

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" on the appropriate line or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name BELLE PLAINE MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number CENTERED ALONG 12TH STREET FROM 7TH AVENUE ON WEST TO 9TH AVENUE ON EAST, FROM 11TH STREET ON THE SOUTH TO 13TH STREET ON THE NORTH N/A not for publication

city or town BELLE PLAINE N/A vicinity

state IOWA code IA BENTON county code 011 zip code 52208

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (nomination request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (meets does not meet) the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant (nationally statewide locally). (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
[Signature] 8/27/2013
Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

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

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

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

Signature of Keeper
Edson H. Beall

Date of Action
10-16-13



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

October 24, 2013

Notice to file:

This property has been automatically entered in the National Register of Historic Places on October 16, 2013

This is due to the fact that there was a lapse in appropriations by Congress and our offices were closed from October 1-16, 2013. "Nominations will be included in the National Register within 45 days of receipt by the Keeper or designee unless the Keeper disapproves a nomination" (30CFR60.(r). If the 45th day falls on a weekend or Federal holiday, the property will be automatically listed the next business day.

The documentation is technically sufficient, professionally correct and meets the National Register criteria for evaluation. Thus, this property is automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many lines as apply)
Category of Property (Check only one line)

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
46	16	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
47	16	Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources
previously listed in the National Register**

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE
DOMESTIC/HOTEL
COMMERCE/TRADE/SPECIALTY STORE
COMMERCE/TRADE/FINANCIAL INSTITUTION
TRANSPORTATION/RAIL RELATED
EDUCATION/LIBRARY

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE
VACANT/NOT IN USE
COMMERCE/TRADE/SPECIALTY STORE
COMMERCE/TRADE/FINANCIAL INSTITUTION
VACANT/NOT IN USE
EDUCATION/COLLEGE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH&20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/CLASSICAL REVIVAL
LATE 19TH&20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/
COMMERCIAL STYLE
LATE VICTORIAN/ITALIANATE

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
walls BRICK
SYNTHETICS/VINYL
roof ASPHALT
other TERRA COTTA

Narrative Description

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

Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, Iowa
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" on one or more lines for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

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

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" on all the lines that apply)

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE
ARCHITECTURE
TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

1885-1960

Significant Dates

1894
1913

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

ZALESKY, CHARLES BENJAMIN
DIEMAN, CHARLES A.

Narrative Statement of Significance - (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliography References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historical Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository

Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, Iowa
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 11.47 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1		15		559877		4638589	
Zone				Easting		Northing	
2		15		560155		4638589	
Zone				Easting		Northing	
3		15		560155		4638404	
Zone				Easting		Northing	
4		15		560022		4638404	
Zone				Easting		Northing	

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Alexa McDowell, Architectural Historian
organization AKAY Consulting date July 19, 2013
street & number 103 W. Island Avenue telephone 515-491-5432
city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55401

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs - Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

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

Property Owner

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

name Various (see continuation sheet)
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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

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

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National Park Service

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

7. Narrative Description

The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District¹ is located at the physical center of the community of Belle Plaine, Iowa, a community of some 2,878 situated in east-central Iowa approximately 45 miles west of Cedar Rapids, Iowa and 6 miles south of Iowa Highway 30. Belle Plaine was founded as a railroad town and its quick growth and long-term prosperity rested with the railroad.

The town of Belle Plaine was laid out in 1862 on the northern bank of the Iowa River in Benton County. The town site was chosen both for its topographical advantages and in anticipation of the coming railroad, which was extended from Cedar Rapids to Belle Plaine in 1863. The original town was laid out with the commercial district concentrated in the blocks along Main Street (aka 1st Street and now officially designated as 12th Street) between Oak Avenue and Maple Avenue (now 7th Avenue and 9th Avenue, respectively), adjacent and parallel to the railroad line. In 1906 a citywide renaming of the town's streets was initiated by local ordinance, with numbered streets running east to west and numbered avenues running north to south.

The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District is a two-block long by three-block wide district, nearly rectangular in shape that is bounded by 7th Avenue on the west and 9th Avenue on the east. The north district boundary is 13th Street, with the railroad tracks marking the south boundary from 7th Avenue to 8th Avenue and 11th Street from 8th Avenue to 9th Avenue (encompassing the depot). The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District comprises the historic commercial core of the community, today providing a comprehensive picture of the historic growth of Belle Plaine's Main Street commerce as impacted by transportation, specifically the railroad and the Lincoln Highway.

One National Register listed resource is located inside the boundaries of the district: the Sankot Motor Company, located on 13th Street. The resource was determined eligible for registration, locally significant under Criterion A in association with the history of the Lincoln Highway.

Commercial resources dominate the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District. Also located in the district are the former Hart Memorial Library, the Chicago & North Western Railroad Depot and Freight House, and the small section of railroad track adjacent to the depot. No residential buildings are located in the district.

Although the resources in the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District are representative of a variety of architectural styles and construction eras, buildings constructed following the devastating fire of July 1894 that destroyed a four-block area of the downtown dominate the district's visual character. A total of 35 of the district's 64 buildings were constructed in the months following that disaster – 32 of the 35 are located on

¹ Through time, Belle Plaine's primary commercial corridor has borne various names, both official and unofficial; today, the street is officially known as 12th Street. However, local historical references and current residents most consistently refer to the street as Main Street, an indication of the community's acknowledgement of the area's historic function as both commercial center and community gathering place. As a result, that name has been adopted in this nomination.

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12th Street. A celebration held on December 20, 1894 marked the completion of a number of new commercial buildings, with many others rising on the remaining burned out sites in 1895.

By the time of the 1894 fire, the Belle Plaine Main Street had developed past the wood-frame storefronts typical of early commercial districts. The prosperity brought by the railroad was reflected along Main Street in the form of one and two-story, brick buildings boasting the stylistic trends prevalent during the Late Victorian era. Historic images (Figure 7.) document 12th Street's pre-fire streetscape, which was dominated by contiguous buildings from 9th Avenue to the site of the Montgomery block just west of 8th Avenue. Some freestanding buildings remained in the 800 block (an indication of developable land) with many more found in the 700 block where commercial enterprises historically tended toward smaller scale business (e.g. restaurant, laundry).

Post-fire construction in the 800 block of 12th Street tended to organize individual storefronts into large, visually unified groupings that create a sense of mass not typically found in a town of this size. Although visually unified, these grouped buildings were constructed to function autonomously. Stylistically, the facades commonly utilize classical elements with a particular reference to the Palladian motif, which appears in various forms on many of the upper facades. Significant among the 1894-1895 buildings located in the 800 block is the Pythian Castle (812) which is the middle section of a visually connected unit comprised of four bays (Image 0003.). The building is differentiated from the others by its slightly advancing, stepped façade and increased parapet height. In the Pythian Castle a vaguely Palladian motif is created by the arrangement of upper story fenestration where a wide, round-arched window is flanked by a pair of narrower, flat headed windows, with what passes as pilasters separating the elements. Historically, the building featured an elaborate cornice (Figure 14.), along with the parapet indicating the building as the "Pythian Castle." Notably, the upper floor of the Pythian Castle retains its historic floor plan, ceiling height, and the vast majority of its historic details.

The remaining buildings that, along with the Pythian Castle, comprise a large visual block on the north side of the 800 block include the Carney Block (808), the Vincent Block (810), and the Masonic Temple (814-816). Within the larger, visual unit the buildings are differentiated from the one another by a change in upper story fenestration. And, when constructed, the buildings featured elaborate cornices that underscored their individual identity and functional autonomy.

Like the Pythian Castle, the Nichols-Herejk Drug Store building (803) on the south side of the 800 block is one part of a visual unit – in this case, a unit of three buildings (Image 0004.) - constructed in the months following the fire of 1894. The façade of the Nichols-Herejk Drug Store building incorporates classically derived elements such as the pedimented form of the parapet and the series of blind Roman arches set within it in combination with a deeply recessed corbelled table. Adjoining Nichols-Herejk on the west is the Lawrence Dry Goods building (801), which displays Roman arches in combination with intricate brickwork

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and details reminiscent of a medieval tower. The W.H. Burrows & Co. Clothing building (805) completes the trio with its round arched upper story windows and the patterned cornice of intertwining round arches that, in their overlap, appear as Gothic arches.

Further to the east, a visual block of three, doublewide buildings were likewise constructed in the immediate aftermath of the 1894 fire. The separate units are discernable by the placement of a central staircase to the upper story with flanking storefronts, which historically were marked by raised parapets (Figure 13.). The Mosnat Block (813-815), the Bender's Meritol Store/Zalesky's Meat Market building (817-819), and the Hartman Block (821-823) all share architectural design elements that visually unify them, while historically functioning autonomously. Like several of the district's 1894-1895 buildings, these utilize a Palladian motif in the upper story fenestration. In this case, narrow windows with flat headers flank a wide window with a segmental arched header, the elements tied together by a running stone lintel.

A number of other buildings rose in the 800 block of the Main Street in the months after the fire of 1894. Like those discussed, most all utilized classical elements, which created a sense of continuity in the "new" commercial district. That continuity extended west into the east portion of the 700 block; the corner anchors - Citizen's National Bank (732) on the northwest corner and the Montgomery Block (731) on the southwest corner - solidly reflect the visual character created in the 800 block.

The Citizen's National Bank (Image 0005.) is perhaps the most "classic" example of the Classical Revival style in the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District. The style is demonstrated in the building's overall sense of symmetry and balance through repetitive pattern, the utilization of Roman arched windows in the upper story, a denticulated copper cornice, and pilasters with classically inspired capitals. It is worth noting that the upper story, while vacant and suffering damage from water infiltration, retains its historic floor plan, high ceilings, wide hallway, and much of the historic details, including door and window trim, baseboards, and wallpaper.

In contrast to the Citizen's National Bank, the visual character of the Montgomery Block, with its clipped façade and corner entrance, reflect its corner location (Image 0006.). Further, the Montgomery Block lacks a clear stylistic reference. Instead, the building displays a variety of brick patterns to highlight elements such as window placement and the cornice. Just beneath the cornice, corbelled panels are deeply set, providing considerable dimension to the wall surface. The cornice itself is likewise corbelled, but here the bricks are laid in a running pattern with evenly spaced voids used to suggest a battlement. In combination the brickwork lends the building a sense of solidity.

One-story, brick front commercial buildings, including the Barbershop (730), the three storefronts that served, for a time, as the Boston Store (725, 727, and 729), Kratoska's Restaurant (722) and M.D. Dodd's Harness & Horse Fitting (724), anchor the visual character of the 700 block (Image 0007. and 0008.).

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Together with three, one-story, false-front, freestanding buildings this streetscape is decidedly less dense and less refined than the 800 block. Only the Montgomery Block, the Citizen's National Bank, the Moore Building, and the Mansfield Building-King Theater add scale and a clear sense of design to the 700 block.

The district's earliest resource, and the only remaining building that pre-dates the fire of 1894, is the Guthrie Block of 1885 (Image 0002.). Although the resource has lost a measure of historic character as it relates to the façade (design, materials, and workmanship), its role as the earliest remaining commercial building and a fire survivor is significant to our understanding of the district's history.

The district includes a number of significant buildings dating to the period from 1910-1925. Some of the buildings, like the Iowa Hotel, reflect the functional types related to the Lincoln Highway. Others, like the Corn Belt Bank, the Mansfield Building-King Theater, the Moore Building, First National Bank, while reflective of the economic impact of tourism related to the highway, also indicate the continued role of the railroad in the city's prosperity. The properties dating to this period vary in form and style with the common thread being a move toward a 20th century expression. For example, the Corn Belt Bank, while featuring design elements clearly inspired by classical precedents, has paired windows and flattened decorative elements, which ground it firmly in the 20th century (Image 0001.). The First National Bank throws the template of the 19th century commercial façade out the window by embracing the work of Chicago architects like Louis Sullivan; the adoption of the single, massive frame opening surrounded by tiles with an organic motif and the ribbon windows of the upper story are a clear nod to the Chicago trends of the period. On the whole, the buildings of this era create an important counterpoint to the streetscape that is otherwise dominated by the late 19th century visual character of the post-fire commercial buildings.

Like the commercial downtown, the buildings associated with the Chicago & North Western Railroad, located one block south of the main street, were lost in the fire. The railroad's depot, a two-story brick passenger and freight depot, was built in the closing weeks of 1894. Like the commercial buildings constructed in the aftermath of the fire, the depot was designed in the Classical Revival style. In contrast to the commercial properties, however, the building exhibits the Greek influence as seen in the pedimented gable end, denticulated cornice, and Ionic capitals. With nearly all of the community's historic railroad buildings non-extant (including the turntable formerly located at the west end of 12th Street, on the west side of 7th Avenue) the Chicago & North Western Depot stands as a critical reference to Belle Plaine history. The building's scale and high level of integrity elevate its contribution to the Main Street Historic District.

Although the architecture of the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District was very likely architect designed, little solid evidence has been found to document that assertion. Still, the continuity and quality of design clearly point to that being the case. Charles A. Dieman of Cedar Rapids has been documented as the architect of the Herring Cottage (National Register listed, but located just outside the district boundaries) and the First National Bank (822). Charles B. Zalesky (who worked for a short period for Dieman) designed the

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Hart Memorial Library. There is some speculation that the Cedar Rapids firm of Taylor & Josselyn may have worked in Belle Plaine, but no evidence has surfaced as confirmation. The renowned Chicago architect, Charles S. Frost may be responsible for the design of the Chicago & North Western Depot and Freight House, but, not only has that not been proven, there are those who suggest that is unlikely.² No other architects are currently known to have worked in the Belle Plaine Main Street District.

The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District retains a sense of cohesion that is, in large part, accounted for by the reconstruction of the majority of the Main Street in the period immediately following the fire of 1894. The buildings that joined those constructed in late 1894-1895 add to rather than detract from the district's cohesion, supplying a sense of historic balance to a business district with a one hundred and fifteen year history.

Statement of Integrity

On the whole, the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District retains a high level of all seven aspects of historic integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association; the district as a whole remains intact and a sense of time and place is maintained. This is due to the continued existence of a sense of cohesion within the district, created by the retention of major historic buildings and objects that together create the fabric of the district.

The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District maintains a high level of integrity as it relates to location, remaining as an intact commercial district in close proximity to the line of the Chicago & North Western Railroad, which determined the location of the town and because of which the town and its commerce flourished.

The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District maintains a high level of integrity as it relates to setting and association. The development of the commercial corridor along Main Street (12th Street) grew out of the placement of the railroad line that dictated the location of the city itself. The proximity of the commercial district to the rail line facilitated the exchange of goods and the retention of that relationship enhances the integrity of association. That the line remains active today (although it does not stop in Belle Plaine) elevates the integrity of setting; one does not stand in the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District for long before a train passes as a reminder that Belle Plaine was and is a railroad town.

Individually the resources exhibit the historic characteristics of their construction eras, demonstrating the influences prevalent during specific times in history. Their materials, stylistic influences, workmanship, and methods of construction all contribute to our understanding of various periods of history and how the trends of an era impacted this community. Although the historic fabric of the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic

² Charles Parrott, "An Architectural Study of the Chicago and North Western Railway Passenger Stations on the Iowa Division Designed by Charles S. Frost 1893-1919," Iowa State University, 1971.

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

District has been adversely affected by the loss of some historic features such as cornices and parapet elements (impacting integrity of design, materials, and association) and many of the storefronts have been altered, the overall level of integrity as it relates to design, materials, and workmanship remains high.

When considering integrity of design, materials, and workmanship it is important to consider that, as indicated in Jan Nash's 2002 multiple property listing *Iowa's Main Street Commercial Architecture*, "evolution and change over time are fundamental characteristics of nearly all Iowa commercial districts."³ As the integrity considerations of that document recommend, the resources of the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District have been evaluated taking "... into consideration the expected alterations and typical motivations of Main Street tenants and owners..." and recognizing that "... a greater degree of alteration can be accommodated in a commercial district before the integrity of the district is seriously compromised."⁴ As Nash states, changes to commercial buildings are particularly prevalent at the storefront level where retailers adapted their stores in reaction to changing function or marketing trends. However, the retention of original form, upper story fenestration and decorative elements, and the building's "... contribution to the street's overall profile..." often compensate for the loss of an original storefront, resulting in the retention of an overall historic integrity and a contribution to the significance of the district.

On July 2, 2012 a ribbon cutting was held to celebrate the completion of a façade rehabilitation project in the downtown district. The project, which focused on 27 facades located on 12th Street, addressed structural issues, repaired damage to masonry elements, uncovered historic facades, and returned historically compatible storefronts where the originals had been removed. Undertaken following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation, the façade project has heightened the sense of time and place and restored some of the historic integrity that had been lost through deferred maintenance and historically inappropriate alterations. Of particular visual impact, was the return of the side-by-side storefronts at 722 (Kratoska's Restaurant) and 724 (Dodd's Harness and Horse Furnishings), which had been hidden behind non-historic materials for some 40 years. The reconstruction of the storefronts at 808 (Carney Block), 810 (Vincent Block), 812 (Pythian Castle), and 814-816 (Masonic Temple), which now function as a single business, did much to restore a sense of the historic character to the north side of the district's 800 block.

³ Nash, Jan Olive. "Iowa's Main Street Commercial Architecture" (Multiple Property Listing, State Historical Society of Iowa/State Historic Preservation Office, Des Moines, 2002), E-38.

⁴ Ibid.

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

Resource Classification & Count

The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District includes a total of 64 resources: 47 contributing buildings (including one National Register listed resource), 16 non-contributing buildings, plus one contributing structure, the section of railroad track located within the district boundary and associated with the function of the Chicago & North Western depot.

Buildings

The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District contains a total of 63 buildings, 47 of which are considered resources contributing to the district (including one National Register listed resource) and 16 are considered non-contributing resources. Although the issue of individual eligibility of district resources is no longer considered separate from the district as a whole, it is of value to note that 11 of the 45 contributing buildings are sufficiently significant and retain a level of historic integrity that would render them individually eligible for Registration were they evaluated independent of the district.

Structures

The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District contains one contributing structure – the section of railroad track associated with the function of the Chicago & North Western Depot and Freight House that lies between 7th Avenue on the west and 9th Avenue on the east.

The following table provides an inventory of the district’s resources, organized to indicate contributing status, architectural style, and construction date.

Iowa-Inventory	Historic Name (Common Name)	Address	Built	Style	Status	
		12 th Street				
06-00799	Beyers Sales Co.	702	ca.1900	Commercial Brick Front		NC
06-00800	Quigley Confectionery	703	1916	Commercial Brick Front		NC
06-00801	Feed Store	704	ca.1945	Commercial	C	
06-00824	Buckley Barber	705-707	1916	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00802	Dry Cleaner	706	ca.1945	Commercial	C	
06-00803	Commercial Building	708	ca.1905	No Style		NC

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Iowa- Inventory	Historic Name (Current Occupant)	Address		Built	Style	Status	
06-00833	C.F. Severs Barber & Billards/G.R. Wade Pantatorium		709	1916	Commercial Brick Front		NC
06-00804	Commercial Building		710	ca.1910	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00303	Moore Building		712	ca.1925	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00805	Commercial Café		713	ca.1910	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00806	Casa Restaurant		715	1946	No Style		NC
06-00807	Cunniff the Tailor		717	ca.1895	Commercial False Front	C	
06-00808	D.I. Collins & Son Paint Shop		719	ca.1899	Commercial False Front		NC
06-00277	Mansfield Block King Theatre		720	1930	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00809	Harm's Restaurant		721	1895	Commercial False Front		NC
06-00810	Kratoska's Restaurant		722	1895	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00811	Thiessen's Meat Market		723	1895	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00832	M.D. Dodd Harness & Horse Furnishing		724	1895	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00293	Boston Store		725	1895	No Style		NC
06-00812	H.U. Swallum, Druggist		726	1900	No Style		NC
06-00823	Boston Store		727	1895	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00813	Second Post Office		728	1900	Classical Revival	C	
06-00825	Boston Store		729	1895	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00304	Barbershop		730	1894	Commercial Brick Front	C	

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

Iowa-Inventory	Historic Name (Current Occupant)	Address	Built	Style	Status	
06-00294	Montgomery Block	731	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00278	Citizen's National Bank	732	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00295	Lawrence Dry Goods	801	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00279	Butzloff Hardware	802	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00820	Nichols-Herejk Drug	803	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00280	Rexall Drug/Miller Clothing	804-806	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00814	W.H. Burrows & Co. Clothing	805	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00305	Hanson Building	807	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00826	Carney Block	808	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00296	Peterman Shoes	809-811	1904	Early 20 th C. Revival	C	
06-00828	Vincent Block	810	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00307	Pythian Castle	812	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00308	Mosnat Block	813-815	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00815	Masonic Temple	814-816	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00816	Zalesky's Meat Market/ Bender's Meritol	817-819	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00283	Boyson Jewelers	818	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00827	Rivola Theater	820	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00817	Hartman Block	821-823	1895	Classical Revival	C	
06-00284	First National Bank	822	1921	Chicago Sch.	C	
06-00299	Commercial Building	825	1895	No Style		NC

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Iowa-Inventory	Historic Name (Current Occupant)	Address		Built	Style	Status	
06-00285	Odd Fellows Building		826-828-830	1906	Classical Revival	C	
06-00821	First National Bank		827	1895	Commercial Italianate	C	
06-00300	Post Office		829	1895	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00301	Guthrie Block		831-833	ca.1886	Commercial Italianate	C	
06-00306	Corn Belt Savings Bank		832	1916	Classical Revival	C	
		13 th Street					
06-00958	(Greider Standard)		701	ca.1940	Roadside Commercial		NC
06-00317	Iowa Hotel		709	ca.1910	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00512	Sankot Motors		807	ca.1910	Roadside Commercial	NRHP	
06-00312	Union Building		811	ca.1910	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00959	(Coon Creek)		817	ca.1952	No Style		NC
06-00960	(Drahn Insurance)		821	ca.1912	Commercial Brick Front	C	
06-00961	(Tippie Education Center)		823	ca.1912	Commercial Brick Front	C	
		11 th Street					
06-00257	Chicago & North Western Railroad Depot and Freight House		8(06)	1894	Classical Revival	C	
06-00962	Chicago & North West Railroad Trackage		Between 7 th & 9 th Aves.		N/A	C	
		8 th Avenue					
06-00831	Commercial Building		1206	ca.1895	No Style		NC
06-00818	City Hall		1207	1967	Modern		NC

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Iowa- Inventory	Historic Name (Current Occupant)	Address		Built	Style	Status	
06-00830	Commercial Building		1208	ca.1895	No Style		NC
06-00829	Commercial Building		1210	ca.1965	No Style		NC
06-00819	Lincoln Café		1214	ca.1910	Commercial Brick Front	C	
		9 th Avenue					
06-00236	Hart Memorial Library		1214	1931	Tudor Revival	C	

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8. Statement of Significance

The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, locally significant in association with the role of transportation in the settlement of Belle Plaine and in the development of the commercial district over an extended period of time. The resources of the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District are representative of the continuum of commercial development spanning the period from 1885 through the mid-20th century.

Belle Plaine was platted by representatives of the railroad that was, from 1863 through 1960, the backbone of the community's economy. The commercial district grew up adjacent and parallel to the line of the Chicago & North Western Railway, providing convenient access for the exchange of goods, and the city's commercial prosperity directly mirrored the size and services of the railroad in Belle Plaine at any given point in the city's history.

Beginning in the early 20th century, the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District felt the impact of the automobile. Located on the route of the Lincoln Highway, the commercial district economically benefited from travelers along the highway, with a number of buildings (both in and out of the historic district) constructed during the period in which the Highway was routed through the town (1913-1937); the appearance of specific property types in the district (e.g. automobile garages, hotels) reflected the requirements of that rising mode of transportation.

Further, the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, considered locally significant as an important collection of historic buildings which, given the predominantly commercial function of the district, are not found in other areas of the city. The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District derives its historic character from the dominance of commercial buildings constructed following the fire of 1894 that destroyed the commercial district. The visual unity derived from that event defines the district and sets it apart from Iowa communities of comparable size. Buildings constructed in the decades after the fire (specifically during the first four decades of the twentieth century) create an important visual counterpoint to those constructed in the fire's immediate aftermath, and offer distinctive architectural significance in their own right.

The Period of Significance for the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District is 1885 through 1960. The earliest remaining resource in the district, the Guthrie Block, was constructed in 1885. The ending date of the period of significance has been determined as 1960, marking the end of passenger rail service to the community, which signaled the end of an era in Belle Plaine.

Significant Dates for the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District include 1894, the year the downtown was destroyed by fire and reconstruction was begun; and 1913, the year in which the Lincoln Highway was routed through Belle Plaine.

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Historic Background

The town of Belle Plaine was laid out in 1860 on the northern bank of the Iowa River in Benton County. The town site was chosen both for its topographical advantages and in anticipation of the coming railroad, which was extended from Cedar Rapids to Belle Plaine in 1863. For many years, the railroad was the underpinning of the city's economic health; Belle Plaine commerce thrived with the railroad and suffered when service diminished, impacting the community as a whole. Although the history of the community and its commercial district is most directly tied to the railroad, the routing of the Lincoln Highway through the town in the 19-teens, provided an economic boost to the commercial district beyond that of the railroad and its impact on the resources of the district is apparent in buildings constructed in the first half of the 20th century.

In July 1861 the Cedar Rapids and Missouri Railroad (later part of the Chicago & North Western) extended from Clinton as far as Cedar Rapids. Those wishing to travel west from Cedar Rapids did so with the Western Stage Coach Company. Plans to extend the rail line west from Cedar Rapids initially considered a route across the state to terminate in Sioux City, but eventually the route of the line was set to end in Council Bluffs, creating the potential for a station at Belle Plaine. To meet the requirements of the government's land grants, the railroad needed to lay tracks up to 40 miles west of Cedar Rapids by January 1, 1862. Initially, the company favored locating a station at Buckeye, but landowners in that town were unwilling to make the land concessions requested by the railroad. An agreement between the Cedar Rapids and Missouri Railroad and landowners Presley Hutton and Benjamin Parris was made; a grant of 40-acres to the railroad established the station at Belle Plaine.¹

In anticipation of the coming railroad line, John I. Blair (who is described in local accounts as a "railroad magnate"), platted Belle Plaine on April 24, 1862. The 13-block plat was filed and recorded on May 13, 1862. Late the following summer, Presley Hutton filed a plat of the town's first addition, which bears his name. When granting land to the railroad, Hutton had reserved a parcel of ten-acres around his home; that land was ultimately situated between Blair's original plat and Hutton's 1863 addition, creating a longstanding aggravation to city abstractors. In April of 1865 Blair's Addition was platted, adding Blocks 14-21 to the town site.²

The first train to Belle Plaine arrived late in 1863 and the following year a four-stall roundhouse (non-extant) was built on the south side of the tracks between 7th and 8th Avenues. Within six years a new ten-stall roundhouse (non-extant) was constructed at the west end of 12th Street; a 30-stall roundhouse (also non-extant) replaced that structure in 1884.

¹ *Belle Plaine Centennial Celebration* [Belle Plaine: Belle Plaine Historical Committee, 1962], 19.

² *Ibid.*

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Belle Plaine was incorporated in 1868 and by that early time the advantages of being a railroad town were apparent in the commercial district. With the convenience of transporting goods via the railroad and the city's distance from other communities of any size, Belle Plaine was the primary supplier to the large farming community that surrounded it and the scale and composition of the town's commercial sector reflected that status. In the fall of 1869 the Belle Plaine commercial district (concentrated along 12th Street) boasted eight dry goods stores, nine groceries, four clothing stores, three boot and shoe stores, three drug stores, three hardware stores, two furniture stores, two tailor shops, four millinery shops, two agricultural depots, two jewelers, three lumber yards, one book store, two livery stables, one flouring-mill, two harness shops, one photograph gallery, two carriage shops, one musical instrument and sewing machine agency, two meat markets, four saloons, three hotels, one bakery, one bank, one newspaper, two grain elevators, five lawyers, four physicians, and one dentist. The town's economic vitality as it was tied to the railroad can be further measured by the amount of agricultural products shipped which, in 1870, amounted to 1,029 train-car loads of grain or an average of thirty-two wagonloads sold every business day of that year.³

Belle Plaine's future was assured in 1878 when the city became the terminus of the Clinton Division of the Chicago & North Western Railway, which created employment for several hundred men and contributed significantly to the increasing prosperity of the town and its commercial district.⁴

By the 1890s the commercial corridor was fully developed with one and two-story, commercial buildings running from 7th Avenue on the west to just past 9th Avenue on the east. Typical of early commercial districts, that in Belle Plaine was dominated by wood-frame, freestanding buildings with some brick business blocks in place in the 800 block by ca.1890. Historic images (figure 7) indicate that the false front was a well represented building form, although several buildings sported the more elaborate forms and decorative devices commonly employed by the Italianate style. The fire of 1894 virtually erased those early commercial buildings, and resulted in the historic character exhibited in the Belle Plaine downtown today.

Near Total Destruction: The Great Fire of 1894

On the evening of July 28, 1894 a blacksmith's fiery spark set a bale of hay afire to start a blaze that resulted in the near complete destruction of the Belle Plaine commercial district. In total some 82 buildings covering almost two full blocks and valued at \$500,000 were lost to the fire or purposely razed in the effort to stem its spread. Despite the devastating blow, the community quickly rallied and businessmen were soon

³ *Belle Plaine Centennial*, 19.

⁴ *The History of Benton County* [Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1878], 444.

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rebuilding.⁵ The community celebrated the rebirth of its downtown on December 20, 1894, by which time several of the buildings located in the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District today had been constructed, with many more rising in 1895.

Like most early settlements, Belle Plaine's commercial district was initially dominated by wood frame buildings, many of which were lost in the years prior to the creation of a fire fighting organization. Those losses represented many hundreds of dollars lost to the blaze itself or as a result of the typical fire fighting technique of razing buildings in the vicinity of the fire to limit its spread. The first organizational meeting of the Pioneer Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 was held June 24, 1873. The newly established company was called upon to fight their first fire on July 16, 1874 that started in a law office in the commercial district. Before it was extinguished several buildings had burned or been purposely razed.

In January of 1880, local citizens circulated a petition that was then presented to the city council requesting an ordinance prohibiting the "erection of frame buildings in some portions of the business district to control fire hazard and to improve appearance." Just such an ordinance was passed in December of that same year.⁶

Belle Plaine's first equipment was a "hand pumper" engine and hose cart purchased for \$700 from Marshalltown and transported by the railroad to Belle Plaine free of charge in January 1880. The City also purchased 500 feet of hose that year.⁷ In 1883 a two-story building was constructed on 8th Avenue (then known as Beech Street) north of the Main Street to house the City Hall and firehouse. The fire insurance map in October of that year documents the building as under construction. The map also indicates that a separate, one-story "fire eng. house" was located immediately north of the new building and that an "inexhaustible well & pump" was on the south end of the block at 8th Avenue's intersection with the Main Street.⁸

Non-flowing artesian wells had been drilled in rural Benton County around Belle Plaine as early as 1882. Over several years, numerous wells were sunk in the corporate city limits, most famously, the Jumbo Well.⁹ The city merchants formed two stock companies to sink wells in the downtown for fire protection. One well

⁵ Pioneer Recollection [Vinton, Iowa: The Historical Publishing Company, 1941], 165.

⁶ Belle Plaine Area Museum, Newspaper clipping file, July 27, 1944 "Volunteer Fire Department Was Organized in The Year 1873."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Sanborn Map & Publishing Co., October 1883.

⁹ An artesian well relies on natural sub-stratum pressure to rise to the surface and, in the process of passing through rock, is filtered, making it desirable as a source of drinking water. The Jumbo Well, which has been anecdotally referred to as "The Eighth Wonder of the World", was sunk at the intersection of 8th Avenue and 8th Street (three blocks south of the historic district) on August 28, 1886. A casing damaged during the drilling process set the well out of control; it was estimated that the well put out 3,472 gallons of water per minute. Many attempts to stem the flow were unsuccessful until October 6, 1887 when Jumbo was at last tamed. Today a large, granite boulder with a bronze plaque marks the location of the famous Jumbo Well and the community continues to commemorate its story each summer with Jumbo Well Days.

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was sunk at 9th Avenue and 12th Street and could be used with a fire hose attached to the case as a very effective firefighting weapon. Work on a second well at 8th Avenue and 12th Street began shortly thereafter and, while at first successful, that well dried up when the Jumbo Well came in.¹⁰

With the newly equipped fire department ensconced in its firehouse on 8th Avenue just north of the Main Street, the city was prepared to protect its buildings from the threat of fire – multiple incidents were reported in March, April, and May of 1894. Scorching heat and drought conditions in June and July set the stage for a conflagration that, despite its state of preparedness, the Belle Plaine Hook and Ladder No. 1 was no match for.

At about 5:30 p.m. on July 28, 1894 Robert Liddle, a blacksmith whose shop was located on 8th Avenue near 13th Street (the present site of the Lincoln Café), was repairing a wagon wheel at the very moment C.H. Kroh was loading hay into his nearby feed store. A spark from Liddle's forge was sent sailing into the street, setting fire to the hay. The fire spread so quickly east across 8th Avenue to the City Hall-Firehouse that the firemen were driven out of the firehouse through the windows when they entered to retrieve equipment. As a result, although there was plenty of water there were no facilities for getting it to the right place. Heavy, dry wind from the northwest fanned the fire, which spread in all directions; within twenty minutes the flames had jumped the wide thoroughfare of Main Street and was devouring the buildings along that street.¹¹

Calls for help to fight the fire were immediately issued and the Chicago & North Western Railroad quickly transported the fire departments from Cedar Rapids, Blairstown, and Tama to Belle Plaine; some came with equipment, while others sent their available manpower. The firefighters were stationed at various locations around the downtown, each working to stem the spread of the blaze through any means possible.

The fire burned commercial and residential buildings, woodframe and brick alike. It spread west from the source burning everything in its path, including the widely renowned Greenlee Opera House, which was located on the north side of 12th Street in the 700 block. Moving to the south, it took a lumberyard and the Chicago & North Western depot south of the Main Street, but through extraordinary effort on the part of the Tama firefighters, the locally famous Burley House was saved and prevented the spread of fire to the southwest, where the houses were close together and the many trees would have made fighting the fire even more difficult. The Cedar Rapids and Blairstown firefighters are credited with saving the buildings east of section east of 9th Avenue between 11th and 12th Streets.¹²

¹⁰ *Belle Plaine Centennial Celebration*, 45.

¹¹ *The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, "The Fiery Furnace" [July 30, 1894], 8.

¹² "The Fiery Furnace".

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The fire moved east along the Main Street and nearly all the buildings on both sides of the street were lost to the blaze or were razed in the effort to stem the spread. On the north side of the Main Street the fire moved east as far as 826 12th Street and on the south to the Guthrie Block, which still stands on the corner at 9th Avenue. The buildings along 13th Street between 7th and 9th Avenues fared no better. When all was said and done the fire had taken almost all of two fully developed blocks of the downtown, plus the lumberyard and depot south of the downtown. Losses totaled some \$500,000 with only \$200,000 of that insured.¹³ Several area news accounts provide an itemized list of estimated property and stock losses.

The threat of fire was very real across the state of Iowa during the summer of 1894. The precarious state of Iowa communities due to a widespread drought during the summer of 1894 was reported in various newspapers statewide. On September 8, 1894, *The Waterloo Courier* ran an article reporting an "alarming number of fires across the state" including those at Adair, Brooklyn, Eagle Grove, and Marion, and warning its citizenry to be prepared to respond to such an emergency.

The *Oelwein Register* issued the weekly report of the Iowa Weather and Crop Service that indicated the daily temperature for the week prior to August 9, 1894 was seven degrees above normal, with that on the 26th of July ranging between 100 to 107 degrees Fahrenheit. To further aggravate the situation, winds blew 20-35 miles per hour.

The governor of Iowa, Governor Frank D. Jackson, issued a proclamation warning about the threat of fire. On August 9, 1894 *The Waterloo Daily Courier* ran the following proclamation under the headline, "A Warning to Our Citizens."

"An unusual and alarming number of fires have occurred within our State during the last few weeks, resulting in great hardships and serious loss to our people. The scarcity of water occasioned by the unprecedented drouth increases the danger of fires and seriously cripples our usually efficient organizations in means and methods of extinguishing them. I would therefore suggest to the people of the State that extraordinary precautions be taken by all to guard against this danger. Let the mayors of cities and towns have all appliances for extinguishing fires thoroughly tested and put in readiness at once. Let all inflammable garbage be removed from the streets and alley; boxes and empty oil barrels moved to a safe distance. Let additional fire patrols be established, and, in short, let every good citizen exercise unusual precaution against this dreaded danger, and in every way seek to reduce the liability of disasters of this kind, to the very minimum."

The article also indicated that Mayor (J.M.) Groat of Waterloo reiterated the governor's admonishment, stating that if the people of Waterloo did not want a disaster such as those experienced by Belle Plaine, Adair, Brooklyn, and Marion, "they should exercise the greatest possible care and caution."

¹³ Ibid.

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Despite the devastating blow to the community of Belle Plaine, the town quickly rallied and businessmen were soon rebuilding. Some of the first buildings reconstructed were temporary “shanties”, including the city’s local newspaper *The Union*, which built on 13th Street. Businessmen and women were quickly arranging for the replacement of lost stock and by July 31st several businesses had reopened and were aggressively marketing their wares in the pages of *The Union*. Superintendent Weldin of the Chicago & North Western Railroad was in Belle Plaine arranging for the construction of a new depot within two days after the fire.

Soon thereafter, several permanent structures rose on the ruins. One of the earliest to be rebuilt was the Citizens National Bank (732 12th Street), which set the tone for the quality of architectural design apparent in the buildings that line the Main Street today. S.S. Sweet, cashier of the First National Bank, is credited with encouraging property owners to employ architects to design the new buildings.¹⁴ Although the names of the architects appear to have been lost to history, the success of Sweet’s effort is obvious today to even the most casual observer.¹⁵

The community of Belle Plaine celebrated the rebirth of its downtown on December 20, 1894, by which time many of the buildings located in the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District today had been constructed. A committee was formed to plan the celebratory gala with a theme of “From Ashes to Elegance”. The committee announced, “The city was wiped out as if by a whirlwind, sudden and unexpectedly, and so has been its recovery.”

The celebration itself started at 10:00 a.m. with a parade that formed at 8th Avenue and Main Street then moved on through a “triumphal arch” to enter the auditorium of the newly re-constructed Guthrie Opera House. Bands from Belle Plaine and several area communities performed, as did a 60-voice choir. Lunch and entertainment followed the official program. Japanese “daylight” fireworks were the feature of the afternoon and at 6:00 p.m. the lights of the city and on the triumphal arch were turned on with a flourish. A souvenir pamphlet that was distributed to the crowd proclaimed, “You may depend upon it, Belle Plaine will be bigger and better than ever...”¹⁶

On December 23, 1894 the *Perry Daily Chief* reported that of the business buildings destroyed, “... nearly all are in business at the old stand today, but where one story wooden buildings stood are new two and three story bricks with plate glass fronts, steam heat and electric lights.”

¹⁴ *Belle Plaine Centennial Celebration*, 57.

¹⁵ Despite the number of articles written about the fire and about the subsequent rebuilding, no mention of specific architects employed has been located in Belle Plaine, Cedar Rapids or others of the state’s newspapers. Further, no evidence of design work has been found in records about period architects such as William Foster, Frederick Claussen, or Josselyn-Taylor, who were well-established, prolific architects in Iowa.

¹⁶ *Belle Plaine Centennial Book*, 57.

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Among those buildings constructed by the close of 1894 are the Citizen's National Bank and the Montgomery Block (on opposite corners of Main Street and 8th Avenue), the First National Bank, the Pythian Castle, the Masonic Hall, the Guthrie Opera House (non-extant), and the Vincent Block – all in the 800 block – and the Chicago North Western depot and freight house.

A new firehouse (non-extant) was also built after the fire and the City Council quickly placed a levy on Belle Plaine's taxable property to be used for the fire department. Still, the loss of buildings on Main Street to fire did not end in 1894. Numerous fires (although none matching the scale of the Great Fire), continued to destroy Belle Plaine property. Ironically, the two wood-frame buildings located on the north side of 12th Street next to the Odd Fellows building that escaped the fire of 1894 burned on January 2, 1896. The loss of those two emptied the 800 block of 12th Street of wood-frame constructions.¹⁷

The Railroad: Belle Plaine's Alpha and (very nearly) its Omega

"Belle Plaine has always been known as a 'railroad town.' The arrival of the railroad was the reason for its existence. It grew because of the railroad; it declined as the railroad withdrew; it survived because it had the will to survive. It will grow again with the hard work, encouragement, and co-operation of its people."¹⁸ This excerpt from the town's centennial publication summarizes both the history of Belle Plaine and the character of its people.

The first train to Belle Plaine arrived late in 1863 and its coming assured the town's survival and prosperity. The railway's arrival in Belle Plaine, as well as the town's founding, can be greatly attributed to the work of one man, a railroad executive named John Insley Blair. Blair was born in New Jersey in 1802. Despite not attending high school, he became a successful businessman at an early age, owning a store by the age of 18 and five stores and four flour mills by the age of 27. He then became active in mining and railroads, founding a mining company and a steel company that manufactured steel rails. Blair also became the largest shareholder in the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad. In 1860, Blair visited Iowa, returning to the state in 1862 to build railroads.¹⁹

Upon arriving in Iowa, Blair became the manager of the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River, which later became the Chicago & North Western (C&NW). Under his leadership the C&NW expanded rapidly, becoming the first of the three main Iowa railways to complete its route across the state, despite the fact that

¹⁷ *The Lever*. "Another Fire" [January 2, 1896], p8.

¹⁸ *Belle Plaine Centennial Book*, 16.

¹⁹ Frank P. Donovan, *Iowa Railroads* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 128-130.

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it was the last of the three railways to begin construction Blair platted Belle Plaine as well as 80 other Iowa towns.²⁰

Early Belle Plaine was, in many ways, a typical railroad town. Early railway towns were commonly laid at the end of the constructed line or at intervals of seven to ten miles. Generally laid out by railway executives, railroad towns served the purpose of improving the railways overall profitability by providing funds through the sale of town lots.²¹ Many railway towns were unsuccessful, rarely growing large, and often times shrinking or disappearing all together. And, some early railroad towns became centers of vice, with gambling, drinking, and other unsavory activities.²²

Belle Plaine follows a number of these early trends. The town was, as has already been discussed, laid out and sold by the railroad. Because rail construction slowed drastically west of the city due to difficult building conditions caused by swampy land west of town, Belle Plaine was also located at a temporary terminus.²³ Atypically, the town grew rapidly and remained vibrant. Also, under the influence of temperance-minded John Blair, Belle Plaine avoided the vice that plagued many other early railway towns, that being alcohol. The community's position in that regard is illustrated by an occurrence in 1861, when a businessman tried to open a saloon in town, only to be asked to leave the city.²⁴

In 1883 a line south from Belle Plaine to Muchakinock was built. Known as the "pumpkin vine," the line served a number of communities, including the coal mining community of Buxton, which is of considerable historical note as the largest unincorporated town in the country in 1900.²⁵ Buxton's population stood at nearly 6,000 at its peak, the majority of which were African-American. The "pumpkin vine" and the rail connection it created allowed the towns of Belle Plaine and Buxton to develop a relatively close relationship. This relationship is perhaps best illustrated by the rivalry that developed between the communities' baseball teams. When the two teams played, a train was chartered to bring the Buxton Wonders and their fans to Belle Plaine. In addition to viewing baseball games, the people of Buxton used their trip to Belle Plaine to spend some of their money. As Belle Plaine's centennial publication states, when contests took place between the two teams, the coal town chartered one or two special trains, took their 60-piece ragtime band

²⁰ Ibid., 132,142.

²¹ Marieke Van Ophem, *The Iron Horse: The Impact of the Railroads on 19th Century American Society* (<http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/essays/1801-1900/the-iron-horse/>). Accessed August 30, 2012.

²² Van Ophem.

²³ *Belle Plaine Centennial Book*, 19.

²⁴ *Belle Plaine Centennial Book*.

²⁵ Iowa Public Television website. http://www.iptv.org/iowapathways/mypath.cfm?ounid=ob_000293. Accessed 10/23/2011.

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and their bankrolls and went to town.²⁶ The mine at Buxton was hard hit when a mine at Bucknell was opened in 1912 and its fate sealed by a general decline in the demand for coal at the end of World War I. The "pumpkin vine" continued in operation until 1957.

Belle Plaine was the division point for the Eastern Iowa Division and the Iowa and Minnesota Division of the Chicago & North Western Railroad. In 1894 the cash value for a payroll of 300 employees was over \$300,000 annually. In 1897 division headquarters moved to Boone, but in 1910 the headquarters moved back, along with the accounting division, which made a greater concentration of railway employees than ever before. In that year, 30 trains traveled the north-south line each day with 50 running on the main line daily. Freight crews alone numbered 45. In the early 1920's the division headquarters were again moved out of Belle Plaine, never to return. With the loss of the division headquarters, employment numbers steadily declined. By 1955 changeover to diesel engines was completed and in 1960 all passenger service on the Northwestern was discontinued. In 1962 only about 60 of the former 500 railroad jobs remained in Belle Plaine.²⁷

While the Chicago & North Western Railroad created many benefits for the city of Belle Plaine, not all of its effects were positive. For example, in a 1910 article regarding the proposed construction of a new line connecting Belle Plaine to Waterloo, one contemporary makes the point that, despite the availability of cheap coal, industries were reluctant to locate in Belle Plaine because the city had only one railway; the lack of competition between rival railroads elevating transportation costs and limiting the town's appeal to potential industry.²⁸

The present Belle Plaine railroad depot was built following the great fire of 1894 and, while corroborating evidence remains elusive, local sources, as well as the president of the Chicago & North Western Historical Society believe the station was designed by the architect Charles Sumner Frost. Frost's success as an architect is tied largely to the railroad; with Granger, Frost designed over 200 railway stations, 127 of them for the Chicago & North Western Railroad.²⁹ Other railroad commissions include the Chicago & North Western terminal in Chicago, Illinois, the St. Paul Union Depot in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Great Northern Depot and Milwaukee Road Depot and Train Shed in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and, regionally, the Union Depot in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.³⁰

²⁶ *Belle Plaine Centennial Book*, 11-13.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁸ *Waterloo Evening Courier*. "Don't Enthuse Over W., B.P.&S" (July 21, 1910).

²⁹ DuPage County Historical Museum.

³⁰ Carl and Mary Koehler History Center. Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

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In contradiction to the opinions noted above, historian Charles Parrott asserts that, in addition to an absence of corroborating evidence, the design of the Belle Plaine depot is inconsistent enough with other of Frost's designs to suggest it may not be the architect's work.³¹ At this time, evidence remains inconclusive.

The Chicago & North Western depot at Belle Plaine was closed in June of 1980.³² The *Cedar Rapids Gazette* reported the facility's closing, including a personal narrative to illustrate a typical day at the depot in 1928. An excerpt from that narrative is offered here.

"It's a Sunday morning in June 1928 down at the Chicago & North Western depot at Belle Plaine. Coal smoke hovers over the two-story brick building. Cattle are bawling from one of the trains on the track. Passengers, most of them cattlemen, mingle in the large waiting room on the depot's west side. Others crowd into the café next to the depot for eggs, bacon and coffee. Before the day is done, 200 to 300 people will have been fed there. In the depot, the dispatcher signals a train down the line. Then he leans back. Sundays are slow days, just cattle and passengers. Monday's another thing. There could be as many as 22 coal-burning C&NW trains rolling in on routes between Clinton and Belle Plaine alone, not to mention trains from the north or freights coming in from the No. 18 mine, south of What Cheer and Consol. They'd be hauling mail, baggage, freight, coal and passengers. Good thing there are more than 75 people to staff the depot and express office, he thinks."

Following its official closing in 1980, the depot continued to be used for storage; today it is privately owned and stands vacant. Although the rail line through Belle Plaine remains active, the train no longer stops in the city.

The profound impact the railroad had on Belle Plaine is hard to deny. The town was blessed with a unique geographic position. Being almost exactly half way between Chicago and Omaha, the town was an ideal location for a division point.³³ In addition, Belle Plaine became a crew transfer point, making the city an ideal place for many railroad men to set up residence.³⁴ Although progress was slow, it is impossible to deny that it was a vital factor in the long-term growth and development of Belle Plaine.

The Lincoln Highway

Founded as a railroad town, Belle Plaine was, from the start, reliant on transportation for the movement of goods and services; a necessity underscored by its distance from other trade centers such as Cedar Rapids and Tama. A portion of that reliance shifted to the roadway during the era of the automobile, and the routing

³¹ Parrott, footnote 2.

³² *Cedar Rapids Gazette*. "C&NW is closing once-busy depot at Belle Plaine" (June 30, 1980).

³³ *Waterloo Evening Courier*. "Don't Enthuse Over W., B.P.&S" (July 21, 1910).

³⁴ *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*. "The City in Brief" (May 6, 1893).

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of the Lincoln Highway through Belle Plaine in the 1910s became an important advantage for maintaining the community's role as supplier to the rural community that surrounded it.

Prior to the building of the Lincoln Highway and for some time following, Iowa's roads were among the worst in the country. Unimproved roads made of Iowa's rich agriculture soil were dusty in the dry season and nearly impassible, sticky muck during the rainy season.³⁵ In 1916, Lincoln Highway Association president Henry Joy described the condition of Iowa's roads by saying of the state that "... not a wheel turns outside the paved streets of her cities during or for sometime after the frequent heavy rains. Every farm is isolated. Social intercourse ceases. School attendance is impossible. Transportation is at a standstill. Millions of dollars worth of wheeled vehicles become, for the time being, worthless."³⁶ The situation had little improved by 1922 when only 5 percent of the state's roads were paved.³⁷ Although slow, Belle Plaine was at the forefront of the road-paving process. According to Rebecca Conard, by 1925 "... motorists could travel paved road across Clinton County, from Mt. Vernon to Cedar Rapids, short distances on either side of Belle Plaine and Marshalltown, and across Greene County."³⁸ Thus, with its paved roads on "either side," Belle Plaine's segment of the Lincoln Highway was one of the few paved sections of the road in the state.

The development of Iowa's road network was also limited by the nature of its layout. During the early 20th century, Iowa's roads were used primarily to bring agricultural products from the farms to the railways. As a result, the state's system of roadways tended to be constructed mainly with the farmer and his need to travel from his fields to the market in mind. As a result, the states roads were designed mainly to travel to the country from a railroad center, and roads connecting towns were rare, as most inter-city travel was conducted by train. As a result, not only did Iowa's roads not really go anywhere, there was also limited knowledge of the roads' routes among the locals, making long distance auto travel almost impossible.³⁹ This situation was improved, albeit only slightly, following the development of the Lincoln Highway, when many cities, disappointed to not be included on the Lincoln Highway, began marking routes of their own. While these new routes were often jumbled, confusing, and indirect, they did help demarcate routes between cities and spread the message of the Good Roads Movement.⁴⁰

The improvement of highways in Iowa was hindered by many different attributes, both geographical and political. As already stated, Iowa's rich agricultural soil was not practical for road building because it

³⁵ William H. Thompson, *Transportation in Iowa: A Historical Summary* (Ames, IA: Iowa Department of Transportation, 1989) 101.

³⁶ Drake Hokanson, *The Lincoln Highway: Main Street Across American* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1988) 97.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

³⁸ Rebecca Conard, "Herring Hotel," (National Register of Historic Places nomination, 2008) 8.8.

³⁹ Hokanson, 7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

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became mud during wet weather.⁴¹ Also, Iowa typically constructed roads along section lines. This tendency forced road builders to construct roads over whatever topographical features were present in the preexisting section lines instead of allowing them to bypass difficult terrain by curving around challenging areas. Ignoring topography in this manner led to increased road building costs as it often made large earth moving projects necessary.⁴² Perhaps the greatest hindrance to road improvement in Iowa was, however, a typical and impractical law, which forced people who owned land adjacent to highways to pay a large portion of the money for their improvement. This law put much of the strain of financing roads on farmers, who were thus not keen to approve road-building measures.⁴³ Despite these limitations, Iowa was eventually able to improve its roads, albeit slowly. By 1931 the Lincoln Highway was almost entirely improved, and upon the repeal of the aforementioned road funding law, road building in Iowa was able to begin catching up to the rest of the country.⁴⁴

With the advent of the automobile and the development of a system of roadways, a series of new building types, businesses who provided services to motorists appeared, Gas stations, which had not emerged as a separate business until the early 1920's began to expand rapidly, and auto repair shops and new forms of restaurants soon followed. Ranging from simple roadside food stands to large restaurants, many new forms of eatery's originated during this time, but as author Drake Hokanson states, the most common of all of these restaurants was the café, an ambiguous term that represented a large variety of establishments. The business of providing lodging also evolved during this time, as whole new types of businesses emerged as the tourist camp, the motel, and many other auto related places of lodging developed.⁴⁵

When the Lincoln Highway was first established in 1913, the route extended through Belle Plaine along 13th Street from the east, turning south at 9th Avenue to run along the Main Street (12th Street) to 7th Avenue where it again turned north out of town. A later route turned back on to 13th Street, which it then followed west out of town.⁴⁶

The impact of the Lincoln Highway on Belle Plaine as a whole and on the composition of the Main Street Historic District specifically is apparent. Different types of businesses that either originated with or thrived because of the highway grew up town during this time, including a number of gas stations, lodging places, auto repair shops and restaurants.

⁴¹ Thompson, 101.

⁴² Ibid., 93.

⁴³ Hokanson, 77-78.

⁴⁴ Hokanson, 113.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 117.

⁴⁶ Personal interview with Iowa highway historian, Lyell Henry, June 13, 2012.

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The Herring Hotel, located just northwest of the Main Street Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, significant in its association with the history of the Lincoln Highway. A Lincoln Highway icon, the George Preston Filling Station, is located three blocks northwest of the historic district.

Within the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District stands the Sankot Motor Company, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Lincoln Café on 8th Avenue (a representative of one of the era's most common eating establishments) and the Iowa Hotel on 13th Street are also sited in the district, their construction and subsequent significance directly tied to the Lincoln Highway.

The Lincoln Highway, and the other named auto trails it indirectly created, helped improve automobile transportation across the United States, both by demarcating routes and by spreading the message of the importance of having good roads. The Lincoln Highway truly changed the nation's highway system and each of the communities it passed through. Belle Plaine would be a very different city today had the Lincoln Highway not passed along its Main Street.

Architecture

The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District has its roots in the prosperity brought to the community with the railroad and its 20th century resources reflect that which resulted from the route of the era of the Lincoln Highway. It was, however, the Great Fire of 1894 that resulted in the spatial relationships, architectural identity, and visual character that defines the district today.

Like most early settlements, Belle Plaine's commercial district was initially dominated by wood frame buildings, many of which were lost in the years prior to the creation of a fire fighting organization. The early prosperity brought to the community resulted in the construction of a number of two-story, brick buildings by the early 1890s, but many early wood-frame, false front commercial buildings stood along the Main Street when it burned in 1894. Most news reports about the Great Fire indicate that only the Guthrie Block, the Odd Fellows building and two, wood-frame commercial buildings remained standing when the flames died away. Today, the Guthrie Block on the southwest corner of 12th Street and 9th Avenue (the eastern end of the Main Street Historic District) is the sole resource dating to before the 1894 fire.

Reconstruction of Main Street was quickly underway and it was not long before several permanent structures rose on the ruins. One of the earliest to be rebuilt was the Citizens National Bank (732 12th Street), which set the tone for the quality of architectural design apparent in the buildings that line the Main Street today.

Although area newspapers fail to report on the specifics of reconstruction, local anecdotal accounts indicate that S.S. Sweet, cashier of the First National Bank, actively encouraged property owners to employ architects

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to design the new buildings.⁴⁷ Although the names of the architects appear to have been lost to history, the success of Sweet's effort is obvious today to even the most casual observer. Several prolific Iowa architects were in practice during the period of reconstruction and, although to date no designs have been credited to them, further research may do so.⁴⁸

Charles A. Dieman was a very well-known Cedar Rapids architect who was chief draftsman for Josselyn & Taylor. Although it does not appear that Dieman was in practice until 1898, he should not be dismissed as having a hand in the reconstruction designs for Belle Plaine. Dieman did complete the design for the 1921 First National Bank, as well as the designs (both the 1900 original and later, 1922 remodel) of the National Register listed Herring Hotel on 13th Street (outside the boundaries of the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District).⁴⁹

Charles Benjamin Zalesky of Cedar Rapids was the architect of the 1931 Hart Memorial Library. Zalesky worked for Charles Dieman from 1905 to 1907. After taking several courses, he was in practice independently from 1916 to about 1930.⁵⁰

As noted, the Chicago & North Western Railroad Depot and Freight House may have been designed by the architect Charles S. Frost. Frost was born in 1856 and attended M.I.T. before moving to Chicago in 1882.⁵¹ Once in Chicago, he formed a partnership with architect Henry Ives Cobb, which lasted until 1889. With Cobb, Frost designed several important buildings including the Chicago Opera House Block.⁵² After parting ways with Cobb, Frost worked alone until around 1898, at which point he entered into what is perhaps his most famous partnership, that with the architect Alfred Hoyt Granger; that association lasted until ca.1911.⁵³

⁴⁷ *Belle Plaine Centennial Celebration*, 57.

⁴⁸ Despite the number of articles written about the fire and about the subsequent rebuilding, no mention of specific architects employed has been located in Belle Plaine, Cedar Rapids, or others of the state's newspapers. Firms working during the period of Belle Plaine's reconstruction include Josselyn (Henry Saville) & Taylor (Eugene Hartwell) Co., which had its office in Cedar Rapids and, given their prolific production and proximity to Belle Plaine, suggests the possibility of some contribution by the firm to the designs in the Belle Plaine Main Street District. William Foster of Des Moines was also very prolific during this period. Foster practiced independently for most of his career, but in 1895 entered into practice with his draftsman Henry F. Liebbe, forming Foster, Liebbe & Co. Although no commissions in Belle Plaine have been attributed to Foster's firm, his widespread impact makes the firm a potential candidate for the Belle Plaine designs.

⁴⁹ Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects, A Biographical Dictionary* [Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999], 51 and *The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*. "Mayor Rall Urges Apartment Building in Cedar Rapids to Solve the Housing Situation," (August 19, 1919).

⁵⁰ Shank, 181.

⁵¹ University of Minnesota, "Charles S. Frost Papers," <http://special.lib.umn.edu/findaid/xml/naa048.xml>. Accessed July 7, 2012.

⁵² DuPage County Historical Museum. http://www.dupagemuseum.org/PDFs/Museum_Architectural_%20History.pdf. Accessed July 15, 2012.

⁵³ University of Minnesota, "Charles S. Frost Papers."

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Frost's success as an architect is tied largely to the railroad. With Granger, Frost designed over 200 railway stations, 127 of them for the Chicago & North Western Railroad.⁵⁴ In fact, Frost was truly tied to the Chicago & North Western for, in 1885, he married Mary Hughitt, daughter of the Chicago & North Western Railroad executive, Marvin Hughitt.⁵⁵ Among Frost's other works include the Chicago & North Western terminal, and Navy Pier in Chicago, Illinois, as well as the St. Paul Union Depot in St. Paul, Minnesota and the Great Northern Depot and Milwaukee Road Depot and Train Shed in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Of regional interest, Frost designed the Union Depot in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ DuPage County Historical Museum.

⁵⁵ <http://www.ancestry.com>. Accessed July 15, 2012 and Lake Forest-Lake Bluff Historical Society, <http://www.lfbhistory.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/alpha-g.pdf>.

⁵⁶ Carl and Mary Koehler History Center. Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

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RELEVANT CULTURAL RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

At the time of the preparation of this National Register nomination, the City of Belle Plaine and the Belle Plaine Community Development Corporation had just completed a downtown revitalization project of previously untried structure, complexity, and creativity. The project involved utilizing financial and design support from a variety of state and federal agencies. Significant to the nomination process is the city's status as a Main Street community – that agency is providing important guidance related to façade design. Further, the City actively consulted with the State Historic Preservation Office as they constructed and implemented a strategy for façade design and for the utilization of historic tax credits. The City of Belle Plaine has also created a historic preservation commission and is the process of application to the Iowa Certified Local Government program. Immediately prior to the present National Register nomination, an Intensive Level Historical and Architectural Survey and Evaluation was conducted of the Belle Plaine commercial; site inventory forms are on file at the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office and with the City of Belle Plaine.

POTENTIAL FOR HISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY

The potential for historical archaeology was not assessed as part of the present National Register nomination. The presence of the paved roadways and paved parking areas suggests the likelihood that the ground disturbance resulting from the construction of those elements may have destroyed localized archaeological resources. However, the paving may have been laid over ground with a minimum of earth movement. In that case, archaeological resources may merely have been encapsulated. It should be noted that some downtown lots remained vacant following the fire of July 28, 1894. However, Doug Jones, Archaeologist with the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office indicates, due to the pre-fire function of the buildings that stood on those lots, it is unlikely the potential for historic archaeology exists on those sites. Further, it has not been verified which, if any, historic paving remains in the district boundaries. In the future, any significant excavation and/or grading should take into consideration the possibility that archaeological and/or sub-grade historical resources may remain (street pavers or vaults under the sidewalks). Of additional note is the former site of the Chicago & North Western Railroad turntable, which was located just outside the boundaries of the historic district at the end of 12th Street, on the west side of 7th Avenue.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This National Register nomination utilizes a wide array of reference resources in an attempt to create a full picture of the historic significance of the Main Street district. Of particular importance were the valuable resources found in the archives of the Belle Plaine Area Museum. The archive holds an excellent collection of historic images, as well as local histories, a few city directories, and area newspapers. The resources at the State Historical Library of Iowa were also utilized.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM References, cont'd.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District is generally rectangular in form, in its entirety bound by 13th Street on the north, 9th Avenue on the east, 11th Street on the south, and 7th Avenue on the west. More specifically, the district is dominated by the commercial resources that line 12th Street (aka Main Street) between 7th and 9th Avenues. From that core the boundary stretches north to 13th Street and south to the railroad line and jogging to 11th Street. See boundary map on page 27.

Boundary Justification

The district boundary is centered around the historic commercial core along 12th Street between 7th Avenue on the west and 9th Avenue on the east. This portion of the historic district represents the growth of the commercial sector, particularly as it was reconstructed following the fire of 1894. The boundary extends north to 13th Street to encompass resources historically associated with Belle Plaine's commercial activity and with one of the routes of the Lincoln Highway as it passed through Belle Plaine. On the south the boundary extends to encompass a portion of the railroad line and the Chicago & North Western railroad depot, which represent the impetus for the location, subsequent growth, and commercial prosperity of the community.

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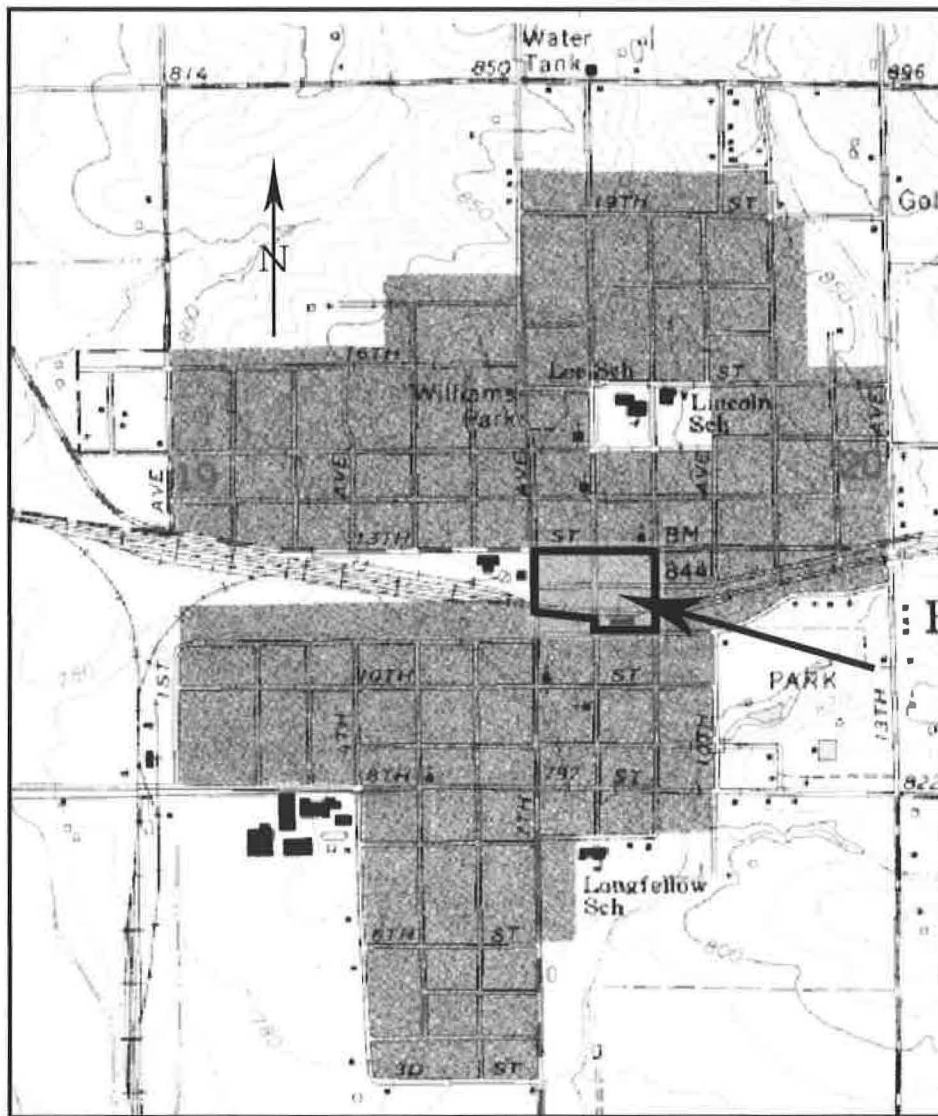
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Figure 1. USGS 7.5 MINUTE TOPOGRAPHIC MAP– BELLE PLAINE QUAD (1968)



(SOURCE: <http://www.trails.com>)

The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District is indicated by the black outline.

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Figure 2. BOUNDARY MAP - 2010



(Base-map Source: <http://www.mapquest.com>)

The Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District is generally linear in form, dominated by the resources that line 12th Street (aka Main Street) between 7th Avenue on the west and 9th Avenue on the east. The district boundary on the north is 13th Street, which encompasses resources associated with the commercial corridor. On the south, the district boundary stretches to 11th Street between 8th Avenue and 9th Avenue to include the Chicago & North Western Railroad Depot and Freight House, then jogs north to run just south of the railroad tracks from 8th Avenue to 7th Avenue. With the exception of the Guthrie Block (1885), the vast majority of the district's resources date to months after the fire of July 1894 and retain a high level of historic integrity, particularly in the 800 block of 12th Street.

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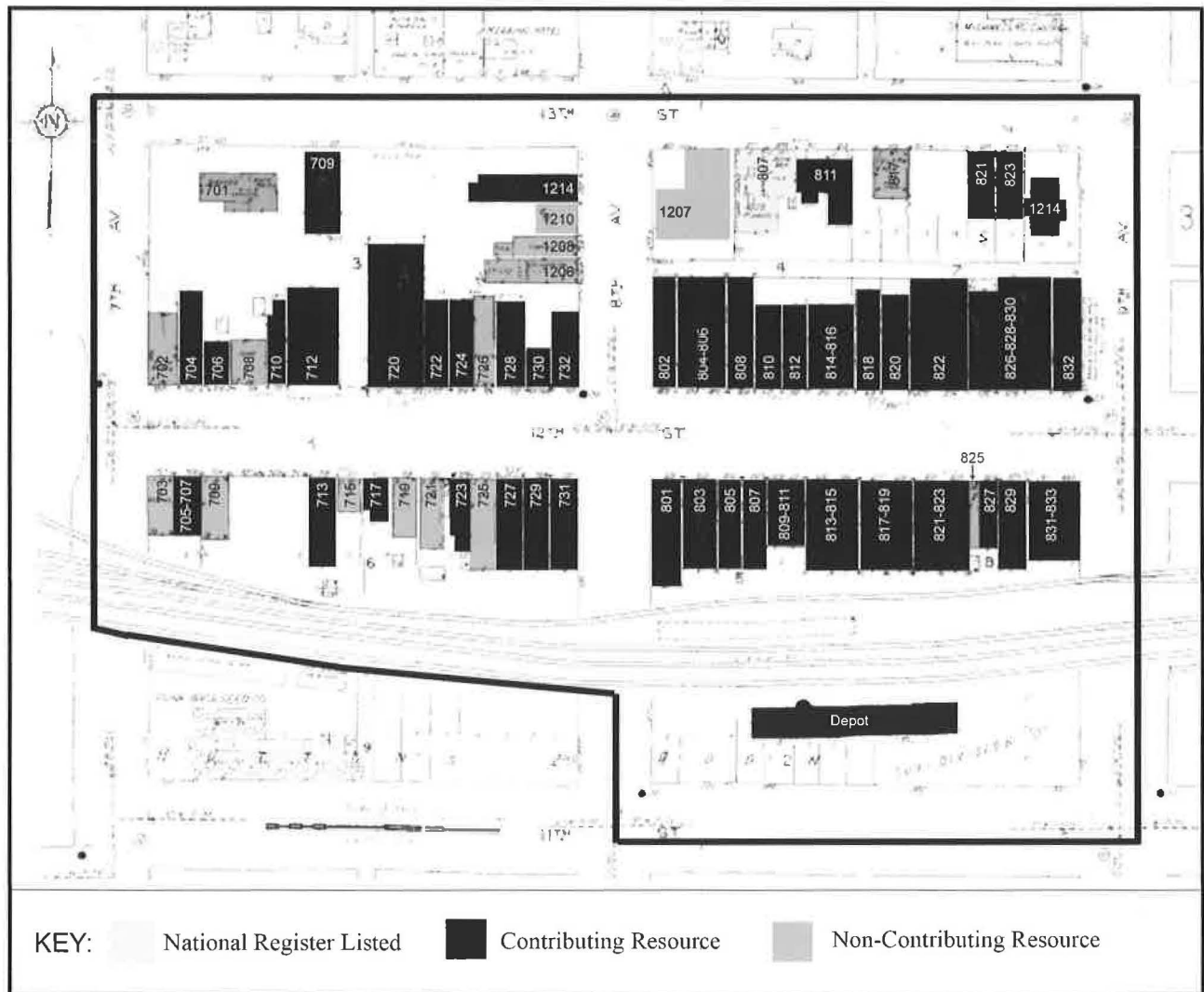
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Figure 3. RESOURCE MAP



(Base-map Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map – 1949 Revision of 1927.)

Commercial buildings that historically housed a wide variety of business enterprises dominate the district's contributing resources. With the exception of the Guthrie Block (1885), the vast majority of the district's resources date to the months after the fire of July 1894 and retain a high level of historic integrity, particularly those buildings located in the 800 block of 12th Street.

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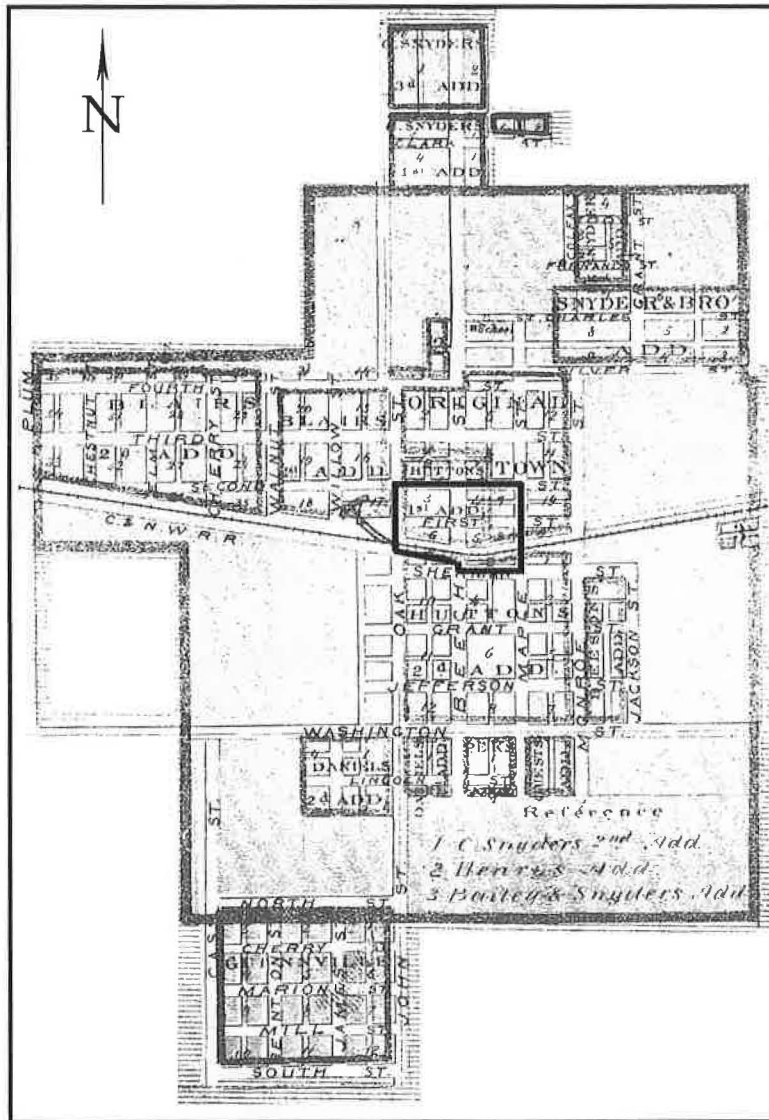
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Figure 4. HISTORICAL ATLAS – 1875



(SOURCE: A.T. Andreas' *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa* (1875; repr., State Historical Society of Iowa, 1970.)

The boundaries of the historic district, located at the heart of the fledgling community, are indicated. The development of the commercial district adjacent to the railroad line is apparent in this map.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

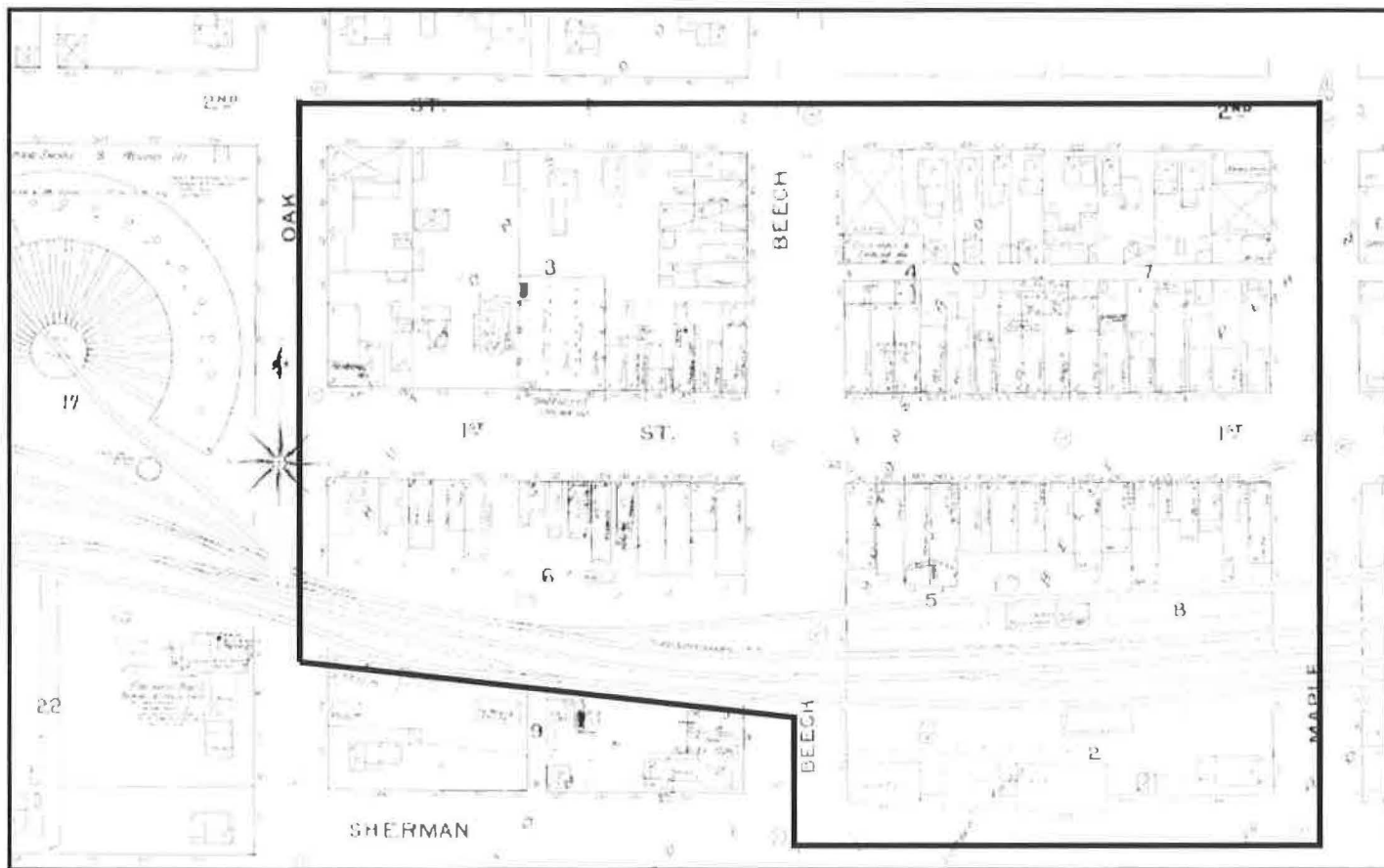
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Additional Documentation Page 37

CFN-259-1116

Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

Figure 5. FIRE INSURANCE MAP – January 1894 (Pre-Fire)



(SOURCE: <http://0-sanborn.umi.com/catalog.cbpl.lib.ia.us:80/>)

This January 1894 fire insurance map records the composition of the Belle Plaine commercial district before the fire on July 28, 1894 devastated the area. At that time, numerous one and two-story wood-frame buildings remained in the downtown (particularly in the 700 block of 12th Street), with some residential properties located at the west end of the historic district. Only one, pre-fire building remains in the district today - the Guthrie Block (1885). See the roundhouse (non-extant), once located at the west end of the commercial district. NOTE: Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District boundaries are indicated.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

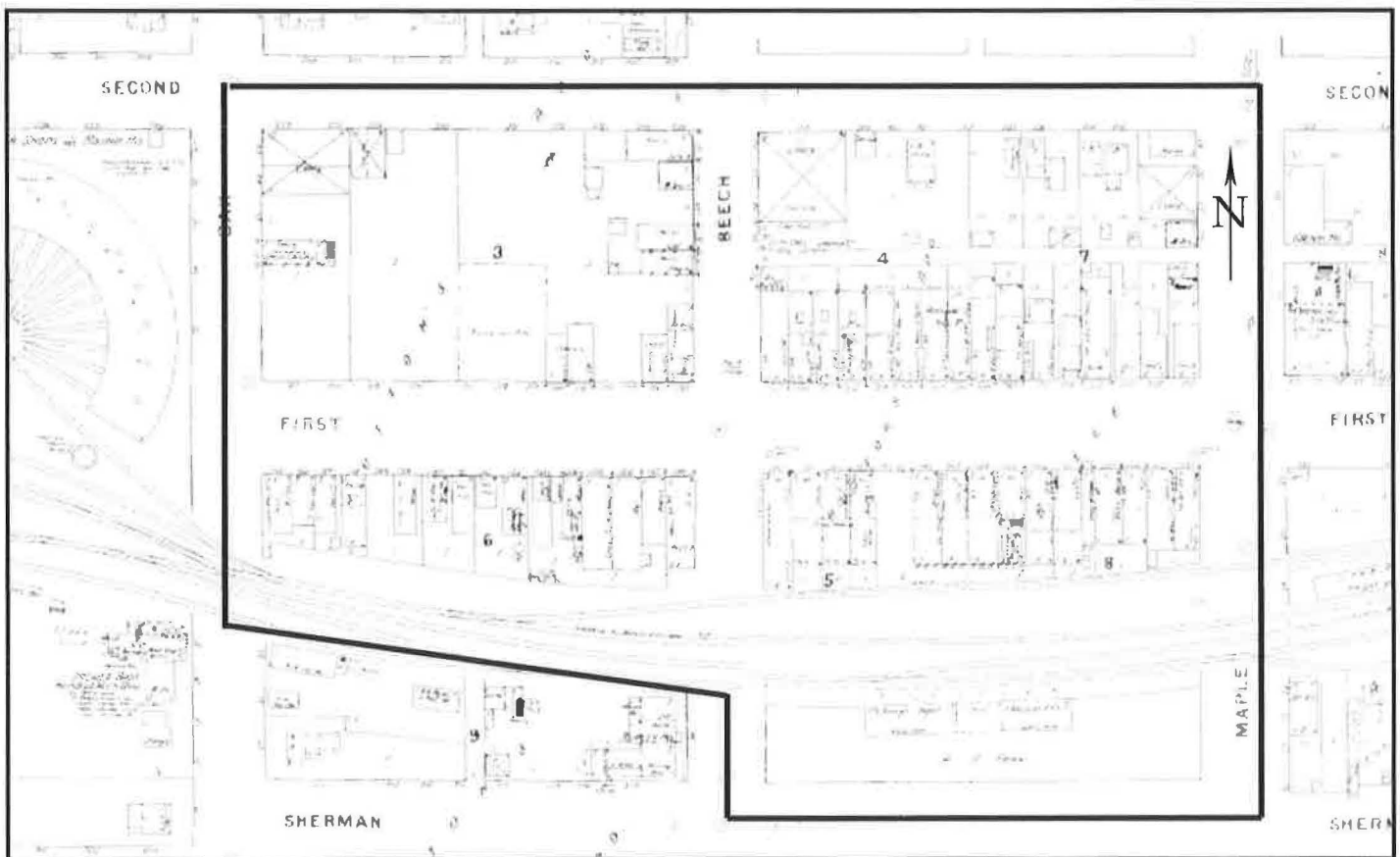
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number Additional Documentation Page 38

CFN-259-1116

Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

Figure 6. FIRE INSURANCE MAP – July 1895 (Post-Fire)



(SOURCE: <http://0-sanborn.umi.com/catalog.cbpl.lib.ia.us:80/>)

Reconstruction of the Belle Plaine commercial district began within days after the July 28, 1894 fire. The community held a celebration to mark the re-birth of the downtown on December 20, 1894 and by that time the majority of the commercial buildings recorded on this July 1895 fire insurance map had been built. The new Main Street boasted two and three-story, brick buildings with facades reflecting the skill of professional architect(s). NOTE: Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District boundaries are indicated.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

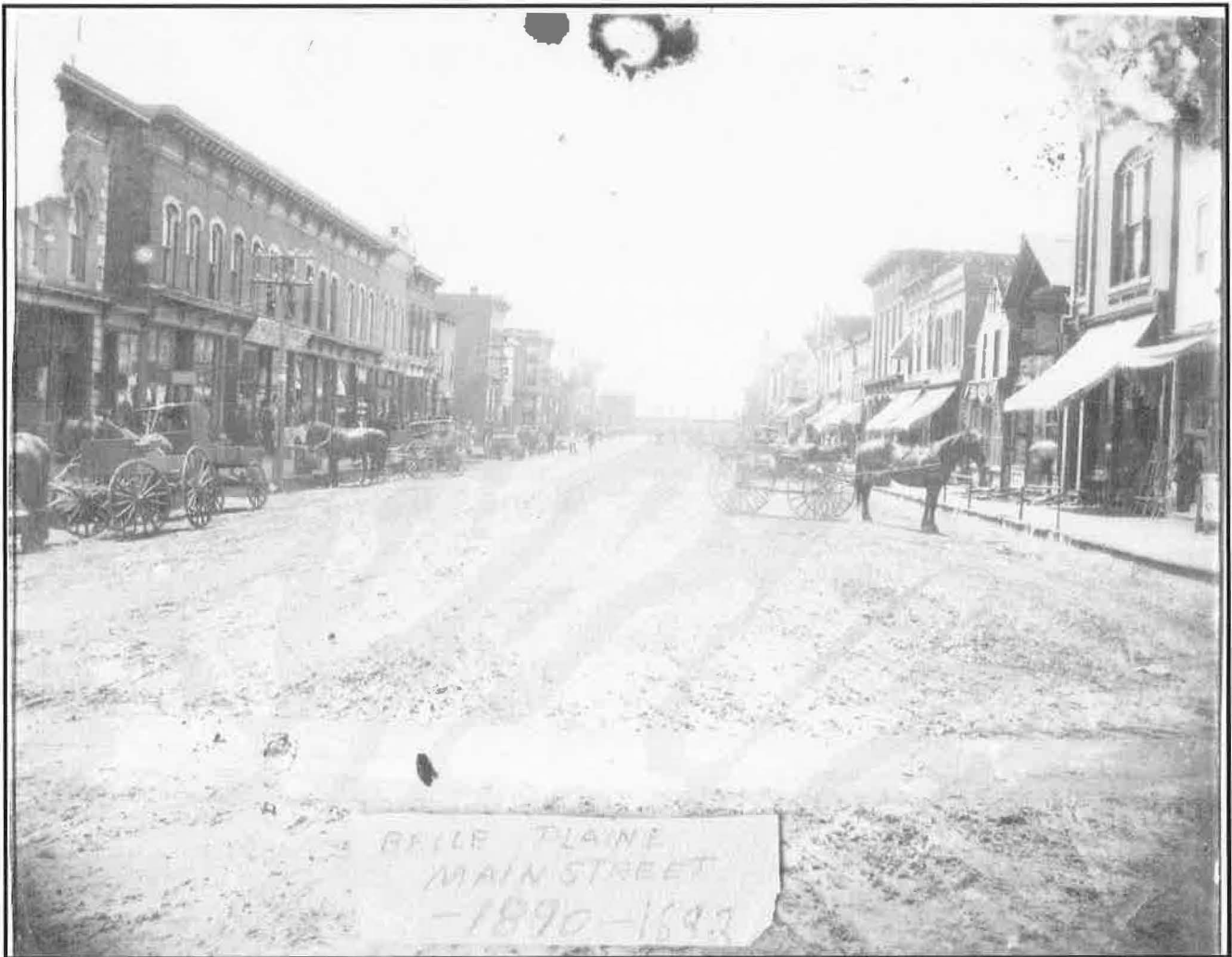
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Additional Documentation Page 39

CFN-259-1116

Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

Figure 7. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca.1890



(SOURCE: Belle Plaine Area Museum)

View looking west along Main Street (12th Street) from near 9th Avenue.

Prior to the fire of July 28, 1894, the Main Street (particularly in the 800 block, which we see here) was comprised of both wood-frame and brick properties. The scale of the buildings is reflective of the commercial prosperity that came with the railroad.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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CFN-259-1116

Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

Figure 8. HISTORIC IMAGE – July 29, 1894



(SOURCE: Belle Plaine Area Museum)

This view of the Belle Plaine commercial district was taken in the hours following the July 28, 1894 fire (note the smoke still rising from the ashes). The view is looking northwest from the vicinity of 11th Street and 9th Avenue. As the image documents, the Guthrie Block (foreground) is one of the few buildings to survive the conflagration; a pair of wood-frame commercial buildings and the Odd Fellows building across 12th Street from the Guthrie were also spared. The wood-frame buildings burned in 1896 and the Odd Fellows building burned several years later. The Guthrie Block is the only pre-fire building remaining in the district.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

Figure 9. HISTORIC IMAGE – July 29, 1894



(SOURCE: Belle Plaine Area Museum)

Due to the utter devastation of the commercial buildings, it is unclear what portion of the Belle Plaine Main Street is recorded in this view (it remains unidentified in the museum archive). The magnitude of the loss, however, is unmistakable.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

Figure 10. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca.1895



(SOURCE: Belle Plaine Area Museum)

By the end of 1894, much of Belle Plaine's commercial district had been reconstructed. This view, looking northwest from the vicinity of 12th Street and 9th Avenue, shows the new streetscape. Note the wood-frame building at the far right – it was one of two wood-frame buildings to survive the fire. It burnt in 1896 (one of numerous fires after that of 1894) and in 1916 the "fireproof" Corn Belt Bank was built on the site.

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National Park Service

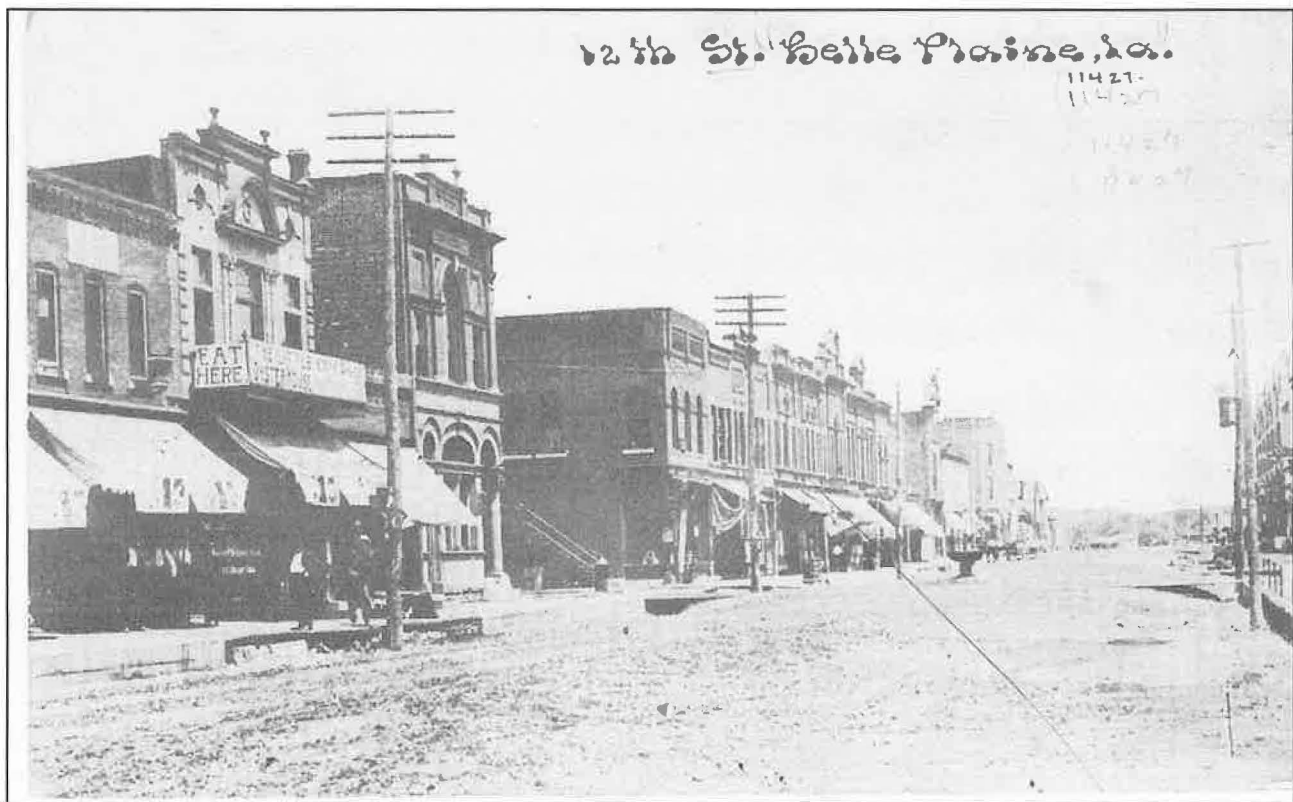
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

Figure 11. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca.1895



(SOURCE: Belle Plaine Area Museum)

This view looking east along 12th Street is taken from the middle of the 700 block, providing a rare, early view of the buildings along that part of the district; although many images of the Belle Plaine Main Street exist, nearly all document the 800 block of 12th Street. Here we see the Citizen's National Bank (732) on the corner, with the barbershop (730), and one of the district's two "post office buildings" (728) to its west.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

Figure 12. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca.1920



(SOURCE: Belle Plaine Area Museum)

This view looking east along 12th Street is taken from 8th Avenue illustrates the visual unity of the streetscape created by the circumstance of the 1894 fire. The concerted effort on the part of local businessmen (led by banker Sidney S. Sweet), to engage professional architects in the reconstruction of the Main Street has everything to do with the high level of design quality and stylistic sensibility apparent in this view and in the Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District today.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

Figure 13. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca.1920



(SOURCE: Belle Plaine Area Museum)

As the notation on this image indicates, the Lincoln Highway passed through Belle Plaine, running south on 9th Avenue from 13th Street to travel along Main Street (12th Street) to 7th Avenue before heading north out of town. In this view (looking west along Main Street from near 9th Avenue), we get a glimpse of the commercial buildings at the east end of the district, as well as the Chicago & North Western Railroad's 30-stall roundhouse (non-extant) that was located on the west side of 7th Avenue.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

Figure 14. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca.1940



(SOURCE: Belle Plaine Area Museum)

This view looks west along 12th Street from 9th Avenue. The image documents some of the later additions to the Main Street, including the Corn Belt Bank (1916) at right and the Citizen's State Bank (1921), which is easily identified by its very 20th century façade (four buildings from the Corn Belt).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

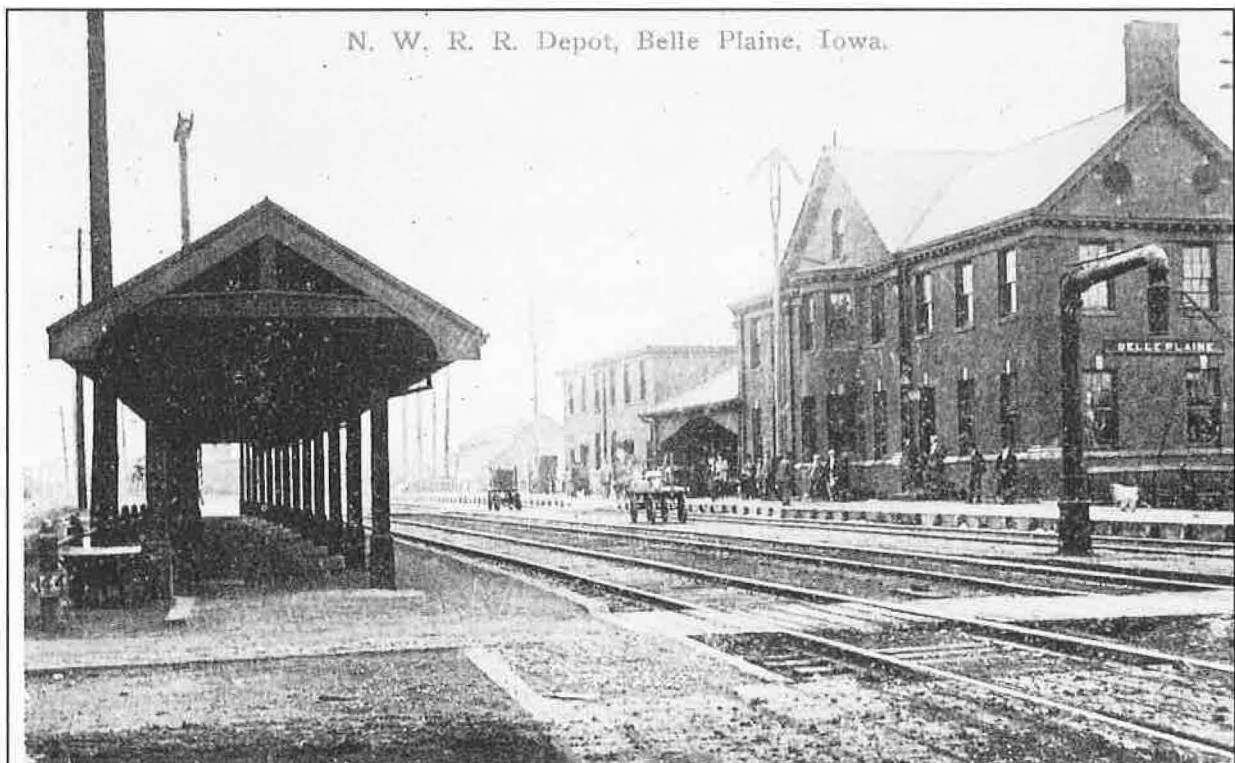
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

Figure 15. HISTORIC IMAGE – Chicago & North Western Railroad Depot – ca.1894



(SOURCE: Belle Plaine Area Museum)

Like most of the Belle Plaine commercial area, the Chicago & North Western Railroad depot burned in the fire of 1894. The present building (seen here shortly after its construction) was completed by the end of December 1894. This view looks northwest from near 11th Street and 9th Avenue.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

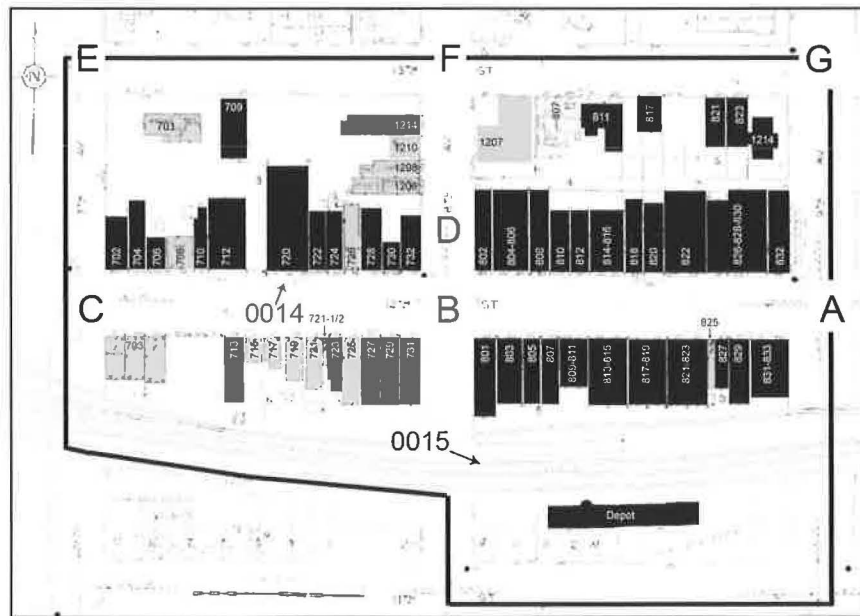
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number “Photographs” Page 48

CFN-259-1116

Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

MAP KEY TO PHOTOGRAPHS



- POSITION A (0001) View of north side of 12th Street, looking NW from 9th Avenue.
(0002) View of south side of 12th Street, looking SW from 9th Avenue.
- POSITION B (0003) View of north side of 12th Street, looking NE from 8th Avenue.
(0004) View of south side of 12th Street, looking SE from 8th Avenue.
(0005) View of north side of 12th Street, looking NW from 8th Avenue.
(0006) View of south side of 12th Street, looking SW from 8th Avenue.
- POSITION C (0007) View of north side of 12th Street, looking NE from 7th Avenue.
(0008) View of south side of 12th Street, looking SE from 7th Avenue.
- POSITION D (0009) View of west side of 8th Avenue, looking NW from mid-block.
- POSITION E (0010) View of south side of 13th Street, looking SE from 7th Avenue.
- POSITION F (0011) View of east side of 8th Avenue, looking SE from 13th Street.
- POSITION G (0012) View of south side of 13th Street, looking SW from 7th Avenue.
(0013) View of west side of 9th Avenue, looking SW from 13th Street.
- Key Buildings. (0014) Mansfield Block-King Theater

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

- (0015) Chicago & North Western Railroad Depot and Freight House
0001. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Benton County, Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Blaine, MN
July 16, 2012
CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.
- Streetscape: View of the north side of 12th Street, looking NW from 9th Avenue (Corn Belt Bank at far right).
IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0001.tif
Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink
0002. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Benton County, Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Blaine, MN
July 16, 2012
CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.
- Streetscape: View of the south side of 12th Street, looking SW from 9th Avenue (pre-fire, Guthrie Block at left).
IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0002.tif
Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink
0003. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Benton County, Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Blaine, MN
July 16, 2012
CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.
- Streetscape: View of the north side of 12th Street, looking NE from 8th Avenue (Pythian Castle mid-block).
IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0003.tif
Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink
0004. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Benton County, Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Blaine, MN
July 16, 2012
CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.
- Streetscape: View of the south side of 12th Street, looking SE from 8th Avenue (Lawrence Dry Goods at right).
IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0004.tif
Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

0005. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District

Benton County, Iowa

Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Blaine, MN

July 16, 2012

CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.

Streetscape: View of the north side of 12th Street, looking NW from 8th Avenue (Citizen's Natl. Bank at right).

IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0005.tif

Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink

0006. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District

Benton County, Iowa

Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Blaine, MN

July 16, 2012

CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.

Streetscape: View of the south side of 12th Street, looking SW from 8th Avenue (Montgomery Block at left).

IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0006.tif

Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink

0007. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District

Benton County, Iowa

Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Blaine, MN

July 16, 2012

CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.

Streetscape: View of the north side of 12th Street, looking NE from 7th Avenue.

IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0007.tif

Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink

0008. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District

Benton County, Iowa

Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Blaine, MN

July 16, 2012

CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.

Streetscape: View of south side of 12th Street, looking SE from 7th Avenue.

IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0008.tif

Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

0009. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Benton County, Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Blaine, MN
July 16, 2012
CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.

Streetscape: View of west side of 8th Avenue, looking NW from mid-block.
IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0008.tif
Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink

0010. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Benton County, Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Blaine, MN
July 16, 2012
CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.

Streetscape: View of south side of 13th Street, looking SE from 7th Avenue (Iowa Hotel).
IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0010.tif
Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink

0011. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Benton County, Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Blaine, MN
July 16, 2012
CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.

Streetscape: View of east side of 8th Avenue, looking SE from 13th Street.
IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0011.tif
Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink

0012. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Benton County, Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Blaine, MN
July 16, 2012
CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.

Streetscape: View of south side of 13th Street, looking SW from 9th Avenue.
IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0012.tif
Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number “Photographs” Page 52

CFN-259-1116

Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Benton County, Iowa

0013. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Benton County, Iowa

Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Boone, IA
July 16, 2012

CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.

Streetscape: View of west side of 9th Avenue, looking SW from 13th Street.

IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0013.tif

Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink

0014. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Benton County, Iowa

Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Boone, IA
July 16, 2012

CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.

View of the Mansfield Block-King Theater, looking north.

IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0014.tif

Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink

0015. Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
Benton County, Iowa

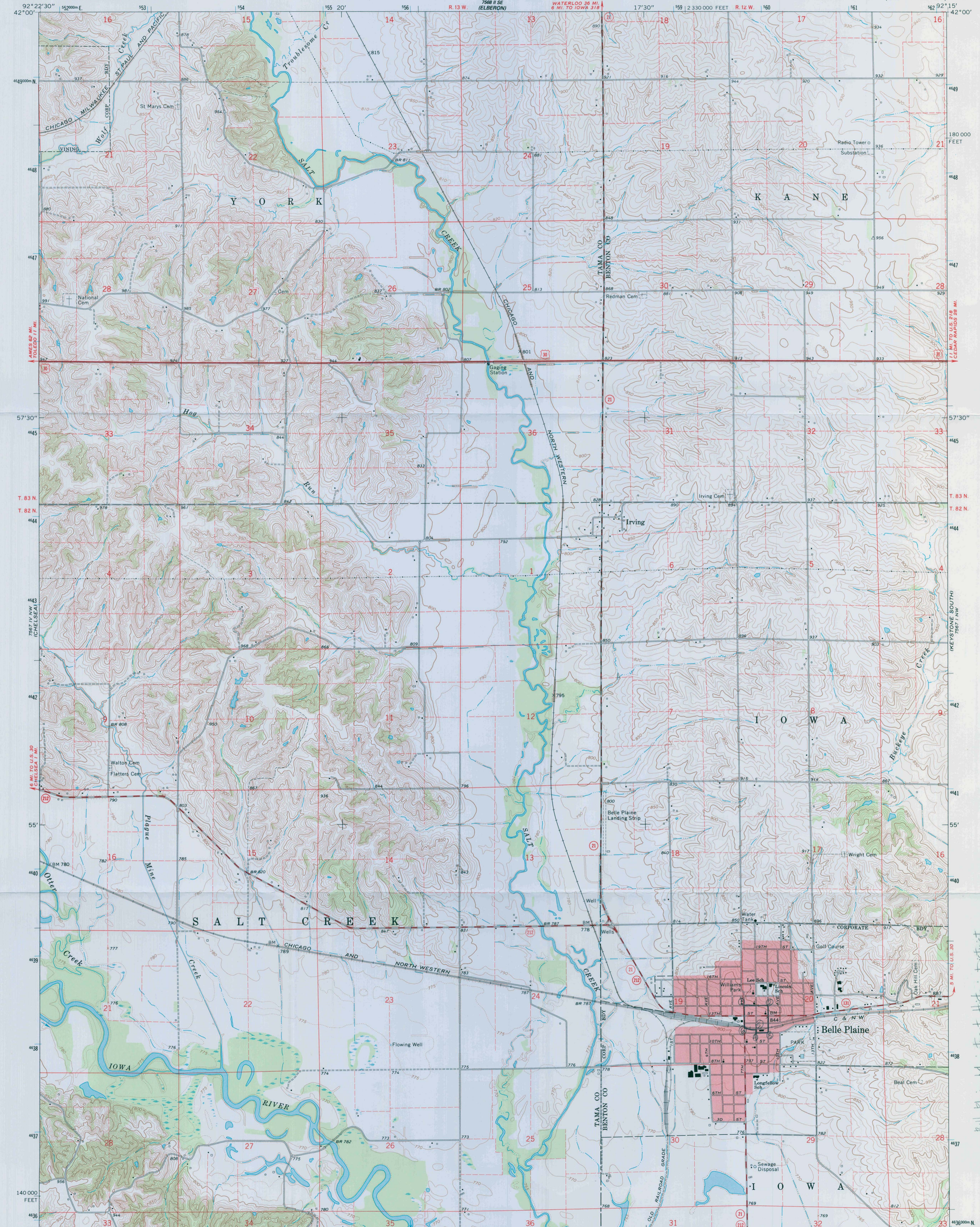
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Boone, IA
July 16, 2012

CD-ROM on file with City of Belle Plaine and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.

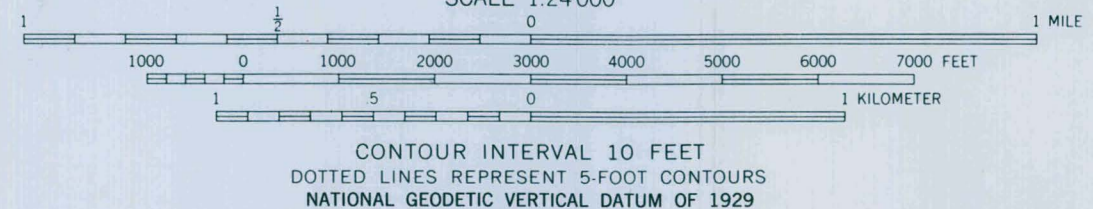
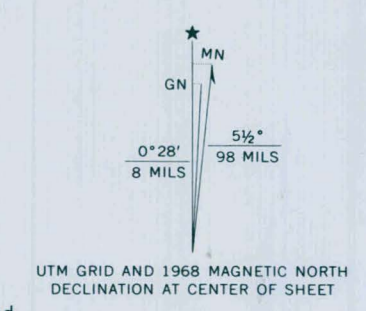
View of the Chicago & North Western Railroad Depot and Freight House, looking SE from 8th Avenue.

IA_BentonCounty_BellePlaineMainStreetHistoricDistrict_0015.tif

Canon Premium Photo Paper and Canon Pixma Ink



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1965. Field checked 1968
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Iowa coordinate system, north zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue
Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983,
move the projection lines 4 meters north and
15 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
AND IOWA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, all weather, hard surface	Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface	Unimproved road, fair or dry weather

U.S. Route (red shield symbol)
State Route (white shield symbol)

BELLE PLAINE, IOWA
41092-H3-TF-024
1968
DMA 7567 IV NE-SERIES V876

*Belle Plaine Mainstreet Historic District
Benton County, Belle Plaine, Iowa*

1.15	559877E	463858N
2.15	560155E	463858N
3.15	560155E	463840N
4.15	560222E	463840N
5.15	560222E	463843N
6.15	559882E	463843N



DO NOT
ENTER

DO NOT
ENTER

West 2nd Street



GUTHRIE

True Value

DO NOT ENTER

PROPAN EXCHANGE \$16.99 FULL 20 LB SAVE UP TO \$

DO NOT ENTER

HIGHWAY



BARON
MOTOR SUPPLY

BARON
MOTOR SUPPLY
Auto Parts Professionals Since 1930



10th Street



GRAND CENTRAL
STATION

GRAND CENTRAL STATION

810 Ave

ANDERS J. LAW

801

ON



LITTLE CHICAGO RESTAURANT
SELZ
Royal Blue
\$350 SHOE

OASIS

DO NOT
ENTER

DO NOT
ENTER
ONE WAY

KING

ICE AGE

WILSON STATE BANK

BELLE PLAIN

WILSON STATE BANK







Memories

STINE'S SALES & SERVICE

SPEED LIMIT 15

Welcome to BELLE PLAINE



SPEED
LIMIT
15

CARQUEST AUTO PARTS

SPEED
LIMIT
15

CHEVROLET
CARQUEST



Judi's
His
Hers
Design

STORM
READY
319-444-5797
SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1988

Wave Station

South Eastern

LINCOLN
CAFE



SPEED
LIMIT
30

service



Independe
ndepende
ndepende



Independe



CITY HALL

CITY HALL

NO RECYCLING,
BICYCLES,
MOTORCYCLES
OR SKATEBOARDS
IN THIS ZONE



Kirkwood Community College
Tippie Education Center

BRUCE JARVIS, INC.
PLUMBING

←
Tippie Mansfield
Center





Barkwood
←
Tippie-Mansfield
Center

19 MANSFIELD 30

Vertical neon sign with blue and white segments and red lights.

KNIGHT AND DAY

Movie posters for "CRUISE DIAZ KNIGHT AND DAY" and "OTHER BOYS".

Entrance area with glass doors and a poster for "CRUISE DIAZ KNIGHT AND DAY".

Window display with movie posters for "CRUISE DIAZ KNIGHT AND DAY" and "OTHER BOYS".





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Benton

DATE RECEIVED: 8/30/13 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 9/23/13
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 10/08/13 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/16/13
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000828

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 10-16-13 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

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

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

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF

CULTURAL AFFAIRS

MARY TIFFANY COWNIE, DIRECTOR

STATE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY of
IOWA

JEROME THOMPSON
ADMINISTRATOR



MATTHEW HARRIS
ADMINISTRATOR

600 E. LOCUST
DES MOINES, IOWA
50319

T. (515) 281-5111
F. (515) 282-0502

CULTURALAFFAIRS.ORG

TERRY E. BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR

KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR



August 28, 2013

Carol Shull, Chief
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye Street, N.W.-- 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

The following National Register nomination(s) are enclosed for your review and listed if acceptable.

- Belle Plaine Main Street Historic District, Centered Along 12th Street from 7th Avenue on the West to 9th Avenue on the East, from 11th Street on the South to 13th Street on the North, Belle Plaine, Benton County, Iowa
- Des Moines, Building, 405 Sixth Avenue, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa
- Forest Grove School No. 5, 24040 195th Street, Bettendorf vicinity, Scott County, Iowa
- Bregant, Jean and Inez (Lewis), Residence, 517 South 4th Street, Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Iowa

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Elizabeth Foster Hill'.

Elizabeth Foster Hill, Manager
National Register and Tax Incentive Programs