

**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street & number Various (see list attached) N/A not for publication
city or town City of Oshkosh N/A vicinity
state Wisconsin code WI county Winnebago code 139 zip code 54901

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally. (See continuation for additional comments.)

[Signature] 1/29/26
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State Historic Preservation Officer-WI

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

North Main Street Historic District
Name of Property

Winnebago County, Wisconsin
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

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

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Edson H. Beall 3/7/96

Entered in the
National Register

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply)
___ private
___ public-local
___ public-state
___ public-federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)
___ building(s)
 district
___ site
___ structure
___ object

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

		Contributing	Noncontributing	
		<u>60</u>	<u>10</u>	buildings
		<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
		<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
		<u>61</u>	<u>10</u>	Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

2

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store
COMMERCE/TRADE: Financial Institution
COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant
COMMERCE/TRADE: Department Store

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store
COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
Italianate
Queen Anne

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation STONE
walls BRICK
STONE
roof ASPHALT
other TERRA COTTA

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on continuation sheet(s).)

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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.)

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 achieved
significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the sources used in preparing this form on continuation sheet(s).)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from
instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1874-1945

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is
marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Waters, William

Stevens, Ephraim E.

North Main Street Historic District
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Previous Documentation on File (NPS):
 preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:
 State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository:
WI Inventory of Historic Places

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 21 acres

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

1	<u>1/6</u>	<u>3/7/6/7/3/0</u>	<u>4/8/7/5/3/4/0</u>	3	<u>1/6</u>	<u>3/7/6/8/2/0</u>	<u>4/8/7/4/7/9/0</u>
	Zone Easting	Northing			Zone Easting	Northing	
2	<u>1/6</u>	<u>3/7/6/8/2/0</u>	<u>4/8/7/5/2/7/0</u>	4	<u>1/6</u>	<u>3/7/6/6/4/0</u>	<u>4/8/7/4/7/1/0</u>
	Zone Easting	Northing			Zone Easting	Northing	
					<u>see continuation sheet</u>		

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 Elizabeth L. Miller, Consultant (608-233-5942) for
organization City of Oshkosh date 5-20-1995
street & number P.O. Box 1130 telephone 414-236-5059
city or town Oshkosh state WI zip code 54902-1130

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)

North Main Street Historic District
Name of Property

Winnebago County, Wisconsin
County and State

Property Owner

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

name Various (see list attached)
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town Oshkosh state WI zip code 54901

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

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

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**National Register of Historic Places
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North Main Street Historic District
Oshkosh, Winnebago County, WI

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SUMMARY

The North Main Street Historic District is located in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. It encompasses portions of nine blocks in Oshkosh's principal downtown commercial district, and includes those properties facing North Main Street beginning just south of Algoma Boulevard and running north to just north of Parkway Avenue. Several commercial and civic structures immediately west of North Main Street have also been included. The North Main Street Historic District is an intact and visually distinct grouping of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings immediately recognizable as a downtown. The district also has a high concentration of architect-designed high-style and eclectic Italianate and Queen Anne commercial buildings. Many were the work of Oshkosh master architect William Waters. The district consists primarily of one- and two-story masonry commercial buildings erected between 1874 and 1931. Of the 73 resources in the district, 63 are contributing and 10 are noncontributing.

SETTING

The North Main Street Historic District is that part of the principal commercial area in downtown Oshkosh that retains its historic character. Main Street runs north-south, crossing the Fox River three-and-one-half blocks south of the district. Historically, these blocks south of the district were integral to downtown Oshkosh, with a concentration of contiguous two-story masonry commercial buildings, many of them Italianate in style and built following the 1874 and 1875 fires that devastated the business district. Beginning about 1950, many structures in these blocks were demolished and replaced with modern buildings. North of the district, North Main Street is commercial. At one time, there were one-story late nineteenth and early twentieth century residences here. These have been replaced with modern commercial buildings and large parking lots. The areas east and west of the district are residential.

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PRESENT APPEARANCE

The North Main Street Historic District includes 62 contributing buildings, 10 noncontributing buildings, and one contributing object (Soldiers' Monument) on portions of nine blocks. These blocks were all platted before 1858.¹

The district is primarily made up of contiguous late nineteenth century two-story brick structures, facing North Main Street and forming a continuous commercial street scape. One-story early twentieth century commercial structures intermix toward the north end of the district. Two-thirds of the 62 contributing buildings were built prior to 1890.² In fact, 27 of the contributing buildings (44 percent of the total) were built between 1874 and 1876, in the aftermath of the 1874 and 1875 fires which ravaged much of the downtown. Thirteen (21 percent) were built between 1877 and 1889. Fourteen (22 percent) were built between 1890 and 1915. Soldiers' Monument, the one object in the district, was also built during this period (1907). Eight (13 percent) were built between 1921 and 1931.

The typical contributing commercial structure in the North Main Street Historic District is two-stories-tall, of load-bearing brick with a stone basement, and has a flat or shed asphalt roof with a parapet. The influences of the Italianate and Queen Anne styles predominate. Of the 62 contributing buildings in the district, 22 are Italianate or Italianate-influenced structures, and two combine Italianate with features of the Gothic Revival style. Sixteen are Queen Anne or Queen Anne-influenced. There are also two examples of Neo-Gothic Revival, one of Richardsonian Romanesque, three of Neo-Classical Revival and one of Art Moderne. The remaining 15 are vernacular buildings. Of these, one is a False-front, and seven

¹Map of the City of Oshkosh, Winnebago County, (Pittsburgh: George Harrison, 1858).

²Sources for the dates of construction include maps, tax rolls, city directories and newspaper articles. These are listed in the bibliography.

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are Modern Broadfront structures. At least 10 of the contributing buildings in the district, and very likely several more, were designed by Oshkosh architect William Waters. Two other local architects are known to have designed at least one building each in the district: Ephraim E. Stevens and T. Dudley Allen. Milwaukee architect H. C. Koch designed one building. The firm of Hoggson Brothers, with offices in Chicago and New York City, also designed one building. The North Main Street Historic District retains a high degree of historic integrity in setting, materials, feeling, association and design, as evidenced by the fact that 86 percent of the structures in the district are contributing.

The oldest buildings in the district are Italianate. There are 22 Italianate or Italianate-influenced structures in the district. On North Main Street, nearly all of the Italianate and Italianate-influenced structures were built immediately following the devastating fires of 1874 and 1875. Many were designed by William Waters. The building at 414 North Main Street (1875, photo 1) is a good example of one of Waters' simpler designs from this period. This structure originally consisted of three storefronts. The southern two were lost when the Osco Drug Store was built on part of the original site in 1962 (at 408 North Main Street, noncontributing). The building at 414 North Main retains round-arched second story windows with enriched hoods and pronounced keystones, and a frieze of decorative brickwork alternating recessed panels and Greek crosses. Recessed crosses at frieze or cornice level, or between stories, can be found on several other buildings in the district. Most of these buildings are known to have been designed by Waters. This may have been a characteristic of his early commercial work. The Beckwith House Hotel at 401-07 North Main Street (photo 2), designed by Waters in 1876, incorporates a band of recessed crosses at the cornice. It is uncertain whether this reproduces a detail that was originally at the cornice, or between floors. The Beckwith House Hotel was built as a four-story building, but the upper floors were destroyed by fire in 1880. The owner, Samuel Beckwith, was unable to finance rebuilding the entire structure, but did restore the first two

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floors.³ The Beckwith House Hotel also features round- and segmental-arched second story windows with ornate metal shouldered hood moldings. The cream brick building at 435 North Main Street (1874, photo 3) provides yet another example of the use of this motif, with a band of recessed red brick crosses between the second and third floors and at the cornice. In addition, the segmental-arched upper floor windows feature cream and red brick hood moldings with a pronounced keystone.

Another design by Waters, and one of the most elaborate buildings in the district, is the First Methodist Church at 502 North Main Street (NRHP, photo 4). It was built as Wagner's Opera House in 1874-75, a use it never served. The Methodists purchased the building in 1875 and converted the interior into a church, while leaving the exterior as it had been designed. A major remodeling in 1924-25 re-styled it as a Neo-Classical Revival building by altering the storefront, creating the tall round-arched windows on the south facade and removing the original bracketed cornice and tower with Mansard roof. However, many of the original Italianate details have been retained. These include brick pilasters, limestone belt courses and round- and segmental-arched windows with brick hood moldings and pronounced keystones.⁴

The Battis Building at 106 High Avenue (1875, photo 5, on the left), a fine local example of the Italianate style, was restored to its historic appearance in 1982-83. The building features a cast iron storefront, tall basket-handle-arched second story windows with enriched metal hood moldings, brick corbelled cornice and a semi-circular pediment. The Wakeman Meat Market at 436 North Main Street was designed by Oshkosh architect T. Dudley Allen in 1875. It has segmental-arched second story windows with enriched shouldered hood moldings. It presents quite a different appearance from Waters' work, with its bull's-eye windows and bracketed

³Intensive survey form, on file in the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (hereafter, WSHPO).

⁴Elizabeth L. Miller, National Register Nomination for the First Methodist Church, 1993.

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cornice. Other good examples of the Italianate style in the district include the Wolcott Block at 325 North Main Street (1875, photo 6, far right, probably designed by Waters); 441 North Main Street (1875) and 438-40 North Main Street (1875).

Although there are no fully developed examples of nineteenth century Gothic Revival surviving in the district, there are two structures that combine Italianate and Gothic Revival elements. The building at 101 Algoma Boulevard (Waters, 1875, photo 7) combines Italianate windows and hood moldings, and pilasters, with a shouldered triangular pediment, trefoil arch tracery and keystones embellished with Latin crosses. The other hybrid is the cream brick Rudd and Holden Block at 465 North Main Street (1874, photo 8). Above the storefront, there are pointed-arched second story windows with continuous red and cream brick hood moldings. Polychromy is the signature feature of a variant of Gothic Revival known as High Victorian Gothic. Built between 1865 and 1900, High Victorian Gothic is rare in Wisconsin.⁵ The Rudd and Holden Block also has a shouldered triangular pediment. The Italianate influence is shown in the brick corbelling, the band of recessed Greek crosses at the cornice, and the segmental-arched second story windows on the Merritt Avenue facade. William Waters is known to have designed many of the commercial buildings erected on North Main Street immediately following the 1874 and 1875 fires,⁶ and details such as the band of recessed crosses suggest Waters may have designed the Rudd and Holden Block.

There are also two examples of Neo-Gothic Revival in the district. The facade on the building at 323 North Main Street, originally a part of the Wolcott Block (1875, photo 6, center), was remodeled in 1926 with glazed terra cotta trefoil tracery, quatrefoils, and

⁵Barbara Wyatt, editor, Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986), II:2-10.

⁶Howard, Needles, Tammen and Bergendoff, (hereafter, HNTB), Final Report of the Intensive Historic Resource Survey for the City of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, September, 1981, p. 153.

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Jacobean shields. The vertical emphasis characteristic of Gothic also lent itself to tall buildings. Here again, its use was mostly in applied terra cotta decoration. The Raulf Hotel at 522-30 North Main Street (1927-28), is a brick-veneered high-rise with glazed terra cotta arcading, tracery, pinnacles and spires, crenellated parapet, shields, and tiles with a floral motif reminiscent of the Tudor rose.

Queen Anne is one of the predominant styles in the district, showing influence in 16 examples. The Webster Block at 501-09 North Main Street (photo 9) is a fine example. Designed by Oshkosh architect Ephraim E. Stevens in 1895, the Webster Block is of cream brick, trimmed with rock-faced stone and enriched with decorative brickwork. It is a corner block, with a round turret above the canted corner entrance, and polygonal bays on both the North Main Street and Merritt Avenue facades. As late as the 1950s, the corner tower retained its conical roof. The Dimpsey Building at 579-81 North Main Street (1895) is smaller but quite similar to the Webster Block, with its corner turret and canted entrance, polygonal bays and ornamental brickwork. The building at 541 North Main Street (1891) is a good mid-block example of the Queen Anne style, with a central polygonal second-story bay and decorative brickwork. Interestingly, none of these buildings has a pressed metal cornice. Rather, all three have brick cornices, as is commonly seen on many of the Italianate commercial buildings on North Main Street.

Virginia and Lee McAlester identify a "Patterned Masonry" subtype of Queen Anne style houses that can include false gables (sometimes shaped and parapeted), decorative terra cotta or stone panels, and masonry in basket weave or lattice patterns. These buildings usually do not have towers or turrets.⁷ There are three fairly simple commercial examples of this subtype in the North Main Street district. The Grand Opera House at 100 High Avenue (NRHP, photo 5), designed by William Waters in 1883, is an excellent eclectic

⁷Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), pp. 264-66 and 284-87.

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example of Patterned Masonry Queen Anne. The Opera House is a cream brick structure on a coursed rock-faced stone foundation and features a gabled shouldered parapet inset with brick and stone in a lattice pattern, and a patterned brick chimney. It is accented with dark rock-faced stone belt courses and decorative patterns, and keystones, impost blocks and a name panel of smooth white stone. The segmental-arched openings may be an Italianate influence. The arcaded corbel table uses the miter arch. The miter arch was an element of early Greek, Celtic and Norman design.⁸ The miter arch was also sometimes employed for window openings and surrounds in vernacular buildings of the late nineteenth century, perhaps as a simplification of the Gothic Revival pointed arch. It seems unlikely that Waters, with his education and talent, was influenced by the vernacular use of the miter arch. Waters used the miter arch arcaded corbel table on several other buildings as well. The Grand Opera House was restored to its original appearance in 1982-83.

The Schmidt Store, across the street from the Grand Opera House at 101 High Avenue, was also designed by William Waters (1884). Though more modest than the Opera House, it echoes that building with its cream brick construction, pale smooth stone imposts and lintels, round-arched second-story windows, and its miter-arch arcaded corbel table. The storefront and the cornice are somewhat altered, however. The Dichman Block at 432-34 North Main Street (1884, Waters) also features miter-arch arcaded corbelling. This two-story red brick building is accented with belt courses of contrasting brick, continuous lintels and sills of white stone, and a band of terra cotta ornament in a floral motif.

There are also three ornate commercial examples of Patterned Masonry Queen Anne in the district. Perhaps the finest of these is the Thielen-Derksen-Weidner Building at 416-20 North Main Street (photo 10), designed by Waters in 1884. The complex facade of this two-story red brick building features false gables and a flat pediment, each with a blind segmental arch infilled with brick in

⁸Henry H. Saylor, Dictionary of Architecture, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1952), p. 114.

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a checkerboard pattern; and belt courses, sills, incised lintels, keystones, copings and carved blocks of smooth white stone. The storefront at 420, with its leaded glass transom, appears fairly intact. Another excellent and eclectic example of this subtype is the Hoernig Meat Market at 422-24 North Main Street (photo 11). Also designed by Waters and built in 1884, this two-story red brick building is trimmed with white stone and retains the cast iron elements of its original storefront, including slender fluted posts. The upper part of the front facade is reminiscent of the work of Frank Furness, a leading practitioner of Victorian eclecticism, with projecting pilasters appearing to hold in place heavy ornamental masonry. Here, there are segmental arches infilled with basket weave brickwork, contrasting brick belt courses, a band of richly decorated terra cotta panels and three-dimensional lattice patterns composed of recessed squares of brick. The Oddfellows Hall at 103-05 Algoma Boulevard (1884, photo 12) is another elaborate example of Patterned Masonry Queen Anne. It was designed by Milwaukee architect Henry C. Koch. The facade is veneered with glazed red brick, divided by projecting brick pilasters and ornamented with red glazed terra cotta panels. A monumental terra cotta panel, set off-center at the second story, reads: "I.O.O.F. 1884," and depicts various Oddfellows symbols. At the top of this building are two shaped parapeted false gables and a mansard roof clad with multicolored slate.

There is one Richardsonian Romanesque Revival style building in the district. The Algoma Building at 110 Algoma Boulevard (photo 13), designed by William Waters in 1890, is an excellent example of Richardsonian Romanesque. It is a two-story monochromatic coursed rock-faced ashlar building on a raised basement with stone belt courses, deep-set rectangular windows and a broad round-arched main entrance.

There are three Neo-Classical Revival commercial buildings in the district. The Wenrich Marble Works at 566 North Main Street (photo 14) is an unusual example of pre-World War I creative Neo-Classical Revival. Built in 1903, the Wenrich Building has coursed smooth ashlar veneer and features a wide semi-circular arch enriched with a bead-and-reel molding. The elongated keystone supports a cornice, above which is a stone panel reading: "Wenrich." This is

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surmounted by a stepped parapet. The arch, unfortunately filled with concrete panels, is flanked on either side by a pair of Ionic columns with an entablature.

A fine and intact post-World War I example of Neo-Classical Revival is the First National Bank at 404 North Main Street (photo 15). Designed by the Hoggson Brothers, a firm with offices in New York and Chicago, the Bank was built in 1926-27. It is of steel, reinforced concrete, and structural clay tile construction with smooth coursed ashlar veneer. A six-story tower rises from the center of the two-story main block. The main block is articulated by a series of two-story pilasters, a frieze enriched with disks, and dentils and a cornice, surmounted by a paneled stone parapet. The entrance is at the base of the tower, and is composed of double doors (not original) in a richly decorated surround. There is a hood with a broken pediment above the doors. The whole is set within a round-arched opening and flanked on either side by a tall round-arched window. On the tower, there is a decorative panel beneath each eighth story window. Above the windows is a frieze with medallions, surmounted by dentils, a cornice, and a paneled parapet. The third Neo-Classical Revival building in the district is the First Methodist Church, discussed above.

There is one modest example of the Art Moderne style in the North Main Street Historic District. The building at 445 North Main Street (photo 16), originally constructed in 1874, was remodeled in 1938 for the Rex Theater. Art Moderne features of the building include the rounded chrome and porcelain-enamel-paneled ticket booth and entrance doors flanked by curving porcelain-enamel-paneled walls, as well as the second-story corner pilasters and parapet with reverse scallop profile.

There are 15 vernacular buildings in the North Main Street Historic District. One notable nineteenth century vernacular building is the False-front at 12 Church Avenue. Prior to 1860, there were many False-fronts on North Main Street.⁹ The building at 12 Church Avenue is one of the few remaining False-fronts in the district.

⁹Drawing, North Main Street file, Oshkosh Public Museum.

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Built in 1883, it is not a very early example. It has a recessed central entrance, with display windows on either side, and a plain cornice.

There are seven examples of Modern Broadfront buildings in the district. The Foute-Slate Auto Company at 563 North Main Street (1921, photo 17) is a one-story structure with a double-width storefront and a shaped parapet. The front is clad with brick in varying shades of orange and brown. The attic story windows with battered jambs suggest Craftsman influence, while the wide belt course and coping, as well as the geometric column elaboration and capitals, appear to have been drawn from the Prairie School style.

There are three other interesting Modern Broadfronts in the North Main Street Historic District. All three are one-story structures with double-width storefronts and stepped parapets. The facade of the Gibson Auto Exchange at 570 North Main Street (1921) has a four-column front veneered with orange brick. Above the storefront, the brick is inset with concrete or stucco in a geometric pattern, and the columns are enriched with angular Prairie-School-influenced ornamentation. The Hathaway Buick Company at 609 North Main Street (1922, photo 18) has a four-column front of glazed cream brick with classical ornamentation. The Gibson Tire Company at 537 North Main Street (1925) is veneered with glazed terra cotta and enriched with classical ornamentation including urns, egg-and-dart and bead-and-reel moldings, volutes and a cartouche.

Soldiers' Monument, located on the northeast corner of Market Street and High Avenue, is the one contributing object in the district. Created by Italian sculptor Gaetano Trentanove, this Civil War memorial was the first of 11 bronze statues or busts presented to the city by Colonel E. R. Hicks, proprietor of the Oshkosh Daily Northwestern. Hicks' father was killed in battle while serving in the 32nd Wisconsin infantry.¹⁰ The bronze

¹⁰James I. Metz, editor, Prairies, Pines and People: Winnebago County, A New Perspective, (Oshkosh: Oshkosh Northwestern Company, 1976), p. 390.

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sculpture of three Civil War soldiers in action is set on a classically-profiled stone pedestal.

ALTERATIONS

Many of the contributing structures in the North Main Street Historic District have "modernized" storefronts, postdating World War II. In some cases, elements of the original storefront remain, but have been infilled with wood or masonry to reduce window and door openings. In other cases, nothing of the original storefront remains. There are also examples where alterations have been limited to replacement windows and doors. These alterations are typical of downtown commercial districts and do not compromise the integrity of North Main Street.

NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

There are ten noncontributing resources in the North Main Street Historic District. Seven of the ten were built after 1946. These buildings are interspersed throughout the district, minimizing their impact. Nearly all are one-story flat-roofed buildings with parapets. The Osco Drug Store at 408 North Main Street (photo 19, now two separate businesses), built in 1962, is typical of these. There are also three older buildings that have become noncontributing. The structure at 542 North Main Street is a false-front, built about 1875. The front has been stuccoed. The building at 571 North Main Street was built in 1922; the front has been altered. The facade of the Mayer Building at 421 North Main Street (1875) has also been altered. The noncontributing structures in the North Main Street Historic District do not detract from the sense of time and place conveyed overall by the 63 contributing resources.

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

<u>Address</u>	<u>Site name</u>	<u>Date built</u>
<u>Algoma Boulevard</u>		
101		1876
103-05	Oddfellows Hall	1884

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110	Algoma Building	1890
<u>Church Avenue</u>		
12		1883
<u>High Avenue</u>		
100	Grand Opera House	1883*
101	Henry Schmidt Store	1884
103	Castle-Pierce Printing Company	1909
106	M.T. Battis Building	1875
<u>Market Street</u>		
315		1900
300	Soldiers' Monument	1907**
<u>North Main Street</u>		
323		1875
	Kline Dept Store remodeling	1926
325	Wolcott Block	1875
401-07	Beckwith House Hotel	1876/81
404	First National Bank	1926-27
411		1874
413		1875
414		1875
416-20	Thielen-Derksen-Weidner Building	1884
415		1879
417-19		1875
422-24	Hoernig Meat Market	1884
423		1875
426		1875
428	Ephraim Stevens Building	1883
430		1875
432-34	Dichman Block	1884
435		1874
436	Wakeman Meat Market	1875
438-40		1875
439	William Hill & Company	1876
441		1874
445		1874
	(Rex Theater remodeling)	1938

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447-51		1874
448		C.1885
452		1874
454		1884
455-57		1874
456	Martin Kelley Grocery	1875
459-61		1874
460-62	Bent Block	1886
463		1874
465	Rudd & Holden Block	1874
501-09	Webster Block	1895
502	First Methodist Church remodeled	1874-75* 1924-25
511		1908
513-15	Blissett Hallock & Company	1901
517-21		1889
	addition (521)	1901
522-30	Raulf Hotel/Strand Theater	1927-28
525	Checkerboard Restaurant	1929
531	Frank Percey Gun and Fur House	1900/07
537	Gibson Tire Company	1925
538		1915
544		1891
558	Oshkosh Pure Milk Company	1904
563	Foute-Slate Auto Company	1921
566	Wenrich Marble Works	1903
570	Gibson Auto Exchange	1921
576-78	Laus Candy Company	1894
579-81	Dimpsey Building	1895
582		1893
584-86		C.1875
	addition (584)	1903
609	Hathaway Buick Company	1922
<u>West Parkway Avenue</u>		
11	Mello Ice Cream Company	1931

* ON NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

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NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

North Main Street

408	Osco Drug Store	1962
421	George Mayer Building	1875
427	J. C. Penned's	1961
506-08		1947
523		1957
542		C.1875
547a	Gibson Used Car Office	1982
b	(prefabricated garage)	1982
571		1922
577		1948

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SUMMARY

The North Main Street Historic District is locally significant under Criteria C and A. The district is architecturally significant as an intact and visually distinct grouping of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings, united by physical development and immediately recognizable as a downtown. The North Main Street district has the largest concentration of architecturally significant commercial buildings and the best integrity of any commercial area in the city. It also has outstanding examples of architect-designed high-style and eclectic Italianate and Queen Anne commercial buildings, as well as good examples of other styles. In addition, the North Main Street Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A as the intact portion of what was Oshkosh's principal business district from 1874 until 1945. The district's integrity is very good; 86 percent of all the buildings are contributing.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Although the fur trade brought a handful of pioneers of European descent to Winnebago County as early as 1818, it was not until the Treaty of the Cedars was signed in 1836 that the area that is present day Oshkosh was truly opened up for settlement. With this treaty, the Menominee ceded to the United States government all the land north of Lake Butte des Morts and the Fox River between the Wolf River and Lake Winnebago. Settlers were quick to arrive and begin farming. Within 15 years all traces of the fur traders disappeared.¹¹

Oshkosh grew slowly during the late 1830s and early 1840s. In 1846, settlers began arriving in earnest to take advantage of Oshkosh's location on the navigable Fox River and near the pine forests to the north and west. In 1847, two steam lumber mills were established, and the industry that would spur Oshkosh's phenomenal growth was born. In early 1849, the population of the village reached 500. By 1850, Oshkosh had become the county seat,

¹¹Metz, pp. 131-135.

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and its population had nearly tripled, standing at 1,392. In 1853, Oshkosh incorporated as a city.¹²

The city grew rapidly during the 1850s, but it was not until the arrival of the railroad in 1859, vastly improving the transportation network for delivering lumber products, that Oshkosh really began to expand. As a result of improved transportation and an increased need for lumber products brought about by the Civil War, Oshkosh boomed during the 1860s. In 1860, the city's population was 6,086. By 1870, the population had more than doubled, reaching 12,663, and Oshkosh had become the third largest city in the state (behind Milwaukee and Fond du Lac). Despite a nationwide recession, Oshkosh continued to boom during the 1870s. In 1875, the population was 17,000.¹³

By the end of the 1870s, the growth of the lumber industry in Oshkosh began to slow. As the importance of the lumber industry declined in Oshkosh, wood products industries began to appear. As Oshkosh's industrial base changed, the demographics of the population changed as well. The early settlers were primarily Yankees. Following the Civil War, German and Irish immigrants arrived to work in the city's factories. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, many Poles, Scandinavians and ethnic Germans from the Volga River region of Russia settled in Oshkosh. From 1870 until the decline of the wood products industry in the late 1920s, Oshkosh remained one of the five largest cities in the state.¹⁴

¹²HNTB, pp. 4-6.

¹³Ibid., pp. 4-6 and 16.

¹⁴Ibid.; Oshkosh Weekly Northwestern, (OWN), 8 January 1880; and Robert C. Nesbit, Wisconsin: A History, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973) pp. 341-43 and 459-60.

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ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The North Main Street Historic District is architecturally significant as an intact grouping of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings united by physical development. The size, configuration, and use of these buildings create a cohesive and visually distinct area immediately recognizable as a downtown. Although there are other smaller commercial areas in Oshkosh, notably on the south side of the Fox River, these are neighborhood-level commercial districts, which lacked the variety and dense concentration of enterprises and services that the North Main Street district had. The North Main Street Historic District also has a unified appearance unmatched by any other commercial area in the city, the largest concentration of architecturally significant commercial buildings, and the best integrity. In addition, the North Main Street Historic District has outstanding examples of architect-designed high-style and eclectic Italianate and Queen Anne commercial buildings, as well as good examples of other architectural styles. Many of the early buildings were the work of noted Oshkosh architect William Waters.

The first businesses in Oshkosh sprung up along North Main Street (called Ferry Street) just north of the Fox River in the mid-1840s. The earliest commercial buildings were mostly one- and two-story frame buildings, and included front-gabled and false-front vernacular structures, as well as some Greek Revival buildings.¹⁵ Because lumber was readily available, as Oshkosh grew businessmen built with wood, despite the hazard of fire. Fire, however, was to be a primary force in shaping the downtown during the nineteenth century, as can be seen in the North Main Street Historic District today.

Major fires devastated downtown Oshkosh four times during the nineteenth century. In May, 1859, fire destroyed almost the entire commercial district, including all the buildings on both sides of

¹⁵Drawing on file at the Oshkosh Public Museum.

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Ferry Street between Ceape and Washington Streets.¹⁶ A second fire in May, 1866 burned the structures on the west side of the street between High Avenue and Algoma Boulevard, and on the east side between Waugoo and Washington Avenues. Shortly thereafter, Ferry Street was renamed North Main Street.¹⁷ In July of 1874, a third major fire swept the northern end of the downtown. It began on the north side of Algoma Boulevard at North Main Street, and destroyed commercial buildings on both sides of the street up to Irving Street.¹⁸ Nearly half of the buildings in the North Main Street Historic District were built in the aftermath of this fire. The last fire was the Great Fire of 1875, which destroyed many of the commercial buildings in the 100- through 300-blocks of North Main Street, and adjacent blocks of Algoma Boulevard and High Avenue.¹⁹

This series of fires created a downtown of extraordinarily unified appearance. There are no commercial buildings in the downtown which predate these fires. All five blocks of North Main Street closest to the Fox River up to Merritt Avenue, on both sides of the street, as well as the commercial areas just east and west of the southern end of the downtown, were almost completely rebuilt between 1874 and 1876. William Waters designed a great many of the buildings erected during this time. Working within the new ordinance that the City of Oshkosh had adopted requiring that all new buildings in the downtown be constructed of fire-proof materials, Waters created a street scape predominantly made up of two-story brick structures in the Italianate style.²⁰ Significant buildings erected during this period include the Beckwith House

¹⁶Metz, p. 325.

¹⁷Clinton F. Karstaedt, editor, Oshkosh, One Hundred Years a City, 1853-1953, (Oshkosh: Oshkosh Centennial, Incorporated, 1953), p. 82.

¹⁸HNTB, p. 21.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 25.

²⁰Ibid., p. 141.

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Hotel at 435 North Main Street (1874), the Rudd and Holden Block at 465 North Main Street (1874), the First Methodist Church at 502 North Main Street (1875, NRHP), the Battis Building at 106 High Avenue (1875), the Wakeman Meat Market at 436 North Main Street (1875), and the Wolcott Block (1875).

During the 1880s, a few new commercial buildings were erected in the downtown south of Merritt Avenue, many of them designed by Waters in the Queen Anne style. All of these buildings were brick structures compatible in size and shape with the earlier Italianate structures. The Grand Opera House at 101 High Avenue (1883, NRHP), the Schmidt Store at 101 High Avenue (1884), the Dichman Block at 432-34 North Main Street (1884), the Theilen-Derksen-Weidner Building at 416-20 North Main Street (1884), the Hoernig Meat Market at 422-24 North Main Street (1884) and the Oddfellows Hall at 103-05 Algoma Boulevard (1884) are outstanding examples of buildings erected during this era. All but the Oddfellows Hall were designed by William Waters. Milwaukee architect Henry C. Koch designed the Oddfellows Hall.

Between 1890 and 1940, new construction on North Main Street was primarily confined to the area north of Merritt Avenue. Here, one- and two-story masonry and masonry-veneered buildings filled in vacant lots and replaced small frame structures. The Webster Block at 501-09 North Main Street (1895), the Dimpsey Building at 579-81 North Main Street (1895), and Wenrich Marble Works at 566 North Main Street (1903) are good examples of commercial buildings erected during the first twenty years of this period. After 1920, several auto-related buildings were erected in the 500- and 600-blocks. The Gibson Auto Exchange at 570 North Main Street (1921), the Hathaway Buick Company at 609 North Main Street (1922) and the Gibson Tire Company at 537 North Main Street (1925) are three of these.

The facades of a few of the older buildings in the district were remodeled beginning in the 1920s. The Neo-Gothic Revival front on 323 North Main Street (1926), and the Art Moderne treatment of the facade on 445 North Main Street (1938) are good examples of this. Some storefronts were also updated during this period. Two "skyscrapers" were built during the 1920s, in keeping with a nationwide

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trend; These were the eight-story First National Bank at 404 North Main Street (1926-27), and the ten-story Raulf Hotel at 522-30 North Main Street (1927-28).

Following World War II, many storefronts in downtown Oshkosh were altered in an attempt to modernize them. This pattern continued during the 1950s and 1960s, at the same time that selective demolition of scattered older buildings was underway, a few in each block. Most of these were replaced with one-story buildings. This was followed by larger scale demolition on North Main Street beginning about mid-block just south of Algoma Boulevard and Washington Avenues, and running south to the Fox River. Although groups of historic buildings do remain in this area, most notably on the east side of North Main Street between Waugoo and Otter Avenue, post-1970 structures dominate, rendering these blocks ineligible for inclusion in the North Main Street Historic District. In contrast, the blocks between Algoma Boulevard and Parkway Avenue retain a high degree of integrity.

The contributing buildings in the North Main Street Historic District, which span 66 years from 1874 to 1940, give the district a distinctly unified appearance and a continuity of scale and materials that create a cohesive whole. The 24 Italianate, Italianate/Gothic and Italianate-influenced buildings provide the underlying pattern in the district. The 16 Queen Anne and Queen Anne-influenced buildings are compatible in materials and scale with the earlier structures, while the remaining 22 buildings contribute to the background fabric and provide accents to what is the largest concentration of architecturally significant commercial buildings in the city. The few noncontributing buildings in the district detract very little.

It should be noted that a second commercial area in Oshkosh has been identified as a potential historic district. The South Main Street Historic District is a neighborhood commercial area rather than part of the downtown, and lies south of the Fox River. It is much smaller than the North Main Street district, encompassing only one block with three buildings. These are cream brick Italianate-

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influenced buildings, two of which date from 1868, making them the oldest surviving commercial structures in Oshkosh.²¹

The appearance of the North Main Street Historic District owes much to the talent of William Waters. The document Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin (Wyatt) lists William Waters as meeting National Register criterion C as a "master" architect.²² Waters (1843-1917) was born in New York state. He studied architecture at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, graduating in 1867. Waters promptly relocated to Oshkosh and opened his own architectural firm. He was a resident of Oshkosh for fifty years. Many newspaper articles and biographies of the time attribute sizable importance to Waters' influence on architecture throughout the Fox River region.²³

Waters designed numerous residential, commercial and civic buildings in Oshkosh, in a variety of styles. Many of the commercial buildings along North Main Street were designed by Waters early in his career.²⁴ These buildings are primarily either Italianate or Queen Anne in style. A few of his Italianate commercial buildings, and most of his Queen Anne commercial buildings, demonstrate his outstanding ability to draw elements from various styles and building traditions, and create an eclectic yet aesthetically pleasing and unified design. Although eclecticism was very popular in the late nineteenth century, it was difficult to do well. Waters' eclectic designs are very well executed and clearly show his great talent.

Waters designed the following buildings (and probably several more) in the North Main Street Historic District: the First Methodist

²¹Ibid., p. 199.

²²Wyatt, II:6-2.

²³"Architect No More," Oshkosh Daily Northwestern (ODN), 15 December 1917, p. 3.

²⁴Ibid.; and HNTB, pp. 63 and 153.

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Church at 502 North Main Street (1874-75, remodeled 1924-25); 101 Algoma Boulevard (1875); 414 North Main Street (1875); the Beckwith House Hotel at 401-07 North Main Street (1876); the Grand Opera House at 100 High Avenue (1883); the Schmidt Store at 101 High Avenue (1884); the Theilin-Derksen-Weidner Building at 416-20 North Main Street (1884); the Hoernig Meat Market at 422-24 North Main Street (1884); the Dichman Block at 432-34 North Main Street (1884); and the Algoma Building at 110 Algoma Boulevard (1890).

At least two other local architects designed buildings in the North Main Street Historic District: Ephraim E. Stevens and T. Dudley Allen. Ephraim E. Stevens was an architect/builder. Born in 1851, he came to Oshkosh with his family in 1852. After high school, Stevens worked as a mason. In 1868, he became an apprentice to Green Bay architect D. M. Harteau. Harteau made Stevens a partner in 1876. The partnership dissolved when Stevens returned to Oshkosh in 1878. The Oshkosh City Directory lists Stevens as a contractor and builder from 1879 until 1889. He is listed as an architect from 1891 until 1905, and unlisted thereafter.²⁵ Stevens designed the Webster Block at 501-09 North Main Street (1895) in the Queen Anne, a style he favored.

T. Dudley Allen seems to have practiced architecture in Oshkosh very briefly. He only appears in the 1876 city directory.²⁶ Allen designed one building in the district, the Wakeman Meat Market at 436 North Main Street (1875).

Two out-of-town firms designed buildings in the North Main Street Historic District. The Hoggson Brothers, with offices in New York City and Chicago, designed the First National Bank at 404 North Main Street (1926-27). Milwaukee architect Henry C. Koch, also accorded "master" architect status by Wyatt, designed the Oddfellows Hall at 103-05 Algoma Boulevard (1884). Henry C. Koch (1841-1910) was born in Germany and immigrated to the United States

²⁵HNTB, pp. 152-53; and ODN, 10 April 1897.

²⁶Richard J. Harney, Oshkosh City Directory and Rebuilt Oshkosh Illustrated, (Oshkosh: Allen and Hicks, 1876).

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in 1842. According to Wyatt, Koch is one of the state's master architects. Koch began his career in 1856 working for Milwaukee architect G. W. Mygatt. During the Civil War, he served as an Army Topographical Engineer (now the Corps of Engineers). In 1866, he returned to Milwaukee and formed a partnership with Mygatt. When that partnership dissolved in 1870, Koch established his own firm. His brother-in-law, H. P. Schnesky, was his associate during the 1880s. Koch's son Henry eventually joined the firm. In 1905, the name was changed to Koch and Son. Koch designed churches and courthouses all over the state. In addition, he designed all of Milwaukee's public schools prior to 1881, and won third prize in a national competition for a model school building in 1880.²⁷ Koch was one of Wisconsin's best-known and most active nineteenth century architects.

The North Main Street Historic District contains several outstanding examples of Italianate and Queen Anne commercial buildings, as well as good examples of other styles.

The oldest buildings in the district are Italianate, a style built in Wisconsin between about 1855 and 1890. Nearly all of the ones in the North Main Street Historic District were built immediately following the devastating fires of 1874 and 1875. Between the 22 Italianate or Italianate-influenced structures and the two Italianate/Gothic Revival buildings in the district, elements of this style can be seen on 40 percent of the contributing structures. Italianate commercial buildings are generally two- or three-story brick structures with a cast iron storefront. In Oshkosh, none of the Italianate commercial buildings retains its original storefront. The upper story windows can be flat-, segmental- or round-arched, with window heads or hood moldings that are typically surmounted by brick corbelling and a bracketed wood or metal cornice. Bracketed cornices appear to have been less common in Oshkosh, with many examples finished with a simple brick

²⁷History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1881), pp. 1500-01; and "Henry C. Koch Dies After Long Illness," Milwaukee Sentinel, 20 May 1910, p. 1.

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corbelled cornice.²⁸ Some of the best examples in the district are the building at 414 North Main Street, with its enriched window hoods and pronounced keystones; the Beckwith House Hotel at 401-07 North Main Street with its ornate metal shouldered hood moldings; and 435 North Main Street with its segmental-arched hood moldings of red and cream brick; the Battis Building at 106 High Avenue, with its basket-handle-arched windows and enriched metal hood moldings; the Wakeman Meat Market at 436 North Main Street with its enriched shouldered hood moldings, bull's-eye windows and bracketed cornice. Other Italianate and Italianate-influenced buildings in the district include 325 North Main Street, 411 North Main Street, 413 North Main Street, 423 North Main Street, 425 North Main Street, 426 North Main Street, 430 North Main Street, 435 North Main Street, 438-40 North Main Street, 441 North Main Street, 447-51 North Main Street, 452 North Main Street, 455-57 North Main Street, 456 North Main Street, 459-61 North Main Street, 463 North Main Street, and 586 North Main Street.

Sixteen buildings in the district show the influence of the Queen Anne style. Queen Anne commercial buildings, built in Wisconsin between 1880 and 1900, combine a variety of textures and materials in the exterior finish. Juxtaposing brick with rock-faced stone was typical. Queen Anne commercial buildings often present a complex, asymmetrical facade with polygonal bays, a corner tower or turret with canted entrance, and a richly decorated pressed metal cornice. There are three fine examples of the style in the North Main Street Historic District. The Webster Block at 501-09 North Main Street and the Dimpsey Building at 579-81 North Main Street both feature turreted canted corner entrances and decorative brickwork, while 541 North Main Street has a polygonal second-story bay and ornamental brickwork. There are also six examples of the eclectic "Patterned Masonry" subtype of Queen Anne, most of them designed by William Waters. This subtype is characterized by false gables (sometimes shaped and parapeted), decorative terra cotta and/or stone panels, and masonry in basket weave or lattice patterns. These buildings do not have towers or turrets, are usually high-style architect-designed structures, and were built

²⁸McAlester and McAlester, pp. 210-14; and Wyatt, II:2-3.

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almost exclusively in large cities.²⁹ The Grand Opera House at 100 High Avenue features a gabled shouldered parapet inset with brick and stone in a lattice pattern, and a patterned brick chimney. The Schmidt Store at 101 High Avenue and the Dichman Block at 432-34 North Main Street both have miter-arch arcaded corbel tables and stone trim. The most ornate examples of Patterned Masonry Queen Anne in the district are the Thielen-Derksen-Weidner Building at 416-20 North Main, with its false gables, flat pediment and checkerboard patterning; the Hoernig Meat Market at 422-24 North Main, with its basket-weave brickwork, richly-decorated terra cotta panels and three-dimensional lattice patterns; and the Oddfellows Hall at 103-05 Algoma Boulevard, which features shaped parapeted false gables and red glazed terra cotta panels. Other Queen Anne and Queen Anne-influenced buildings in the district include 531 North Main Street, 544 North Main Street, and 584 North Main Street.

There are two fine Gothic Revival-influenced buildings in the North Main Street Historic District. The hallmark of Gothic Revival is the pointed arch. Built in Wisconsin between 1850 and 1880, the style is most often seen in churches and residences. Other details can include label moldings, steeply-pitched gables and tracery.³⁰ The building at 101 Algoma Boulevard shows the influence of the Gothic Revival in its shouldered triangular pediment, trefoil-arch tracery and keystones embellished with Latin crosses. The Rudd and Holden Block at 465 North Main Street features pointed-arch second-story windows with continuous hood moldings in red and cream brick.

There are two examples of Neo-Gothic Revival in the district. This was a style that was built between 1900 and 1940. After falling out of favor in the late nineteenth century, Gothic enjoyed a small resurgence, primarily in church and institutional design. In commercial buildings, Neo-Gothic Revival was typically confined to applied terra cotta decoration, inspired by Gothic and Jacobean

²⁹McAlester and McAlester, pp. 264-66 and 284-87.

³⁰Wyatt, II:2-5.

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ornamentation.³¹ Both the Raulf Hotel at 522-30 North Main Street and 323 North Main Street feature glazed terra cotta tracery, and Jacobean or Tudor motifs.

There is one Richardsonian Romanesque Revival style building in the district. This is a subtype of Romanesque Revival, a style contemporaneous with Queen Anne, but not as common. Developed by nationally-prominent architect Henry Hobson Richardson, characteristics of this substyle include a massive rock-faced masonry exterior (often monochromatic), wide round-arched openings, round towers, and parapeted gables.³² The Algoma Building at 110 Algoma Boulevard, with its rock-faced ashlar finish, deep-set rectangular windows and broad, round-arched main entrance, is an excellent example of this style.

There are three Neo-Classical Revival buildings in the district. This style, built in Wisconsin between 1895 and 1935, evolved over time. The earliest examples were loosely based on classical building traditions, inspired by the "White City" of the 1893 Chicago World Columbian Exposition. Following World War I, Neo-Classical Revival architecture was more accurately patterned after historical precedents. Neo-Classical Revival is primarily based on the Greek architectural orders, using Ionic or Corinthian columns. The main facade is usually symmetrical and may be dominated by a portico that rises the full height of the building. Other details can include an attic story with a parapet, arched openings, and rusticated masonry.³³ The Wenrich Marble Works at 566 North Main Street, a pre-World War I example, is finished with coursed smooth ashlar veneer and enriched with Ionic columns and a semi-circular arch ornamented with a bead-and-reel molding. The First National Bank at 404 North Main Street, a post-World War II example, has a smooth coursed ashlar veneer articulated with pilasters, a frieze, dentils, and a pedimented hood over the entrance. The First

³¹Ibid., II:2-30.

³²McAlester and McAlester, pp. 300-302.

³³Ibid., p. 320; and Wyatt, II:2-18.

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Methodist Church as 502 North Main Street, with its round-arched windows with brick hood moldings and pronounced keystones, is another fine post-World War II example.

There is one modest example of the Art Moderne style in the North Main Street Historic District. In Wisconsin, Art Moderne was built between 1930 and 1950. Inspired by advances in technology and industrialization, Art Moderne has a horizontal, streamlined appearance. This look is achieved through the use of smooth wall finishes, flat roofs, curving walls and horizontal bands of windows.³⁴ The building at 448 North Main Street has an Art Moderne facade with curving porcelain-enamel-paneled walls and a parapet with a reverse scallop profile.

There are 15 vernacular buildings in the district. One of these is a False-front. False-fronts were often the first commercial structures erected during the early settlement era, and were used to convey an image of progress and prosperity. These buildings were usually one- or two-story frame structures, and they generally had a gable roof hidden behind the false front, a central recessed entrance, and a plain cornice.³⁵ The building at 12 Church Avenue incorporates all these elements.

Another vernacular form in the district, represented by seven examples, is the Modern Broadfront. This building type was primarily built between 1910 and 1940. It is a one- or two-story structure with a flat, two-dimensional main facade. The front is usually finished with brick or, less commonly, glazed terra cotta. The ornamentation is primarily limited to the cornice area, and often consists of a rectangular panel framing decorative brickwork in a herringbone, diamond or basket weave pattern. A stepped parapet with a stone or concrete coping is typical. Insets of

³⁴Wyatt, II:2-35.

³⁵Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings, American Vernacular Design: 1870-1940, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1985), pp. 244-245.

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tile, stone or concrete in simple shapes are also common.³⁶ One of the best Modern Broadfronts in the district is the Foute-Slate Auto Company at 563 North Main Street, with its orange-and-brown brick veneer and shaped parapet. Other interesting examples of Modern Broadfront buildings in the district include the Gibson Auto Exchange at 570 North Main Street, with its orange brick veneer and geometric ornament; the Hathaway Buick Company at 609 North Main Street, with its glazed cream brick finish and classically-influenced ornament; and the Gibson Tire Company at 537 North Main Street, which has glazed terra cotta veneer enriched with urns, egg-and-dart and bead-and-reel moldings, volutes and a cartouche.

In conclusion, the North Main Street Historic District is architecturally significant at the local level as a cohesive and visually distinct area of commercial buildings united by physical development and immediately recognizable as a downtown. The North Main Street Historic District also has a unified appearance unmatched by any other commercial area in the city, the largest concentration of architecturally significant commercial buildings, and the best integrity. The North Main Street Historic District also has outstanding examples of architect-designed high-style and eclectic Italianate and Queen Anne commercial buildings, as well as good examples of other architectural styles.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: COMMERCE

The North Main Street Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A as the intact portion of what was the principal business district in Oshkosh from 1874 until 1945.

In 1844, Joseph Osborn opened the first store in Oshkosh. It was located in a log cabin near the intersection of present-day Bowen and Bayshore Streets (east of the district).³⁷ The second store was built later in 1844 on North Main Street (called Ferry Street) just

³⁶Gottfried and Jennings, p. 249; and draft describing style as "Twentieth Century Commercial," available from the WSHPO.

³⁷HNTB, p. 13.

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north of the Fox River. In 1846, Lucius Miller and Edward Eastman opened the third store, on Ferry Street. Settlers arrived daily that summer, and by the fall Oshkosh was becoming a small village, with a little commercial area concentrated on Ferry Street near the Fox River. The pattern was set, and the commercial area soon spread north along Ferry Street, reaching beyond Ceape to Otter Street (just south of the district) by 1853, the year Oshkosh incorporated as a city.³⁸

Downtown Oshkosh suffered four major fires during the nineteenth century: in 1859, 1866, 1874 and 1875. Each time, new buildings were immediately erected, and the commercial district expanded. The 1875 fire prompted the city to adopt an ordinance requiring that all new buildings in the downtown be fire-proof, resulting in a street scape made up of two- to four-story brick and brick-veneer buildings. In 1876, Ferry Street (renamed North Main Street in 1870)³⁹ was a bustling commercial district stretching as far north as Merritt Avenue. In addition to three banks and seven dry goods stores, Oshkosh boasted a variety of specialized businesses, reflecting its position as a regional commercial center. In the North Main Street Historic District at that time, there were three billiard parlors, a barbershop, a bank, a boilermaker, a bakery, two bookbinders, two books stores, nine boot and shoe stores, a clothing store, a confectioner, a crockery shop, a drugstore, two dry goods stores, five flour and feet stores, three fruit shops, six grocers, a hardware store, two hotels, two jewelers, one livery, four meat markets, a tailor, a milliner, a music store, two newspaper offices, five saloons, a glove factory and a carriage manufacturer.⁴⁰

During the 1870s and 1880s, the commercial district continued to diversify and expand, growing north to Parkway Avenue. Oshkosh gained a cosmopolitan air with the construction of buildings

³⁸Ibid., p. 14; and Metz, p. 324.

³⁹Karstaedt, p. 82.

⁴⁰Harney.

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dedicated to social and cultural pursuits, such as Oddfellows Hall and the Wagner and Grand Opera Houses. In 1890, the North Main Street Historic District had one bank, four bakeries, five barbershops, two blacksmith shops, four bookstores, five boot and shoe stores, two dressmakers, six drugstores, one dry goods store, a carriage factory, six cigar makers, one clothing store, ten confectioners, one fire station, two flour and feed stores, one fruit store, three men's wear stores, nine grocers, two gunshops, two hardware stores, one harness shop, one hotel, six jewelers, one laundry, three liveries, two paint shops, one printer, four meat markets, six milliners, one newspaper office, two stores selling notions, three photographers, three restaurants, thirteen saloons, one secondhand store, one shooting gallery, one tailor and a trunk factory. Toward the north end of the district, there were ten single family houses.⁴¹

From the 1890s and into the 1920s, the downtown continued to develop, with masonry and masonry-veneered structures of a more permanent character replacing smaller and simpler frame stores and houses toward the north end of the downtown. Department stores and other specialized shops succeeded dry goods stores, while automobile dealerships, gas stations and garages replaced liveries, flour and feed stores and blacksmith shops. In the North Main Street Historic District in 1905, there were two banks, one barbershop, two bicycle shops, one blacksmith, two cigarmakers, one clothing shop, two confectioners, one creamery, five drugstores, one furniture store, two furriers, two grocers, one hardware store, one hotel, two jewelers, one laundry, two liveries, two marble works/monument carvers, one milliner, one photographer, one plumber, two printers, three saloons, one sporting goods shop, one tailor, four tinshops, one trunk factory, one turkish bath, one upholsterer, one wallpaper and paint shop and four single family

⁴¹Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Oshkosh: 1890, (Pelham, New York: Sanborn Publishing Company, 1890); and Bunn and Philippi's Oshkosh City Directory, (Oshkosh: E. W. Viall and Company, 1889).

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houses.⁴² In 1920, there were three single family houses in the district, as well as two automobile dealerships, three automobile garages/gas stations, two automobile rental offices, one bakery, one bank, three barbershops, one bicycle shop, three billiard parlors, three cigarmakers, two clothing stores, three confectioners, one creamery, three drugstores, one drygoods store, one fruit store, two furriers, one furniture store, four groceries, two hairdressers, two hardware stores, one hotel, two jewelers, two ladies' wear stores, two luggage factories, one meat market, one men's wear store, two movie theaters, one music store, one office supply store, two optometrists, one paint manufacturer, one photographer, one popcorn shop, two plumbers, two printers, three restaurants, one secondhand store, three shoe stores, one shoe repair shop, one shoe shine stand, five soda shops, one stationer, two stone carvers/monument shops, three tailors, two tire stores, two typewriter shops, one undertaker, and one wallpaper shop.⁴³ By 1929, the last of the single family houses in the district had been replaced with a commercial structure.

During the Depression, the growth of the downtown stopped, and business activity slowed. During World War II, commerce picked up a little bit. In 1942, the North Main Street Historic District had one advertising agency, one antique shop, three automobile dealerships, three automobile garages/filling stations, three auto parts stores, two bakeries, one bank, two barbershops, five beauty shops, one bicycle shop, one bowling alley, one cab company, one camera shop, one children's clothing store, two cigarmakers, three confectioners, four drugstores, one dry cleaners, one electrical supply store, two furniture stores, three furriers, two gift shops, one glassware shop, six groceries, three hardware stores, one hat shop, one hobby shop, one hotel, one store selling household appliances, three jewelers, six ladies' wear shops, two liquor

⁴²Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Oshkosh: 1903, (Pelham, New York: Sanborn Publishing Company, 1903); and Bunn's Directory of Winnebago County, Wisconsin, (Oshkosh: John V. Bunn, 1905).

⁴³Konrad's Directory of Oshkosh, Wisconsin: 1920, (Milwaukee: Wright Directory Company, 1920).

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stores, two men's wear shops, three movie theaters, one music store, two office supply stores, four optometrists, two paint stores, four photographers, two plumbers, one printer, two publishers, one radio station, six restaurants, one sewing machine shop, three shoe stores, ten taverns, one tile manufacturer, two tire stores, and one vacuum cleaner store.⁴⁴

Business in the North Main Street Historic District maintained a brisk pace following World War II and into the 1960s. During the 1960s, as in many cities, business began moving to the outskirts, in this case, toward U.S. 41, and a number of large aging business blocks in the downtown were demolished.

The growth and development of long-time businesses in downtown Oshkosh help establish the basis of the North Main Street district's significance in commerce. One of the most important enterprises in the district was the First National Bank of Oshkosh, the city's oldest and largest bank. Now the First Wisconsin National Bank, it began as a private bank under the name of Darling, Wright, Kellogg and Company in 1852. In 1857, it became the Bank of Oshkosh, and in 1863, the First National Bank of Oshkosh. In 1876, a building was erected for the bank at 404 North Main Street. The bank erected a new building in 1911, and in 1927 replaced that building with the current eight-story First National Bank building. Members of Oshkosh's most prominent families served on the Board of Directors, including Philetus and Edgar P. Sawyer, Gabriel Bouck, Robert McMillan, Moses Hooper, J. Earl Morgan and Daniel C. Buckstaff. First National grew to be the city's largest bank in part because it affiliated with several smaller banks, acquiring German National Bank, Oshkosh Savings and Trust, Commercial National Bank, and Security Bank. Since 1929, it has been a part of the First Wisconsin National Bank Corporation.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Wright's Oshkosh City Directory: 1942, (Milwaukee: Wright Directory Company, 1942).

⁴⁵HNTB, pp. 43-44.

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One of the city's largest dry goods stores was William Hill and Company. It was located at 439 North Main Street from 1876 until 1892. Built for the firm immediately following the fire, the building housed "a palace store [that] will draw trade from suburban towns and villages [all over] central and northern Wisconsin."⁴⁶ The building was purchased by Hough and Topliff, another dry goods firm, in 1892. Hough and Topliff had moved to 423 North Main by 1905. A later dry goods store was Luther Davies and Company, located at 435 North Main Street from 1892 until 1920.

The Continental was a long-term clothing shop in the district. It was located at 323 North Main from 1901 until 1925. Kline's Department Store moved into the space when the Continental relocated to the Beckwith Block, remaining in business at that location until 1993. The Continental closed in the 1970s.

There were several long-time hardware stores in the North Main Street Historic District. Leander Dimpsey was working as a tinsmith in 1876. By 1880, he had opened a hardware store at 448 North Main. In 1895, the building at 579-81 North Main Street was erected for Dimpsey. Dimpsey retired around 1913. The building at 447-451 North Main Street has housed hardware stores since at least 1905. From c. 1905 until at least 1920, the storefront at 447 housed Ralph Burtis Company. By 1924, Burtis had sold out to his partner, H. Stillman. After operating for 42 years, Stillman Hardware was purchased by Kitz and Pfeil in 1966. Kitz and Pfeil Hardware, located in the neighboring storefront at 451 since 1914, needed room to expand. As of this writing, it is still in business at 447-51 North Main Street.

An early and long-lived shoe store in the district was Charles Haase and Son, located in the Wolcott Block at 323 North Main from 1879 until at least 1893. By 1895, the firm had moved to 129 North Main Street (demolished) and the name changed to Otto Haase Shoe Store. The Haase Shoe Store closed in 1974. Another long-term shoe store on North Main Street is the Walkover Shoe Store, still

⁴⁶Harney, p. 83.

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in business and located at 435 North Main Street, operated by a series of owners since 1926.

One drugstore, J. Bauman and Company, was in business in the North Main Street Historic District for over 50 years. John and George Bauman founded their company in 1869, and were located in the Beckwith Block from 1876 until 1929.

The building at 436 North Main Street was built for the Wakeman Meat Market, which was located there from 1875 until 1893. The firm was established by William Wakeman, Senior in 1860. Wakeman was an English immigrant. William, Junior helped his father operate the meat market until William, Senior's retirement in 1874. The younger William, who was also born in England, operated the market until 1893.⁴⁷

One long-term grocery in the district was the Evans Brothers Grocery. Established by John R. and David W. Evans c. 1889, the grocery was located at 457 North Main Street until at least 1895. By 1900, the Evans Brothers had moved to 455 North Main Street, remaining there until at least 1908. By 1911, they had moved to 465 North Main Street where they stayed until 1944. That year, the Evans Brothers closed that store and opened two branches, west of downtown.

Other long-term businesses in the district include a music store, a printer, one boilermaker, two plumbers, a jeweler, a cigarmaker and several furriers. By 1895, Ernest and Joseph Wilson had opened a music and musical instruments store at 447 North Main Street. Ernest was also a music teacher. The store was located at 441 North Main Street from 1914 until 1919, and has been at 448 North Main Street since 1920.

The Castle-Pierce Printing Company, was established by William M. Castle in 1888. Born in Boston, Castle came to Wisconsin with his family in 1856. In 1868, when he was 13, Castle became a printer's

⁴⁷Commemorative and Biographical Record of the Fox River Valley, (Chicago: J. H. Beers and Company, 1895), pp. 1109-10.

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apprentice at the Oshkosh Daily Northwestern. He worked for the Milwaukee Sentinel from 1873 to 1878, returning to Oshkosh as a reporter for that paper in 1878. After opening his printing business, Castle took his employee Harry Pierce as a partner.⁴⁸ The Castle-Pierce Printing Company was located in the Battis Building at 106 High Avenue from 1889 until 1908, when a block was erected for the company at 103 High Avenue. In 1963, Castle-Pierce Printing moved to the edge of town.

As early as 1876, Martin Battis was manufacturing and repairing "all kinds of steam boilers, smoke stacks, britchens and tanks of every description, plate and sheet iron works. . ." ⁴⁹ Born in Boston, Battis settled in Oshkosh in 1856, after spending seven years in the California gold fields. Battis was Fire Chief for 15 years, and sat on the City Council for many years. When Battis died in 1885, his sons Harry and Allen continued the business as Battis Brothers. That year, the building at 106 High Avenue was built for the company. The partnership between Harry and Allen dissolved in 1894.⁵⁰ Harry joined with another brother, Martin, Junior, and the firm has been known as Battis Brothers ever since. The firm relocated to the 200-block of Market (just west of the district) c. 1940, and has been at 570 North Main since 1987. The firm has sold plumbing supplies since around 1947.

Fred J. Merten was a long-term plumber in the district. Established in 1913, the Merten Company was located at 430 North Main Street until it closed in 1970. Another long-time plumbing firm in the district was Toner Plumbing and Heating. Established by Owen Toner at 454 North Main Street in 1895, the company remained at that location until it closed in 1966.

⁴⁸Milo Quaife, Wisconsin: Its History and People, (Chicago: J. S. Clarke Publishing Company, 1924), III:284-86.

⁴⁹Harney, p. 183.

⁵⁰Commemorative and Biographical Record of the Fox River Valley, pp. 1204-05.

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Joseph Krumrich was a long-time jeweler in the North Main Street Historic District. Krumrich was working as a watchmaker for the J. Chapman Company in 1905. By 1908, he had opened his own jewelry store with Otto Konrad at 413 North Main Street. By 1926, Krumrich had bought out Konrad. Krumrich closed in 1974.

Cigarmaker and tobacconist Herman Derksen came to Oshkosh from the Netherlands with his father Theodore in 1869. Theodore immediately opened a cigar store. Herman worked with him, eventually succeeding Theodore.⁵¹ In 1884, Herman Derksen was a partner in the construction of the building at 416-420 North Main Street. Herman Derksen, and later his sons, operated a tobacco shop out of the storefront at 418 until 1987.

There were several furriers in the North Main Street district. The most prominent was Frank Percey, who also sold guns and ammunition. Percey was in business in the 300-block of North Main Street by 1876, operating there until his own building was built at 531 North Main Street in 1901. The company closed in 1943. Steude Fur Company, founded by Ernest F. Steude c. 1900, was located at 457 North Main Street from 1900 until 1956. John Reimer, who worked for Steude in 1914, and for another furrier in 1920, opened his own fur shop at 511 North Main by 1926, remaining in business at that location until his retirement in 1956.

Two long-term hotel buildings survive in the North Main Street Historic District. The oldest, and now so altered that it is noncontributing, is located at 542 North Main Street. Opened as a boarding house by Joseph Schneider in 1876, it was called the Phoenix House by 1884. Schneider was the proprietor until 1913. It was called the City Hotel from 1919 until it closed in 1928. Its closure may have been the result of the opening of the luxurious Hotel Raulf at 522-30 North Main Street. In 1967, it became the Plaza Motor Inn, but closed in 1981. In 1982, the building was converted into apartments for the elderly.

⁵¹William Titus, History of the Fox River Valley, (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1930), p. 1144.

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The most significant theater building surviving in Oshkosh is located in the North Main Street Historic District. The Grand Opera House at 100 High Avenue was built in 1883. It served as an opera house from that time until c. 1936. From c. 1942 until 1983, it was operated as the Grand Theater, showing movies. The City of Oshkosh restored the building to its original appearance in 1982-83. Oshkosh's leading movie palace was the Strand Theater, opened in 1928 as part of the Hotel Raulf complex. In the 1950s, the name was changed to Raulf Theater. In 1967, the name was changed again, to the Plaza Theater. It closed in 1981. Another long-time movie theater in the district is the much smaller Rex Theater at 445 North Main Street. Known as the Time Theater since at least 1942, movies have been shown in the building since 1913.

Restaurants in the North Main Street district had a high turn-over, but there were two long-term food-related businesses: the Joseph Laus Candy Company and the Mello Ice Cream Company. Joseph and Peter Laus established a candy company on the site of 578 North Main Street by 1880. By 1883, Peter had left the company. In 1894, the current building was erected for the firm, which then consisted of Joseph and his sons Henry and Joseph, Junior. The company closed following the death of Joseph, Senior in 1930. The Mello Ice Cream Company was founded by Fred Engle. The building at 11 West Parkway Avenue was erected for the company in 1933. The company closed in 1985.

The 500-block had two long-term auto-related businesses in the early- to mid-twentieth century. Both were built for Alenor Gibson. The building at 570 North Main was built in 1921, and housed Gibson Auto Exchange (car rental) until 1933. From 1934 until 1984, it was Gibson Chevrolet Company. The building at 537 North Main Street was built in 1925 for Gibson Tire Company. From 1961 until 1982, it was Gibson Auto Exchange, which closed in 1989.

PRESERVATION ACTIVITY

The Oshkosh Landmarks Commission was created with the adoption of the Oshkosh Historic Preservation Ordinance in 1981. The Commission's powers are restricted to the designation of local landmarks. Design review of proposed alterations to historic

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structures is not required. The Commission has a draft revised ordinance, with accompanying guidelines, which would require that permits to alter any locally designated structures be reviewed by the Commission. This draft ordinance is currently being reviewed by the city's Planning and Law Departments. Staff comments will be forwarded to the Commission. After the Commission responds to those comments, the ordinance may be presented to the City Council in a workshop forum. The Planning Commission must also review the ordinance before the City Council takes final action.

The Oshkosh Volunteers for Preservation, a not-for profit group, was formed in 1992 to foster the preservation of structures, sites and districts which are part of the historical, architectural and archaeological heritage of Oshkosh.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

No archaeological remains have been discovered to date in the North Main Street Historic District. Some prehistoric and late historic remains may be present, as American Indians and, later, European Americans have inhabited the area for hundreds of years. Any remains of pre-European cultures are likely to have been disturbed, if not destroyed, by the building activity association with the development of downtown Oshkosh.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The North Main Street Historic District includes all or part of the following parcels in the City of Oshkosh, Winnebago County, Wisconsin: Jackson's Replat, Lot 1, Block 1; Original Plat, Lot 4, Block 7; Original Plat, Lots 2-5, Block 8; Original Plat, Lots 4-6, Block 9; Leach's Map Lots 1-8, 14-20, & 27-29, Block 40; Leach's Map, Lots 1 & 48, Block 43; Leach's Map, Lots 4-7 & 10, Block 44; Leach's Map, Lots 1-3, Block 88; Eighth, Read & Kennedy's Subdivision, Lots 2-8; G. H. Read's Subdivision, Lots 1-3; Cottrill's Subdivision, Lots 1-9; Merritt Addition, Lots 1-8, & 11-14, Block 1; Merritt's Second Addition, Lots 1-4 & 7-8, Block A; Hennings Plat, Lots 2-24, 28-32, 36-43 & 46-51, Block 43; and Hennings Plat, Lots 1-6 & 59-64, Block 51.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries of the North Main Street Historic District encompass that part of the principal commercial area in downtown Oshkosh that retains its historic character. The district is composed of a cohesive commercial street scape primarily composed of contiguous two-story brick structures built between 1874 and 1940. The boundaries were drawn to exclude areas that have lost historic integrity, are not in commercial use or are of a different character or time period.

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North Main Street Historic District
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Photo by Elizabeth L. Miller, March 1994
Negative on file at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin
414 North Main Street, west (main) facade

The information for the following photographs is the same as the above, except as noted.

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401-07 North Main Street, east facade

Photo 3 of 19
435 North Main Street, east facade

Photo 4 of 19
502 North Main Street, west and south facades

Photo 5 of 19
100 and 106 High Avenue, south facades

Photo 6 of 19
323 and 325 North Main Street, east facades

Photo 7 of 19
101 Algoma Boulevard, north facade

Photo 8 of 19
465 North Main Street, east and north facades

Photo 9 of 19
501-09 North Main Street, east and south facades

Photo 10 of 19
416-420 North Main Street, west facade

Photo 11 of 19
422-24 North Main Street, west facade

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)
Wisconsin Word Processing Format
(Approved 3/87)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet
photos

North Main Street Historic District
Oshkosh, Winnebago County, WI

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Photo 12 of 19
103-05 Algoma Boulevard, north facade

Photo 13 of 19
110 Algoma Boulevard, south facade

Photo 14 of 19
566 North Main Street, west facade

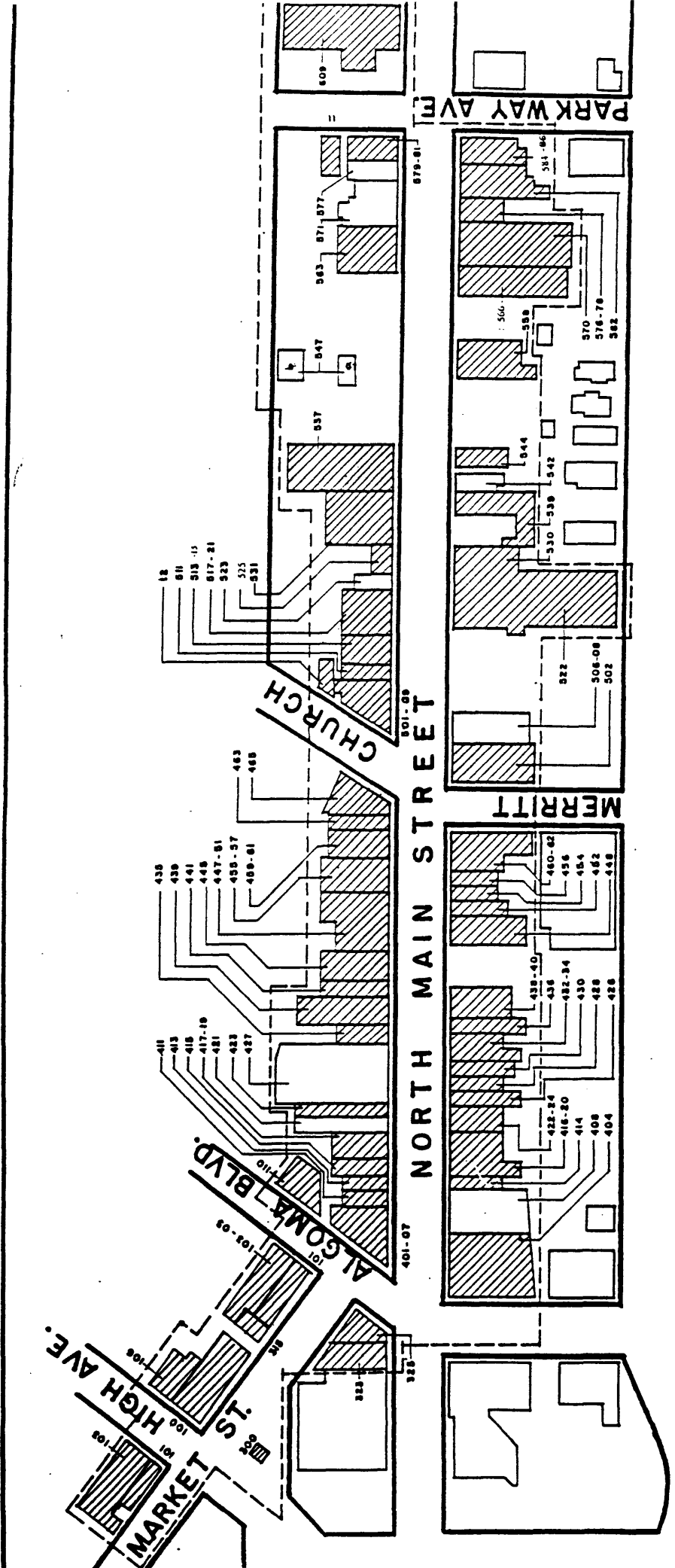
Photo 15 of 19
404 North Main Street, west facade


Photo 16 of 19
445 North Main Street, east facade

Photo 17 of 19
563 North Main Street, east facade


Photo 18 of 19
609 North Main Street, east facade

Photo 19 of 19
408 North Main Street, west facade




 NORTH MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT
 OSHKOSH WINNEBAGO COUNTY WISCONSIN


 SCALE IN FEET


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