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Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

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

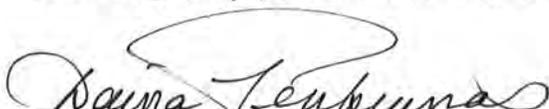
historic name Merchant Row Historic District
other names/site number

2. Location

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|----------|---------------------|
| street & number | 212, 216, 218-220, 228-230 Merchant Row and 533, 537, and 541 Vernal Avenue | N/A | not for publication |
| city or town | Milton | N/A | vicinity |
| state Wisconsin | code WI county Rock | code 105 | zip code 53563 |

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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


Signature of certifying official/Title

6/15/2015
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer – Wisconsin

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Merchant Row Historic District | Rock | Wisconsin
 Name of Property | County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

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

Edson H. Beall

8-3-15

[Signature]

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

| Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply) | Category of Property (Check only one box) | Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count) | |
|---|--|--|-----------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> building(s) | contributing | noncontributing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district | 7 | 0 buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State | <input type="checkbox"/> structure | | sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal | <input type="checkbox"/> site | | structures |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> object | | objects |
| | | 7 | 0 total |

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
 0

6. Function or Use

| Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions) | Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions) |
|--|---|
| COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store | COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store |
| HEALTH CARE/medical business/office | COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant |
| | COMMERCE/TRADE/financial institution |

7. Description

| Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions) | Materials (Enter categories from instructions) |
|--|---|
| Late Victorian/Italianate | foundation stone |
| Late 19 th and Early 20 th Century American Movements/Commercial | walls brick |
| | Wood |
| | roof asphalt |
| | other concrete |

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- _____
Commerce (A)
- _____
Architecture (C)
- _____
- _____
- _____

Period of Significance

- _____
1880-1964 (A)
- _____
1880-1926 (C)

Significant Dates

- _____
- _____
- _____

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Merchant Row Historic District
Name of Property

Rock
County and State

Wisconsin

9. Major Bibliographic References

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

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State Agency
 - Federal Agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1 acre

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

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|---------------|----------------|---|-----------|---------------|----------------|
| 1 | <u>16</u> | <u>339360</u> | <u>4738180</u> | 3 | <u>16</u> | <u>339370</u> | <u>4738090</u> |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 2 | <u>16</u> | <u>339420</u> | <u>4738160</u> | 4 | <u>16</u> | <u>339330</u> | <u>4738100</u> |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |

See Continuation Sheet

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| name/title | Carol Lohry Cartwright, Consultant | date | 7/1/2014 |
| organization | Prepared for the City of Milton | telephone | 262-473-6820 |
| street & number | W7646 Hackett Rd. | zip code | 53190 |
| city or town | Whitewater | state | WI |

Merchant Row Historic District

Rock

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

Property Owner

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

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----|--|------------------|
| name/title | Various, see attached list | | | date |
| organization | | | | telephone |
| street & number | | | | zip code |
| city or town | state | WI | | |

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

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

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Section 7 Page 1

Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

Start description on line below

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Site

The Merchant Row Historic District consists of a small group of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings that make up the southern part of old Milton Junction's downtown. Originally, Milton Junction was a separate community adjacent to the western boundary of Milton. The two communities merged to form the modern city of Milton in 1969. Because of their origins as two separate communities, they developed separate downtowns. Old Milton's downtown grew up around the public square and included the historic Milton House and related commercial storefronts and a group of commercial buildings along Parkview Drive, formerly Main Street. Milton Junction's downtown developed along Merchant Row and its intersection with Vernal Avenue. The best preserved buildings of each of these downtowns are being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as commercial historic districts. This nomination is for the southern part of Milton Junction's downtown located at the intersection of Merchant Row and Vernal Avenue.

The buildings of the Merchant Row Historic District are located at the south end of Merchant Row and the west end of Vernal Avenue. Both Merchant Row and Vernal Avenue end at this intersection, so while each street is relatively busy with downtown traffic, these streets are not main thoroughfares through the community in this location. Both streets have slightly different characteristics. Merchant Row is a medium-width urban street that is improved with curbs and gutters and is marked for angled parking on the east side. There are no buildings on the west side of Merchant Row. Rather, there is a frontage road that sits between Merchant Row and a long, narrow park. On the west side of the park is Front Street, a street running parallel with Merchant Row. The frontage road between Merchant Row and the park is used for additional parking for the downtown.

The district's buildings occupy relatively flat terrain that continues north, east, and west of the district. To the south of the district, behind Vernal Avenue, the terrain slopes downward. Like many commercial districts, the buildings all share party walls along Merchant Row and Vernal Avenue. There is no landscaping within the district except for a small strip of grass along one of the corner buildings. Sidewalks run right up from the curb to the main facades of the buildings and there are no street trees or other shrubs that have been planted along the sidewalks.

The district is an architecturally cohesive collection of buildings representing a small commercial core from the late nineteenth century to early twentieth century. They are almost all two stories in height with brick veneer walls and reflect popular late nineteenth and early twentieth century architectural styles applied to commercial buildings. All of the buildings have retained sufficient historic integrity

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Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

to contribute to the district.

The district is also cohesive because of its external features. Three areas outside of the district boundaries have distinct differences in their buildings and/or the landscape. West of the district is a previously-mentioned frontage road and park that is a clear boundary between old Milton Junction's downtown and its west side residential neighborhood. To the southwest, the old remodeled railroad depot and railroad tracks create a change of use in the area. To the south of the district is a small residential neighborhood.

To the east of the district boundaries, there is a mixed use area that includes several unattached small commercial and residential buildings on the south side of Vernal Avenue and the Masonic Temple on the north side of Vernal Avenue. Due to alleys, other open spaces, mixed uses, and a loss of integrity, all of these buildings were determined to be outside of the boundaries of the historic district. Beyond these buildings there is a residential neighborhood that is part of the large historic east side residential area of old Milton Junction.

To the north of the district along Merchant Row, commercial buildings have been drawn out of the district boundaries due to loss of historic integrity or because they were constructed outside the period of significance.

Description of Contributing Buildings

212 Merchant Row
Thorpe Block
Commercial Vernacular, 1906

The Thorpe Block was constructed in 1906 as a one-story retail building. It has cream brick walls and cream brick pilasters that decorate the first floor storefronts. At the top of the building is a wide cornice decorated with brackets and other classical motifs. The height of the cornice gives the building a slight "boomtown" appearance. Rows of brick corbelling sit under the cornice and an awning covers the transom area of the storefront. The original storefront is not extant, but the replacement front of large show windows sitting on paneled aprons suggests a historic storefront.

The building was constructed as a separate building and, architecturally, it still appears as a separate building today. However, its interior has been connected to the modern bank building to the north.

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Merchant Row Historic District
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216 Merchant Row
Seeger Millinery Store
Boomtown, c.1880

This building appears to date from the later nineteenth century and was remodeled around 1900 for the Seeger Millinery Store. It is a one-story retail building with a boomtown front that is covered with vertical wood boards. The storefront consists of a central, recessed entrance that features a wood and glass door flanked by sidelights and topped with a partially enclosed transom. The show windows flank the entrance and consist of large panes of glass with transoms sitting on a narrow wooden apron.

218-220 Merchant Row
Seeger Block
Commercial Vernacular, 1899

The Seeger Block was constructed in the Commercial Vernacular style with strongly identifiable influences from the Italianate style. The building has a façade of dark red bricks topped with a very tall cornice that features a round central arch, brackets, modillions and bull's eyes. Two sets of paired windows sit in the second story. The single-light sashes have brick pilasters and heavy cast iron lintels with round arched pinnacles. Flanking the windows and decorating other sections of the building are panels of rusticated red bricks, giving the façade a slightly textured effect.

The first story storefront has been remodeled with a fixed shingled awning over a set of modern metal and glass show windows that sit on a raised brick apron. There is a modern metal door covering the entrance. Next to the entrance is the entry door leading to the second story.

228-230 Merchant Row
Kelly Block
Commercial Vernacular, 1897

The Kelly Block is a two-story Commercial Vernacular style building with many stylistic details from the Italianate style. Its corner location lends itself to the flattened treatment of the southwest corner. The building is constructed of tan bricks although the first story has been given a coat of white paint. Topping the building is a cornice that spans both elevations and is decorated with brackets and two types of scroll motifs. The second story openings are largely symmetrical and on the main elevation, they are filled with single-light sashes that fill the openings. Along the Vernal Avenue elevation, the second story openings are partially enclosed with wood panels on the top and bottom of the single-light sashes. At the flattened corner of the building, the second-story opening is filled with a large, single pane window.

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Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

There are two storefronts on the first story of the west elevation of the building. They have been partially enclosed with vertical wood panels, medium-sized show windows and tall, stone-veneered aprons. The entrances are covered with modern metal and glass doors. The entire storefront is topped with a fixed shingled awning. Along the first story of the south elevation, there were six openings originally, but three have been enclosed. The others are filled with single-light sashes with narrow transoms and there is an entry door in between the window openings that also has a transom.

533 Vernal Avenue
Gates Block
Commercial Vernacular, 1926

The Gates Block was constructed as a replacement building when the original building on this site was destroyed by fire. The one-story building has a plain tan brick main elevation with a stone-capped arched and stepped parapet. Under the arch is a stone plaque with the building date and under the plaque are two faux brick reveals made up by bands of brick headers in a rectangular shape. A fabric awning covers the original metal and glass show window and recessed entrance. A matching brick apron sits under the show window.

537 Vernal Avenue
Schmutzler Block
Commercial Vernacular, 1926

The Schmutzler Block was constructed to replace the original building on this site that also burned in 1926. It is a two-story vernacular building constructed of red brick, which is painted on the second story. It has a flat roof and no cornice decoration. There are two second story openings. The larger opening is filled with a three-part picture window that probably dates from the mid-twentieth century. It features a single central pane with flanking single-light sash windows. The other opening is filled with a set of paired single-light sash windows.

The storefront of the first story of the building consists of a set of show windows that sit on a red brick apron. The east set of show windows have transoms. Red brick pilasters divide this set of show windows from the west set of show windows that are made up of single panes of glass. There is a narrow show window in the recess to the main entrance that sits at the west end of the first story. The entrance has an intact transom and a modern entry door.

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Merchant Row Historic District
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541 Vernal Avenue
Button Block
Commercial Vernacular, 1890

The Button Block is a large, double-storefront block in the Commercial Vernacular style but with strongly identifiable influences and features from the Italianate style. The two-story building is constructed with cream bricks and features a decorative cornice that runs around the main and west elevations. The cornice is decorated with a central pediment on the main elevation and large brackets and modillions throughout the entire cornice. On the second story of both the main and west elevations there are tall, narrow openings that have a symmetrical pattern. Most of these openings are filled with modern single-light sashes with transoms. Two openings in the center of the main elevation are filled in with single pane windows. The windows are all topped with slightly-arched stone lintels.

The first story of the main elevation has two storefronts that have been united for a single business. Above the storefronts is a cornice that has similar details to the main cornice at the roofline. Both storefronts have been partially enclosed with wood panels. The west storefront does not have an entrance and is enclosed with wide diagonal board transoms. The original show window areas have been partially enclosed with smaller glass panes and vertical wood panels. However, in this storefront, two of the cast-iron posts are still visible. On the west side, the storefront also has an intact, original wood-paneled apron. The other aprons are clad with modern bricks.

The east storefront has a large, vertical wood panel covering the transom and the show windows have been enclosed in the same manner as those of the west storefront. At the east end of the storefront, there is also a panel of stone veneer and the aprons are clad with modern bricks. The first story of the west side is plain with only two small, arched openings that have been enclosed with wood panels.

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Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

Building Inventory

| <i>Address</i> | <i>Name</i> | <i>Date of Construction</i> | <i>Status*</i> |
|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| 212 Merchant Row | Thorpe Block | 1906 ¹ | C |
| 216 Merchant Row | Seeger Millinery Store | c.1880 ² | C |
| 218-220 Merchant Row | Seeger Block | 1899 ³ | C |
| 228-230 Merchant Row | Kelly Block | 1897 ⁴ | C |
| 533 Vernal Avenue | Gates Block | 1926 ⁵ | C |
| 537 Vernal Avenue | Schmutzler Block | 1926 ⁶ | C |
| 541 Vernal Avenue | Button Block | 1890 ⁷ | C |

* *C=Contributing*
NC=Non-contributing

___End of Description of Physical Appearance

¹ Tax Rolls for Milton, on file in the Rock County Courthouse, Milton, Wisconsin; *Milton Telephone*, April 12, 1906, 1; *Milton Telephone*, July 5, 1906, 1.

² Tax Rolls; Milton Bicentennial Committee, *The Bicentennial History of Milton* (Milton: Milton Printers, 1976), 82.

³ Cornice imprint; Tax Rolls; *Milton Telephone*, April 1, 1899, 5; *Milton Telephone*, August 24, 1899, 5.

⁴ Tax Rolls; *Milton Telephone*, August 26, 1897, 5; *Milton Telephone*, December 9, 1897, 5.

⁵ Cornice stone; Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps, 1917, 1930, on file in the Archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin; Tax Rolls; Milton Bicentennial Committee, 77.

⁶ Tax Rolls; Milton Bicentennial Committee, 77.

⁷ *Milton Telephone*, June 12, 1890, 5; Milton Bicentennial Committee, 77.

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Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

___ Insert Statement of Significance

SIGNIFICANCE

The Merchant Row Historic District is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. It is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its association with the growth and development of commercial activities in this part of old Milton Junction during the period of significance, 1880-1964. Although the district does not include the entire historic downtown, the activities in these buildings were important to the commercial economy of old Milton Junction. They represent typical businesses in small downtowns during this period, including food stores, clothing stores, drug stores, and professional services. Also in this district, the formative years of an important regional business was housed in one of the buildings.

The district is also being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, because it contains the best collection of commercial architecture in old Milton Junction. The district's buildings are representative of the architectural styles popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and include a variety of interpretations of the Italianate and Commercial Vernacular styles.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for the area of Commerce is 1880-1964. Beginning with the construction of the first contributing building in the district, these dates span the decades during which this district was a commercial hub in the city. The year 1964 is the standard 50 year significance end date for the National Register of Historic Places and corresponds to the decline of traditional retailing and services in the district.

The period of significance in the area of Architecture begins in 1880, the date of construction of the earliest contributing building in the district and ends in 1926, the date the last contributing building in the district was constructed.

Area of Significance: Architecture

The Merchant Row Historic District is architecturally significant at the local level because its buildings are good and distinctive examples of Commercial Vernacular architecture both from the late nineteenth-century and the first decades of the twentieth-century. They are also the buildings in old Milton Junction's downtown that exhibit the best architectural details and highest levels of integrity.

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Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

According to Wisconsin's *Cultural Resources Management Plan*, Commercial Vernacular (or Vernacular Commercial) is a style term that is applied to "simply-designed commercial buildings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries." These buildings have several common characteristics including: large retail show windows on the first story; simple wood and glass entry doors; simple applied cornices with classically-influenced details such as plain brackets, dentils, modillions or molded panels; or brick corbeling and/or belt courses in place of cornices. Window openings on upper floors are simple, the only decoration commonly being segmental brick arches or flat stone lintels. Because they are not overly stylistic, commercial vernacular buildings are usually only significant when they have a high level of integrity with many historic details intact or when they are grouped together creating a cohesive and distinctive historic district.⁸

The Merchant Row Historic District has a distinctive group of commercial buildings, and three buildings are distinctive for their architecturally stylish details. For example, the Seeger Millinery Store dates to c1880 and still has the form of one of the earliest types of Commercial Vernacular buildings in Milton Junction, the one-story building with "boomtown" style raised parapet. These simple wooden buildings were typically built during the earliest era of downtown development and were often lost to fire or demolition for a larger block. There have been a few alterations to the building, but its extant boomtown parapet and period storefront make it contributing in the district for its association with Commercial Vernacular architecture.

In 1890, when the next contributing building of this district was constructed, Commercial Vernacular buildings were often being decorated with Italianate details. That is the case with the Button Block (541 Vernal Avenue), a large building that has most of its architectural detail encompassed in the two cornices that are still extant. These cornices are classically-influenced and typical of those seen on Commercial Vernacular buildings that reflect the Italianate style, a popular style for commercial buildings from the mid to the late nineteenth century. The tall, narrow window openings of the second story are characteristic of the Italianate style. The Button Block is one of the largest buildings in old Milton Junction's downtown, and its size, scale, and decorative elements make it one of the most distinctive.

Highly decorative, but on a much smaller scale, is the Seeger Block (218-220 Merchant Row), built in 1899 and heavily decorated on the second story with classical elements. The tall metal cornice has a large arched parapet at the center with a finial and features classical motifs including dentils, brackets, bull's eyes, and modillions. Large metal lintels with pinnacles decorating the second-story windows add to the classical feel of this building. The large and heavy details contribute to the distinctive

⁸ Barbara Wyatt, ed., *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986), Architecture, 3-10.

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Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

appearance of this small building. With the building's unusual dark red brick veneer accented with rusticated brickwork, the Seeger Block really stands out in the streetscape.

Next to the Seeger Block is the Kelly Block (228-230 Merchant Row), built two years earlier in 1897. With its corner location, the builder gave it a "flat iron" effect by flattening the corner. Like the previous two buildings described, the Kelly Block has an Italianate-influenced metal cornice decorated with brackets and embossed with two different patterns of scrollwork. The rest of the building is simple, with only flat jack arches decorating the second-story windows. But, despite being more simply decorated, this building is a good example of a vernacular commercial block decorated with Italianate motifs, one of the most popular styles for Main Street buildings at the time it was constructed.

The small Thorpe Block (212 Merchant Row) is also a simple building constructed in 1906. At that time, classical motifs were very popular and this building's Italianate-influenced cornice, with dentils and brackets, reflects that trend. Like the Kelly Block, the building is vernacular, but its classically-influenced details provide architectural interest.

Use of the Commercial Vernacular style extended into the twentieth century, and a good example of the style from 1926 is the Gates Block (533 Vernal Avenue). The Gates Block is simple, but its arched and stepped stone parapet and rectangular panels reflect motifs that were popular at that time. In more elaborate buildings, these motifs are often described as Twentieth Century Commercial and consist of more elaborate geometric patterns and forms that were similar to architectural elements popular in the Prairie and Craftsman residential styles. In the case of the Gates Block, the motifs are simple, making this building a good example of the Commercial Vernacular form with details from a style that was popular at the time.

Summary

The Merchant Row Historic District is locally significant for architecture because this collection of commercial buildings have the most distinctive stylistic elements and are the most intact group of historic buildings in the downtown of old Milton Junction. The buildings are representative of the common forms and architectural features seen in many of Wisconsin's small town commercial districts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but with their own distinctive building materials and methods of construction.

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Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

Area of Significance: Commerce

The Merchant Row Historic District is locally significant in the area of Commerce as an intact collection of buildings associated with the early commercial activities that contributed to the growth and development of this part of Milton. Commercial activity was as varied as providing financial services, providing common retail goods, and the establishment of a large regional wholesale business.

As stated earlier in this nomination, the modern city of Milton was formed from two distinct communities that gradually grew together physically over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and were joined together politically in 1969. The east part of today's Milton was always known as Milton, while the west part of Milton was the separate community of Milton Junction. Because they were two communities, two downtowns developed in each community. In Milton, the commercial area originally surrounded the town square or park and in old Milton Junction, the commercial area developed along Merchant Row and Vernal Avenue. It is the intact part of the old Milton Junction commercial area that is included in this historic district.

The development of old Milton Junction was slightly different than Milton, but began in a similar manner. Henry Beebe Crandall came to the area with Milton pioneer, Joseph Goodrich, and claimed the section of land west of Goodrich. At the time, two settlements were not anticipated and Crandall and Goodrich worked together establishing the first institutions of the community. But, while Joseph Goodrich forged ahead in the commercial enterprises in Milton, including his notable grout-constructed hexagonal Milton House, Crandall's business revolved primarily around his land holdings. He platted and sold residential plots of land, but little business development occurred on the west side for a number of years.⁹

The first rail line came to Milton in 1852, then, it ran north to Stoughton. A subsequent rail line was built from Janesville in 1853 to connect to this line and the two lines met about half way between Milton and what was to become Milton Junction. This connection did not result in Milton Junction's development. In 1858, another line from Janesville was built to Milton and eventually became part of the Chicago Northwestern Railroad. This line connected with the original line, eventually the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad, a bit further west, creating a "junction" where Milton Junction would develop. A small hotel and depot was built at the junction, but it was not until 1861, when William Morgan replaced this small building with a large hotel and depot known as the Morgan House, that Milton Junction began to grow as a separate community.¹⁰

⁹ Carol Lohry Cartwright, *Architectural and Historical Survey of Milton, Wisconsin* (Milton: Milton Historic Preservation Commission, 2013), 44.

¹⁰ Cartwright, 44.

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Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

In fact, it was Morgan's Addition, platted in 1862 that formed the nucleus of the new community. Helping build the community was Henry G. Greenman and his son, Reynolds J. Greenman, who operated a large early lumber yard in Milton Junction. By 1875, a historic photograph shows a group of largely small, frame buildings along Merchant Row, the center of what was to become Milton Junction's downtown. Between 1880 and 1900, an almost three-block area along Merchant Row and extending around the corner of Vernal Avenue developed with primarily brick blocks sharing party walls. This development continued into the early twentieth century.¹¹

Three of the buildings of this district were constructed in the 1890s and were important commercial additions to Milton Junction's downtown. The first, the Button Block, built in 1890, was built for George Button to lure the post office so that he could become postmaster while operating his "Yankee notions" (sewing supplies and select clothing and accessories) business that he had operated in Milton Junction since 1870. After the building was completed, indeed, the post office was located in the east storefront along with Button's business, while the west storefront had a men's store.¹²

When George Button died in 1891, the post office left the building, but two of Button's employees took over the business and turned it into a large wholesaler of tobacco products, one of the largest in the region. S. C. Chambers and J. H. Owen began working for Button in 1881 and 1883, respectively. It was, perhaps, the ambitions of Chambers and Owen that persuaded Button to build the large Button Block in 1890, as he saw that his employees were eager to grow the business. After Button died, the two men did just that.¹³

At the time, like most of northern Rock and southern Dane County, the area around Milton was heavily invested in tobacco growing and several tobacco warehouses were established in Milton for this wholesale trade. It was in this area that Chambers and Owen expanded Button's business. The men acquired their own tobacco warehouse and sold and manufactured their own and other's cigars through their own business and through other retailers. Chambers was largely the salesman of the partnership and spent a lot of time on the road selling to retailers throughout southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. Owen was largely the business "brains" behind the partnership and together, they made the firm very successful in the early twentieth century.¹⁴

By 1920, Chambers and Owen had a thriving wholesale tobacco business and when J. H. Owen's son, A. Paul Owen, took over the business, he discontinued the notions line, concentrating instead on cigars and pipes. For the next seven years, A. Paul Owen continued to grow the business in Milton Junction,

¹¹ Cartwright, 44-45.

¹² Milton Bicentennial Committee, 77; *Milton Telephone*, October 16, 1890; Cartwright, 51-52.

¹³ Cartwright, 52.

¹⁴ Cartwright, 52.

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Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

eventually growing out of the Button Block. In 1927, Owen moved the business to Janesville and added cigarettes and loose tobacco to the line. He created branch offices in Beloit and in Rockford and Freeport, Illinois. Keeping the Chambers and Owen name, Owen turned the firm into a broad wholesale jobbing firm supplying tobacco products to retail outlets, restaurants, and soda fountains. Owen moved into the vending machine business in the 1930s, and in the 1950s, his sons, John E. and A. Paul, Jr. expanded the business even further, becoming one of the largest suppliers of products to convenience stores in the Midwest. Today, the fourth and fifth generations of the Owen family still operate the firm that supplies goods and professional management training for convenience stores in the Midwest.¹⁵

The firm of Chambers and Owen was developed in Milton Junction between 1891 and 1927, a period of over 35 years. These were the formative years of the business when primarily S. C. Chambers and J. H. Owen took a small notions and cigar business and turned it into a successful regional wholesale tobacco business. While the firm eventually moved to Janesville and grew even larger, it was the years in Milton Junction and the work of Chambers and Owen personally that created the foundation for a successful business. And, it was in the Button Block that much of this activity took place.

The Button Block is not only significant for its association with Chambers and Owen, but as a long-time grocery store that began in the east storefront after Chambers and Owen moved from the east storefront to the west storefront. This grocery business was one of the longest, if not the longest-lived, in Milton Junction, beginning in the early twentieth century and continuing into the later years of that century. During its long history, it affiliated with the IGA chain of grocery stores before becoming an independent market in the late twentieth century. In this, it was typical of many large local groceries that affiliated with a national or regional chain during the mid-twentieth century, but then did not continue this affiliation after the chain stores began building new and larger facilities away from downtowns or in other communities. This long-time business adds to the significance of this commercial building and to the commercial history of the district.

The second of the three most important commercial buildings in the district is the Seeger Block (218-220 Merchant Row), built in 1897. E. F. Seeger came to Milton Junction in 1886 and operated a tailor shop and ready-made men's clothing store into the 1890s. In 1898, Seeger's sons, Otto and Gustav, entered the business, which was renamed E. F. Seeger and Sons and perhaps, this new partnership encouraged Seeger to erect this new building in 1899. The business appeared to be successful and in 1908, they added a line of ladies accessories and were operating a millinery shop in a small building just to the north. Perhaps seeing more opportunity in a larger city, in 1909 the Seegers moved their business to Milwaukee.¹⁶

¹⁵ Cartwright, 52.

¹⁶ Cartwright, 55.

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Although the Seeger family no longer operated the men's store in this building after 1909, the men's store remained under new ownership for much of the twentieth century. The location of this long-time business in Milton Junction in this building adds to the commercial significance of this district as long-time retailers helped create a stable downtown business district, an important factor in the long-term economic health of Milton Junction.

The third of the three most important commercial buildings in this district is the Kelly Block (228-230 Merchant Row), which like the Seeger Block, housed long-time retail businesses important to the growth and stability of Milton Junction's downtown. David Kelly had the block constructed for his grocery store business that his son and a later partnership continued to operate into the mid-twentieth century. At the same time, in the other storefront and in the corner of the building, a jewelry store and barber shop operated for several decades in the early twentieth century. In 1956, a national chain hardware and variety store, Gambles, located in this building and remained for several years.¹⁷

The long-time and important businesses that were housed in this building add to the commercial significance of the district. Of particular note was the Gambles store. National chains, Gambles and Coast to Coast, were popular retailers in small towns in the mid-twentieth century. Long before Wal-Mart came to dominate retailing in small towns, these chains, along with Sears and J. C. Penny, were part of the first wave of national retailers to have an effect on small downtown businesses. The difference was that these retailers occupied downtown buildings rather than edge-of-town locations and contributed to the commercial stability of downtowns during the later period of significance.

Two small buildings also contribute to the overall commercial significance of the downtown. The Thorpe Block (212 Merchant Row) was built for W. R. Thorpe's drug store, and under a succession of pharmacists, the business continued well into the 1970s. The building, constructed by W. H. Gates, (533 Vernal Avenue) contributes to the commercial significance of the district as the later home of Gates' banking business. He began the business in 1883 as the Gates Exchange Bank. After the turn of the twentieth century, the bank was renamed the State Bank of Milton Junction. In 1926, a fire burned the old bank building and Gates had it immediately rebuilt. Gates continued to operate the bank until 1936, when old age and/or the Great Depression caused him to liquidate his assets.¹⁸

The long-time drug store in the Thorpe Block was a stable business that helped Milton Junction retain a successful downtown commercial district during the period of significance. Gates' bank was also significant as a long-time financial institution providing important banking services to residents for

¹⁷ Cartwright, 55.

¹⁸ Cartwright, 46, 55.

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Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

over 50 years. Both of the buildings that housed these businesses add to the overall commercial significance of this district.

The other two contributing buildings in the district, the Seeger Millinery Store and the Schmutzler Block, did not house businesses that were as significant as the previously-mentioned ones, but the millinery store building housed a series of retail businesses, including a bakery, during the twentieth century that added to the commercial success of the downtown. The Schmutzler Block, built for a long-time dentist, represents the wide range of professional and medical services historically located in most downtowns. The historic business activities in both of these buildings contribute to the overall commercial significance of the historic district.

Summary

The Merchant Row Historic District is historically significant at the local level in the area of Commerce for its collection of buildings that contributed to the retail and commercial growth of the city. Buildings housed a broad and important range of retail businesses that contributed to the overall development of old Milton Junction's downtown. Many important stores and services necessary to sustain a community were located in this district, and notably, one of the longest-lived and most significant businesses in Milton Junction was located here. The success of local retailers is often determined by their longevity, and in the case of most of the businesses in the district, their longevity was 35 years or more. With another commercial district only about one mile away in Milton, it is significant that Milton Junction's downtown was equally, if not more successful than Milton's downtown. The success of the commercial activities here influenced Milton Junction and the entire community of Milton during much of the twentieth century.

Integrity

Like most small downtowns, the buildings of this district have undergone some changes due to remodeling, especially in the storefronts. But, there is considerable historic character still extant and alterations to the buildings do not significantly detract from the overall architectural or historical significance of the district. The buildings, as a collection, possess enough historic details to make them identifiable as an intact commercial center, representing popular architectural styles of the period. Because so many important historic details of the buildings are extant, the district retains and reflects the distinguishing characteristics of an historic downtown.

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Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

Statement of Archeological Potential

It is unknown if Native American resources may be extant within the boundaries of the district in Milton; archaeological potential within the district remains unassessed.

Preservation Activities

The City of Milton is actively participating in the Certified Local Government program having applied for and received grants in 2012 for intensive survey and in 2013 for the completion of National Register nominations. In listing this district, the Milton Commission hopes that building owners will take advantage of historic rehabilitation tax credits and/or other incentives to maintain and restore their properties.

Acknowledgments

This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or disability or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

The activity that is the subject of this Nomination has been financed entirely with Federal Funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, and administered by the Wisconsin Historical Society. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior or the Wisconsin Historical Society. Nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the Wisconsin Historical Society.

___ End of Statement of Significance

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 1

Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

___Insert References

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPIC REFERENCES

Cartwright, Carol Lohry. *Architectural and Historical Survey of Milton, Wisconsin*. Milton: Milton Historic Preservation Commission, 2013.

Milton Bicentennial Committee. *The Bicentennial History of Milton*. Milton: Milton Printers, 1976.

Milton Telephone, June 12, 1890; August 26, 1897, December 9, 1897; April 1, 1899; August 1, 1899; April 12, 1906, July 5, 1906 .

Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps, 1917, 1930. On file in the Archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

Tax Rolls for Milton. On file in the Rock County Courthouse, Janesville, Wisconsin.

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

___End of References

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 1

Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

___Insert Boundary Descriptions

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of this district is as follows. Beginning at the intersection of the east curb line of Merchant Row and the party wall between old 208 Merchant Row and old 212 Merchant Row (now all 208 Merchant Row), then southeast along the party wall between old 208 and old 212 Merchant Row to the rear lot lines of 212, 216, 218-220, and 228-230 Merchant Row, then southwest along this line to the north curb line of Vernal Avenue, then west along this line to the intersection with a line running north from the lot line of 533 Vernal Avenue, then south along this line to the rear lot lines of 533, 537, and 541 Vernal Avenue, then northwest along this line to the west lot line of 541 Vernal Avenue, then north along this line to the south curb line of Vernal Avenue, then east along this line to the intersection of a line running south from the east curb line of Merchant Row, then northeast along this line to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

This boundary encompasses the most intact group of historic buildings of old Milton Junction's downtown commercial district. Specifically, the northern boundary that separates the southern part of Merchant Row from the rest of the commercial district along that street was drawn due to the large intrusive banking complex just north of 212 Merchant Row. Beyond the banking complex are other commercial buildings from this era but have lost historic integrity and have been excluded from the boundary. To the west of the district is a park and old railroad depot area that is not compatible with the commercial uses of the district. To the south is a residential district, and to the east are several buildings that are both of different uses and/or significantly remodeled so that they did not fit in with the intact part of the downtown that is included in the district. The result is a tight district with most buildings sharing party walls and all buildings being contributing.

___End of Boundary Descriptions

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National Park Service

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Section photos Page 1

Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

___Insert Photo Descriptions

Name of Property: Merchant Row Historic District
City or Vicinity: Milton
County: Rock County
State: WI
Name of Photographer: Carol Lohry Cartwright
Date of Photographs: May, 2014
Location of Original Digital Files: Wisconsin Historical Society, Division of Historic Preservation,
816 State St., Madison, WI 53706

WI_Rock County_Merchant Row Historic District_0001

View of district, camera facing southeast

WI_Rock County_Merchant Row Historic District_0002

212, 216, 218-220, 228-230 Merchant Row (L-R), camera facing northeast

WI_Rock County_Merchant Row Historic District_0003

533, 537, 541 Vernal Avenue (L-R), camera facing southeast

WI_Rock County_Merchant Row Historic District_0004

533-537 Vernal Avenue (L-R), camera facing southeast

___End of Photo Descriptions

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National Park Service

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Merchant Row Historic District
Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin

Section figures Page 1

MERCHANT ROW HISTORIC DISTRICT MAP and PHOTO KEY
MILTON, ROCK COUNTY, WISCONSIN







FIRST COMMUNITY BANK

MERCANT ROW

2777
LAWSON ACCOUNTS



537

Milton Family
RESTAURANT

Milton Family
Restaurant



537



533 VERNAL AVENUE

FOR SALE

NO PARKING



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Merchant Row Historic District

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: WISCONSIN, Rock

DATE RECEIVED: 6/19/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/07/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 7/22/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/04/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000504

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 8.3.15 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

RECEIVED

FEB 13 2015

DIV HIST PRES

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
ANDY JORGENSEN

43rd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT • ASSEMBLY DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS CHAIR

February 4, 2015

Jim Draeger
816 State Street
Madison, WI 53706

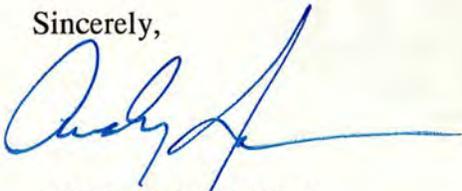
Dear Jim,

Thank you for notifying my office with the Wisconsin Historic Preservation Review Board's considerations for nomination to the Wisconsin State Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places. It is a privilege serving in the Wisconsin State Assembly and I appreciate the time you took to notify me of the potential nominations from my district.

It is exciting to hear that Milton has four different locations under consideration for this honor. Historical landmarks help bring tourism to cities like Milton and I appreciate the Board including these historic sites in their consideration. Communication is essential to me serving you well and I look forward to working with the Wisconsin Historical Society on this in the future.

Thank you again for providing my office with this exciting news, Jim. I truly appreciate the time the Wisconsin Historical Society took to contact me about the potential nominations. Please know that I am always willing to have a conversation and listen to the Wisconsin Historical Society regarding this or any other matter of importance.

Sincerely,



ANDY JORGENSEN
State Representative
43rd Assembly District



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

RECEIVED 2280

JUN 19 2015

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

TO: Keeper
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Peggy Veregin

SUBJECT: National Register Nomination

The following materials are submitted on this 15th day of June 2015,
for the nomination of the Merchant Row Historic District to the National Register of
Historic Places:

1 Original National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form

1 CD with NRHP Nomination Form Word Document

 Multiple Property Nomination form

4 Photograph(s)

1 CD with electronic images

1 USGS map(s)

1 Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)

1 Piece(s) of correspondence

 Other _____

COMMENTS:

 Please insure that this nomination is reviewed

 This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
 The enclosed owner objection(s) do _____ do not _____
 constitute a majority of property owners.

 Other: _____