside the plain inset panel are two raised panels decorated with classical figures. Between this panel and the storefront is a flat brick cornice that matches the one running across the commercial part of the building. Framing the storefront is terra cotta tile and a heavier rope molding. A modern storefront has replaced the original theater entrance. This storefront has a panel enclosing the transom area and modern plate glass show windows.

Fischer's Fond du Lac Theater Building was one of two large combination commercial-theater buildings constructed in 1925 in the city's downtown and in this district; the other is the old Retlaw Theater, which will be discussed next. The two theaters opened within one month of each other, with the Fond du Lac Theater getting a one-month jump on the Retlaw, opening on November 25, 1925. The Fischer Fond du Lac Theater was built for the Fischer Paramount Theaters company of Chicago under the ownership of Frank W. Fischer. Fischer came to Fond du Lac in 1923 looking for a site for a large movie theater. After acquiring 140 feet on North Main Street all the way back to North Portland Street, Fischer's company contracted to clear four old commercial buildings on Main Street and several outbuildings along Portland Street for the new building. In March of 1925, construction began on the building and the Fond du Lac Theater was opened on November 25, 1925. The remainder of the building still needed several weeks' work to open, but Fischer probably wanted to open the theater before his competition, the Retlaw Theater, which was fast nearing completion further down the street.⁹

⁹ "Fischer Theater Opens Its Doors Tonight; First Show at 7 p.m.," *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 25 November 1925, Section 2, p. 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 13 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

The Fond du Lac Theater was a movie palace typical of many constructed in the 1920s. Its interior was decorated in the popular French Renaissance royal palace style, which was one of three major interior motifs for movie palaces. The foyer, lobby, lounges, and the auditorium were lavishly decorated with ornamental plasterwork, chandeliers, carpeting, and painted murals. The auditorium could seat almost 2,000 people and consisted of a large main floor, a mezzanine lounge, and a large balcony that wrapped around the walls of the auditorium. The ceiling of the auditorium was reported to have a huge dome, plaster decoration, a chandelier, and murals. The pipe organ, a necessary piece of equipment during the silent movie era, was reported to have cost \$40,000 and was located next to a full orchestra pit. Completing the auditorium was a large stage, suitable for the vaudeville shows that often accompanied the movies during that era.¹⁰

Not only was the Fischer Fond du Lac Theater Building a beautiful movie theater, it was also a fine seven-storefront commercial building. At first occupied by just a few businesses, most of the storefronts were occupied most of the time during the mid-twentieth century, even during the years of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Above the storefronts were eighteen apartments when the building was opened. Each apartment had a 14x16 foot living room, a large dressing room and bathroom, a dining room, and a kitchenette. The dressing rooms all had Murphy beds that unfolded into the living room. The dining rooms featured built-in china cabinets and the kitchenettes had gas stoves and modern iceboxes that could be filled with ice from the hallway.¹¹

23 S. Main St.

Retlaw Theater Building

1925

Architect: Rapp and Rapp

Builder: Immel Construction Company

The Retlaw Theater Building is a three-story, commercial and theater structure constructed of red brick with Classical Revival details. The main elevation has two sections, the north movie theater section, which is covered with terra cotta, and the southern three-fourths of the building that houses the commercial space. The theater section has a wide cornice of terra cotta blocks that are embellished with raised carving. The cornice has an arched parapet at the roofline. At

¹⁰ "Fischer Theater Ready to Open, Finest Example of Builder's Art," *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 25 November 1925, Section 2, p. 2.

¹¹ "Business Block Important Part of New Building," *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 25 November 1925, Section 2, p. 2; "Eighteen Cozy Apartments in Theater Building," *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 25 November 1925, Section 2, p. 11.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 14 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

the center of upper floors of the theater section, there is an arched opening that was once filled with over 30 panes of plate glass. It is now enclosed with metal panels. The first story of the theater section of the building has a modernized theater entrance with glass and metal doors topped with transoms flanked by modern brick walls. The original marquee, with its vertical "Retlaw sign, is not extant. A modern metal canopy with marquee panels currently covers the main entrance.

The second floor of the main elevation of the commercial section of the building is punctuated with tall and narrow openings filled with modern glazing. Originally, the openings were filled with casements topped with transoms. Above the openings are small terra cotta blocks embossed with foliated decoration. A wide terra cotta cornice separates the second and third stories of this elevation. The third story was originally a "roof garden" dance pavilion that was enclosed with large, multi-light, windows, including a large multi-light bay on the main elevation. This story was enclosed with modern red brick and six narrow windows that are similar to the second story openings. The first story of the main elevation in the commercial section of the building is faced with terra cotta tiles and the same material covers two piers set between storefronts. The storefronts are modern with large plate glass show windows and modern entrances.

A larger terra cotta clad pier wraps around the southwest corner of the building. The commercial section of the south elevation is similar to the commercial section of the main elevation, including the narrow windows on the second and third stories, the wide terra cotta cornice and small terra cotta blocks over second story windows, and the terra cotta veneered storefronts. On the south elevation, the storefronts are largely original. There is one large double storefront with large plate glass windows, and a smaller storefront at the southwest corner that has a projecting glass and terra cotta veneer front. At the east end of the commercial section of the building is an entrance covered with a modern metal canopy.

Completing the south elevation of this building is the theater section that sits to the east of the commercial section. This part of the theater section houses the auditorium. It is a three-story, red brick structure with an arched parapet and narrow terra cotta cornice. Three very large rectangular outlines made up of brick create the illusion of massive inset panels, and this decoration takes up much of the wall space of this elevation, while the first story is undecorated. Two exits sit at each end of the first story of the theater section of the south elevation.

Not to be outdone by Chicago theater entrepreneur Frank Fischer, who began construction on the Fond du Lac Theater Building in 1924, Milwaukee hotel magnate and owner of the Retlaw Hotel in Fond du Lac, Walter Schroeder, announced in that same year that he would build his own movie palace and commercial building about one and one-half blocks down Main Street from his

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 15 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

hotel. Luckily for Schroeder, his new Retlaw Hotel, completed in 1922, had driven the old Palmer House, the city's most prominent hotel before the Retlaw, out of business, and Schroeder acquired the old hotel site for his theater. In September of 1924, he announced that he would be building a theater and commercial building with a large ballroom on the third floor. His plans were to decorate it with terra cotta and use a similar brick as his Retlaw Hotel. Initially, Schroeder announced that H. W. Tullgren, his hotel architect, would draw up the plans for the theater building, but when the theater opened in December of 1925, the newspaper reported that the architects for the project were noted Chicago theater designers Rapp and Rapp.¹²

The builder for the new theater was local contractor J. W. Immel and his Immel Construction Company and the building cost around \$600,000 to complete. Not only was the new Retlaw Theater a movie palace in the Rapp and Rapp tradition, but the building housed a beautiful glassed-in roof garden that was used for dancing. It was the only facility of its kind outside of Milwaukee. The Retlaw Theater was smaller than the Fond du Lac Theater, but it was the largest one-floor theater in the state.¹³

When the Retlaw Theater opened, a special section of the *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth* was printed about the new building. Among the many articles and pictures of the building printed in this special section, was an article written by the theater designers, C. W. and George L. Rapp. In it they described the appointments of their new theater. The architects described their building as "classic in design, faced with a buff colored terra cotta." They stated that the ticket lobby was given a marble base and wainscoting, plaster walls grooved to look like stone, and mirrors, large windows and drapes. They gave the main lobby a patterned terrazzo floor and details they referred to as being carried out "in an Italian style of architecture." Rapp and Rapp identify the décor in the theater auditorium as "modified Spanish design," with decorations, drapes, lighting fixtures and hand painted murals that give "an effect of a pleasing and homelike room."¹⁴

The Rapps described the "large golden dome" at the center of the ceiling in the auditorium. The dome was illuminated by concealed reflectors and colored lamps. While sitting in the auditorium, the patrons could watch "the play of colors on the rich golden surface of the dome—

¹² "350,000 Theater for City," *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 9 September 1924, p. 1; "Open New Theater April 1, Says Schroeder," *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 10 September 1924, p. 5; *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 26 December 1925, p. 1.

¹³ *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 26 December 1925, theater section, p. 1; "The Golden Age of the Retlaw Theater," *Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter*, 27 April, 197, article on file in the local history files of the Fond du Lac Public Library, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

¹⁴ C. W. and George L. Rapp, "New Retlaw Theater Among Finest Says Designers in Describing City's New Playhouse Ready for Dedication," *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 26 December 1925, theater section, p. 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 16 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

colors ranging from a deep purple, delicate rose, and soft amber.” Similar concealed colored lights also decorated the proscenium. The auditorium was richly appointed with brocaded wall hangings and the hanging on the stage was made of “cut mohair enriched with a beautiful lambrequin in the center having a design appliquéd thereon.” The Rapps go on to boast of the modern equipment of the theater, including dressing rooms, modern lighting and rigging systems, comfortable ventilating systems, and “one of the finest organs that has ever been installed in a theater of this size.”¹⁵

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 17 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

BUILDING INVENTORY

Address	Historic Name	Style	Date of Construction	Status
1 N. Main St.	Hotel Retlaw	Classical Revival	1922, 1923, 1927 ¹⁶	C
2 N. Main St.	Schmidt's Sample Room	Greek Revival	1852 ¹⁷	C
4 N. Main St.	Harness Shop	Contemporary	c.1870, c.1990 ¹⁸	NC
6 N. Main St.	Krumme Building	Italianate	c.1883 ¹⁹	C
7 N. Main St.	Connell Block	Commercial Vernacular	1909 ²⁰	C
8 N. Main St.	Saloon	Contemporary	c.1875, c. 1970 ²¹	NC
14 N. Main St.	Diedrich Hardware Store	Modern	c.1936 ²²	NC
15 N. Main St.	Bischoff Block	Italianate	1874 ²³	C
16 N. Main St.	Flatten Block (pt)	Classical Revival	1865, c.1925 ²⁴	C
18 N. Main St.	Flatten Block (pt)	Italianate	1865 ²⁵	C
20 N. Main St.	Commercial Building	Italianate	c.1880 ²⁶	C
21-23 N. Main St.	Interurban-Bus Station	Twentieth Century Commercial	1925 ²⁷	C
24 N. Main St.	Gerhard Bakery-Gough Grocery	Contemporary	c.1875, c.1990 ²⁸	NC
25 N. Main St.	Commercial Building	Contemporary	c.1875, c.1980 ²⁹	NC
27 N. Main St.	Fischer's Fond du Lac	Classical Revival	1925 ³⁰	C
28 N. Main St.	German-American Bank	Contemporary	c.1873, c.1980 ³¹	NC

¹⁶ National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Hotel Retlaw.

¹⁷ Newspaper clipping from the *Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter*, 12 December 1972.

¹⁸ Sanborn-Perris Maps; City Directories, field observation.

¹⁹ Sanborn-Perris Maps; City Directories.

²⁰ "Prepared for Big Dedication," *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 30 September 1909, p. 5.

²¹ Sanborn-Perris Maps, City Directories, field observation.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Datestone; Deeds, Vol. 70, p. 164, party wall agreement.

²⁴ Mortgage Deeds, Vol. 179, p. 404, party wall agreement; Sanborn-Perris Maps, City Directories.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ "Public Opening Tonight," *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 31 July 1925, p. 12.

²⁸ Sanborn-Perris Maps, City Directories, field observation.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ "Fischer Theater Opens Its Doors Tonight."

³¹ C. W. Butterfield, *History of Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin*, Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1880, p. 639; field observation.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 18 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

BUILDING INVENTORY

<i>Address</i>	<i>Historic Name</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Date of Construction</i>	<i>Status</i>
30 N. Main St.	Saloon	Classical Revival	c.1900 ³²	C
32-46 N. Main St.	Reinig Block	Classical Revival	1901 ³³	C
41 N. Main St.	Conaughton House Barber Shop	Contemporary Twentieth Century Commercial	c.1880, c.1970 ³⁴ c.1920 ³⁵	NC
45 N. Main St.	Saloon	Commercial Vernacular	c.1905 ³⁶	C
47-51 N. Main St.	McCready Building	Twentieth Century Commercial	1924 ³⁷	C
48 N. Main St.	Grocery Store	Commercial Vernacular	c.1901 ³⁸	C
50-54 N. Main St.	Reinig Block II	Classical Revival	c.1910 ³⁹	C
56 N. Main St.	Crescent Motor Co.	Commercial Vernacular	c.1910 ⁴⁰	C
59-61 N. Main St.	Connell-Dockery Block	Commercial Vernacular	c.1905 ⁴¹	C
1-3 S. Main St.	Collins Building	Classical Revival	c.1910 ⁴²	C
5 S. Main St.	Commercial Building	Commercial Vernacular	c.1920, c.1990 ⁴³	NC
7 S. Main St.	Commercial Building	Contemporary	c.1920, c.1995 ⁴⁴	NC

³² Sanborn-Perris Maps; City Directories.

³³ "Will Build Reinig Stores."

³⁴ Sanborn-Perris Maps; City Directories; field observation.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Mortgage Deeds, Vol. 204, p. 183, Vol. 208, 485; Deeds, Vol. 204, p. 571; City Directories.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Deeds, Vol. 144, p. 460, Vol. 164, p. 287, Vol. 187, p. 560; City Directories.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 19 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

BUILDING INVENTORY

<i>Address</i>	<i>Historic Name</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Date of Construction</i>	<i>Status</i>
9 S. Main St.	Edith's Building	Commercial Vernacular	c.1950 ⁴⁵	C
	Erhart Cigar Factory	Commercial Vernacular	c.1890, c.1950 ⁴⁶	
17-19 S. Main St.	Radford-Reinig Block	Italianate	1876 ⁴⁷	C
23 S. Main St.	Retlaw Theater Building	Classical Revival	1925 ⁴⁸	C

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Datestone; Mortgage Deeds, Vol. 39, p. 636, Vol. 45, pp. 360, 469, 531, Vol. 51, p. 87.

⁴⁸ *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 26 December 1925, p. 1.

North Main Street Historic District
Name of Property

Fond du Lac
County and State

Wisconsin

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.)

- 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 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.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Commerce

Period of Significance

1852-1950

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Rapp and Rapp
Tullgren, Herbert

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 1 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

SIGNIFICANCE¹

The North Main Street Historic District is being nominated for the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C for both architectural and historical significance. It is being nominated under criterion A for local historical significance because the district has been an important part of Fond du Lac's commercial development since the later nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century. Along with its historic neighbor, the South Main Street Historic District, the North Main Street Historic District represents the growth and development of commercial activities in the city during its historic period. This commercial activity not only served the city of Fond du Lac, but also a regional area in east-central Wisconsin. The district was the site of important commercial activities related to retailing, hotels, and entertainment, and the most significant buildings related to hotels and entertainment, as well as some of the best commercial buildings in the city, are located within the North Main Street Historic District.

The North Main Street Historic District is also being nominated under criterion C, for local architectural significance. The district has some fine examples of late nineteenth and early twentieth century architectural styles, in particular the Italianate commercial style and the Classical Revival style. Also, two of the buildings are associated with important architects of the early twentieth century. As a whole, the district has a good level of integrity with buildings that have much of their historic details intact, including several buildings that are good examples of the use of a popular early twentieth century decorative material, terra cotta.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Between 1672 and 1829, the area at the southern end of Lake Winnebago was visited by French explorers, missionaries and fur trappers; and, trading posts were built in what is now the city of Fond du Lac. These early explorers and traders found much Native American activity, particularly along lower Lake Winnebago. The Native Americans hunted and fished along the lake and there were at least three villages in the area that would become Fond du Lac.²

In 1829, James Duane Doty, along with several companions, traveled from Green Bay to Prairie du Chien looking for sites to develop. Among the sites they viewed was an area where the Fond

¹ This footnote relates to the period of significance given on the first page of Section 8 of the nomination form. The period of significance encompasses the earliest date of construction in the district to 1950. The period of significance includes all dates of construction for the buildings in the district, along with historic additions and remodeling. The period also includes the dates when these buildings housed their most significant historic commercial activities.

² Carol Lohry Cartwright, *City of Fond du Lac Intensive Survey Report*, Fond du Lac: City of Fond du Lac, 1992, pp. 9-10, 21-23.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 2 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

du Lac River flows into Lake Winnebago. In 1835, after the federal government overcame Native American claims to the area, Doty and George McWilliams purchased 3,705 acres of this land under the name of the Fond du Lac Company. Within these acres, Doty also drew the city's original plat of 33 city blocks with 1800 lots.³

In 1836, the historic Military Road came through Fond du Lac on its way between Green Bay and Prairie du Chien, an event that helped early settlement in the state. Looking to capitalize on the new road, the Fond du Lac Company established a tavern, inn and land office at the site of the new community. Brothers Colwert and Edward Pier, with Colwert's wife, Fanny, agreed to run this business in a log cabin, becoming the first permanent white settlers in Fond du Lac.⁴

In 1838, physician Mason C. Darling, who was recruited to the new settlement by James Doty, arrived in Fond du Lac. As a fee for locating there, the Fond du Lac Company gave Darling 80 acres of prime land in the new plat, along with some nearby farmland. In a shrewd, but underhanded, economic move, Darling legally blocked the Fond du Lac Company from selling their lots for a time, while selling the lots from his own 80-acre parcel and some additional land he had obtained. Much of Darling's land was in what would develop as downtown Fond du Lac, and Darling quickly became wealthy. Additionally, Darling promoted the settlement by giving away some lots, donating land for the county courthouse, acquiring the postmaster appointment, and opening a hotel. But, despite Darling's efforts, Fond du Lac grew slowly during the 1840s, and only 400 people lived there in 1847.⁵

During the 1850s and 1860s, the population of Fond du Lac grew rapidly, the result of two important developments. The first was the development of an important rail link. In 1851, ground was broken for the Rock River Valley Railroad, a line out of Janesville, Wisconsin. This line was reorganized in 1855 and absorbed by the large Chicago NorthWestern Railroad Company (CNW) in 1859. The Fond du Lac stop was part of the CNW's rail line that they developed through eastern Wisconsin during the 1860s, a line that became one of the most important transportation lines in the state.⁶

The second development that changed Fond du Lac was the lumber industry. Fond du Lac was an early "sawmill town," processing the timber that came down the Fox River system from areas north of the city. The first sawmill built in Fond du Lac operated in 1846-1847, then reopened in 1849, and operated until 1855. During the 1850s and 1860s, more sawmills were established in

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 108.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 3 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

Fond du Lac. In 1873, at the peak of the lumber industry in the community, the city had 18 lumber and wood products mills that employed over 1,400 workers, who processed 67,000,000 feet of lumber and 2.3 million dollars worth of wood products.⁷

Largely due to these developments, the population of Fond du Lac rose to almost 5,000 in the early 1850s, then doubled to 10,000 during the 1860s. At the peak of the lumber boom, Fond du Lac had just over 15,000 residents, 18 churches, six banks, and a dozen hotels. In order to house all of these new residents, a building boom began in the city. This boom included the development of downtown Fond du Lac, as well as three residential neighborhoods that grew up to the east, west and south of the downtown. Like most pioneer-era downtowns in Wisconsin, Fond du Lac's early downtown consisted mainly of frame buildings, usually fairly small, except for the occasional larger pioneer hotel. These old frame buildings were largely replaced in the later nineteenth century with brick blocks, as the downtown grew and expanded.⁸

After the lumber industry died out in the 1880s, Fond du Lac's economy slowed for a while. Although the city had other industries, none could rival the size of the lumber mills and wood products factories. But, the large influx of people to the city during the mid-nineteenth century, along with the farmers in the surrounding area, created a high demand for consumer goods. The result was the Fond du Lac's downtown continued to grow and develop during this era. By 1884, the city's commercial business district was spread out along 10 blocks of North and South Main Street. The highest concentration of commercial buildings was in the several blocks south of this district. At this time, North Main Street was at the north end of the downtown business district, and its most significant growth and development would come at the turn of and the first three decades of the twentieth century. This development coincided with a revival of the city's industrial economy.⁹

After the turn of the twentieth century, new or expanded industries revived the city's industrial economy. Large repair shops and division headquarters for both the Soo Line and the Chicago and North Western railroads in North Fond du Lac employed almost 2,000 men by 1912. Several industries, including the Fred Rueping Leather Company, the Moore and Galloway Lumber Company, and the Giddings and Lewis Company, employed another 1,500 workers at that time. Several smaller industries, such as the Gurney Refrigerator Company, the Fond du Lac Table Manufacturing Company, the Northern Casket Company, the Vulcan Manufacturing Company,

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹ National Register of Historic Places nomination for the South Main Street Historic District, 1991, on file in the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin; Sanborn-Perris Maps for the City of Fond du Lac, on file in the Archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 4 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

and the Galloway-West Dairy Products Company employed almost 1,000 workers in 1912. These companies continued to grow during the twentieth century; in particular, the Giddings and Lewis Company, the Vulcan Manufacturing Company, and the Galloway-West Company. They were the core of Fond du Lac's industrial economy in the twentieth century that helped the city become one of the largest industrial centers in east-central Wisconsin.¹⁰

The growth of industry during this period is reflected in the development of this district, which was an expansion of the entire downtown commercial district in Fond du Lac. Sanborn-Perris maps show few major changes in the district between 1884 and 1898. But, beginning with the construction of the large Reinig Block in 1901, the district expanded and many building sites were redeveloped. Between 1902 and 1908, several new brick blocks replaced old frame buildings or filled in vacant lots along North Main Street. Then, between 1908 and 1915, this trend increased dramatically. Specifically, the Reinig Block II and the Crescent Motor Company filled out most of the west side of North Main Street in the district. Several new buildings were also added to the east side of North Main Street and South Main Street in the district, including the impressive terra-cotta clad Collins Building at the corner of South Main and East Division streets.¹¹

Between 1915 and 1930, though, the most prominent buildings in the district, other than the Reinig Blocks, were constructed. They included the tall Hotel Retlaw in 1922, 1923, and 1927; the Fond du Lac Theater Building in 1925; and the Retlaw Theater Building, also in 1925. Another significant building constructed in the district was the Interurban-Bus Station, constructed in 1920. Although a relatively small building, it, and the bus barn behind it (not extant), was important for the downtown because it was the hub of what was to become the most important public transportation link in the city, particularly after the decline of the railroads in the mid-twentieth century.

The Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II halted much of the building and remodeling activity in downtown Fond du Lac, but the commercial activity in the area remained high, especially during the 1940s and 1950s. Fond du Lac's large downtown had a variety of specialty, department and chain stores that drew a regional trade. But, during the 1960s and 1970s, trade in Fond du Lac's downtown stores began to decline, as new retail opportunities grew up in other nearby cities and on Fond du Lac's suburban west side. New supermarkets and discount stores in Fond du Lac itself and in nearby communities began to attract local and regional shoppers and hurt downtown businesses. Traditional downtown businesses began to move out or close in downtown Fond du Lac. Also, on the city's west side, one of the early

¹⁰ Cartwright, pp. 11-12.

¹¹ Sanborn-Perris Maps.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 5 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

regional shopping malls was developed in the late 1960s, further eroding downtown's customer base. During the last several decades, there has been an increase in storefront vacancies in the downtown and many commercial businesses have been replaced with offices. Sitting in the middle of the Fond du Lac's historic downtown is a block of large, modern office buildings that has broken up the commercial streetscape.

In the last decade, though, city officials and downtown businesspeople have been working on revitalizing Fond du Lac's downtown, including creating the South Main Street Historic District and this district to provide tax credit and other incentives to property owners. The successful renovation (twice) of the old Retlaw Hotel has been a major success story for downtown. And, although offices are as numerous as retail businesses in the downtown, it is still an important commercial center, housing specialty businesses that serve a local and regional customer base.

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: ARCHITECTURE

The North Main Street Historic District is significant in the area of architecture at the local level because several of its buildings are good examples of popular nineteenth and early twentieth century architectural styles and because, as a whole, the district presents a relatively intact streetscape of historic buildings that reflect the growth and development of this district during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The district has a good level of integrity, with much of the historic fabric of buildings intact, especially above the storefront level. The district also features fine examples of the use of terra cotta, a popular early twentieth century building material. There are also two buildings that are the work of important early twentieth century architects, and these buildings are two of the most impressive in the district.

Architectural Styles

There are several buildings in this district that have details from the Italianate commercial style. According to Wisconsin's *Cultural Resource Management Plan*, the Italianate style was popular between 1850 and the mid-1880s. The style is seen on Wisconsin's downtown commercial buildings primarily in the use of brackets attached to friezes or bracketed metal cornices. Brick corbelled cornices that were constructed to resemble brackets are also popular features of Italianate commercial buildings. One of the major features of Italianate commercial buildings, though is the arched second story opening, usually decorated with round or segmental brick arches, or hoodmoldings of wood, stone, or brick.¹²

¹² Barbara Wyatt, ed., *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, Vol. 2*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, Architecture, p. 2-3.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 6 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

Among the Italianate style commercial buildings in this district, two stand out as fine and distinctive examples of the style. They are the Commercial Building at 15 N. Main Street and the Hardware Building at 17-19 S. Main Street, built in 1874 and 1876, respectively. These buildings are similar in that they are both two-story blocks of about the same size, built of cream brick and highlighted with elaborately decorated stone arches and label moldings on the upper floors. The Hardware Building still retains a pressed-metal cornice over a distinctive brick cornice of inset panels that is also seen on the building at 15 N. Main Street. Because the round arched stone moldings of each building's third story and the segmentally-arched stone label moldings of both building's second story are similar, and the layout of the window pattern on the upper floors of both buildings is identical, a common builder is suggested, though none was uncovered. That the buildings had a common builder is further suggested given that the buildings were constructed within two years of each other.

Both buildings are fine examples of the Italianate style because they have abundant and well-constructed details of the style. In particular, the tall openings decorated with elaborate round or segmentally-arched hoodmoldings are typical details of the style and are the buildings' most decorative elements. A pressed metal cornice with brackets is still extant on the building at 17-19 S. Main Street, and it is a typical detail of Italianate commercial buildings. A similar cornice was probably attached to the building on North Main Street.

The integrity of these buildings is good, especially on the upper levels. In particular, both buildings have extant historic two-over-two-light, double-hung sash windows that have not been partially enclosed, a rarity for buildings of this vintage. The stone arches and label moldings are all intact and in good condition, as are the brick walls. The storefronts are remodeled, but still retain some historic elements. The building at 15 N. Main Street has remnants of a 1925 remodeling when its storefront was combined with the neighboring interurban-bus depot building. This storefront has retained the large show windows and a central recessed entrance that gives it more of a period look. The Hardware Building on South Main Street has slightly more altered storefronts, but they do not overly detract from the rest of the building's historic appearance.

Since this district was intensively developed during the first three decades of the twentieth century, there are several fine examples of the Classical Revival style within its boundaries. The Classical Revival style was popular in Wisconsin between 1895 and 1935. It was developed by prominent architects, many of whom studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. The style was further popularized at the World's Columbia Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, which featured a "white city," a group of formal, classical buildings painted white. Details of Classical Revival buildings include symmetrical form and massing and heavy, classical details. Because of the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 7 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

heaviness of the style, it is seen most commonly on public, commercial, and institutional buildings.¹³

The earliest building of the district to reflect the Classical Revival style was the Reinig Block, 32-46 N. Main Street, built in 1901. Its details were repeated in the Reinig Block II, 50-54 N. Main Street, built around 1910. While both of these buildings are late or transitional examples of the Italianate style, the Reinig Block differs from more typical examples of the Italianate or Queen Anne commercial buildings of the late nineteenth century in that its cornice is less picturesque and the windows surrounds are less decorative. Here, the pressed metal cornice is relatively plain with only a small row of dentils as decoration and the pedimented parapets and paneled brackets are more classical than picturesque. In many respects, it is a transitional work between the popular late nineteenth century commercial styles and the styles of buildings that would be constructed only a few years later in the district.

The Reinig Block is of special interest due to its good level of integrity. Most of the second and third story windows are filled with modern sashes that replicate the original single-light sashes of the building. Only a few of the building's upper windows are partially enclosed. Also, even though some of the storefronts have been remodeled, most have retained large show windows and enclosed transom areas that could be uncovered and restored. In fact, the northernmost storefront of the Reinig Block has an intact period transom of small glass panes and a period storefront that could be a model for the rest of the building. The neighboring Reinig Block II has a modernized storefront and windows that have been enclosed, but its current owner is very interested in using tax credits to renovate this building and bring back historic details.

A more definitive example of the Classical Revival commercial style is the Collins Building, 1-3 S. Main Street, built around 1910. This building is of considerable interest because it is constructed of glazed terra cotta bricks and features some interesting large, classical shields that decorate the main elevation and part of the side elevation. A classically decorated entrance to the second floor is also extant, along with a prominent cornice. But the second story windows are the most interesting classical feature of the building. The tripartite windows, with the large single panes flanked by single-light sashes, are one of the types of large openings used in Classical Revival commercial buildings. In fact, they seem a bit out of scale with the overall size of the building, but the fact that they are intact is an important part of the overall integrity of this building.

On a grander scale is the Classical Revival Hotel Retlaw, 1 N. Main Street, built in 1922, 1923, and 1927. Noted Milwaukee architect Herbert W. Tullgren used a restrained classicism for this

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 2-18.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 8 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

building that gives it a very modern appearance, while still being a grand and decorative building that people thought hotels should be at that time. The classical details are seen in the applied limestone cornices and decoration around the openings of the main block. The first story also features the restrained classicism of inset limestone panels with subtle and elegant classical details. The building has undergone several "renovations" over the past 20 years, but has retained most of its original details, especially on the first and second stories of the main block. Because the building has retained so many details, it has a high level of integrity and is an historic anchor in this district.

One of the most decorative of the Classical Revival buildings in this district is Fischer's Fond du Lac Theater Building, a combination movie palace, commercial building, and apartment building. This building (27 N. Main St.) was constructed in 1925 and was one of two rival movie palaces in Fond du Lac. Its owner, the Fischer Paramount Theaters company of Chicago, created a large commercial and apartment building that was a showplace along North Main Street. The use of a beautiful golden brown brick blends in well with the light cream color of the extensive terra cotta decoration on the building. The movie theater section, itself, was covered with terra cotta, making it stand out within the large elevation of the building.

The building is a good example of the Classical Revival style because it has typical features associated with that style, including a parapet roofline, prominent classical cornice, grouped windows on the second and third stories, and classical details that included pilasters, wreaths, swags, and foliated scrolls. Most of the classical decoration is found at the top of the building along the parapet and above the third story windows. The theater section of the building has more elaborate classical details on the terra cotta panels and tiles. They include pilasters, foliated scrolls, eagles with shields, and classical figures. The outside of the Fond du Lac Theater gave the public a taste of the elaborate Renaissance decoration within.

The overall integrity of the Fischer Fond du Lac Theater Building is good, especially the upper levels of the commercial section. The terra cotta details are in good condition and largely unaltered. The only significant alterations to the storefronts are the enclosure of the transoms. The terra cotta covering of the theater section of the building has deteriorated somewhat, but the major elements are still extant. The theater entrance has been significantly altered and the old marquee and sign are gone. But, as a whole, the building still presents an elegant and historic appearance along North Main Street.

The final important Classical Revival building in the district is the old Retlaw Theater Building at 23 S. Main Street, built in 1925. The classical details of this building are more restrained, but evident. The elaborate terra cotta cornice of the theater part of the building and the terra cotta-clad storefronts are high-quality details that reflect the Classical Revival style. Unfortunately, the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 9 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

more typical classical openings of the commercial section of the building have been altered and the third floor ballroom, with its multi-light openings, has been enclosed. These changes and the alterations to the theater windows and entrance on the main elevation have lowered the integrity of the building. But, despite this loss of integrity, enough of the building's historic fabric exists to express its original style and to make it contributing in the district. There are currently plans to renovate this building, perhaps using the tax credits. If so, perhaps more of the original Rapp and Rapp design of this building can be appreciated.

Architects

Rapp and Rapp. The old Retlaw Theater Building (23 S. Main St.) was designed by noted theater architects Cornelius Ward Rapp and George Leslie Rapp of Chicago. C. W. Rapp (1861-1927) and George Rapp (1878-1942) grew up in Carbondale, Illinois, sons of a carpenter-architect. C. W. Rapp worked for his father, then began practicing architecture alone in 1891. George received his architectural training at the University of Illinois, worked for Chicago architect Edward Krause, then in 1906 joined his brother's practice. Together, they formed the partnership of Rapp and Rapp. Rapp and Rapp started working for the Balaban & Katz chain of theaters in 1917 and soon became one of the three leading theater architects (with Thomas W. Lamb and John Ebersson) in the nation. During the 1920s, Rapp and Rapp designed hundreds of theaters and were adept at all three of the major theater interior styles: the royal palace (featuring European opulence), the exotic (with South American Indian, East Indian, Middle Eastern, and Oriental influences), and the atmospheric (featuring imaginative weather or sky patterns decorating the ceilings, along with opulent wall décor). But, primarily, Rapp and Rapp worked in the royal palace tradition and were particularly fond of French Renaissance interior design. They often used Louis XIV era designs, replicating interiors from the sun king's grand palace at Versailles. While noted primarily for theater designs, Rapp and Rapp also designed a number of commercial and industrial buildings around the nation.¹⁴

Rapp and Rapp are known to have designed many theaters in Wisconsin, some, perhaps, still unidentified. The design of the Retlaw shows their fondness for the French Renaissance style of theater design, while meeting the demands of Walter Schroeder, the owner. The use of the red brick and the classical revival exterior was, perhaps, a demand of Schroeder, who wanted this building to be similar to his Retlaw Hotel. While this is probably not one of Rapp and Rapp's most elaborate movie theater designs, it is significant that Walter Schroeder, perhaps trying to "one-up" his competition from Fischer's Fond du Lac Theater, which was designed by a Chicago firm, would choose one of the most noted theater architects to design his movie palace,

¹⁴ "Rapp and Rapp," *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, Vol. 3, New York: The Free Press, 1982, p. 332.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 10 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

particularly when he had a fine architect, Herbert Tullgren, on his staff already. It is hoped that this building will be renovated, so the quality of this architectural firm can be better exposed.

Herbert W. Tullgren. Tullgren (1889-1944) was born in Chicago to a Swedish immigrant father, Martin Tullgren, who had established an architectural practice in Chicago in 1881. At the turn of the twentieth century, after working in western mines, Martin Tullgren became a partner with Archibald Hood, and in 1902 Tullgren and Hood established an office in Milwaukee. In 1905, the Tullgrens settled permanently in Milwaukee. Herbert Tullgren was a draftsman in his father's firm between 1905 and 1908, and became a partner in that firm, along with his brother Minard, in 1909.¹⁵

The firm of Martin Tullgren and Sons specialized in large projects like hotels, commercial buildings and apartment houses. In 1922, Martin Tullgren died and his sons continued the firm until 1928, when Minard died. Herbert Tullgren continued to practice under the name Martin Tullgren and Sons until 1936, when he changed the firm's name to Herbert Tullgren, Architect. Herbert Tullgren designed in the popular historical period revival styles during the 1910s and 1920s. But after 1928, he designed almost exclusively in the modern Art Deco and Art Moderne styles.¹⁶

Herbert Tullgren was responsible for many prominent Milwaukee buildings and was the best designer in the modern Art Deco and Art Moderne styles in the city. Some of these outstanding designs include the First Wisconsin Bank Garage, 1929; the Armory Courts Building, 1930-31; the Sherman Theater, 1935; and the Milwaukee Western Fuel Company, 1937. While these and other buildings show how well Tullgren designed in the modern styles of the early twentieth century, three of his apartment building designs also made important contributions to the development of twentieth century apartment house construction. These "tower" apartment buildings were an important innovation in apartment house construction at the time.¹⁷

Tullgren's design for the Hotel Retlaw is a fine example of his work at a time when he was designing in the period revival styles. The classical motifs used on the building are typical of decoration used for period revival and classical buildings, but these details are also restrained and somewhat streamlined, giving the building a fresh, modern look, rather than a strictly historical appearance. Tullgren's skill at designing in the modern Art Deco and Moderne styles may be reflected in this modern historical design. The design for this hotel has also stood up to

¹⁵ National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Wisconsin Consistory Building, 1992, on file in the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

the present time. The building is the tallest in Fond du Lac and anchors the city's downtown. Its high quality design is still good looking today. Tullgren's design for the Hotel Retlaw was probably not his largest or most impressive, since he worked extensively in Milwaukee, but it does show his architectural talent.

Building Materials: Terra Cotta

The North Main Street Historic District is also architecturally significant for the number of buildings that used terra cotta as a facing and decorative element. Terra cotta is an ancient building material made of cast and fired clay. Terra cotta panels are generally larger and more intricate than brick, and terra cotta is usually glazed or painted. It became popular as a decoration on stone or brick buildings in the late nineteenth century, and in Wisconsin it can be found on a few buildings from that era. However, its use flourished in the early twentieth century and it is found in many medium and large cities primarily on commercial buildings. Occasionally glazed terra cotta blocks were used as a structural element, but most of the time, terra cotta panels were used for decorative purposes.¹⁸

Terra cotta was used on some of the most important buildings in this district. The earliest use was on the prominent corner Collins Building (1-3 S. Main St.), built around 1910. In this case, the terra cotta was used both as decoration and as a structural element. The walls of the main or west elevation and the north or side elevation appear to be constructed of glazed terra cotta bricks. The cornice and the elaborate shields are applied terra cotta decoration. The extensive use of terra cotta in this building and the high quality way it was used give it a distinctiveness unlike any other building in the district and adds to the district's architectural significance.

A more typical use of terra cotta in the district is the facing of the building at 16 N. Main Street, remodeled about 1925. The original late nineteenth century building was refaced with terra cotta tiles and classical decorations, such as the arches over second story windows, pilasters, and foliage. The second story terra cotta tiles, along with the first story pilasters, are still in good condition and they provide an elegant facing for this small building.

Fischer's Fond du Lac Theater Building, 17 N. Main Street, built in 1925, makes extensive use of terra cotta decoration. On the large commercial part of the building, the terra cotta details are applied to the brick walls and are the way in which the Classical Revival style is largely expressed on the building. The facing of terra cotta on the theater section of the building is more elaborate and includes intricately carved panels and details that add to the classicism of the building.

¹⁸ Wyatt, Architecture, p. 4-13.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 12 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

The Retlaw Theater Building also has a theater section that is faced with terra cotta tiles, and the theater's cornice is particularly decorative, being made up of dozens of carved tiles in a classical motif. The use of terra cotta also extends to the storefronts of the commercial section of the building. Unlike the commercial section of the Fond du Lac Theater Building, where the terra cotta details are found on the upper floors, the terra cotta details of the commercial section of the Retlaw Theater are found primarily on the storefront floor. The extensive use of terra cotta on both of the theater sections of these buildings adds a lavish and exotic look to buildings meant to attract the public into the fantasy world of Hollywood and vaudeville entertainment. The terra cotta on both buildings is in fairly good condition and adds integrity to their historic appearances.

Significance Statement

The combination of the fine examples of Italianate and Classical Revival-influenced commercial architecture in this district, along with its fairly intact historic streetscape of late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings, combined with the work of two notable architects, and the extensive use of terra cotta decoration make up the architectural significance of this district. Because of these fine architectural elements, the North Main Street Historic District is significant and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Its level of integrity is good and helps make this area of Fond du Lac's downtown stand out in the city.

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: COMMERCE

The North Main Street Historic District is historically significant at the local level because it has been an important part of the history of commercial activity in Fond du Lac from primarily the later nineteenth century through the period of significance. It, along with the South Main Street Historic District, makes up the historic core of Fond du Lac's downtown commercial district. The most important type of commercial activity that took place in this district revolved around retailing, hotels, and entertainment. This commercial activity was an important part of the city's economy throughout the period of significance.

Retailing

Trading in goods and services began in Wisconsin communities almost from the beginning of their settlement, some businesses starting out in primitive log cabins. Often, pioneer businesses incorporated a general store, inn, and post office all under one roof. As communities developed in the late nineteenth century, even the smallest towns had a variety of retail stores, usually located in downtown commercial business districts. Retailers in larger cities, such as

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 13 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

Milwaukee, developed larger stores that had a larger selection of goods. The popularity of retailing increased during the late nineteenth century, and while pioneer general stores persisted during this time, they gradually died out in favor of large department stores and small specialty shops. The common thread winding through the history of retailing in Wisconsin is the high turnover of businesses, short-term retailers being the rule and not the exception.¹⁹

Before permanent white settlement at Fond du Lac, there were fur trading posts, but the first commercial business established by a permanent settler was Colvert Pier's real estate office and inn located in his log cabin. The first real store in Fond du Lac was the general store located in Dr. Mason C. Darling's Fond du Lac House during the 1840s. After this time, the history of retailing in Fond du Lac was typical of most Wisconsin communities. Retail businesses had a high turnover rate and many general, grocery, dry goods, and hardware stores came and went during the mid-nineteenth century. Also located in Fond du Lac's downtown were small shops that produced goods that would eventually be available at retail stores, such as shoes, harnesses, and tinware.²⁰

By 1854, Fond du Lac had over 40 retail businesses, many small shops, eight hotels, and some professional offices. During the next 30 years, these numbers dramatically increased so that by 1884 Fond du Lac's downtown commercial district was spread out over 10 blocks along Main Street and included grocery, dry goods, hardware, drug, and clothing stores, along with several banks, restaurants, hotels, and saloons. The development of Fond du Lac's downtown peaked during the 1920s. In 1931, there were 471 retail outlets in the city, most of them located downtown, and these businesses did more than \$17,000,000 worth of business. The Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II halted much downtown development, and after World War II, retailing began to move away from downtowns to suburbs and big-city shopping malls.²¹

The commercial significance of the North Main Street Historic District lies not so much in important individual businesses that were located in the district, but in the wide variety of businesses housed in its buildings and the general success of the commercial buildings in the district. For example, one of the oldest extant commercial buildings in the district is at 17-21 S.

¹⁹ Richard N. Current, *The History of Wisconsin, Vol. II: The Civil War Era, 1848-1873*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976, pp. 107-108; Robert C. Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin, Vol. III: Urbanization and Industrialization, 1873-1893*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1985, pp. 211-213.

²⁰ C. W. Butterfield, *The History of Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin*, Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1880, pp. 567-568; Maurice McKenna, ed., *Fond du Lac County Wisconsin Past and Present, Vol. II*, Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912, pp. 308-309.

²¹ McKenna, p. 313; Sanborn-Perris Maps; *Fond du Lac Centennial and Homecoming Celebration Historic Souvenir and Official Program*, 1936, on file in the local history files of the Fond du Lac Public Library, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, p. 12.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 14 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

Main Street, built in 1876. One of its earliest tenants was John Reinig's hardware store. Reinig would go on to build one of the largest and most important commercial blocks in the district and in the city. After the Reinig hardware store, the building housed the long-time plumbing business of David Ahern and Sons (c.1898-c.1922). After this time, there was a long-time restaurant business in this building.²²

As stated above, John Reinig built his large, seven-storefront, commercial block in the district in 1901. Although it was built on what was then the north edge of the downtown, the large business block was successful during the early twentieth century. Two of its early retail business tenants were the Kremer Brothers furniture store, a well-known and successful business of the twentieth century, and a large dry goods store. Several retail tenants had long-term occupancy in the building, including a plumbing shop, a fruit store, a grocery store, an electrical shop, and the Gambles Department Store. Even today, the storefronts of this building are full.²³

The Reinig Block (32-46 N. Main St.) was so successful that a new matching three-storefront building, the Reinig Block II (50-54 N. Main St.) was built nearby. The dry goods store that had been in the original Reinig Block moved to one of the new storefronts and remained there for several years. But the most important tenant of this building was the Leath Furniture Store. Leath Furniture started in 1914 as a small furniture store that had grown to 26 stores by 1925 when the company decided to open a store in Fond du Lac. The store took over the entire Reinig II block with furniture and accessory displays on all three floors. The Leath Furniture store has been an anchor in downtown Fond du Lac throughout the twentieth century and the store is still operating at its original location today.²⁴

Another large business block constructed during the early twentieth century was the Fischer Fond du Lac Theater Building (17 N. Main Street), completed in 1925. Not only was it the location of a splendid new movie palace, but it had seven storefronts. Within five years, these storefronts were filled with a number of retail businesses, including a barber shop and a beauty parlor, a jewelry store, an appliance store, and an electrical shop. The storefronts of the building were sometimes vacant during the Great Depression, but several businesses remained for many years, including the beauty parlor and barber shop, and the appliance store.²⁵

²² Sanborn-Perris Maps; City Directories for the City of Fond du Lac, on file in the Fond du Lac Public Library, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*; "A. Leath and Co. Will Open Furniture Store on Saturday; Building Completely Changed," *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 26 May 1926, p. 5.

²⁵ Sanborn-Perris Maps; City Directories.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 15 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

Although the most significant commercial buildings in the district are those described above, there were also some long-time retail businesses located in buildings in this district that add to its historical significance. Because retailing had a high turnover rate, only the best and most tenacious retailers stayed in business for more than a few years. The duration of a store is one way to assess its historic significance, because long-time retailers made a greater individual contribution to the city's commercial economy than short-term businesses.

One of Fond du Lac's nineteenth and early twentieth century retail businesses eventually grew into a larger, regional enterprise. The Gerhard Baking Company had its origins with J. W. Gerhard's Bakery at 24 N. Main Street (now part of modern 24 N. Main St.). Jacob W. Gerhard was a native of Germany who came to Fond du Lac when he was a teenager. He spent a year in New York City, then three years in Milwaukee. In 1861, he came to Fond du Lac and established a bakery. He retired in 1895 and his son, also Jacob, took over the business. The younger Jacob Gerhard was educated for one year at the Fond du Lac High School, then took night courses at the local business college. As a teenager, he worked in his family's bakery, taking over in 1895 when his father retired. The Gerhard Bakery operated a retail store out of its Main Street building and, in the rear, a bakery building was constructed between 1902 and 1908. It was slightly enlarged between 1908 and 1915, then doubled in size between 1915 and 1940. By 1928, Gerhard was no longer operating their storefront on North Main Street and during the mid-twentieth century, the company became a regional supplier of baked goods.²⁶

Another long-time business in the district was located at 6 N. Main Street. When the building was erected around 1883, its first retail tenant was Frederick Krumme's drug store. Frederick Krumme was a German immigrant who came to Freeport, Illinois in 1854 and began a drug store there. He served in the Civil War for about six months until illness forced his discharge. In 1866, Krumme relocated to Fond du Lac, eventually moving his successful drug store to the North Main Street building. Around 1900, Krumme's store was taken over by Frank Masilko, and Masilko's Drug Store was a popular retail location in the district until the late 1950s.²⁷

Several buildings in the district had long-time businesses that began in the twentieth century. The Connell Block was built in 1909 (7-11 N. Main Street) and housed a drug store for many decades. Beginning as Bechaud Drugs, in the late 1920s, the business became Kremer Drugs and stayed in the building well past the Post-World War II era. Crescent Motor Company was one of the early automobile dealerships to locate in downtown Fond du Lac. Its showroom building at 56 N. Main Street was built around 1910 and the building has had automobile related

²⁶ *Ibid.*, McKenna, pp. 205-206.

²⁷ Sanborn-Perris Maps; City Directories; *Portrait and Biographical Album of Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin*, Chicago: Acme Publishing Company, 1889, p. 270.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 16 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

businesses in it throughout the century. After Crescent Motors vacated in the 1930s, the building housed the Gibson Company tire and auto store, then the Goodyear tire shop. In more recent years, it has been an outlet of the NAPA auto parts chain.²⁸

By the 1910s, electricity was a reliable power source and large utility companies began consolidating small power companies into regional concerns. At that time, it was customary for a power company to have a service and retail building in many communities. In Fond du Lac, during the early twentieth century, the Eastern Wisconsin Railway and Light Company provided electric service as well as the regional interurban line and local streetcars. In 1913, this company established an office in the Bischoff Block (15 N. Main St.). After that time, the building was known as the Public Service Building. Eventually the Wisconsin Power and Light Company acquired the Eastern Wisconsin Railway and Light Company and used this building as an office well into the 1960s. In 1925, the Bischoff Block's storefront was remodeled to match the appearance of the new interurban-bus station waiting room next door.²⁹

One of the most long-lived retail businesses of the mid- and late twentieth century is Edith's, a bridal shop that began as a women's clothing store in 1937. In September of 1937, H. R. and Edith Murphy announced that they would be opening a women's clothing store at 9 S. Main Street. The store quickly expanded into the neighboring building at 11 S. Main Street, and the two buildings were rebuilt for Edith's store. After the late 1950s, Edith's also expanded into the old Fleischman's Grocery Store at 13 S. Main Street and married all of the buildings with an attractive, modern front. Edith's has remained in business up to the present time as a specialty bridal shop and does a wide-ranging regional trade.³⁰

Hotels

The North Main Street Historic District is historically significant, in part, because two of the most significant hotels in the city's history developed within its boundaries, one of which is still extant. The first hotel in Fond du Lac was the inn operated by pioneer Colwert Pier in 1836. In 1838, Dr. Mason C. Darling built the Fond du Lac House at the corner of Main and First streets (not extant). In 1847, Theodore Herbert built a three-story hotel called the Exchange, at that time the largest building in town (not extant). In 1846, a small inn called the Globe Hotel was started. In 1861, the manager of the Exchange Hotel purchased it and razed it for a new three-story hotel building called the American Hotel. It was the first modern, first-class hotel in Fond

²⁸ Sanborn-Perris Maps; City Directories.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, "Public Opening Tonight," *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 31 July 1925, p. 12.

³⁰ Sanborn-Perris Maps; City Directories; "New Store for Women to Open," *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 17 September 1937, p. 20.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 17 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

du Lac. In 1875, a new American Hotel was built that was larger, but over time, both of these hotels were razed, the latter for the Windsor Hotel, later known as the Erving House (not extant).³¹

In 1849, the first hotel located in this district appeared when Robert Wyatt moved a two-story building to the corner of Main and Sheboygan streets (23 S. Main St.) and expanded it to almost four stories. In 1850, it was renamed the Lewis House, but burned in 1866. The reconstructed Lewis House was a showplace for its time, taking up 80 feet on Main Street and 140 feet on Sheboygan Street and having 105 rooms. It was later renamed the Patty House for S. B. Patty, its later manager. During the late nineteenth century, the Patty House became the Palmer House and it was the most prominent hotel in the city until 1922, when the new, modern Hotel Retlaw was completed.³²

The Hotel Retlaw surpassed all of the local hotels in size, quality, and style when it was completed and the Palmer House quickly folded. Ironically, Walter Schroeder, who had built the Retlaw, acquired the Palmer House property for his new Retlaw Theater Building. The Hotel Retlaw is still in operation today as the Ramada Plaza and it is still an important regional hotel. During its historic heyday, it hosted many notable politicians, entertainers, and celebrities as they passed through this area of Wisconsin. It was the most significant hotel ever built in the city and it has retained this distinction since its completion in 1922. It is one of the important commercial anchors of the North Main Street Historic District.

Entertainment

Theaters were integral parts of downtown business districts throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries in Wisconsin. Live entertainment gradually gave way to the movie show in most communities during the early twentieth century and movie theaters were pervasive in downtowns during the mid-twentieth century. Only in recent decades have movie theaters left downtown for suburban locations, but in some cases, live theater still exists in old theater buildings in downtown business districts.

Theatrical entertainment in the nineteenth century consisted primarily of traveling performing troupes and local musical and theatrical productions. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, professional theatrical entertainment became more widespread as many communities built and supported theaters and opera houses. These facilities were places where

³¹ Cartwright, p. 62.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63; McKenna, p. 323.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 18 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

professional touring groups could perform and local organizations could put on musical or theatrical performances and were usually located in downtown business districts.³³

Beginning with nickelodeons in the first decade of the 1900s, the motion picture industry grew rapidly. By the 1920s, most towns had a motion picture house, and some communities had one or more "movie palaces," where movies were shown with vaudeville-like entertainment, and movie-going was a multi-faceted experience. The growing popularity of the movies was not without social comment. Many saw the movies as a bad influence on public morals and a distraction from more wholesome entertainment. But, by 1940, going to the movies was a part of American life. Friday or Saturday night was "movie night," and many children spent Saturday afternoons enthralled by the latest serials. The movies provided a much-needed escape, especially during the difficult years of the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II in the 1940s.³⁴

There were several early movie theaters established in Fond du Lac. They included the Idea Theater (not extant), which opened in 1905, and began showing movies in 1911; the Orpheum (not extant), which opened in 1913 as a movie house; and the Bijou (not extant), which opened in 1911 and showed movies with mirrored screens. But, the height of movie theater construction in Fond du Lac came late in 1925, when two "movie palaces" opened within two blocks of each other in the North Main Street Historic District.³⁵

Beating Walter Schroeder's Retlaw Theater by one month, Fischer's Fond du Lac Theater (27 N. Main St.) opened at the end of November in 1925. It was a lavish movie theater seating almost 2,000 people and had an interior design in the royal palace or Renaissance style of opulent classicism. The Retlaw Theater (23 S. Main St.) opened at the end of December of 1925. While slightly smaller, it was equal to the Fond du Lac Theater in its movie palace opulence and it had a magnificent roof garden dance pavilion that rivaled such facilities in Milwaukee. Moviegoers in Fond du Lac probably benefited from the competition from the two theaters, and the two movie theaters reigned supreme in Fond du Lac during the mid-twentieth century. Finally, pressure from suburban and modern multi-plex movie houses in both Fond du Lac and other communities forced them out of business during the late twentieth century. The Retlaw, though, is seeing new life as a performing arts center and a potential renovation of the building may bring it back to some of its original movie palace glory.

³³ Current, p. 128; Nesbit, pp. 491-493, 541.

³⁴ Nesbit, pp. 491-493, 541; Paul W. Glad, *The History of Wisconsin, Vol. V: War, a New Era, and Depression, 1914-1940*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1990, pp. 255-256; William F. Thompson, *The History of Wisconsin Vol. VI: Continuity and Change, 1940-1965*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1988, pp. 26-27.

³⁵ Cartwright, pp. 95-96.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 19 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

The fact that these two theaters are located in the North Main Street Historic District adds to its historic significance because they were the most elaborate and the best theaters built in the city. They gave Fond du Lac moviegoers not one, but two, movie palace experiences. The numbers of people who came to see movies at these theaters also must have had an effect on other downtown commercial businesses, especially in this district. Any business that attracted the public, especially on Friday or Saturday nights, when businesses often had late hours, was important to the commercial health of the downtown. For this reason, the movie theaters played an important historic role in the commercial development of the district.

Significance Statement

The North Main Street Historic District is historically significant at the local level for the several reasons that have been elaborated above. It is significant, especially, because it was a center for historic commercial activity in the city's downtown during its period of significance. Not only did some long-time, important businesses thrive in this district, but several of its buildings were some of the most successful commercial locations in the city's downtown. The district also saw the development of its most important hotel, the Hotel Retlaw. Finally, the district has local historical significance as a center for commercial entertainment, specifically Hollywood entertainment in the form of movies. The two movie palaces located in this district were the most important constructed in the city and helped draw people to the other commercial businesses in the downtown. For these reasons, the North Main Street Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHEOLOGICAL STATEMENT

Historic sources indicate that the Fond du Lac area at the tip of Lake Winnebago was the site of considerable pre-historic Native American and historic Native American and fur trade activities. An archeological investigation was beyond the scope of this nomination, although it is likely that either pre-historic or historic resources from the above-mentioned activities may still be extant within the boundaries of this district.

PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES

This nomination was prepared for the Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission with the support of the City of Fond du Lac. The Historic Preservation Commission is active in the preservation of Fond du Lac's historic resources and has engaged in many activities that help to promote and protect those resources. This nomination is part of a large project of several

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 20 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

nominations that are designed to list some of Fond du Lac's most important historic resources in the National Register of Historic Places. In listing this district, the City of Fond du Lac also hopes to provide the opportunity for downtown building owners to obtain tax credits and/or other incentives to restore and renovate their properties as part of the on-going efforts by the city and private organizations to maintain a successful and viable downtown business district.

North Main Street Historic District
Name of Property

Fond du Lac
County and State

Wisconsin

9. Major Bibliographic References

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

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

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 4.5 acres

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

1 16 383520 4848520
Zone Easting Northing

3 16 383620 4848220
Zone Easting Northing

2 16 383620 4848520
Zone Easting Northing

4 16 383520 4848340
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	Carol Lohry Cartwright	date	8/21/01
organization	prepared for the City of Fond du Lac	telephone	262-473-6820
street & number	W7646 Hackett Rd.	zip code	53190
city or town	Whitewater	state	WI

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 1 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

“A. Leath and Co. Will Open Furniture Store on Saturday; Building Completely Changed,”
Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth, 26 May 1926, p. 5.

“Business Block Important Part of New Building,” *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*,
25 November 1925, Section 2, p. 2.

Butterfield, C. W. *History of Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin*. Chicago: Western Historical
Company, 1880.

Cartwright, Carol Lohry. *City of Fond du Lac Intensive Survey Report*. Fond du Lac: City of
Fond du Lac, 1992.

City Directories for the City of Fond du Lac. On file in the Fond du Lac Public Library,
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Current, Richard N. *The History of Wisconsin, Vol. II: The Civil War Era, 1848-1873*.
Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976.

“Eighteen Cozy Apartments in Theater Building,” *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*,
25 November 1925, Section 2, p. 11.

“Fischer Theater Opens Its Doors Tonight; First Show at 7 p.m.,” *Fond du Lac Daily
Commonwealth*, 25 November 1925, Section 2, p. 1.

“Fischer Theater Ready to Open, Finest Example of Builder’s Art,” *Fond du Lac Daily
Commonwealth*, 25 November 1925, Section 2, p. 2.

*Fond du Lac Centennial and Homecoming Celebration Historic Souvenir and Official
Program*, 1936. On file in the local history files of the Fond du Lac Public Library,
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth, 26 December 1925, p. 1.

Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth, 26 December 1925, theater section, p. 1.

Glad, Paul W. *The History of Wisconsin, Vol. V: War, a New Era, and Depression, 1914-1940*.
Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1990.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 2 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

“The Golden Age of the Retlaw Theater,” *Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter*, 27 April, 1997. Article on file in the local history files of the Fond du Lac Public Library, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Gores, Stan. “The Night Carry Nation Pulled Out Her Hatchet at E. J. Schmidt’s Bar,” *Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter*, 25 June 1986, Newspaper clipping on file in the historical landmarks clipping files of the Fond du Lac Public Library, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

McKenna, Maurice, ed. *Fond du Lac County Wisconsin Past and Present*. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912.

National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Hotel Retlaw, 1984. On file in the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

National Register of Historic Places nomination for the South Main Street Historic District, 1991. On file in the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Wisconsin Consistory Building, 1992. On file in the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

Nesbit, Robert C. *The History of Wisconsin, Vol. III: Urbanization and Industrialization, 1873-1893*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1985.

“New Store for Women to Open,” *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 17 September 1937, p. 20.

Newspaper clipping from the *Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter*, 12 December 1972. On file in the historical landmarks clipping files of the Fond du Lac Public Library, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

“Open New Theater April 1, Says Schroeder,” *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 10 September, 1924, p. 5.

Portrait and Biographical Album of Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin. Chicago: Acme Publishing Company, 1889.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 3 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

“Prepared for Big Dedication,” *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 30 September 1909, p. 5.

“Public Opening Tonight,” *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 31 July 1925, p. 12.

“Rapp and Rapp.” *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, Vol. 3*. New York: The Free Press, 1982.

Rapp, C. W. and George L., “New Retlaw Theater Among Finest Says Designers in Describing City’s New Playhouse Ready for Dedication,” *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 26 December 1925, theater section, p. 1.

Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps for the City of Fond du Lac. On file in the Archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

Thompson, William F. *The History of Wisconsin Vol. VI: Continuity and Change, 1940-1965*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1988.

“350,000 Theater for City,” *Fond du Lac Daily Commonwealth*, 9 September 1924, p. 1.

“Will Build Reinig Stores,” *Fond du Lac Daily Reporter*, 24 July 1900, p. 3.

Barbara Wyatt, ed. *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, Vol. 2*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, Architecture.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 1 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

District Boundary

Beginning at intersection of the east curb line of South Main Street and the north curb line of East Division Street, then south along the east curb line of South Main Street to the north curb line of Sheboygan Street, then east along this line to the rear lot lines of 1-23 South Main Street, then north along these lines to the east lot lines of 1-61 North Main Street, then north along these lines to the north lot line of 59-61 North Main Street, then west along this line to the west curb line of North Main Street, then north along this line to the north lot line of 56 North Main Street, then west along this line to the rear lot lines of 2-56 North Main Street, then south along these lines to the north curb line of Sheboygan Street, then east along this line to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

This boundary was chosen because it includes all of the historic buildings along North Main Street and South Main Street that present an intact historic streetscape, while leaving out as many intrusions as possible. The northern boundary was drawn to exclude several heavily remodeled buildings along North Main Street near Merrill Street. North of Merrill Street, the area becomes more mixed with open spaces and primarily modern commercial buildings. The eastern boundary was drawn to leave out the mixed use area that lies just east of the downtown that begins to include houses from the large residential neighborhood on the east side of Fond du Lac. The south boundary was drawn to exclude about a block and one-half of modern office buildings and more heavily remodeled commercial buildings that divides Fond du Lac's historic downtown commercial district in half. The boundary on the west was chosen because this area is also one of mixed uses and large parking lots that eventually lead to the Fond du Lac River. The result is a compact and intact district with as few intrusions as possible.

North Main Street Historic District
Name of Property

Fond du Lac
County and State

Wisconsin

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 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 SHPO or FPO.)

name/title			
organization		date	
street&number		telephone	
city or town	state	zip code	

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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

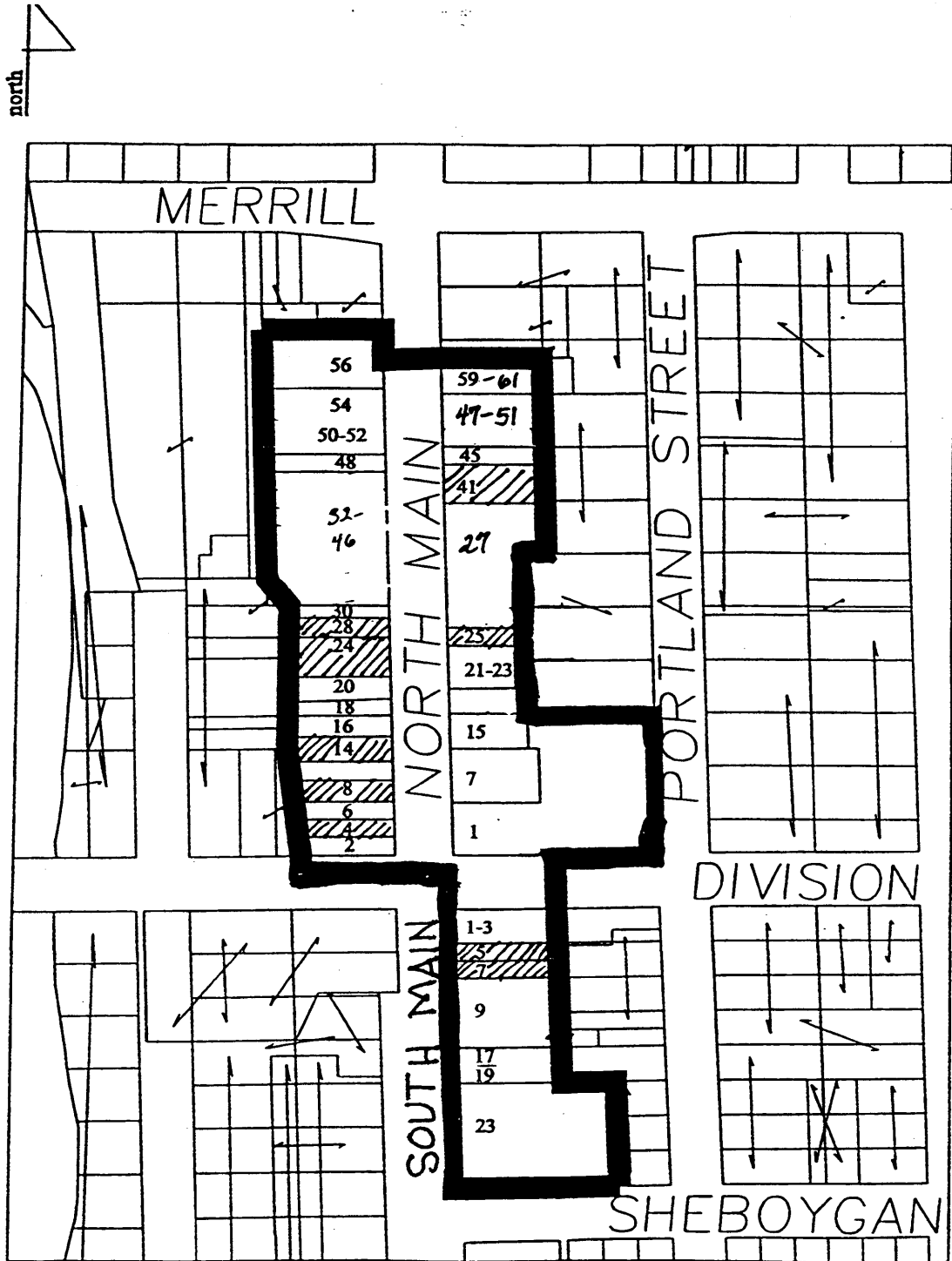
Section photos Page 1 North Main Street Historic District
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

NORTH MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT, Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin. Photos by Carol Cartwright, August, 2001. Negatives on file in the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

Views:

- 1 of 10: 18-56 N. Main St., from the southeast.
- 2 of 10: 30-46 N. Main St., from the southwest.
- 3 of 10: West side, North Main Street, from the northeast.
- 4 of 10: East side, North Main Street, from the northwest.
- 5 of 10: 27 N. Main St., from the northwest.
- 6 of 10: 15 N. Main St., from the southwest.
- 7 of 10: 1 N. Main St., from the northwest.
- 8 of 10: 1-23 S. Main St., from the northwest.
- 9 of 10: 23 S. Main St., from the northwest.
- 10 of 10: 23 S. Main St., south elevation, from the southwest.

**NORTH MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT
FOND DU LAC, FOND DU LAC COUNTY, WISCONSIN**



Key: Non-contributing 

Not to scale