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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

JAN 24 1989

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Mt. Horeb Opera Block  
other names/site number Mt. Horeb Opera House; Masonic Temple; Opera House Antique Mall

2. Location

street & number 109-117 East Main Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Mt. Horeb N/A vicinity  
state Wisconsin code WI county Dane code 025 zip code 53572

3. Classification

|   |   |                                     |                          |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ownership of Property                       | Category of Property                            | Number of Resources within Property |                          |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | Contributing                        | Noncontributing          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local       | <input type="checkbox"/> district               | <u>1</u>                            | <u>      </u> buildings  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State       | <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | <u>      </u>                       | <u>      </u> sites      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal     | <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | <u>      </u>                       | <u>      </u> structures |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <u>1</u>                            | <u>0</u> Total           |

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

[Signature] 1/13/89  
Signature of certifying official Date  
State Historic Preservation Officer-WI  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Entered in the National Register 2/23/89  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL:meeting hall  
RECREATION AND CULTURE:auditorium  
COMMERCE/TRADE:business  
COMMERCE/TRADE:restaurant

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE:business  
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling  
HEALTH CARE: medical/business office

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne  
Romanesque

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone  
walls BRICK  
roof Slate  
other Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located at the intersection of East Main and Second, the Mt. Horeb Opera Block is a pivotal commercial building at the center of the village's business district. This district is composed primarily of two story late nineteenth century and early twentieth century commercial buildings. Mt. Horeb was a small rural trading center with a population of 800 to 900 at the turn of the century and 1360 by 1927 (R.L. Polk & Co. 1895-1927). The Mt. Horeb Opera Block fills the partial lots upon which it sits with the exception of the rear alley. It directly abuts the former 1892 Mt. Horeb bank building to the east and anchors the northeast corner of the block which lies on the south side of Main Street. Erected in 1895-1896 by the Mt. Horeb Opera Block Company, the block was planned as a community center supported by the rental of business spaces on the first and east end of the second floor (Evans et al. 1961; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986).

As a two part commercial block (Longstreth 1987), its horizontal external divisions parallel the transition from the business function on the first floor to the semi-private functions above. A massive, three story brick building, the 1895 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [4/18: 1]) opera block is an arcaded block with Queen Anne stylistic influences (Gottfried and Jennings 1985). The building displays such stylistic features as the broad roof expanse, gabled wall dormers, corbeled brick cornices, several series of arched windows, a low arched entrance, corner entrance and turret, belt courses, and a brick decorative panel. This building displays Romanesque Revival through its elaborate brick work and here through the addition of wood elements in the tower. The busy effect of the decorative elements are coincident with the Queen Anne style. The 50 by 91 foot rectangular building now contains three floors consisting of four commercial store fronts on the first floor; two offices and the 1922 meeting hall rooms which once contained the opera house on the second floor; and two third floor apartments, the east built as a meeting room in 1895-1896 and the southwest one added as a storage area probably in 1922-1923 (Hopkins c. 1984; Post 1988). There is an attic space over the north room of the second floor masonic hall.

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Mt. Horeb, Dane County, WI

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Historic Functions:

GOVERNMENT: post office

HEALTH CARE: medical business/office

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The building rests on a limestone rock-faced, random ashlar, mortared foundation. A thin layer of cement now covers the mortar on the exterior. The tan, common bond brick bearing walls are of solid masonry construction. The broad hip roof is covered with slate which replaced an 1930s slate roof (Post 1988). Window and door placement and shape form an important element of the style. Plate glass windows now mark the store front of the south facade and a series of arched, double hung one-over-one windows stretch across the second floor of the south and east facades. Fixed, semi-circular windows pierce the east wall of the first floor and double hung, one-over-one windows occur in the third floor dormer. The west side contains no windows at any level, and the rear fenestration is randomly placed according to function.

The store fronts, the main entrance door to the second floor, and the series of second floor windows along with the belt course and the frieze vertically and horizontally organize the south facade and east elevation and reflect interior functions. Along the first floor, the four plate glass fronts surrounded by brick and vertical siding mark the four business spaces. This arrangement covered and perhaps in some cases replaced the cast iron front in the mid-1950s. However, at least some of the cast iron floral elements along the cast iron lintels above the plate glass windows remain visible. The deeply set arched door which leads to the upstairs hall segregates the corner business area to the east from the other three. This division places the upstairs business spaces and the hall above the east corner office. Three fixed, semi-circular windows pierce the east wall of the first floor directly under the second floor windows. The first floor is visually divided from the second floor by a belt course.

Along the second floor, the arched double hung front facade windows are grouped in a series of three-six-three. The eastern-most group defines the second floor business area and hall, and the western two groups open into the community area. This arrangement gives the main facade a basically symmetrical appearance. The east side second floor fenestration opens into the double room office and a waiting room of the adjacent office while the turret above the canted ground floor entrance serves the corner business space. The limestone belt course which forms the sills of many of the windows, the remaining sills, and lintels offer additional texture. Brick detailing forms the rounded arches placed above the windows. The center six windows of the front facade rest on a brick panel containing diamond-pattern brick work in relief. The high second floor lies under the brick corbelled cornice and frieze. These elements except for the frieze are not continued along the west and south sides.

The third floor dormer windows on the east elevation and front facade now light the third floor apartments. The community hall originally rose a full two stories, and the current ceiling was dropped in 1922-1923. Twin steeply

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gabled wall dormers with two one-over-one double hung sashes break the roof of the front facade and a single gabled wall dormer pierces the east and west elevations. The steeply gabled wall dormers with rounded returns give a rather vertical effect which is broken by a blind brick arcade between the two front dormers. Two tall, gable end chimneys symmetrically pierce the hip roof on the east side. A turret along the southeast corner contains additional detailing and texture including the wood shingling, arches, dentil molding, and short pilasters.

Little of the 1895-1896 interior survives. Almost all first floor areas have been covered with paneling or wall board. The western-most retail section appears to retain some of the original high molding boards. Except for the southeast office, the hall on the second floor, and the stairway to the third floor, the interior elements of the second floor include the plain window and door surrounds and low molding boards and the chair rails added by the Masons in 1922 in the meeting hall. Occupants of the front second floor offices remodeled during the 1960s. An original corner block and molded window surround decorate the windows in the stairway, the original molding board and the door's entablature and molded surround common to the 1890s occur in the southeast office and hall. This type of window and door surround and molding board probably characterized much of the building's interior prior to 1920. Except for the original window surrounds along the north and east walls of the third floor, interior decorative elements reflect the 1922 remodeling with plain wood trim by the Masons in the east apartment and the 1960s remodeling in the southwest apartment.

The functional design of the Mt. Horeb Opera Block follows the two part commercial block (Longstreth 1987). The most common type of commercial composition, it is utilized in small to medium-sized commercial buildings across the nation. It is composed of two to four stories with a horizontal division into two zones. Usually, the ground floor is divided into public spaces, for example retail spaces, while the upper zone is more private, for example a meeting hall and offices. A derivative of the shop-house form emerging in the Middle Ages, this type prevailed from 1850 to 1950. After the 1870s, ornamentation became increasingly additive, covered a greater amount of surface area, and was composed of a larger variety of materials.

The Mt. Horeb Opera Block was originally designed with four retail spaces on the lower floor. On the second floor, the two story opera hall which is no longer extant occupied the entire west end with one story coat rooms at its northeast corner. It featured a stage in the center of the west wall, a two story dressing room in the northwest corner, and two stairways on either side of the stage-dressing room area which ascended to a u-shaped balcony. The balcony followed the south, east, and north walls going over the coat rooms on the east side. An extant one story hall divided the opera hall from the two

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story office spaces on the east end. One office of four rooms extended from the northeast corner to the middle of the east wall. A second office occupied two rooms at the south end of the east side. Stairs to the balcony and meeting room above the east end now replaced by one apartment ascended from the southeast corner. Since the opera hall extended two floor across the entire west end, the third floor remained open except for the south balcony.

After the sale of the building by the stock company in 1922 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1922 [3/10: 1]), the owners extensively remodeled the interior. Structural remodeling did not then occur in the first and second floor business spaces. The new owner, T.G. Lingard, added the plainer, lower molding boards, plain window and door surrounds, and chair rail common to the 1920s on the second and third floors. He also divided the single-room opera hall on the west side length-wise into a smaller north hall and south lounge area for the Masons. The south room originally contained from west to east: a pool/game room, a washroom, and a two-room dining room and lounge. The dividing wall across the lounge was removed about 1940 (Miller 1988; Grundahl 1988). Lingard removed the stage which was centered on east wall and replaced it with a kitchen. The female and male dressing rooms, one placed above the other, remain intact in the northeast corner of the second floor. Lingard divided the original two-story opera hall into two floors and created a storage area on the third floor over the lounge-game areas (Post 1988). The original third floor meeting room on the east side and the added storage area were remodeled into apartments ca. 1960 (Evans et al. 1961; Miller 1988; Hopkins ca. 1984; 1988; Post 1988).

The Mt. Horeb Opera Block maintains good integrity of location, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association for the exterior of the 1895-1896 building. It has lost some elements of its integrity of design and material on the exterior. The exterior of the opera block continues to express the interpretation of the Queen Anne by local architects, Gordon and Paunack in Madison and the Madison and local workman who constructed the building.

The interior remodeling and limited external alterations have affected integrity of design and material. While the building's exterior retains much of its physical integrity with the exception of the removal of the plate glass fronts, the interior of the first floor underwent relatively recent surfacial remodeling in the early 1950s and early 1960s (Post 1988), the west portion of the second floor was rennovated in 1922-1923, the woodwork in some of the east rooms was modified in the 1950s, and the third floor was redone in the late 1950s (Post 1988). The covering and remodeling of the plate glass front with vertical board siding and brick have removed some of the texture and variety of decoration intended by the original architects. However, at least a few of the elements of the plate glass front remain if reconstruction is contemplated. But, it is unknown whether the entire cast iron front or any pressed metal ceilings are intact. Thus, since the overall sense of the Queen

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Anne commercial style is still present, these changes affect these elements of integrity only to a limited degree. However, the original interior integrity of design, workmanship, and material have been destroyed on the first and third floors and the second floor business spaces through remodeling. The original room divisions of the ground floor do remain and much of the interior remodeling appears relatively superficial. The second floor maintains its 1922 character with only a few alterations such as the removal of the lounge room division ca. 1940.

The exterior and second floor interior clearly maintains integrity of feeling and association for the community of Mt. Horeb. Its current second floor occupants, the Opera House Antique Mall, have effected few if any changes and maintain the general openness of the lodge hall and lounge area. Because of the strong historical associations evoked within the community, its exterior integrity, its pivotal location in the business district, and the integrity of its setting, the block retains sufficient physical integrity to merit nomination.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1895

1895-1938

1922-1938

Significant Dates

1895 (1)

1922

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Gordon and Paunack

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Mt. Horeb Opera Block gains local historical and architectural significance under criterion A in the area of commerce as a pivotal business building and Social History as a community meeting hall/lodge in Mt. Horeb's business district. It is also locally significant under criterion C as an example of a Queen Anne commercial block. Thus, it achieves importance under the theme of fraternal organization (Halpern 1986), related to the social history area of significance. The Mt. Horeb Opera Block is significant from the date of its construction to 1938 as a commercial block and from 1922 when it was remodeled from an opera hall to 1938 as a fraternal lodge hall. From 1922 to 1984, the Masonic fraternal lodge, one of the oldest organizations to unite American society, rented the second floor hall and other organizations occupied the third floor meeting room. The exterior design of the Mt. Horeb Opera Block generally reflects these commercial and meeting hall functions. Because of the block's role within the community and because other buildings also exemplify this theme and style in other communities, its significance is local.

The Mt. Horeb Opera Block also gains significance for its association with its local historical context. At the corner of a main business block, a common placement of this style (Gottfried and Jennings 1985), it occupied a central position in the business and social community and physically expressed its dual role in these functions.

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## Historical Background

The Mt. Horeb Opera Block served Mt. Horeb after the initial development of its business district. Originally established as a post office north of the present village in 1861, Mt. Horeb did not emerge at its present location adjacent to the railroad until 1881 (Dane County Title Company 1985 [plats, vol. A, p. 45]). It possessed a mixed population composition which included immigrants from the Northeast, England, Scotland, Norway, Germany, and Ireland (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 7; Gregory 1932: 1083). The site of the village of Mt. Horeb was entered by James Morrison in 1848 and sold to Charles Boeck who platted the village (Dane County Title Company 1985 [deeds, vol. 59, p. 204]). Businessmen rapidly moved their businesses to the new site. New ones were also established, and others changed owners. Thus, Mt. Horeb experienced rapid expansion during the 1880s and early 1890s. In the 1880s, it served as an important center for the collection and processing of milk. Mt. Horeb incorporated as a village in 1899 (Gregory 1932; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986; Evans et al. 1961: 19, 27). It thus developed as a local trade center serving the surrounding rural communities. With its emphasis upon dairying, the village remained prosperous into the 1920s despite the growing agricultural depression (MT. HOREB TIMES 1922 [2/9: 1]). By 1903, the village had attained a population of approximately 900 and grew to about 1360 by 1927 (R.L. Polk & Co. 1903; 1927).

As the community at the new site emerged, the organization of social life altered (Evans et al. 1961: 95). Prior to 1881, the Methodist Church in the old town had served as the center of the community. Small in size, the community had organized upon an informal basis and around its religious organizations. In the new village of Mt. Horeb, lodge halls above commercial establishments rapidly appeared in the 1880s. Halvor Nelson maintained a large lodge hall above his saloon. Here, residents enjoyed public dances, shows wrestling, masquerades, and roller skating (MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [1/2: 1, 10/3: 1]). By the late 1880s, Andrew Thompson built a hall in conjunction with his furniture store on East Main. This hall contained a large stage with stage scenery and two dressing rooms. Theater troupes frequently played in the hall for six day stretches (Evans et al. 1961: 95). By 1894, the Times referred to this hall as an opera house (MT. HOREB TIMES 1894 [1/21: 1]). Erected at 128 East Main in 1905 by Thomas Ayen, Olson's Hall by 1911 was Otto Olson's bakery and restaurant on the ground floor with spaces on the second floor for an apartment, banquet and meeting room, and at one point a barber shop (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 21). Lodges held their meetings in these halls (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 111). Nelson's Hall was dismantled in 1955. Although altered through exterior remodeling and removal of the upstairs hall, Thompson's Hall at 126 East Main still stands (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 15-16, 20). Olson's Hall retains its original exterior form.

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In 1894, the Times noted that "What Mt. Horeb is in need of now is a good large opera house" (MT. HOREB TIMES 1894 [1/21: 1]). The Mt. Horeb Opera Block Company was incorporated on October 19, 1894. They formed with a capital stock of \$12,000 "...the purpose of which shall be to purchase ...[lots]...and to erect a two story building thereon" (Dane County Title Company 1985 [misc. doc., vol. 8, p. 12]). In early March, 1895, the stock holders of the Mt. Horeb Opera Block met at Nelson's Hall. They included T.G. Lingard as president, William Sommer as vice president, A.F. Gramm as secretary, and William Curtiss as treasurer. T.G. Lingard, A.F. Gramm, H. Witte, H. Nelson, and J.E. Kittleson composed the Board of Directors. A corner lot at Main and Second was purchased from Kittleson and Vilberg on April 16, 1895 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [3/7: 1]). Carl Boeck had sold this property to Samuel Thompson in 1881 who had erected a wagon shop on the corner (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 19). Thompson in turn sold the lot to Isaac Kittleson and T.G. Lingard on March 27, 1895. The building committee intended to commence their work immediately (MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [3/7: 1]).

The stock company opened bids for different phases of the work. Architects Gordon and Paunack of Madison prepared the plans (MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [4/18: 1]). J.C. Gordon established his architectural firm in Madison in 1890 and formed a co-partnership with Fred W. Paunack in 1892. The partnership ended with Paunack's death in 1904. Gordon died in 1915. They constituted one of Madison's most prestigious architectural firms at the turn of the century. According to their advertisements, they primarily designed residences. They are most noted today for their Queen Anne residences, for example the Curtis-Kittleson House built in 1901 and the Halle Steenland House built in 1896 as well as the house at 1020 Sherman Avenue. They are all on the National Register of Historic Places (from Sherman Avenue Historic District, National Register of Historic Places nomination; WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL 1902: 172). Hence, although recognized for their Queen Anne designs and one of the area's turn of the century noted architectural firms, they were not known for their commercial designs.

The contract for the cellar excavation, provision of the stone, sand, and lime and the building of opera block's cellar was granted to Ayen and Holm. The work was begun by April 4 and completed sometime in mid-May, 1895 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [3/28: 1; 4/4: 1; 5/16: 1]). Oakey and Morgan, the lowest bidders, probably contracted for the "brick work" and carpentry (MT. HOREB TIMES [5/9: 1]). At the end of June, O. Lund had agreed to paint the building, and the slate roof was laid in late August. Anton Bakken completed the interior carpentry work at this time as well. The flagpole graced the top of the turret by September 5 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [6/27: 1; 8/27: 1; 9/5: 1]). The plate glass windows on the ground floor were in place by late October and the interior decorative work was completed by M. Moe, an artist (MT. HOREB TIMES

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1895 [10/24:1; 10/31: 1]). The Mt. Horeb Opera House staged its grand opening, the production of a series of plays including the opening bill: "Strangers of a Great City" followed in the week by "Dixie Land", "Sweet Genevieve", and "Great New York" with full houses in mid-November (MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [11/14: 1]).

The Mt. Horeb Opera Block Company rented the hall to a manager who was then responsible for the public use of the block, presumably both the opera house and the commercial spaces (MT. HOREB TIMES 1896 [12/24: 1]). Operating as a community center, the opera house served many functions including performances by theatrical troupes, dances, political rallies, home talent shows, minstrel shows, dances, and silent movies after 1907 (Evans et al. 1961: 37-39, 95; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1896: 19-20; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society n.d.). Talent included local and regional groups. Although it appears that the number of plays presented at the opera house diminished quickly, the managers continued to engage concert bands until the time of its closing (MT. HOREB TIMES 1922 [2/17: 1; 4/14: 1]).

Additional functions at the opera house included semi-private parties, illustrated lectures, high school commencement until 1918, school plays, basketball, speeches by representatives of the WCTU, and political speeches such as the heated meetings conducted during the fall of 1896 or La Follette's speech. Ladies served lunch during the presentation of election returns at the opera house. The opera house manager began to show movies which soon dominated the entertainment by 1906 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1896 [10/5: 1]; 1901 [9/12: 1]; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 111; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society n.d.). And, after the high school burned in 1917, some of the classes met at the opera house during the erection of the new school (Evans et al. 1961: 92; Hopkins ca. 1984; 1988).

The impetus behind the closing of the opera house in 1922 remains unclear. The agricultural depression of the 1920s does not appear to have visited Mt. Horeb. Meetings and entertainment did occur in other buildings. The new 1918 high school contained an auditorium used for both school and community affairs (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 112; MT. HOREB TIMES 1921 [5/6: 1]; 1922 [4/14]). Luder erected a new recreation building which also became the location for concerts and movies (MT. HOREB TIMES 1922 [3/31: 1]; 1923 [5/25: 1]; Evans et al. 1961: 49). And, Bakken and Peterson also erected a new dance hall and theater, the Parkway, in July of 1923. Movies, dances, vaudeville shows, Chautauques, and wrestling matches had become popular forms of entertainment (MT. HOREB TIMES 1923 [3/30]; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 25; Evans et al. 1961: 45). Then, perhaps new forms of entertainment or crowd size demanded a new setting. The last show in the Mt. Horeb Opera Block occurred in June, 1922 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1922 [6/9: 1]).

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The Mt. Horeb Opera Block Company dissolved in March, 1922. T.G. Lingard purchased the Mt. Horeb Opera Block from the Mt. Horeb Opera Block Company on April 10, 1922 (Dane County Title Company 1985 [deed, vol. 282, p. 396]). He began his remodeling program in June (MT. HOREB TIMES [6/9: 1]). Lingard left the ground floor, the second floor business spaces, and the third floor meeting room intact. He altered the opera house area on the west side of the building "...making it a 3 story structure" (MT. HOREB TIMES 1922 [3/10: 1]).

Lingard remodeled the opera house specifically to fit the specifications of the Freemasons and other unnamed lodges (MT. HOREB TIMES 1922 [3/10: 1]). The Masonic Lodge rooms by 1922 included the lodge hall, lounge-dining room areas, the pool and game room, and the kitchen. The American Legion occupied a small portion of this area and later moved to the third floor meeting room (Hopkins c. 1984; 1988; Evans 1961: 39; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society n.d.; Grundahl 1988; Miller 1988). On December 8, 1922, Lingard sold the building to Nora Hustad but remained as the building's manager. He was to complete the remodeling activity as specified by the lodges. Nora Hustad transferred the block to Nels Hustad in 1930 (Dane County Title Company 1985 [deeds, vol. 282, p. 396; vol. 298, p. 23; vol. 351, p. 245]; MT. HOREB TIMES 1922 [12/1: 1]).

Nels Hustad owned the Mt. Horeb Opera Block from the time of its transfer from Nora Hustad in 1930 to his death in 1938. Until 1959, the building then remained apart of a trust under the administration of Alfred Hustad and later Ralph Dahle. The purpose of this trust is not clearly stated in the abstract of title (Dane County Title Company 1985 [final judgements, vol. 579, p. 579; County Court, vol. 50, p. 206]). Edward and Harold Post purchased the property in 1959 (Dane County Title Company 1985 [deed, vol. 69, p. 393]). The Post brothers sold the block to Douglas Goble in 1975 who in turn transferred the property to its present owners, REB Investments, in 1984 (Dane County Title Company 1985 [deed, vol. 551, p. 371; vol. 1563, p. 53]).

## Architecture

The Mt. Horeb Opera Block represents a Queen Anne commercial building. Common between 1880 and 1910 in Wisconsin, this style is characterized by an irregularity of planning and massing which became more rectilinear in later examples. It also possessed a variety of surface texture with multiple, steep roofs and wall projections. Architectural detailing followed an interpretation of American's colonial styles and although profuse was small in scale. Eclectic, often the style combined details from several styles. The Queen Anne commercial block was not extensively built in Wisconsin. It was typically multi-storied with bay windows, gables, and period ornament (Godfrey 1986: 2-15).

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The Mt. Horeb Opera Block, the only known representation of the Queen Anne commercial style in Mt. Horeb, falls well within the date range of the style, and its massing and detailing parallel the Queen Anne. Like other late Queen Anne buildings, it is rectilinear but possesses projections, for example the corner turret and steeply pitched dormers. Its many details and use of several building materials, primarily brick and stone and also wood, adds to the texture, thus producing an effect of irregularity extended by the Queen Anne and Romanesque details. They include the series of arched windows across the front and east side, a blind of arches between the dormers, the gabled wall dormers with curvilinear returns, corbeled brick cornices and frieze, a low, arched entrance, the diamond pattern brick work, canted ground floor entrance, the turret with short pilasters, dentil molding, arches, wood shingling, and conical roof.

The opera block thus embodies the type of detail and rectilinear form with projections common to the style. Also, it represents the only known example of its type in Mt. Horeb. The Queen Anne was not used extensively in Wisconsin for commercial buildings (Godfrey 1936: 2-15). Finally, Gordon and Paunack are noted for their Queen Anne dwellings, but not their commercial buildings. But, this example embodies the style which their buildings commonly expressed. Thus, the architectural significance of the Mt. Horeb Opera Block lies in this single expression in Mt. Horeb of a rather sparsely built commercial style. And when Gordon and Paunack did erect this commercial building, it was in the style for which they were well noted.

### Social History

Reaching their peak activity after the Civil War to 1910, the fraternal organization was one of the first and most popular types of voluntary organizations. Its small size and intimacy and their religious and moralistic overtones gave a needed sense of order and cohesion which small midwestern communities were losing by the late nineteenth century. The first type of fraternal organization, the recreational form which was most prevalent from 1865 to 1911, existed to provide companionship, offer welfare services later taken over by the government such as health and death benefits for its members, and improve working conditions. Such groups included the Good Templars, Odd Fellows, Masons, Knights of Pythias, Modern Woodmen of America, Royal Neighbors, the Loyal Temperance League, and Grand Army of the Republic. Many of these groups began as secret societies following the form of organization developed by the Masons.

By the 1890s, the instrumental form of voluntary organization began to perform a large number of social, political, and economic functions. More common after the turn of the century, these organizations developed a social

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consciousness and provided active leadership in communities which had lost their informal networks for joint action. They became heavily involved in charity, for example they provided aid to the poor, contributed to many community improvement projects, played a role in the municipal reform movements, and established public welfare institutions. Fraternal organizations thus became a social focal point of the community providing another avenue through which the community could act and sustain itself as informal joint community action declined. These later forms included the chamber of commerce, businessmen's associations, other civic improvement groups, and the American Legion. Especially after 1865, they erected their own lodge halls in downtown areas or established halls above commercial establishments in central business areas or in saloons (Halpern 1986; Nesbit 1985: 686; McKay 1985).

The membership in fraternal organizations began to level-off in the first decades of the twentieth century. During the Great Depression, they experienced an accelerated loss of membership. Many groups disbanded because of their weak financial structure which had been based upon an informal and often irregular assessment. Those which did survive the depression often reorganized on a more firm contractual basis. This move frequently eliminated the fraternal aspects of the organization, especially the secrecy and brotherhood which had often surrounded their meetings. These fraternal groups remained active in smaller communities and continued to act as a center of social life (Halpern 1986).

Although the fraternal organizations are poorly documented, Mt. Horeb appears to have supported its share. They included the Sons of Temperance, the Society of Law and order, and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows by 1876 (Evans et al. 1961: 49), the Masons by 1885, the Grand Army of the Republic by 1895 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [8/22]), the Modern Woodmen of American by 1895 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [5/23: 1]), the AF & AM, Mt. Horeb Lodge No. 228 by 1896 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1896 [12/10: 1]), the EFU Mt. Horeb Assembly No. 132 by 1904 (G.A. Angello & Co. 1904), the Royal Neighbors established in 1910 (Evans 1961: 75), and the American Legion formed in 1919 (Evans 1961).

Although the remodeling was incomplete by early December, 1922 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1922 [12/1: 1]), the Masons appear to have occupied their lodge hall sometime in 1922. One of the oldest fraternal lodges, the Free and Accepted Masons were organized in England by the early eighteenth century and established in America by the 1730s and in Wisconsin by 1823. After the Civil War, most communities containing a population greater than 200 supported a Masonic Lodge. There were frequently ten to fifteen fraternal lodges with joint memberships in one village. In Wisconsin, Dane, Columbia, Milwaukee, and Grant counties formed the areas of greatest activity for the Masons by 1900. A secret society, the Masons maintained a highly structured

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organization conducting their meetings with much ceremony and ritual. Membership in the organization offered community status and prestige. Its hierarchy and rules provided some order to a highly mobile midwestern society. Thus, the Masons formed mainly a social organization which met regularly for companionship. It established strict rules of conduct not only within the lodge but also in public. The Masons were thus primarily a recreational rather than an instrumental lodge and did not engage heavily in charitable activities (Halpern 1986).

The Mt. Horeb Masons formed Howarth Lodge No. 228 in 1884 and became chartered in 1885. They changed their lodge's name to Mt. Horeb Lodge No. 228 in 1893. The Masons initially met in the Hall of Howarth, a building owned by Andrew Thompson. In 1893, they changed their quarters to the John F. Pieh Hall, in 1907 to the former state bank, in 1917 to the second floor of the Mt. Horeb creamery, and by 1918-1919 to the Westside School. In 1922, they leased the second floor hall in the opera block (Evans et al. 1961: 75; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 84).

In the late 1860s, the Masons founded the Order of the Eastern Star, a parallel organization open to wives and daughters of members. By 1893, their membership had expanded sufficiently to form a grand lodge (Halpern 1986). Summit Chapter No. 72 of the Order of the Eastern Star was chartered in 1895. Freemasons and their wives and daughters composed this organization. Their specific purpose aimed at serving their community (Evan et al. 1961: 75; MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [8/22: 1]; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 37). The Eastern Star used the lodge jointly with the Masons (Grundahl 1988).

Other fraternal lodges occupied the opera house. The Modern Woodmen of America formed in Mt. Horeb by 1895 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [5/23: 1]). There is some suggestion that they occupied meeting rooms in the opera house either before or after their move to the rooms over the Hoff Meat Market in 1922 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1922 [4/7: 1]; see also Grundahl 1988). The Royal Neighbors, Summit Height Camp No. 6188 which was founded at Mt. Horeb in 1910, met at numerous locations including the opera block (Evans et al. 1961: 75). Formed in 1919, the Frank E. Malone Post of the American Legion met in the opera block, perhaps initially in a second floor room and later in the third floor meeting room. Although placed well before 1940, exactly when the American Legion occupied the opera block remains unclear (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society n.d; Grundahl 1988). The MT. HOREB TIMES refers to the "new Legion room" in 1922 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1922 [12/8: 1]). The American Legion also formed at the national level with offices in St. Louis in 1919 (Evans et al. 1961: 14). They functioned as an important service organization in the community. Founded in 1921, the American Legion Auxillary established a parallel organizational purpose providing assistance to veterans and their families and acting as a community service organization. They also met in the

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Mt. Horeb, Dane County, WI

third floor meeting room of the opera block until the late 1950s (Post 1988; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1984: 81; Evans et al. 1961: 39; MT. HOREB TIMES 1921 [3/6: 1]).

Thus, from 1895 to 1922, the opera block remained a community center under the operation of a formal association, the Mt. Horeb Opera Block Company. From 1922 to 1984, it contained the Mason's lodge hall as well as the meeting place of several other organizations. Its interior, second floor spaces at the west end reflect this association. The exterior of the building reflects these periods of operation in its two part design. These associations gain particular importance because of the role of voluntary organizations in late nineteenth and early twentieth century American society.

Forty-three recorded meeting halls exist in the Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places in the southern Wisconsin counties of Dane, Crawford, Columbia, Dodge, and Jefferson as of June, 1988. Since only two appear in unincorporated villages and three occur in rural areas and two of those are associated with rural schools, community meeting halls are clearly a village and city phenomenon. Meeting halls may either occur as a single function building, 33% of the sample, or they occur in conjunction with other functions: retail buildings with meeting halls represent 26% of the sample, meeting halls in association with church functions are 19% of the sample, meeting halls with cheese factories, schools, domestic dwellings, and libraries compose 16%, and opera houses associated with other often commercial functions represent 9%. Although this sample of 43 meeting halls probably does not adequately represent the potential number, it clearly identifies the importance of this building function in Wisconsin villages and cities. And it also suggests the importance of the association of the meeting hall with commercial buildings for their support.

The only meeting hall recorded by the Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places in Mt. Horeb is a late nineteenth century Italianate commercial structure standing on the west side of south Third near its juncture with Main Street just south of the mobile station. However, the American legion has only occupied the building since 1960. Iver Lund originally utilized the building as a general store in the late nineteenth century (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 20, 23, 81). Once a lodge hall over a commercial building, Nelson's Hall no longer stands. Built as an Italianate commercial building in the 1880s with a lodge hall at 126 Main, Thompson's Hall remained a furniture store under ownership of the Thompson and Fosshage families until 1926 when it was partitioned into small stores including the Parisey Variety, Evan's 5 and 10 Store, and Philip Hoff's Bar and Bowling Alley. This modification probably destroyed the upstairs lodge hall. In 1954, it became a single store again, the Ben Franklin, owned by Raphael Vasens and in 1984 by Gary and Joyce Rundle (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 20). Tom Ayen erected Olson's Hall

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at 128 East Main in 1905. By 1911, it became Olson's Bakery and Restaurant with space on the second floor for an apartment, banquet and meeting room, and at one time a barber shop. It remained a bakery during the ownership of the Olsons until 1957, of Doug Goble until 1980, and of Jerry Schubert and Jerry Tompson after 1980. It retains its original 1905 cement block front (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 21). Thus, Olson's Hall which represents a different style and a single commercial building rather than a block is the only known fraternal hall remaining in Mt. Horeb.

## Commerce

The ground floor of the opera block contained spaces for four businesses, and the east end of the second floor held two offices. With some exceptions, the same kind of businesses occupied these spaces from the 1890s to 1938. Gilland and Krehl first opened the drugstore at the corner of Second and Main in the east end of the block in November, 1895 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [11/25: 1; Sanborn-Perris Map Company 1899). In 1901, G.M. Helland, also an optician, took over the drugstore. Optician Charles Bancroft replaced Helland between 1909 and 1911. Bancroft sold patent medicine, pipe tobacco, snuff, herbs, and spices for potpourri in his "Corner Drugstore" (R.L. Polk & Co. 1901; 1909; 1911; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 44, 46; Sanborn-Perris Map Company 1905). In 1915, Conrad Robertshaw, also a practicing optician, purchased the same business space. He established Robertshaw's Rexall which his family continued to 1961 after his death in 1942 (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 44, 46; R.L. Polk & Co. 1913; 1915; 1928; Sanborn-Perris Map Company 1915; 1928).

The business just west of the entrance to opera hall/lodge rooms was maintained as a restaurant (Sanborn-Perris Map Company 1915). H.J. Paskey opened his confectionary at this location by November, 1895 (MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [11/25: 1]). He advertised: "Call at the Opera House Block when you desire confectionary, ice cream, temperance drink, soda water" (MT. HOREB TIMES 1896 [11/28: 1]). He also ran a restaurant in conjunction with his sweet shop. Elf Severson acquired the location by 1901. Sam and Boris LeVitan and then William Scot, who ran it primarily as a soda fountain, owned it prior to its sale to Thomas Johnson in 1903. He advertised himself as a confectionary and baker in 1904 (R.L. Polk & Co. 1901; 1903; Angell & Co. 1904; Evans et. al. 1961: 48; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1896). Johnson retained the business until at least 1917 (R.L. Polk & Co. 1917). Levy Jacob may have operated the restaurant by 1919 (R.L. Polk & Co. 1919). By 1921, Theodore Statz had purchased the business, and he ran it until 1929 (R.L. Polk & Co. 1921; W.H. Lightfoot & Co. 1928; Evans et al. 1961: 49). Leo Haig then maintained the restaurant until Edward and Harold Post acquired it about 1950. They sold it to Douglas Goble in 1975 (Mt. Horeb Area Historical

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Society 1986; Evans et al. 1961: 49).

The post office occupied the third business area to the west of the restaurant by 1897. The period of its occupation prior to that date remains unknown. John Vilberg served as post master as well as an insurance and real estate agent (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1896: 55; R.L. Polk & Co. 1901; 1903; 1905). H.C. Gier replaced him by 1908 and Al Goebel arrived in 1916. By 1925, the post office had moved to the State Bank building and Ted Statz may have expanded his restaurant into this space (Evans et al. 1961: 47; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 19, 55; Sanborn-Perris Map Company 1915; 1928).

A jewelry store occupied the west end of the block (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 19). Dahle and Berg operated the space as jewelers and opticians by 1901 through 1913 (R.L. Polk & Co. 1901; 1913). Joachim Brager with H.O. Brager took over the store by 1915 to 1919 (R.L. Polk & Co. 1915; 1919; Evans et al. 1961: 45, 49). Jorgen Moe followed him until 1930 when C.M. Staub purchased the business (R.L. Polk & Co. 1921; W.H. Lightfoot & Co. 1928; Evans et al. 1961: 49). He remained in business until Orrin Bergey's ownership (Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 19).

Business occupants on the second floor were equally stable. Dr. Carl Sholts, a graduate of the Chicago College of Dental Surgery, established his practice in the corner office from 1895 to 1937. Dr. M.M. Darrow purchased his practice and remained from 1937 to 1976 (R.L. Polk & Co. 1901; W.H. Lightfoot & Co. 1928; MT. HOREB TIMES 1922 [3/10: 1]; Evans et al. 1961: 47; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 42). James Brown and Ludwig Weltzin as Brown and Weltzin occupied the rear office on the west side by 1904 through 1928. James Brown may have operated by himself in 1903. They sold real estate and insurance (Evans et al. 1961: 47; R.L. Polk & Co. 1903; G.A. Angell & Co. 1904; W.H. Lightfoot & Co. 1928; Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society 1986: 20; MT. HOREB TIMES 1922 [3/10: 1]).

The Mt. Horeb Opera Block served as a pivotal building in the Mt. Horeb business district after its erection in 1895. Although the interior and the window fronts of the business spaces on the first and second floors have been at least superficially altered, the historical association with these businesses remains strong. Its businesses and offices were established fifteen years after Mt. Horeb's founding in 1880. Rather than initial businesses, they represent the kinds of businesses founded in the early period of expansion as farmers recovered from the panic of the early 1890s and moved into dairying operations. Typical businesses in Mt. Horeb remained stable in the 1895 to 1924 period. They included the general merchandise store, bank, jewelry store, hotel, drugstore, furniture store, livery stable, agricultural implement sales, cigar and tobacco store, barber shop, meat market, grocery, photography store, hardware, restaurant and saloon, bakery, and boot and shoe

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Section number 8 Page 11 Mt. Horeb Opera Block  
Mt. Horeb, Dane County, WI

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store. Professional enterprises included the physician, dentist, real estate agent, and lawyer (R.L. Polk & Co. 1895-1921). Thus, the restaurant/confectionary, drugstore, jewelry store, real estate agent, and dentist represent typical businesses of the period. The fourth business area housed Mt. Horeb's post office from at least 1897 to 1925.

The commercial businesses located in the Mt. Horeb Opera Block represent a virtual cross section of the turn of the century business enterprises typically found in agricultural service centers. Commercial business blocks like the Mt. Horeb Opera Block, by virtue of their size and prominence, were the "anchors" of the commercial district and exerted a significant economic impact on the local economy. The Mt. Horeb Opera Block was by far the largest commercial block in the city of Mt. Horeb and played a significant commercial role in the community from 1895-1938. Since the time it was constructed in 1895 the Opera Block has been a landmark symbol of the commercial success of Mt. Horeb.

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## Conclusion

Thus, because of the historical importance of meeting halls within the community and their low representation on the National Register in southern Wisconsin, the Mt. Horeb Opera Block gains considerable local significance as a potential example of this resource type under the social history area of significance. Its first floor retail spaces, its second floor office, and the second floor hall reflected in its two part design (Longstreth 1987; Halpern 1986) exemplify the meeting hall/retail form common to the late nineteenth century. It achieves significance in the area of commerce because its retail businesses and professional offices were common to the era of expansion in Mt. Horeb from the mid-1890s into the 1920s. And, the building gains importance under the area of architecture as a Queen Anne commercial block. Its eclectic choice of decorative elements and massing parallel those common to the style. Commercial blocks were not frequently erected in the Queen Anne style in Wisconsin. It is therefore not surprising that this block represents the only known example in Mt. Horeb. Also, its architects, Gordon and Paunack, are noted for their Queen Anne residences but not commercial building. They translated this example into the Queen Anne style. The period of significance for the commerce area of significance extends from 1895 to 1938, the period from which they occupied the building to the modern era. The period of significance for the social history area of significance begins with its remodeling by the Masons in 1922 and ends at the beginning of the modern era in 1938.

The Mt. Horeb Opera Block possesses exterior integrity with the exception of the commercial fronts. Its second floor interior integrity dates from the 1922 remodeling. Although the first and third floors have suffered interior loss of integrity for both periods, very significantly, the building's Masonic Lodge on the second floor has suffered very little change. And, while integrity of design and to a lesser degree material and workmanship have been thus affected, those of location, setting, feeling, and association are intact. The Mt. Horeb Opera Block visually remains the central element of the business district.

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(1) MT. HOREB TIMES 1895 [4/11: 1]).

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See Continuation Sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property less than one acre

UTM References

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

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date August 29, 1988

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Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries of the Mt. Horeb Opera Block coincide with its original legal description given in the 1895 transfer of the property to the Mt. Horeb Opera Block Company and describe its current boundaries. This description locates the property at the southeast corner of East Main and Second and includes the "East 92 feet of lots 7 and 8 and north 9 feet of lot 6, Block 4, Carl Boeck's survey plat of Mount Horeb Station, in the village of Mount Horeb (Dane County Title Company 1985 [deed, vol. 158, p. 388]).

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Mt. Horeb Opera Block.

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Name of property: Mt. Horeb Opera Block  
Location: Mt. Horeb, Dane County, Wisconsin  
Photographer: Joyce McKay  
Location of negatives: Historic Preservation Division  
State Historical Society of Wisconsin  
816 State Street  
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

March, 1988:

- 1 of 14: View of the east elevation and north facade of the Mt. Horeb Opera Block, looking southwest.
- 2 of 14: View of the north facade showing alteration to the first floor business fronts, looking south.
- 3 of 14: View of the north facade showing the second story detailing, looking southeast.
- 4 of 14: View of the turret on the northeast corner of the opera block, looking southwest.
- 5 of 14: View of the north facade and west elevation along Main Street looking southeast.
- 6 of 14: View of the east elevation and south facade of the opera house looking northwest.

June, 1988:

- 7 of 14: View of the north facade of the opera block in the 1920s or 1930s looking southwest. Photographed from the collections of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society.
- 8 of 14: The Mt. Horeb Opera Block taken ca. 1901-1902, looking southwest. Photographed from the collections of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society. Also available at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

August, 1988:

- 9 of 14: View of the interior of the second floor lodge hall taken from the entrance looking southwest.

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10 of 14: View of the private lodge rooms to the south of the lodge hall, the dining room, lounge, game room area looking west.

11 of 14: Second floor office space in the southeast corner of the building identified as the real estate and insurance office, looking southeast from the entrance.

12 of 14: Second floor office space in the northeast corner of the building identified as the dentist office looking northeast toward the canted wall.

13 of 14: Second floor stair hall from the south wall looking north.

14 of 14: First floor commercial space, second retail area going from east to west identified as the restaurant. Looking north.

MT. HOREB OPERA BLOCK, MT. HOREB, DANE COUNTY

FIRST FLOOR

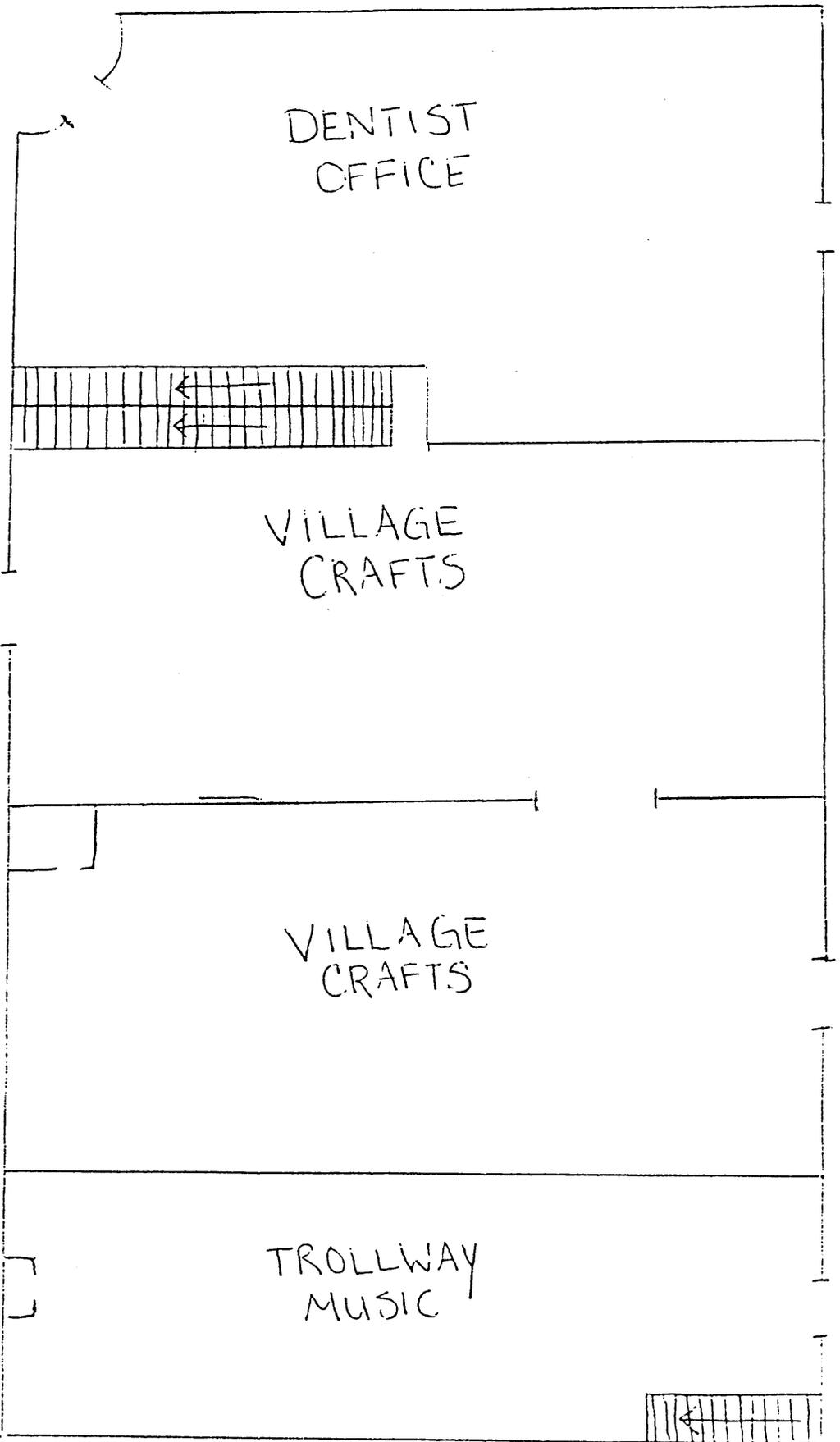


Figure 1  
50'  
SECOND STREET

91'  
MAIN STREET



MT. HOREB OPERA BLOCK, MT. HOREB, DANE COUNTY

SECOND FLOOR

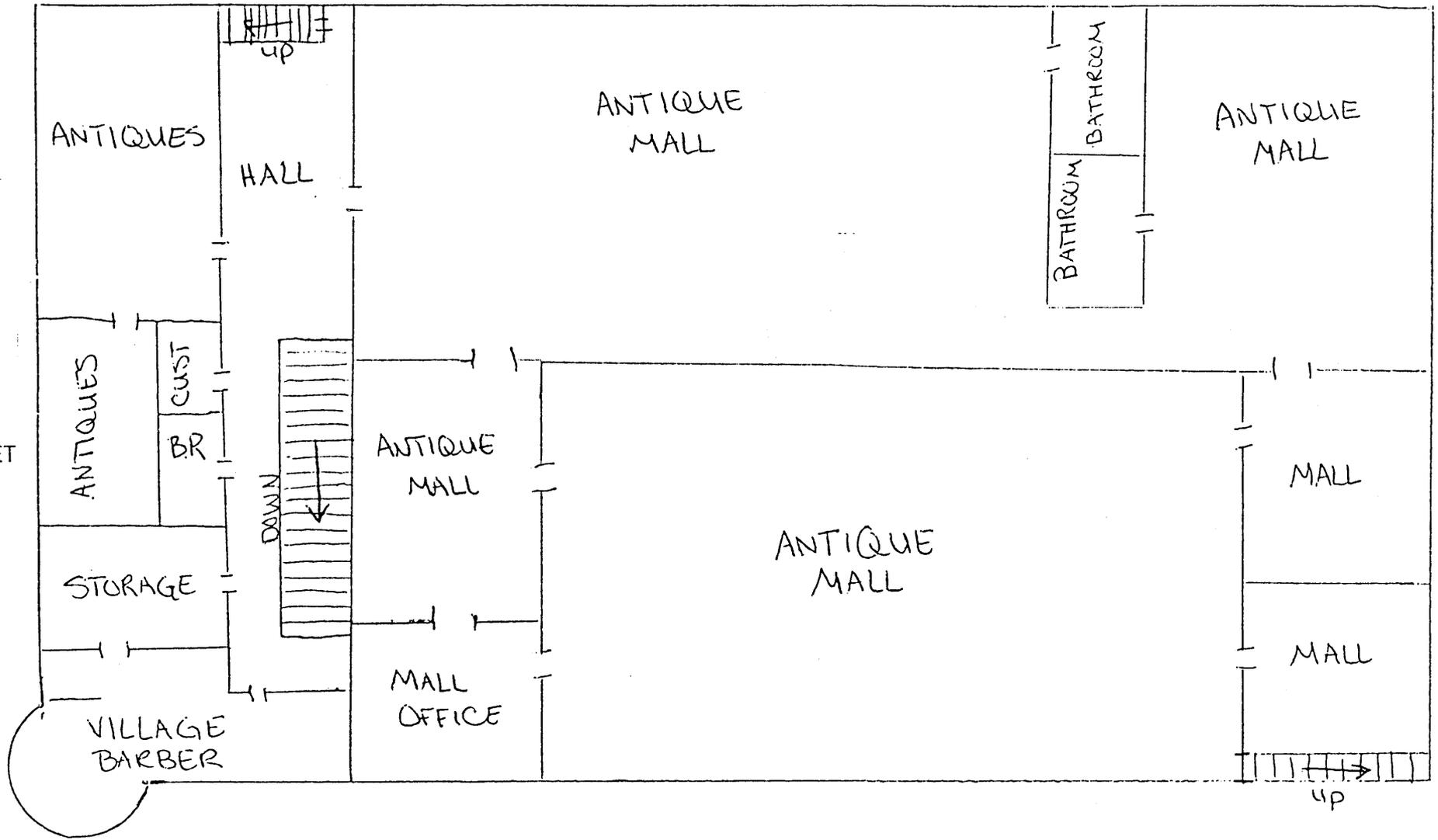


Figure 250

SECOND STREET

91'  
MAIN STREET

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MT. HOREB OPERA BLOCK, MT. HOREB, DANE COUNTY

THIRD FLOOR

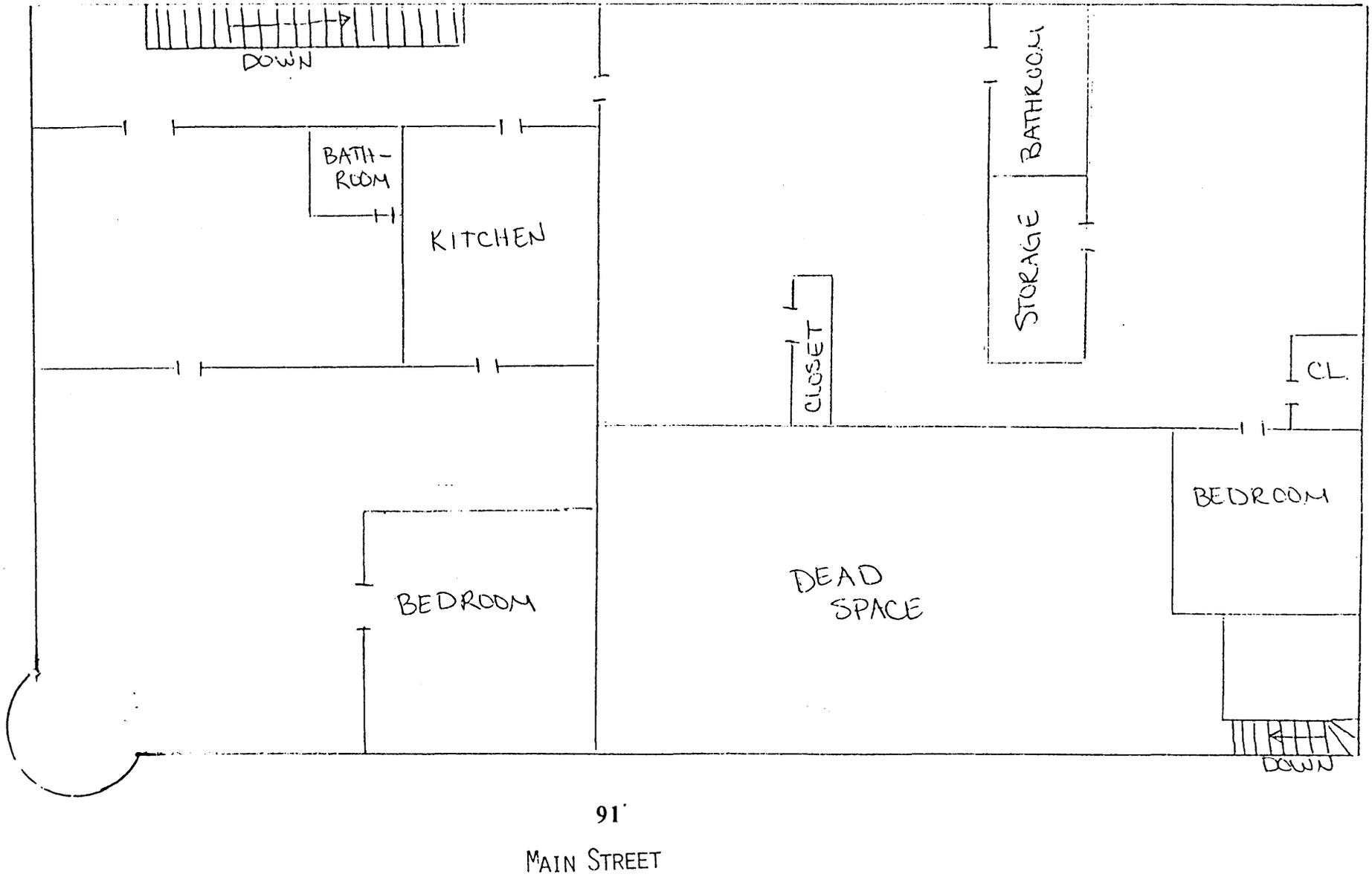


Figure 3 50'

SECOND STREET

91'

MAIN STREET