

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received NOV 25 1983

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Healey Block  
and or common Powell Place (preferred)

2. Location

street & number 200-212 Main Street not for publication  
city, town LaCrosse vicinity of  
state Wisconsin code 55 county LaCrosse code 063

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Various - See continuation sheet (Item 4)  
street & number  
city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. LaCrosse County Courthouse  
street & number 400 N. 4th Street  
city, town LaCrosse state Wisconsin 54601

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 1977  federal  state  county  local  
depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin  
city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located two blocks east of the Mississippi River and within LaCrosse's commercial core, the Healey Block is a large Italianate commercial building, constructed of red brick and composed of a two story and a three story section. Elaborate metalwork, including cornices and window hoods, detailed brickwork, and a regular arrangement of segmental and round arch openings characterize the building's upper stories. On the ground level cast iron columns and pillars provide support and indicate the individual store areas.

Standing at the western edge of the property is the three story section of the Healey Block which measures forty feet (on Main Street) by seventy-five feet (on Second Street). The adjoining two story section of the building extends 110 feet along Main Street and forms the largest part of the principal facade. Identical metal cornices, decorated with brackets and dentils, crown both portions of the commercial block. A brick corbel table boldly underlines the cornices and provides a terminus for the narrow piers that vertically divide the upper level of the structure. The piers on the Second Street elevation break the top, two story area into five units. The third floor contains eight round arch window openings, which are distributed 2-1-2-1-2. Included within wood frames, the windows, like those used throughout the building, are 1/1 double-hung sash. Metal window hoods incorporating a keystone and a dentil-like pattern accent the large openings. On the second floor the apertures are segmentally arched and again highlighted by metal hoods. The paired openings are further emphasized by stone sills. Facing Main Street, the upper floors of the three story component are divided into three vertical sections each containing a single opening per floor. In keeping with the pattern, the round arch is used on the third floor and the segmental arch on the second. The two story section of the building is likewise marked by segmental arch openings. Sixteen windows, all of which are flanked by piers and enhanced by decorative hoods, punctuate its second level. A peaked roofline also characterizes this part of the block.

The first floor of the Healey Block, which is separated from the stories above by a finely detailed corbel table, features five store areas. The individual stores (except for the "modernized" unit located at the eastern end of the building) are indicated by cast iron columns and pillars, most with richly decorated capitals. A metal lintel distinguishes the storefront at 206-208 Main Street. The first floor of the block's Second Street elevation is more modestly detailed. The brick piers have simple capitals and the rectangular window openings are highlighted only by stone lintels and sills. At the rear of the building is a one story concrete block addition that was completed in c. 1920. This addition is not considered significant to the nomination.

Currently, the Healey Block is undergoing extensive rehabilitation. The project focuses upon the restoration of the street level display windows and entrances and the remodeling of the interior to accommodate mixed retail and office use. Distinctive interior features such as two cast iron support columns will be retained. The block addition at the rear of the building will be razed and a new, one story addition constructed in its place. This addition, which will contain one of the building's main entrances, will compliment the original, adjoining work.

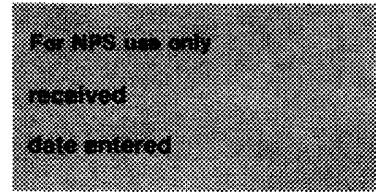
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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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Healey Block, LaCrosse, LaCrosse County, Wisconsin  
Continuation sheet

Item number 4

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Owner of Property

200-208 Main Street: Powell Place Partners c/o Eagle Development, William Marx, president  
330 S. 6th Street  
LaCrosse, Wisconsin 54601

212 Main Street: Richard L. Wolfe, Jr.  
212 Main Street  
LaCrosse, Wisconsin 54601

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
	1872-78 (construction) <sup>†</sup>			Association with significant person
<b>Specific dates</b>	1881-91 (period of significance)	<b>Builder/Architect</b>	Unknown	

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

A LaCrosse landmark, the Healey Block is both architecturally and historically significant. The Italianate commercial structure, which stands at the corner of Main and Second Streets in the city's central business district, is a locally distinguished example of its period of construction. In addition, the building is associated with David Franklin Powell, or "White Beaver", a doctor and patent medicine manufacturer, as well as four-time mayor of the city.

### Architecture

The owner of the Healey Block, Benjamin B. Healey, settled in the Mississippi River community in 1854 and established himself in the lumber industry. Achieving success in that enterprise, Healey became involved in other ventures including the LaCrosse National Bank, where he sat on the board of directors, the LaCrosse Street Railway, and the construction of the building that bore his name. The Healey Block, completed in 1878 and described at the beginning of the next decade as "one of the finest and most substantial buildings in the city",<sup>2</sup> is an Italianate commercial structure that, today, is among the best preserved and most impressive illustrations of its style in LaCrosse. The striking red brick building is distinguished by its wealth of metal-work which, according to a plaque originally fastened to the building, was fabricated by W. Hirschheimer.<sup>3</sup> This craftsman was presumably associated with a local firm, Hirschheimer & Co., manufacturers of various metal products.<sup>4</sup> The building's metal window hoods and cornices are characteristically elaborate and embellished with Classical details such as keystones and dentils. In particular, the window hoods draw attention to the segmental and round arch openings that are typical of the style. Equally noteworthy are the distinctive cast iron columns and pillars at the first floor level and the brick corbel tables that contribute a horizontal emphasis.

At this time the Healey Block is being rehabilitated and developed for use as mixed retail and office space. The rehabilitation project, which includes the restoration of the lower storefront area, is part of an effort to revitalize downtown LaCrosse.

### Association with Significant Person

Since its completion in 1878, the Healey Block has housed a variety of business offices and retail shops. The 1881 county history listed the following occupants: J.W. Toms & Co., wholesale dealers in crockery and glassware; Gutman Brothers, dry goods and clothing; Hanscome, boots and shoes; and H. Berger & Co., dry goods and clothing. On the second floor were attorneys' offices and on the third, Norden Hall.<sup>5</sup> In the twentieth century, from 1920 to 1928, the Northern Engraving Company occupied the structure. This firm was followed by the LaCrosse Drug Company from 1930 to 1944 and the Yahr-Lange Company, warehouse and distributing, from 1944 to 1982. Despite

(continued)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Hebberd, Mary Hardgrove. "notes on the Medical Practice of Dr. David Franklin Powell"  
Wisconsin Magazine of History 35:306-309; 36:188-191.

History of LaCrosse County, Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1881 (see continuation sheet)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name LaCrescent, Minn.-Wis.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	5	6	4	0	4	7	0	4	8	5	1	2	3	1	9	1	0
Zone			Easting				Northing										

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing										

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing										

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing										

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing										

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing										

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing										

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing										

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Description of property located at 200-208 Main St.:  
That part of Lots 1 and 2 in Block 20 of Town of LaCrosse, in the City of LaCrosse described as follows: beginning at the northwesterly corner of said Lot 1; thence easterly along the northerly line thereof 127.86 feet more or less to the centerline

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries** (see continuation sheet)

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary E. Taylor/Consultant

organization N/A

date August 1983

street & number 8269 Doolittle Road

telephone (715)356-2555

city or town Minocqua

state Wisconsin 54548

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Historic Preservation Division, SHSW

date Nov. 21, 1983

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 12/22/83

  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet

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this long list of occupants, the distinctive business block is recognized historically for its association with Dr. David Franklin Powell, better known as "White Beaver", a flamboyant "eclectic" physician and a politician who, from 1881 to 1891, maintained his medical offices there. Though other buildings connected to Powell's life remain standing (one of his former residences and another office building that he occupied for a short time), the Healey Block is most closely linked to Powell's contributions to the history of LaCrosse. Indicative of this association, the owners of the Healey Block have renamed the building "Powell Place".

Powell, a native of Kentucky, born there in 1847, spent most of his childhood and young adult years in Omaha and in Lone Tree, Nebraska, where he and his brothers, George and William, became army scouts. During this "frontier period", Powell received his Indian name White Beaver, when, according to his own account, he saved the life of a Sioux chief's daughter and was presented with the pelt of a white beaver in gratitude. Powell also established a lifelong friendship with William F. Cody, a man known nationwide as Buffalo Bill.

In 1869, after receiving a scholarship, Powell entered medical school at the University of Louisville. He headed west again in the 1870s and was appointed to successive terms as post surgeon at Fort McPherson, North Platte Barracks, Camp Stambaugh, and Fort Laramie. Following these appointments and a number of tours with Cody's wild west show, Powell made his way to the Midwest. He established a medical practice in Lanesboro, Minnesota, in the late 1870s, but in 1881 he moved it to LaCrosse where he opened his office in the Healey Block. Soon the commercial structure was adorned with an array of signs and banners that proclaimed his products and his services

The medicine that Powell and a great number of others practiced in the nineteenth century can be described as "eclectic". An eclectic physician, according to one definition, "purported to embrace the best of all therapies, regular or irregular. In practice, eclectics simply replaced the lancet and mineral drugs used by allopaths ("regular" doctors) with an assortment of botanic preparations. Like allopaths and homeopaths, they valued medical education and practiced surgery and obstetrics as well as medicine".<sup>6</sup> The remedies, or patent medicines, that Powell manufactured and distributed included Cough Cream, which he produced in partnership with Cody, and Yosemite Yarrow, which was "designed to cure rheumatic pains, neuralgic side and back aches, lameness, cramps in the stomach and bowels, and magically relieves internal and external pains".<sup>7</sup> Typically the local newspapers featured his advertisements and heartily endorsed his practice in editorials. Buffalo Bill's name and often his photograph were included in Powell's announcements.

Powell's political and medical careers coincided. He was first elected LaCrosse's mayor in 1885 on an independent ticket. His notoriety as frontiersman, friend of Buffalo Bill, and medical practitioner extraordinaire contributed to his successful campaign and to his re-election in 1886 for a second one-year term. In the next decade, representing the People's Party, he again served as mayor for two terms (two year terms at this time), 1893 to 1895 and 1895 to 1897.<sup>8</sup> Statewide office also beckoned as Powell ran twice (1888 and 1894) for the governorship. In 1888 he was backed by the Labor Party and in 1894 by the People's Party. Powell re-

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mained in LaCrosse until 1903 when he left to manage the Cody syndicate. His death three years later was announced in the headlines of the LaCrosse Leader Press.<sup>9</sup>

1  
Tax Assessment Records, Area Research Center, University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse

2  
History of LaCrosse County, (Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1881), p. 625.

3  
Genevieve Koenig, "Yahr-Lange Building", Historical Notes: LaCrosse County Historical Society, May 1981.

4  
1876-77 LaCrosse city directory

5  
History of LaCrosse County, p. 625.

6  
Ronald Numbers and Judith Walzer Leavitt, eds., Wisconsin Medicine: Historical Perspectives. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), p. 53.

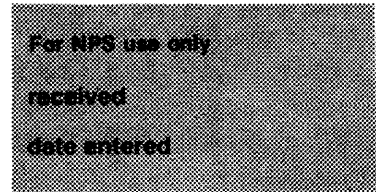
7  
Mary Hardgrove Heberd, "Notes on the Medical Practice of Dr. David Franklin Powell", Wisconsin Magazine of History, Vol. 36, p. 190.

8  
Albert G. Sanford and H.J. Hirshheimer, A History of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, 1841-1900. (LaCrosse: LaCrosse County Historical Society, 1951), pp. 214-215.

9  
LaCrosse Leader Press, May 8, 1906, p. 1.

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Healey Block, LaCrosse, LaCrosse County, Wisconsin  
Continuation sheet Item number 9, 10

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Major Bibliographical References (cont.):

Holbrook, Stewart. The Golden Age of Quackery. New York: Macmillan Co., 1959.

Koenig, Genevieve. "Yahr-Lange Building". Historical Notes: LaCrosse County Historical Society, May, 1981.

LaCrosse Leader Press, May 16, 1906.

Numbers, Ronald, and Judith Walzer Leavitt, eds. Wisconsin Medicine: Historical Perspectives. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981.

Sanford, Albert H., and H.J. Hirshheimer. A History of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, 1841-1900. LaCrosse: LaCrosse County Historical Society, 1951.

Verbal Boundary Description (Cont.):

of a party wall; thence southerly along said centerline 99.68 feet to the northerly line of the southerly 22.25 feet of said Lot 2; thence westerly along said northerly line 46 feet 2 inches to a point which is .06 feet northerly of the northeasterly corner of a building; thence southerly parallel with the westerly line of said Lot 2 a distance of .06 feet to said northeasterly corner of the building; thence westerly along the northerly line of said building 81 feet 6.5 inches to the westerly line of said Lot 2; thence northerly along the westerly line of said Lots 2 and 1 a distance of 101 feet more or less to the point of beginning.

Description of property located at 212 Main Street: Town of LaCrosse, east 24 1/12 ft. of Lot 1 and east 24 1/12 ft., except south 22 1/4 ft., of Lot 2 in Block 20.