

PH0505544

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED OCT 4 1977
DATE ENTERED MAR 31 1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Waitsburg Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Main St.

CITY, TOWN Waitsburg VICINITY OF 5th - Thomas S. Foley

STATE Washington CODE 53 COUNTY Walla Walla CODE 071

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Social

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Multiple

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN VICINITY OF STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Walla Walla County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Walla Walla STATE Washington

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Washington State Inventory of Historic Places

DATE October, 1974 and January, 1975 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN Olympia STATE Washington

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Location and Setting

The town of Waitsburg is situated in a particularly scenic portion of the State of Washington. The village lies in the extreme mid-eastern section of Walla Walla County, some twenty miles north of the City of Walla Walla. Here Coppei Creek joins the Touchet River, embracing the small community between them. Both streams flow from the Blue Mountains in the southeast corner of the state, join the Walla Walla to the west and south of Waitsburg, and eventually flow into the Columbia River at Wallula. The Touchet River Valley has a restful, picturesque quality in all seasons of the year. To the southeast are the Blue Mountains, fronted by the rolling hills of wheat -- variously green, gold and brown -- which surround the town of Waitsburg. These endless hills of wheat are interrupted only by the bright green of orchards, gardens, and wooded streams. With its sufficiency of rain and abundant sunshine, Waitsburg has been historically noted as a garden spot of unusual beauty.

The Town of Waitsburg: A General Description

The traveler comes upon Waitsburg for the first time with a certain sense of relief. From a seemingly endless sea of rolling wheat fields, one descends into the Touchet Valley to a village of shaded avenues, imposing white mansions, and colorful flower gardens. Waitsburg's edges are well-defined. Along the roads leading from town there has been no creeping commercial development. Similarly, the central business district is clearly self-contained.

Bordering the commercial sector on the east, west, and south are quiet residential neighborhoods dotted with a surprisingly large number of dignified houses, dating from the 1880-1920 period. Many of these homes are substantial in size, and those of the Nineteenth Century are characteristically ornate. Most exhibit an architectural sophistication that is unusual in a small agricultural community. These neighborhoods are also spotted with modern-day housing, so that to some extent their historic ambience has been compromised. However, imposing older homes occur with impressive regularity, a constant visual reminder of the town's long-lived prosperity.

Waitsburg's downtown commercial sector, essentially a two-block stretch of Main Street, is an even more concentrated sampling of the town's history, and, for this reason, forms the proposed Waitsburg Historic District. Main Street is oriented in a north-south direction. At its north end is a bridge over the Touchet River leading to the Waitsburg mill complex and the railroad tracks. The mill building itself is the largest structure in town with numerous additions and dependencies built around its four-story core. Standing on the high north bank of the river, the mill overlooks the village which it spawned. Wheat fields rise above the mill and railroad, creating a natural boundary on the north. To the south, the business district ends abruptly at Third Street. Beyond Third Street, Main Street continues south through residential neighborhoods filled with spreading shade trees and spacious old homes.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1865 +

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

From the year of its birth in 1865, the town of Waitsburg, Washington, has owed its existence to the productivity of the surrounding wheatlands. Like many towns in eastern Washington's famed Palouse country, Waitsburg sprang up around the site of a small grist-mill. The mill was built in 1865 on the banks of the Touchet River and in its earliest years was owned and operated by the town's founding father, Sylvester M. Wait. Greatly stimulated by the coming of the railroad in 1881, Waitsburg rapidly evolved into a prosperous agricultural service center. The community's chief industry throughout much of its history has been the storage, milling and shipment of wheat and flour.

Modern housing has to some extent intruded upon Waitsburg's substantial old residential neighborhoods. However, the downtown commercial sector, which comprises the proposed Historic District, is largely intact and remains self-contained as a center of business. The wooden fabric of the 1860's and 1870's downtown is no longer extant, but the masonry and metal commercial structures of the 1880-1930 period are very much in evidence. In spite of some modernization of store fronts, the architectural character of this two-block length of Main Street is strikingly well-preserved. Waitsburg as a whole and Main Street in particular project a quality of timelessness that can be attributed to its geographically isolated setting, its continuing prosperity, and the pride of its citizens in their heritage.

Settlement and Growth: 1860's and 1870's

White settlers had arrived at the juncture of the Touchet River and Coppei Creek only a few short years before Waitsburg made its appearance there. The first claims were made in 1859. In that year, Robert Kennedy settled in the forks of the two streams and within a few months, seventeen other families had joined him. A dozen or so more arrived in the following year. Initially, these pioneer farmers worked the bottomlands along the river banks, raised a little grain, and reared large numbers of cattle and horses. Many also hauled supplies to the booming mining regions of Idaho. When it was demonstrated that the high bench lands, covered with native bunchgrass, were suitable for agricultural purposes as well as for stockraising, settlement in the area rapidly increased and the fledgling town of Waitsburg grew in size and importance.

Sylvester M. Wait, founder of Waitsburg, was an energetic millwright and dairy rancher from Rogue River, Oregon and Lewiston, Idaho. Recognizing the opportunity for a profitable milling business in the Walla Walla area, Wait surveyed a site on the north bank of the Touchet River. To encourage his enterprise, ten acres of land was donated to him for a mill and residence by pioneers Dennis Willard and Perry Bruce, who also gave the right-of-way for a millrace. Wait erected a mill on borrowed capital and credit, at a total cost of \$14,000. The original mill structure measured approximately forty by fifty feet and was framed with hand-hewn timbers reportedly cut in the nearby Blue Mountains and

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Gilbert, F. T. - Historic Sketches of Walla Walla, Whitman, Columbia and Garfield Counties. Portland, Oregon, 1882.

Illustrated History of Southeastern Washington. Western Historical Publishing Co., 1906.

(see attached sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 11 17.8

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,1	4,1,1	0,3,0	5,1	2,4	8,9,0	B	1,1	4,1,1	3,4,0	5,1	2,4	9,1,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		
C	1,1	4,1,1	3,4,0	5,1	2,4	7,5,0	D	1,1	4,1,1	0,3,0	5,1	2,4	2,6,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Item 10 Page 2

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Florence K. Lentz, Historic Preservation Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

DATE

August, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

7150 Cleanwater Lane

TELEPHONE

753-1707

CITY OR TOWN

Olympia

STATE

Washington

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Jeanne M. Welch

TITLE

Acting State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

September 27, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

Walter Cole

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 3-27-78

DATE 3-15-78

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DATE ENTERED	MAR 31 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 4 PAGE 2

All addresses: Waitsburg, Washington 99361, unless otherwise noted.

Mr. Phillip Monfort ✓
Mr. Clifford A. Peters ✓
Mr. Ervin C. Ely ✓
Waitsburg Town Hall Association ✓
Blue Mountain Agency ✓
Mr. Delbert C. Mock ✓
Mr. Thomas C. Baker ✓
Ms. Gladys Ritter ✓
City of Waitsburg ✓
Mr. Vaughn Hubbard ✓
Mr. Joseph P. Gagnon ✓
Mr. Norman Lybecker ✓
American Legion ✓
Mr. Morris Kurth ✓
Ms. L. Louise Isley ✓
Waitsburg Masonic Lodge ✓
Mr. I. E. Bloor ✓
Mr. Lewis Gammon ✓
Mr. Sidney G. Conner ✓
Mr. Robert D. Sickles ✓
Delta Lodge #70 ✓

Ms. Alva A. Wood ✓
108 S.E. Sixth
College Place, Washington 99324

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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RECEIVED	OCT 4 1977
DATE ENTERED	MAR 31 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE

2

Historic District Boundaries

The Waitsburg Historic District encompasses approximately two and one-half blocks of commercial structures on Main Street, in addition to the mill complex across the Touchet River (on the northern extension of Main Street) and a single building on Preston Avenue (to the east of Main Street). In all, twenty-three properties are included within the District. Some commercial buildings on Main Street have been excluded, because they do not contribute architecturally or historically to the character of the District but only serve to weaken it. Of this group, all occur at the south end of the business district (see sketch map, Blocks 1 and 5).

The excluded structures include: two newly-constructed buildings (a bank and a post office), three undistinguished buildings of less than fifty years of age (a gas station, fire and ambulance station, and a former jewelry shop with attached residence), and one historic building with a radically altered facade.

To the west and south of the Historic District are residential neighborhoods consisting of both modern and historic dwellings. To the north of the District are several vacant lots leading to the river, and beyond the river are railroad tracks and wheat fields. To the east of the District along Coppei Avenue is a mixture of buildings of relatively recent construction including residences, a welding shop, the city garage, a church and the public swimming pool.

Architecture in the Historic District

The buildings within the Waitsburg Historic District were constructed for the most part between 1880 and 1930. They represent a broad range of structural types and architectural "styles." As with most small town architecture of the Northwest however, Waitsburg's Main Street exhibits few definable styles of any purity. Romanesque, Victorian Italianate, and Renaissance elements can be identified, as well as Spanish and Moorish themes, but these "styles" have been diluted into the commercial vernacular of the American West.

The District's building stock consists largely of one and two-story brick and one-story concrete structures. Within each block, these shops and stores adjoin one another forming a contiguous streetscape that is flush with the sidewalk. Clear variations in height, roofline, cornice treatment, facade composition, materials, and color create interesting movement and texture along Main Street. Facades are finished with the following materials: brick masonry (exposed or painted); stucco; plate glass with wood, cast iron or cast stone piers; metal; and wood siding or half brick veneer on remodelled shopfronts. These facades are organized in a variety of ways depending on date of construction, materials used, and degree of alteration. Most window openings are trabeated with one-over-one light, double-hung sash; however, round-arch and segmental arch openings frequently occur.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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RECEIVED	OCT 4 1977
DATE ENTERED	MAR 31 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

Alterations to the buildings in the Waitsburg Historic District have for the most part been non-radical in nature, although some facade "improvements" do show an insensitivity to the historic appearance of the buildings. Alterations range from fully obscuring an original shopfront with modern wood siding and shakes, to the blocking of window openings. Some of the more recently constructed one-story buildings of the 1910's and 1920's have been cleared of all surface detail, stuccoed, and made to appear somewhat anonymous. Judging from available historic photographs, several of the older buildings in the District have been stripped of their decorative parapets. A readily apparent quality of the Waitsburg District is the high level of maintenance which the majority of structures receive. Only a few buildings at the north end of Main Street are presently in deteriorated condition.

Inventory of Structures

The following inventory lists each surveyed structure included within the Historic District boundaries. Block and lot numbers refer to those indicated on the Sketch Map. The historic name and date of construction are given when known. The majority of buildings within the District have no visible street addresses, but all are located on Main Street unless otherwise stated.

The architectural and historic significance of each structure is indicated by its placement in one of four categories:

- Pivotal - possessing outstanding historic and for architectural value within the context of the District
- Primary - possessing considerable historic importance and/or architectural merit; little or no alteration of original fabric
- Secondary - contributing to the historic and architectural character of the District; alterations at street level with intact upper story.
- Altered Historic - showing substantial alterations which disguise historic and architectural value.

→ THESE TERMS ARE INCORRECTLY APPLIED ON THE MAP AS IS EVIDENCED BY THE PHOTOGRAPHS.

Block 1

Building No. 4 - 218 - 222 Main Street - Primary
Present Use: Sid's Waitsburg Pharmacy/Treasures in Tole/apartments
Historic Name: Loundagin House, The Royal Block
Date of Construction: 1888

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED MAR 31 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

Description: Two-story brick with cast stone, cast iron and pressed tin facade; windows separated by colonettes on pedestals at second story; heavy entablature with brackets and modillions; motifs include rosettes, sunbursts, running dog, and decorative pilaster panels.

Building No. 5 - Secondary

Present Use: Ginny's Grill/vacant shop/apartments
Description: Two-story brick with pressed tin ornament; coupled colonettes divide windows at second story; decorative metal cutablature with bracketed cornice, wide frieze with running dog; shop fronts entirely altered with siding, plate glass, shakes, etc.

Building No. 6 - Primary

Present Use: Weller Public Library
Historic Name: Exchange Bank, later City Hall
Date of Construction: 1905
Description: Two-story two-bay brick with rough stone trim; rusticated stone base, stone lintels and dentils; arched recessed entry; woodwork and pressed tin ceiling intact on interior

Building No. 7 - Secondary

Present Use: Plaza Theatre Mall
Historic Name: Plaza Theatre
Date of Construction: 1928
Description: Moorish style blond brick with grey and red brick trim; arched center bay encompasses marquee and triple arch window unit; shop windows and entrance remodelled, interior theatre space intact.

Building No. 8 - Secondary

Present Use: Ferguson - Gagnon Industries
Description: One-story brick with stuccoed facade, plate glass windows; single interior space with wood ceiling and walls, iron columns intact.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED MAR 31 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5

Building No 9 - Secondary

Present Use: Jim's Market/Masonic Hall
Historic Name: Masonic Hall - F. and A.M. No. 16
Date of Construction: 1913
Description: Two-story pink-buff brick with pressed metal and cast stone trim; segmental arch windows with keystones; projecting cornice with modillions; grand entrance to second-story Masonic Hall on Second Street, with balustraded balcony, marble date stone and step parapet at roofline; street level thoroughly remodelled.

Block 2

Building No. 1 - Altered Historic

Present Use: Touchet Valley Hardward
Description: One-story brick with stuccoed facade; plastic and plate glass shop front; recessed entry with marble-tiled ceiling.

Building No. 2 - Primary

Present Use: Headquarters Tavern
Historic Name: J. W. Morgan Building
Date of Construction: 1892
Description: One-story brick with frontal gable; cast iron and pressed metal trim in form of columns, rusticated pilasters, urns and finials; original shop front door-window configuration intact.

Building No. 3 - Altered Historic

Present Use: American Legion Hall
Description: One-story stuccoed masonry; anonymous altered facade and entrance are without architectural distinction.

Building No. 4 - 120 Main Street - Secondary

Present Use: (Lybecker Building) vacant shop/Gagnon Appliance
Description: One-story blond brick with dentilled cornice, raised parapet; three levels of windows above garage entrances deteriorated condition; lower narrow addition to north has separate shopfront.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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RECEIVED OCT 4 1977

DATE ENTERED

MAR 31 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 6

Block 3

Building No. 1 and 2 - Pivotal

Present Use: Touchet Valley Grain Growers
Historic Name: Wait's Mill, Preston-Shaffer Milling Company, etc.
Date of Construction: 1865, with subsequent additions
Description: Building No. 1 is four-story timber-framed central core with Mansard roof and dormers; major gabled additions on east, west and north elevations; entire structure now clad with corrugated metal; Building No. 2 is detached warehouse with elevator and silos to west; complex sited on north bank of Touchet River on railroad tracks at Main and Millrose Streets

Block 4

Building No. 1 - Altered Historic

Present Use: Johnny's Repair (garage)
Historic Name: McKenzie Garage
Date of Construction: 1914
Description: One-story poured concrete; original openings appear intact.

Building No. 2 - Altered Historic

Present Use: Waitsburg Welding Works
Description: Three adjoining frame structures clad with sheet metal.

Building No. 3 - Primary

Present Use: Trading Post (second-hand store)
Historic Name: I.O.O.F. Hall
Date of Construction: 1888
Description: Two-story brick with cast iron and plate glass storefront intact; paired second story windows with tympanum ornament in wood, cast stone corbelling above each pair; elaborate cornice in wood; original pedimented parapet removed, replaced with narrow shake "Mansard" overhang.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED OCT 4 1977

DATE ENTERED

MAR 31 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 7

Building No. 4 - Primary

Present Use: Trading Post
Historic Name: I.O.O.F. Hall
Date of Construction: 1905 addition to Odd Fellows Hall
Description: Two-story brick with wood and plate glass store front intact; cast stone and pressed metal trim; motifs in metal include anthemion, swagging, running dog; coupled columns, brackets and modillions in metal at second-story level.

Building No. 5 - Altered Historic

Present Use: Ye Towne Hall (community meeting hall)
Historic Name: American Legion Hall
Date of Construction: 1929
Description: One-story brick with curved roofline; stuccoed facade with casement windows and wooden detail.

Building No. 6 - Secondary

Present Use: Blue Mountain Agency (insurance agency)/bus garage
Historic Name: Waitsburg Garage
Date of Construction: 1915
Description: One-story brick with stepped parapet and corbelling; stuccoed facade; garage entrances on either side; center bay remodelled with brick veneer; plate glass and "Georgian" doorway.

Building No. 7 - Altered Historic

Present Use: vacant shop/Gagnon Construction/Mock's Electric
Historic Name: City Hall (?)
Date of Construction: 1902
Description: One-story masonry, stuccoed at front and rear; remodelled plate glass store fronts; little architectural distinction remaining.

Building No. 8 - 139 Main Street - Primary

Present Use: "The Times" (local newspaper)
Historic Name: same as above
Date of Construction: 1888

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	OCT 4 1977
DATE ENTERED	MAR 31 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 8

Description: One-story painted brick with decorative corbelling; central archway leads to double recessed entrances; multi-paned transoms above doors and windows; pediment and additional trim along parapet now removed.

Building No. 9 - Secondary

Present Use: Ritter's Second Hand Store
Description: Narrow two-story brick with broad pressed metal entablature; two 2/2 light sash with stone lintels at second-story level; shop front relatively intact.

Building No. 10 - Secondary

Present Use: Vaughn Hubbard, Attorney
Historic Name: Commercial Club (second story)
Description: Two-story pressed brick with simple geometric brick detail; pressed metal cornice with dentils and modillions; ground story faced with brick veneer, remodelled doorway and windows.

Building No. 11 - Primary

Present Use: City Hall
Historic Name: First National Bank
Date of Construction: 1889
Description: Two-story dark pressed brick with rusticated stone base, granite and sandstone trim; Renaissance - inspired design; round arch openings with keystones at first story; all wooden sash intact; classical pressed metal cornice identical to adjoining Building No. 10; location of Main Street entrance changed with alteration of detail or proportion; bank interior essentially intact.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 9

Block 6

Building No. 6 - Preston Avenue - Secondary

Present Use:	The Starting Gate (tavern)/State Liquor Store/Greyhound Bus depot
Historic Name:	Knights of Pythias Hall
Date of Construction:	1905
Description:	Large two-story brick, buff-colored on facade; shopfronts altered between original rusticated cast stone piers; moulded stone window surrounds at second story; elaborate pressed metal entablature.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

hauled to the site by wagon. Wait's mill opened for business in the spring of 1865, grinding with a single set of buhrstones. One year later, Wait sold a half interest in the business to William and Platt Preston. The Preston Brothers were quick to capitalize on the gold mining boom in Idaho by selling flour at the mill's door to pack trains bound for the mining camps.

The original name of the little village which grew up around Wait's mill was Delta, until it was decided by popular vote in 1868 to rename the post office Waitsburgh. Delta blossomed rapidly owing to the growing stability of its modest industry and to the Walla Walla-Lewiston stage route which ran through the village crossing the Touchet by ford. In 1865 and 1866, several frame buildings from Coppei, a short-lived settlement five miles upstream, were transported to the site of the new mill. Soon a general store, a saloon and a schoolhouse were in full operation. By the fall of 1866, Wait had enlarged the mill structure and built for himself a large dwelling near the mill. William N. Smith added to his general store and a log "hotel" was erected by G. W. Cantonwine on the river bank. In 1867, a third schoolhouse was constructed at a cost of \$2,400, the money raised by subscription. The same year, the citizens of Delta constructed a bridge across the Touchet at the foot of Main Street.

Until 1869, no attempt was made to plat the townsite. Perry Bruce was the largest contributor of land and money to the mill, the school, the river bridge and other community projects, but he was for some time uninterested in converting his property into a town. When Bruce realized the inevitability of Waitsburg, he filed a plat on February 23, 1869, encompassing only Main Street and a single block to either side. At the close of the decade, Waitsburg was a firmly established little town with a population of 109, some 35 dwellings, and a handful of frame business houses lining Main Street.

The decade to follow witnessed a major transformation on the hills surrounding Waitsburg. The high grazing lands of native bunchgrass were steadily converted to the raising of wheat as an exclusive money crop. As a result, the economic base of the area became more narrowly-defined, and the mill at Waitsburg became a still more significant factor in the economy of the community. Sylvester Wait sold his remaining interest in the mill to the Preston Brothers in 1870. To accommodate their growing business, the new owners again enlarged the mill building, raised the flame, and installed four sets of larger buhrstones.

Already Waitsburg was characterized by a look of prosperity and order. Mrs. F. F. Victor, traveling through the area by stagecoach in 1871, described the appearance of the village in her book All Over Oregon and Washington:

A ride of eighteen miles (from Walla Walla) brings us to the Touchet . . . a beautiful stream with a gravel bottom, wooded banks, picturesque bluffs and an open, handsome valley. And here at the crossing is the promising new town of Waitsburg

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MAR 31 1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

. . . . which today has an appearance of the most enterprising and thrifty of any town except Walla Walla in the whole valley. Judging by the farm wagons, the sleek houses, the well-dressed farmers' families, and brisk trade at the stores, we should say that the Touchet was the farmer's land of Canaan.

Good morals and good order seem fashionable in Waitsburg - a great recommendation to a new place in a new country. There is considerable outfitting for the mines done at this place which is on the direct road to Idaho

Prosperity and Expansion: 1880's

The 1880's was a period of major growth and progress for the town of Waitsburg, as it was for the entire Washington Territory. Several events which were to profoundly influence the future of the town occurred during this decade. On September 13, 1880, fire broke out in the Pearl House, a hotel on the edge of the business district which was then clustered near the river bank and mill at the north end of Main Street. Lacking fire-fighting equipment, anxious citizens fought the flames with a bucket brigade and wet blankets. In spite of their efforts, the blaze destroyed the entire west side of the wooden commercial sector, with the exception of the Hanford House hotel on the river bank, and damaged a number of buildings on the east side. It was later declared that the conflagration had been caused by a Chinese cook at the Pearl House who, in an opium-induced stupor, had upset a lamp in the kitchen. In all, 37 buildings - nearly all of Waitsburg's business structures - were lost, at an estimated cost of \$125,000. The reconstruction which occurred in the 1880's, 1890's, and into the 20th Century was the beginning of Waitsburg's commercial district as it appears today. As a result of the devastation of 1880, "fire-proof" brick masonry from local brickyards became the preferred material of construction.

The arrival of the "iron horse" in the Touchet Valley was a development of far-reaching significance to the community. The Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company, under a traffic agreement with the Northern Pacific, laid its track south of the Snake River and extended a branch line from Walla Walla to Waitsburg, Dayton and Grange City. When the first train from Walla Walla pulled up with a jerk at the Waitsburg mill, the citizenry of Waitsburg was jubilant. The railroad meant an end to the long hauls with wagonloads of wheat and flour over rutted roads to Walla Walla. Moreover, a connecting line from Walla Walla to Portland gave Waitsburg's crops a cheap and direct access to ocean-going freighters. Along with an influx of new settlers in the 1880's, and the continually improving technology in the wheatfields, the railroad provided a tremendous boost to Waitsburg's milling industry.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

During the 1880's, the Waitsburg mill became known as Washington Mills, and the building was enlarged and partially rebuilt on a new stone foundation. New railroad box cars lined the sidings in place of pack mules and freight wagons. Four large warehouses accommodated the continuous stream of wagons which passed through town during harvest. The directing personnel as well as the technology of the mill underwent changes in this period. In 1886, William B. Shaffer from Minnesota was employed as general manager. Shaffer accomplished a complete conversion from buhrstones to modern steel roller machines. The area's Bluestem wheat was especially well-suited to an all-purpose flour, increasingly in demand by the commercial baking industry. Flour from the Washington Roller Mill was shipped to Portland, Seattle and San Francisco, as well as points east and abroad. In 1891, Frank Parton of Albany, Oregon purchased a third interest in the concern, and the firm incorporated under the name of Preston-Parton Milling Company.

To a great extent the activity and success of the mill itself characterized Waitsburg. The local Waitsburg Times reported that:

*From early morn' 'till dewy eve our thoroughfare is lined
with wheat wagons and teams, our mills running day and night,
and from break of day 'till midnight, a small army of men are
kept busy handling grain and loading cars. At all our stores
skilled clerks and salesmen are 'on the jump' all day. Waits-
burg is indeed a busy little town.*

The territorial Legislature issued a regular charter to the City of Waitsburg on November 25, 1881. Under it, the city was incorporated with the usual powers for the creation of a police force, fire department and water works, and the enforcement of regulations for the safety, health and order of the city. Waitsburg remains today the only city in Washington to operate under a territorial charter, as revised in 1886. The decade of the 1880's also brought a rapid increase in the town's population. By 1890, Waitsburg boasted some 800 residents. Public improvements were undertaken and amenities provided. Main Street was straightened, graded and graveled. Uniform wooden sidewalks were constructed and street lamps were installed. In 1888 alone, twenty or more residences were built and some half-dozen brick commercial buildings, including the Waitsburg Times Building, the Odd Fellows Temple, and the new Loundagin Hotel, all standing today.

Waitsburg in the 20th Century

The opening of the 20th Century ushered in more changes, changes which continue to take place in a slow and measured way characteristic of this small agricultural community. The Main Street commercial district had gradually shifted to the south, with the west side supporting a greater number of businesses. By 1900 it extended then, as it does now, south to Third Street. Throughout the 1890's through the 1920's, commercial buildings were erected anew in brick masonry and cement block, with iron fronts and pressed metal ornament, or with plain stuccoed surfaces and "modern" plate glass windows.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 5

The following stores and business establishments were noted by W. D. Lyman in 1900, many of them located on Main Street:

Three general merchandise stores, two grocery stores, two hardware stores, one furniture store, two jewelry stores, two drug stores, two saloons, two newspapers, one bank, a planing mill, two lumber yards, one bakery, two livery stables, three blacksmith shops and two hotels.

The milling operation continued to evolve and expand. The Preston-Parton Milling Company produced a fine quality "Peerless" pastry flour to ship east, and "Pure White" family all-purpose flour for market in the west. At the turn of the Century, and area's annual wheat harvest amounted to one million bushels, and the mill produced 400 barrels of flour per day. The four-story, Mansard roofed mill building operated 24 hours a day, its windows ablaze with light at night. In 1911, William Shaffer became part owner of the operation, buying out Frank Parton. Over the years the Preston-Shaffer firm further expanded their holdings, establishing mills in Athena and Freewater, Oregon. Not until March of 1957 did stockholders of the firm vote to discontinue the business. The Waitsburg mill, oldest continuously-operated mill in the state of Washington, thus closed its doors after 92 years.

The role of the wheat-growing and milling industry in the founding and subsequent development of Waitsburg was a major one. Even today, wheat farming is the economic backbone of the town. The Touchet Valley Grain Growers occupy the former offices of the Preston-Shaffer Company, although the mill building itself stands empty. The business district on Main Street remains very much alive, supported by a population that is slowly expanding. In terms of architectural interest and integrity, the Waitsburg Historic District represents perhaps the finest example of an eastern Washington wheat-growing community.

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DATE ENTERED	MAR 31 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10

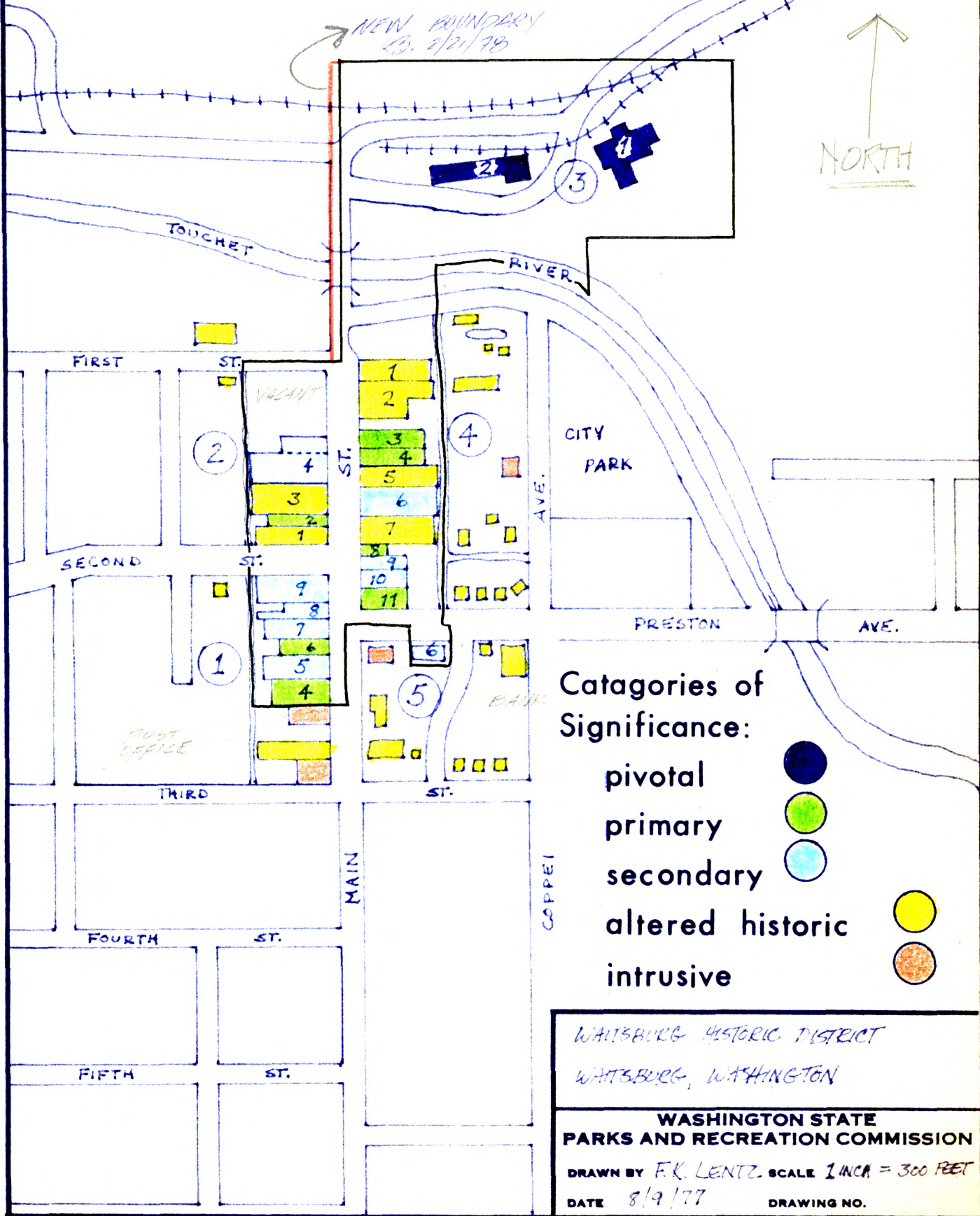
PAGE 2

Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at the Southeast corner of Lot 17, Block 4 of the Original Town Plat of Waitsburg, and running thence West along the South boundary of said lot to the center of the alley which separates said block from Block 1, Whitcher's Addition; thence North along the centerline of said alley, continuing North across Second Street and North along the centerline of the alley which bisects Block 3, Original Town Plat, to the center of First Street; thence East along the centerline of First Street to the center of Main Street; thence North along the ~~centerline~~ ^{West Side} of Main Street to the North boundary of the Northwest quarter of the Southwest quarter of Section 11 in Township 9 North, Range 37 East of the Willamette Meridian; thence East along the North boundary of said Northwest quarter to its Northeast corner, and continuing East along the North boundary of the adjoining Northeast quarter a distance of 537.9 feet, more or less; thence South, parallel to the West line of said Northeast quarter of Southwest quarter, a distance of 521.40 feet; thence West, parallel to the North line of said subdivision, to a point which is 234.96 feet East, measured at right angles, from the West line of said subdivision; thence South, parallel to the West line of said subdivision, a distance of 132.0 feet, more or less, to the center of the Touchet River; thence West, along the center of said Touchet River to a point opposite the centerline of the alley which bisects the unnumbered block of the Original Town Plat of Waitsburg (said block bounded by the Touchet River on the North, Preston Avenue on the South, Copper Avenue on the East and Main Street on the West); thence South along the centerline of said alley to the center of Preston Avenue; thence East along the centerline of Preston Avenue to a point opposite the Northeast corner of Lot 14, Block 10, Original Town Plat; thence South along the East boundary of said lot to its Southeast corner; thence West along the South boundary of said lot to its Southwest corner; thence North along the West boundary of said lot to the center of Preston Avenue; thence West along the centerline of Preston Avenue to the center of Main Street; thence South to a point opposite the Southeast corner of Lot 17, Block 4, Original Town Plat; thence West to point of beginning.

Excepting therefrom the right of way of the Union Pacific Railroad and the right of way of the spur track of Burlington Northern, Inc., over and across said premises.

WAITSBURG HISTORIC DISTRICT



Categories of Significance:

pivotal



primary



secondary



altered historic



intrusive



WAITSBURG HISTORIC DISTRICT
WAITSBURG, WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON STATE
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

DRAWN BY F.K. LENTZ. SCALE 1 INCH = 300 FEET

DATE 8/9/77

DRAWING NO.

