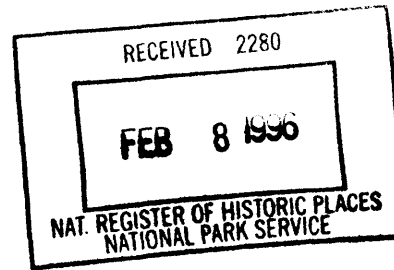


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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries. Use letter quality printer in 12 pitch, using an 85 space line and a 10 space left margin. Use only archival paper (20 pound, acid free paper with a 2% alkaline reserve).

1. Name of Property

historic name Omro Downtown Historic District  
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number (see continuation sheets) N/A not for publication  
city, town Omro N/A vicinity  
state Wisconsin code WI county Winnebago code 139 zip code 54963

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>11</u>	<u>3</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		<input type="checkbox"/> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<u>11</u>	<u>3</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

No. of contributing resources  
previously listed in the  
National Register 0

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination    request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.    See continuation sheet.

Jeff M. De...  
Signature of certifying official  
State Historic Preservation Officer-WI  
State or Federal agency and bureau

1/29/96  
Date

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

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

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
   See continuation sheet

Edson A. Beall 3/7/96

   determined eligible for the National Register.    See continuation sheet

   determined not eligible for the National Register.

   removed from the National Register.

   other, (explain:)   

Entered in the  
National Register

    
Signature of the Keeper  
Date

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store  
COMMERCE/TRADE/financial institution  
DOMESTIC/Hotel

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store  
DOMESTIC/Hotel

<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	
Architectural Classification (ENTER CATEGORIES FROM INSTRUCTIONS)	Materials (ENTER CATEGORIES FROM INSTRUCTIONS)
<u>Late Victorian</u>	foundation <u>Stone</u>
<u>Commercial Style</u>	walls <u>Brick</u>
	<u>Concrete</u>
	roof <u>Asphalt</u>
	other <u>Wood</u>
	<u>Cast Iron</u>

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Description

The Omro Downtown Historic District consists of a fine collection of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century one to three-story commercial buildings that form the historic commercial core of the city of Omro. The district is centered around the four-way point of intersection of the east-west running Main Street, the city's principal thoroughfare, and the north-south running South Webster Avenue, which divides Main Street into east and west segments. The large majority of the district's resources front on Main Street. The district contains fourteen commercial buildings, nearly all of which are good representative examples of masonry construction late nineteenth century Commercial Vernacular form and early Twentieth Century Commercial style design. Most of the district's eleven contributing resources were constructed between 1870 and 1903, with the remainder being constructed between 1910 and 1927. Two of the district's three non-contributing resources are a special case, however, these buildings both being examples of late Art Moderne-inspired design dating to ca.1950. Although these buildings are of too recent a date for inclusion as contributing resources today, their intact state makes them excellent candidates for reevaluation as contributing resources a few years from now.

The city of Omro is located approximately eight miles due west of the city of Oshkosh, which is the county seat of Winnebago County and one of Wisconsin's larger cities.<sup>1</sup> The two communities are connected by SH 21, which becomes Main Street within the corporate limits of Omro, and they are also linked by the Fox River, which flows just north of and parallel to both Main Street and the Omro Downtown Historic District. The district is located on level ground on the south bank of the river and comprises buildings that line both sides of portions of a two-block-long stretch of Main Street (the 100 blocks of East and West Main Street) and portions of a two-block-long stretch of South Webster Avenue (the 10 and 100 blocks). Both of these two-lane streets are approximately 60-feet-wide at this point, both have curbside parking, and the buildings in the district are built flush with the cement sidewalks that line both streets.

The buildings within the district comprise both the most intact collection of historic commercial buildings remaining in the downtown section of Omro and they also represent a considerable percentage of all the commercial buildings that have ever existed in this city.<sup>2</sup> For the most part, however, they are not the original

<sup>1</sup> The 1994 population of Omro is 2909. The 1990 population of Oshkosh was 55,006.

<sup>2</sup> A few other buildings that have a similar history are also located on both sides of Main Street just outside the district, but these buildings have either lost too much integrity for inclusion in the district or they are separated from it by too great a distance to form a continuous streetscape as defined by the National Park Service.

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building on their sites. Until as late as 1887, Omro's downtown consisted of a mix of mostly frame construction and just a few masonry construction commercial buildings. By the turn of the century, however, nearly all of the frame construction buildings and most of the oldest masonry ones had been replaced with larger masonry construction buildings, most of which are now included within the proposed district boundaries.

Some general characteristics typify the district's resources. All of the nineteenth century buildings in the district either are or were originally faced in cream brick, while most of the contributing twentieth century examples are faced in dark reddish-brown brick. Most of the district's buildings are rectilinear in plan and are one or two-stories in height (the square plan three-story Hotel Omro is the sole exception). In general, these buildings exhibit a high degree of integrity for buildings of this type although nearly all of them have experienced some degree of exterior or interior change. Almost all of these buildings have, for instance, had their first story storefronts modified since World War II to conform to modern tastes, a circumstance that is true of the buildings in most of Wisconsin's older commercial districts. None of these buildings have experienced so great a loss of integrity as to make them non-contributing for this reason, however.

The following inventory lists every building in the district and includes the original owner's name and the construction date, if known, the address, map number, and contributing or non-contributing status.

INVENTORY

<u>Map No.</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Historic Name/Use</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Status</u>
1	207 W. Main Street	Northwestern Hotel	ca.1870-76	C
2	127 W. Main Street	George H. Barr Building	1948	NC
3	123 W. Main Street	Root Bros. Building	1900	C
4		I.O.O.F. Building		C
A	117 W. Main Street	"	1912	
B	111-113 W. Main Street	"	1894	
5	107-109 W. Main Street	A. B. Larrabee Building	1894	C
6	101-103 W. Main Street	Fountain Inn Hotel	ca.1900-13	C
7	103 E. Main Street	N. Frank Building	ca.1881	C
8	109 E. Main Street	W. W. Race Building	1871	C
9	115 E. Main Street	Anton Bang Meat Market	1927	C
10	100 E. Main Street	Earl & McGuire Building	ca.1890-95	C
11	122 South Webster Ave.	E. A. Earle Building	ca.1895-1900	NC
12	"	Building	ca.1895-1900	C
13	100 W. Main Street	Building	ca.1887-92	C
14	120 W. Main Street	Club Omreau Lanes	ca.1900 & 1950	NC

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Northwestern Hotel (Contributing) 207 West Main St. ca.1870-76 Map No. 1

The Northwestern Hotel (also known as the Larrabee House and the Gould House and now called the Hotel Omro) is a free-standing three-story square plan Commercial Vernacular form building of very simple design that measures 60-feet-wide x 60-feet-deep. The building was constructed as a hotel ca.1870-76 and it rests on 24"-thick stone foundation walls. These walls enclose a crawlspace that underlies the whole of the building excepting a 16-feet x 16-feet square portion that occupies the northeast corner. This corner consists of a later boiler room that has a concrete floor and a ceiling height of 7-feet. The exterior walls that rest on this stone foundation are 12"-thick and they are fashioned out of cream brick. These walls rise up to a simple corbelled brick parapet on the main facade and to stepped parapets on the side elevations. All of the exterior walls of the hotel are now covered with a deteriorating coat of stucco that was applied some time after 1974, the corbelled parapet of the main facade being the only portion left uncovered. This stucco coating also now covers a raised covering of stone veneer that was applied around the lower four feet of the building between 1945 and 1974.

The principal facade of this building faces south onto Main Street and an early photo taken around 1902 shows that its first story was originally symmetrical in design and five-bays-wide with the center bay consisting of a deeply inset main entrance, above which was a small wooden balcony that has since been removed.<sup>3</sup> This same photo shows that the other four bays then contained single segmental-arched window openings, each of which was filled with a four-over-four-light double-hung wooden sash window and featured a cut stone sill and a corbelled segmental-arch brick hood. This story is now the most altered portion of the building. The two window openings to the left (west) of the entrance have been filled in since 1974, while the two openings to the right have been replaced by a single large flat-arched window opening whose lower half is filled with glass block and whose upper half is filled with a single sheet of plate glass. In addition, a modern pent roof overhang covered in wood shakes now spans the width of the facade between the first and second story windows.

The original fenestration pattern of the second and third stories of the main facade, however, is still largely intact. Both stories are identical in design and are each six-bays-wide, with the second and third and the fourth and fifth bays from the left being closer to each other than they are to the first and the sixth bays. Each bay contains a single segmental-arched window opening that is filled with its original four-over-four-light double-hung wooden sash window that is now covered

<sup>3</sup> This building is not shown on the 1870 Bird's Eye Map of Omro but is mentioned in the 1876 history of Omro written by P. M. Wright. Wright, P. M. Omro, Wisconsin: A Brief Sketch of its Past and Present. Omro: Omro Journal, 1876, pg. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the historical photographs referred to in the text are in the possession of the Omro Historical Society.

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with a modern bare aluminum sash storm window and each opening features a cut stone sill and a corbelled segmental-arched brick hood.

The first story of the west-facing side elevation of the hotel now contains no openings although it is possible that earlier openings were later filled in and stuccoed over. The second and third stories are identical to each other and are each five-bays wide. Each bay contains a single flat-arched window opening that has a stone sill and that is filled with a two-over-two-light double hung wood sash window.

The first story of the east-facing side elevation of the hotel contains two flat-arched door openings filled with modern doors, but it is not known if these openings are original to the hotel. The second and third stories of this elevation are nearly identical to those of the west elevation, both being five-bays-wide and each having bays that contain a window opening that is identical in size and design to the ones described above.

The interior of the hotel has now been considerably altered and it no longer retains its original room arrangement or design features. The exterior, despite the changes noted, still retains enough of its original design for it to be considered a contributing element to the district and this status is enhanced by the building's continuous use as a hotel. It is believed that there was an earlier building or buildings on this site but nothing specific is known about them.

George H. Barr Building (Non-Contributing) 127 West Main St. 1948<sup>b</sup> Map No. 2

The George H. Barr Building is a small one-story rectilinear plan Commercial Vernacular form building that was built in 1948 as an insurance agency office. The building measures 20-feet-wide x 45-feet-deep and has 12"-thick concrete block exterior walls that enclose both a full basement story and the first story. The main facade faces south onto Main Street and it is clad in dark brown brick. The design of this facade is symmetrical and consists of a storefront that is enframed by full-height pilaster strips and surmounted by a tall undecorated parapet wall. The original storefront has since been replaced with later materials but the original outline of the storefront is still intact and consists of a deeply inset canted and centered entrance flanked by single display windows on both sides. The glass that originally filled the flat-arched display window openings has now been replaced with plywood sheets to which wood strips have been nailed to give a batten-like appearance and a single oblong one-light window has been centered within each opening. The entrance door has also been replaced, but the original two-light transom above it is still intact.

The west-facing side elevation is fashioned from concrete block. It has no openings and it is terminated by a stepped parapet wall that slopes down gradually to the

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<sup>b</sup> Omro Tax Rolls. Omro City Hall.

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north and which hides the very gently pitched asphalt-covered roof behind it. The east-facing side elevation is also concrete block. It is flush with the west wall of the building to the east (Map no. 3) and it has never had any openings.

A small square entrance vestibule behind the main entrance door has doors on both its west and east sides that open into the two stores that now divide the interior in two longitudinally, but it is not known whether this division of the interior is original or of a more recent date. The building is in very good condition.

Root Brothers Building (Contributing) 123 West Main St. 1900<sup>6</sup> Map No. 3

The Root Brothers Building is a two-story rectilinear plan Commercial Vernacular building that measures 32-feet-wide x 74-feet-deep. The building was constructed in 1900 and originally housed a hardware store on its first floor. The building rests on 24"-thick rubble stone foundation walls that enclose a dirt-floored 3/4 basement story. The exterior walls that rest on this foundation are 12"-thick and they are fashioned out of cream brick. These walls rise up to overhanging eaves on the building's side elevations and to a tall corbelled brick parapet on the main facade that is surmounted by a bracketed wooden cornice (this parapet conceals the gable end of the asphalt shingle-covered gable roof that shelters the building).

The principal facade of this building faces south onto Main Street and it is enframed by full-height corner pilaster strips that terminate at the lower edge of the cornice. An early photo taken around 1930 shows that the first story then consisted of a single large symmetrically designed storefront. This storefront featured two large display windows (the one to the right had two lights while the one to the left had only one) that flanked a deeply inset and centered main entrance, the canted sides of which were also display windows. Each display window (and also the double entrance doors themselves) was surmounted by two-light transoms and two fluted cast iron columns were placed at the corners flanking the entrance. A smaller deeply inset secondary entrance door opening that led to the second story was placed just to the left of the left-hand display window (where the second light would otherwise have been) and the entire storefront opening was spanned by a large cast iron lintel. Portions of this storefront are still intact today. The general outline of the storefront opening remains as do the iron columns and the lintel, but the display windows have all now been replaced with painted plywood sheets into which a small oblong sliding windows has been inserted. The transoms are also now filled with plywood panels and the entrance doors have all been replaced with modern units.

The same photo, however, shows that the second story of the main facade is still completely intact. A single stringcourse of dog-tooth course brick is placed

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<sup>6</sup> Brooks, Warren. "Early Omro." Typescript Mss., pg. 4. Incorporated within "The History of Omro," 1977, a much larger Mss. compiled by Miss Marian Smith that is located at the Carter Memorial Library in Omro.

Wisconsin Word Processor Format  
Approved 2/81

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Immediately above the lintel and the corner pilaster strips are also corbelled out slightly at this level. These strips frame the sides of the second story and they are connected to a horizontal strip that frames the top of the facade. Within this frame are three symmetrically disposed bays that are separated from each other by two additional pilaster strips that descend part way down from the upper portion of the frame. Each bay contains a single segmental-arched window opening that features a cut stone sill and a segmental-arched head, and each opening is filled with its original flat-arched two-over-two-light double-hung wooden sash window. A corbelled brick stringcourse spans each bay just above the window opening below, the bottom edge of the horizontal part of the frame of each bay is further decorated with a course of denticulated brick, and the facade is surmounted with a simple wooden cornice whose uppermost element is supported by four small sandwich brackets.

The east-facing side elevation of the Root Brothers building is flush with the west wall of the earlier building next door (Map No. 4) and has no openings while the first story of the building's west-facing side elevation is almost completely covered by the one-story building to the west (Map No. 2). Originally, though, the west elevation was unobstructed and it is known that its first story featured a large freight door that opened onto a now-vanished loading dock. The second story is still unobstructed, though, and at least one of its original windows is still intact.

By 1929, a second store had been created on the first story of this building and it is believed that virtually nothing now survives of the original interior of either this or the second story. The exterior, however, is in good condition and still clearly represents the building's historic appearance.

I.O.O.F. Building (Contributing) 111-117 West Main St. 1894/1912<sup>a</sup> Map No. 4

The Odd Fellows building is one of the most intact in the district and was built in two stages. The first and also the largest portion (111-113) was built in 1894. The first story was designed to house two stores and the second story housed the Odd Fellows hall. This Commercial Vernacular form building is two-stories in height and rectilinear in plan and measures 44-feet-wide by 60-feet-deep. The building rests on 24"-thick stone foundation walls that enclose a basement story. The exterior walls that rest on this foundation are 12"-thick and they are fashioned out of cream brick. These walls rise up to sloping parapets on the building's side elevations and to a tall corbelled brick parapet on the main facade.

<sup>1</sup> This story's four other windows are all believed to represent later alterations that reflect the transformation of the second story of this building into apartments.

<sup>a</sup> "New Odd Fellows Hall Dedicated." Omro Herald, November 23, 1894, pg. 4. Full page story about No. 111-113 with illustration and floor plan. Also, for the date of No. 117 see: Smith, Marian. "History of Omro," pg. 152. On file at the Carter Memorial Library in Omro.



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The principal facade of this building faces south onto Main Street and it is enframed by full-height corner pilaster strips that terminate at the base of the parapet.<sup>9</sup> A drawing of the building published when it was dedicated shows that the present appearance of this facade is almost identical to the original. The design is symmetrical and the first story consists of two large identical storefronts that are separated from each other by a one-story pilaster strip. Each storefront originally featured two large one-light display windows that flanked an inset and centered main entrance, the canted sides of which were also display windows. Each entrance door was surmounted by a two-light transom and two cast iron columns were placed at the corners flanking the entrance. Each storefront opening was spanned by a large cast iron lintel decorated with cast iron rosettes. These storefronts are still largely intact today. The cast iron columns and lintels are still extant and the one-light entrance doors may be original as well, but the original display windows are believed to have been replaced with later ones and the left storefront (113) has had a three-light transom placed across its entire width.

The second story of this building is four-bays-wide and it is also highly intact. A long inset brick panel is placed just above the cast iron lintel of each of the two storefronts and a full-width cut stone string course is placed just above these panels. This stringcourse acts as a continuous sill for the four second story windows, each of which consists of a segmental arch opening accented with a corbelled brick hood. Each opening is filled with its original one-over-one-light double hung wood sash and the hoods are linked with a stringcourse consisting of a double course of dog-tooth bricks. The upper part of the facade consists of a corbelled brick parapet wall that is decorated with another stringcourse made of a double course of dog-tooth bricks and the parapet is surmounted by a second decorative motif consisting of linked squares in a chain-like motif.<sup>10</sup>

The first story of the east-facing side elevation of this building has always been covered by the building next door (Map No. 5). Its second story contains no openings and the elevation is surmounted by a gradually sloping parapet wall that hides the nearly flat asphalt-covered roof behind. The west-facing side elevation of the building is now hidden by the addition that was built in 1912.

The west addition (117 W. Main Street) was constructed in 1912 by the Odd Fellows and it is one-bay-wide. This addition measures 17-feet-wide by 74-feet-deep and it too is two-stories in height and rectangular in plan. The main facade of the

<sup>9</sup> There is a metal plaque affixed to the base of the left pilaster that reads:

1894  
Omro Lodge  
125  
I.O.O.F.

<sup>10</sup> Early photos show that there was originally a small triangular pediment centered on the parapet as well, but this has since been removed.

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addition faces south and has a design that is a continuation of that of the original building to the east (111-113). The facade is faced in cream brick and is entrained by a full-height pilaster strip on the left and by another one on the right that is the left-hand one of the original building. The addition's first story storefront originally consisted of a single display window to the left and an inset entrance to the right that contained separate entrances for the first story store and the second story apartment. The upper portions of the original display windows of this storefront have since been covered with panels of vertical boards, but the original entrance doors are still in place, as are the original two-light transoms above them. The one-bay-wide second story replicates the design of the older building as described earlier and it is entirely intact.

The addition was built to house a bakery in the first story and this usage continued until just recently. The upper story of the original building functioned as the Odd Fellows Hall for many years, but this usage has since been discontinued, while the two first story stores have been combined into one and greatly altered in the process. The exteriors of the building and its addition, however, are in very good highly intact condition.

This building was built to replace an earlier one belonging to the Odd Fellows that burned in early 1894. The earlier building had originally been a Methodist Church that the Odd Fellows bought and moved to this site.

A. B. Larrabee Block (Contributing) 107-109 West Main St. 1894<sup>++</sup> Map No. 5

The A. B. Larrabee block is a double store building constructed in 1894 to replace an earlier building on the site that burned in the fire of 1894. This Commercial Vernacular form building is one-story in height and rectilinear in plan and measures 36-feet-wide by 60-feet-deep. The building rests on 24"-thick stone foundation walls that enclose a basement story. The exterior walls that rest on this foundation are 12"-thick and are fashioned out of cream brick. These walls rise up to sloping parapets on the building's side elevations and to a tall corbelled brick parapet on the main facade.

The principal facade of this building faces south onto Main Street and it is entrained by thin full-height corner pilaster strips that terminate at the base of the parapet. Early photos of the building show that the present appearance of this facade is close to the original, but there have also been several alterations. The design is, strictly speaking, an asymmetrical one because the two otherwise identical original storefronts that take up most of the facade are not quite equal in width, the left-hand one (109) being slightly wider. These storefronts are

<sup>++</sup> Omro Herald. December 28, 1894, pg. 8. See also a letter from C. B. Root written in 1939 that is incorporated within "The History of Omro," 1977, the much larger Mss. compiled by Miss Marian Smith.

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separated from each other by a one-story pilaster strip and they each originally featured two large two-light display windows that flanked a deeply inset and centered main entrance, the canted sides of which were also display windows. Paneled bulkheads were placed below the windows, each entrance door was surmounted by a transom, and two cast iron columns were placed at the corners flanking the entrance.

The form of the left-hand (west) storefront is still largely intact today, as are its cast iron columns, but the original display windows have now been replaced with later ones, the upper third of which is now covered with panels covered in angled wooden boards. In addition, the original paneled bulkheads below the windows have been replaced with brick. The right-hand storefront, however, has been completely replaced with a later one. This storefront has a single large display window to the right and an entrance door to the left, both of which are entrained in brick and separated from each other by a wide brick pilaster.<sup>12</sup>

The upper part of the main facade is given over to its original tall brick parapet. This parapet has three panels above each storefront opening, the panels being divided from each other by thin corbelled brick strips. The top edge of each panel is decorated with double courses of dog-tooth bricks and a corbel table spans the width of the facade just above the panels. Early photos of the building show that the parapet was originally even taller than it is now, but the upper portion and its decorative elements have now been removed.

Larrabee used the left-hand store to house a grocery business and it has since served many other businesses as well and quite recently housed the local V.F.W. post. The right-hand store has been a grocery store and a saloon and it housed the People's Bank of Omro for a number of years. Until quite recently it contained a shoe shop, but it has now been converted into an apartment. This building is still in good condition today despite the alterations noted above.

The Fountain Inn Hotel (Contributing) 101-103 W. Main St. ca.1900-19<sup>13</sup> Map No. 6

Sanborn-Perris maps show that the two-story rectilinear plan Fountain Inn Hotel achieved its present form between 1900 and 1913, and it is possible that it incorporates portions of an earlier one-story rectilinear plan brick building that

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<sup>12</sup> An excellent photo of the original right-hand storefront of this building appears on pg. 139 of Vol. 2 of Come Back in Time, which was written by Elaine Reetz, and published in Princeton, WI in 1982. There is also a good photo of the interior as fitted up to house the People's Bank of Omro, which was located here from 1915 to 1933.

<sup>13</sup> Sanborn-Perris Maps of Omro, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1900 and 1913. Other maps in the Omro series are dated 1887, 1892, 1895, and 1929.

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was built on the same site ca.1881.\*\* As it now stands, the present building is an early example of the Twentieth Century Commercial style that measures 35-feet-wide by 80-feet-deep. The building rests on 24"-thick stone foundation walls that enclose a full basement story. The exterior walls that rest on this foundation are 12"-thick and are fashioned out of orange-brown brick. These walls rise up to shallow parapets on the building's side elevations and on its main facade.

The building's location on the northwest corner of the intersection of West Main Street and South Webster Avenue gives it two principal facades. The most important of the two faces south onto Main Street and its first story is believed to have originally consisted of an inset corner entrance to the right, two equal-width display windows in the center, and a secondary entrance for the second story to the left. This cannot be confirmed, however, due to the lack of early photos of the building. The present appearance of the first story follows this general outline but all the elements have now been modernized. These elements are each separated from one another by five regularly spaced brick piers, and photos of the original building on this site confirm that, with the exception of the right-hand corner pier that supports the ceiling of the inset entrance and the left-hand pier, the other three piers were not a part of the design of the original building. The corner entrance now contains a single modern metal and glass door, both of the one-light display windows are set into metal frames and have bulkheads below that are clad in modern materials, and the second story entrance door is also a modern unit. The wall surface above these elements to the level of the second story window sills is now covered over with a broad band of modern metal siding, which wraps around the corner of the building for a distance of about 10-feet.

The second story of the main facade is symmetrical in design and three-bays-wide and it is demarcated from the first story by a dark brown header course brick beltcourse. This beltcourse also acts as the sill of the three flat-arched window openings, which each contain a single one-over-one-light double hung wooden sash window. The heads of each of the windows are outlined by a slightly corbelled inverted U-shape brick hood mold, and a simple metal cornice spans the facade above them. The facade is terminated by a shallow stepped brick parapet, which an early photo shows originally also sported a triangular pediment that has since been removed.

The first story and part of the second story of the west-facing side elevation of this building is covered by the building next door (Map No. 5). The first story of the east-facing South Webster Avenue side elevation of the building is asymmetrical and four-bays-wide. The left-hand bay consists of a now filled window opening, the second bay from the left contains a large brick-filled display window opening, the third bay from the left (which is located towards the rear of the elevation)

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\*\* If the earlier building is in fact part of the present one it may be that the second story and a two-story addition in the rear were both added to it between 1900-1913.

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contains a modern entrance door, and the fourth bay contains an original entrance door opening that still retains its original oblong one-light transom. The second story is also asymmetrical in design and is eight-bays-wide. Each bay contains a single flat-arched window opening that has a head fashioned from two courses of header bricks and each opening contains a single one-over-one-light double hung wooden sash window. The metal cornice that spans the main facade continues across the width of this elevation as well and the elevation is terminated by a shallow brick parapet, which, like that of the main facade, is capped with terra cotta coping.

So far as can be determined, the interior of the building does not retain any historic features. The first story of this building has always been occupied by two stores or by saloons. The second story was originally used as a hotel, but it now houses several apartments. With the exception of the now altered first story of the main facade, the exterior of this building is still in good, largely original condition, however, and for that reason the building is considered to be a contributing resource in the district.

N. Frank Building (Contributing) 103 E. Main St. ca.1881<sup>45</sup> Map No. 7

The two-story N. Frank Building is one of the district's finest and most intact resources. It was built ca.1881 as a double store building with a meeting hall occupying the second story and it replaced a frame building of the same size and type that had been built by Frank in 1857 and destroyed in a fire earlier in 1881. This Italianate-inspired Commercial Vernacular form building is rectilinear in plan and measures 50-feet-wide by 70-feet-deep. The building rests on 24"-thick stone foundation walls that enclose a full basement story. The exterior walls that rest on this foundation are 12"-thick and are fashioned out of cream brick. These walls rise up to a continuous parapet that encircles the building's side elevations and its main facade.

The building's location on the northeast corner of the intersection of East Main Street and South Webster Avenue gives it two principal facades. The most important of the two faces south onto Main Street and early photos of the building show that the present appearance of this facade is very close to that of the original. The design is symmetrical and its first story originally contained two identical storefronts that were framed by brick pilaster strips at each end of the building and separated by a third one. These storefronts each featured two large four-light display windows that flanked a deeply inset and centered main entrance, the canted sides of which were also four-light display windows that were slightly less wide than the main ones. Two cast iron columns were placed at the corners flanking the entrance, paneled wood bulkheads were placed below each window, each storefront had

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<sup>45</sup> In a letter from C. B. Root written in 1939 that is incorporated within "The History of Omro," 1977, pg. 288; the much larger Mss. compiled by Miss Marian Smith.

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a raised cut stone sill, and each storefront opening was spanned by a cast iron lintel. All the framing elements of these storefronts and the cast iron columns are still intact, but the display windows have since been replaced by modern wooden panels upon which thin wood strips have been placed so as to imitate the appearance of paneling. In addition, small square windows have been cut into four of these panels and the entrance to the right-hand storefront has now been removed and replaced with paneling.

The remainder of this facade is almost totally intact. A corbelled brick stringcourse spans the facade just above the cast iron lintels and just below the cut stone sills of the second story windows. The second story of this building is somewhat taller than others in the district in order to accommodate the second story hall and it is six-bays-wide. Each bay contains a single stilted arch window opening having a cut stone sill and a head that is decorated with a corbelled, stilted arch brick hood mold that features a stone keystone. These openings are filled with the original four-over-four-light wood sash double hung windows, the upper sash of which also has a stilted arch shape. A dignified corbelled stringcourse spans the facade several feet above the window heads and the facade is terminated by a brick parapet designed to resemble a solid balustrade whose length is divided into four equal sections by pedestal-like brick strips.

The west-facing South Webster Avenue side elevation of the building is divided into three equal-width sections by four full-height pilaster strips. The only openings in the first story are two segmental arch door openings in the left-hand section. Each of these openings has a corbelled, segmental arch hood mold. The left-hand opening contains what may be its original four-panel door and it is surmounted by a small five-light transom. The second story is six-bays-wide with each of the three sections containing two bays. Each bay contains a single stilted arch window opening. These are identical to the ones on the main facade and they also contain their original four-over-four-light wood sash double hung windows, the upper sash of which also has a stilted arch shape. The elevation is terminated by a continuation of the same corbelled stringcourse that spans the main facade and the elevation is terminated by a continuation of the same brick parapet that is found on the main facade.

The two stores that originally made up the interior of the first story of the building have now been turned into one and their original design features have either been removed or covered over. The second story was not seen but it was originally known as "Frank's Hall" and it was long a meeting place for a number of civic and fraternal organizations including the E.F.U. and the Modern Woodmen of America. The building's exterior is now in excellent, highly original condition (it was lightly sandblasted in 1980) and should be considered one of Omro's finest historic public buildings.

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W. W. Race Building (Contributing) 109 E. Main St. 1871<sup>1a</sup> Map No. 8

The two-story W. W. Race Building is another of the district's finest resources. It was built in 1871 as a double store building the west store being given over to Race's hardware business. This Italianate-inspired Commercial Vernacular form building is rectilinear in plan and measures 36-feet-wide x 60-feet-deep and there is also a one-story brick addition to the rear that measures 25-feet-wide x 30-feet-deep. The building rests on 24"-thick stone foundation walls that enclose a full basement story. The exterior walls that rest on this foundation are 8"-thick and are fashioned out of cream brick. These walls rise up to sloping parapets on the buildings side elevations and to a taller corbelled parapet on the main facade.

The main facade faces south onto Main Street and early photos of the building show that the present appearance of the second story of this facade is very close to that of the original. The design of the facade was originally symmetrical and its first story contained two identical storefronts (actually, they were mirror images of each other) that were framed by brick pilaster strips at each end of the building and separated by a second story entrance. These storefronts each featured a large one-light display window that flanked a slightly inset main entrance, the entrances being on the left side of the left-hand (west) storefront and the right side of the right-hand (east) storefront. Two-light transoms were placed above each entrance, shallow paneled wood bulkheads were placed below each window, and both openings were spanned with cast iron lintels decorated with paterae. The centrally placed second story entrance was unusual in that it played a major role in the design of the first story. The surround of the entrance door opening was made of brick and its design was classical in inspiration. This opening had a stilted arch shape and it was outlined by two continuous corbelled brick pilaster strips that terminated in a keystone at the apex of the arch. These strips also had bases and capitals. The wood entrance door within this opening was tall and narrow, and it had four panels and was surmounted by a four-light fanlight.

Almost nothing of the original first story is visible today, however. All of the original storefront elements appear to have been removed after the two stores were joined together after World War II. Now, the right-hand portion of this story is covered over with panels displaying signage while the left-hand portion consists of a modern bare metal sash display window and door combination. These elements are sheltered by a flat metal-edged canopy and the remaining wall space above is covered with a full-width paneled signboard. The only remaining part of the original first story that survives is a denticulated brick stringcourse that is located just above the signboard below.

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<sup>1a</sup> Wright, P. M. Omro, Wisconsin: A Brief Sketch of its Past and Present. Pamphlet published by the Omro Journal, 1876, pg. 13.

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The second story, though, is almost completely intact. This story is entrained by pilaster strips that serve as the side elements of a corbelled brick frame that creates a slightly inset full-width panel into which the window openings are placed. This story is six-bays-wide and each bay contains a single stilted arch window opening that has a cut stone sill and is entrained with pilaster strips that, like the surround of the second story entrance below, have capitals and terminate in a stone keystone. Because these openings are set quite close together the overall effect is that of a continuous arcade. Originally, each of these openings was filled with four-over-four-light wood sash double hung windows, the upper sash of which also had a stilted arch shape, but these have since been replaced with flat-arch one-over-one-light double hung windows that are each surmounted by a single fixed stilted-arch pane.

The facade is terminated by a corbelled cornice, above which is a brick parapet that is designed to resemble a solid balustrade whose length is divided into three equal sections by pedestal-like corbelled brick strips.

The west-facing side elevation of this building is now completely covered by the building next door (Map No. 7). The first story of the east-facing side elevation is similarly concealed by the building next door (Map No. 9), but the second story is still visible. This elevation is clad in orange-red brick and it is four-bays-wide, each bay containing a single flat-arched window opening that is filled with a one-over-one-light double hung window. The elevation is terminated by a sloping three-step parapet that hides the gently sloping asphalt-covered roof of the building.

Race's hardware store occupied the west store for many years and both it and the east store have also been occupied by a series of drugstores, one of which now occupies both stores. The second story has usually been given over to professional offices and this is still true today. Despite the loss of the the first story of the main facade and the interior, this is still one of the district's most impressive buildings and it is still in very good condition today.

Anton Bang Meat Market (Contributing) 115 E. Main St. 1927<sup>17</sup> Map No. 9

The Anton Bang Meat Market building is a small one-story rectilinear plan Commercial Vernacular form building that was built in 1927 to house a meat market. The building measures 20-feet-wide x 49-feet-deep and has 12"-thick concrete block exterior walls that enclose both a full basement story and the first story. The main facade faces south onto Main Street and its design is asymmetrical and consists of a storefront that is surmounted by a tall, plain concrete block parapet wall into which a datestone is set that reads "1927". The storefront appears to be largely

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<sup>17</sup> Smith, Marian. "History of Omro," pg. 149. Typewritten Mss. on file at the Carter Memorial Library in Omro.



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original and consists of a recessed entrance to the left and a display window to the right. A concrete block pilaster strip on the extreme left flanks the deeply inset half-canted entrance. The canted side wall of the entrance contains a one-light display window opening and a sidelight is placed to the left of the one-light over one-panel wood entrance door. Transoms that are now filled with plywood are placed over the door, the sidelight, and the canted display window. To the right of the entrance is a single large one-light display window that is set into a wall surface that is now covered in stack bond brick. This window has a header course brick sill and it is set into a wooden frame. A flat modern canopy now shelters the entire facade, but its construction date is unknown.

The west-facing side elevation of this building abuts the building next door and has no openings. The east-facing side elevation is constructed out of concrete block and it faces a parking lot next door and also has no openings. This elevation terminates in a straight parapet that is topped with concrete coping.

Anton Bangs occupied this building until his retirement in 1936, and it was afterwards a restaurant and is now a video store. The building is in good condition and is a modest but essentially intact resource.

Earl & McGuire Building (Contributing) 100 E. Main St. ca.1890-95<sup>+</sup> Map No. 10

This fine, largely intact two-story building was constructed between 1890 and 1895 by Earl & McGuire, whose grocery store occupied the first story. This Italianate-inspired Commercial Vernacular form building is rectilinear in plan and measures 27-feet-wide by 97-feet-deep. The building rests on stone foundation walls that enclose a full basement story. This foundation is expressed on the exterior of the building as a plinth and the exterior walls that rest on it are 12"-thick and are fashioned out of cream brick. These walls rise up to a continuous parapet that encircles the building's west-facing side elevation and its main facade.

The building's location on the southeast corner of the intersection of East Main Street and South Webster Avenue gives it two principal facades. The most important of the two faces north onto Main Street and early photos of the building show that the present appearance of the second story of this facade is very close to that of the original. Early photos show that the first story originally contained a single very large six-light display window that was framed by brick pilaster strips at each end of the facade. This window occupied the whole width of the space between the pilaster strips, a paneled wood bulkhead was placed below it, and a cast iron lintel decorated with three paterae spanned the width of the opening above the window. In recent years, however, the original display window has been replaced with a modern three-light one, the bulkhead has been replaced, and the upper third of the window

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<sup>+</sup> Sanborn-Perris Maps of Omro, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1890 and 1900.

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opening and the wall surface above has been covered by modern metal or wood siding up to the level of a corbelled brick beltcourse placed just below the second story window sills.

The remainder of this facade is almost totally intact. The brick beltcourse mentioned above separates the first from the second story, which is three-bays-wide. Each bay contains a single segmental arch window opening that has a rock-faced cut stone sill and a head that is decorated with a corbelled, segmentally arched brick hood mold, the ends of which are linked by a double dog-tooth course stringcourse. These openings are filled with their original flat-arched one-over-one-light wood sash double hung windows. The wall surface above is terminated by a corbelled brick parapet that is decorated with a denticulated course and a dog-tooth course of brick. The parapet is crowned by a bracketed metal-covered overhanging cornice that also has pilaster caps at the top of each pilaster strip.<sup>19</sup>

The northwest-facing corner of the building is canted and the first story contains the principal entrance to the building. Originally, this flat-arched entrance opening was as tall as the display window opening on the main facade and one ascended two cut stone steps to reach it. This entrance has been modified, though, and now contains a modern bare metal frame one-light entrance door, and the upper portion of the opening is also now hidden by metal or wood siding. The second story, however, is intact and contains a single bay that is filled with a window opening of the type found on the main facade. The parapet above and its cornice are also still intact.

The much longer west-facing South Webster Avenue side elevation of the building is divided into two equal-width sections by three full-height pilaster strips, one at each end and one in the center. All of the original openings in the first story have now been filled in with brick. One is located to the left of center and was originally a segmental-arched side door entrance. The largest of these openings was a display window located just to the right of center and the outline of this opening and its cast iron lintel are still visible. In addition, a brick stringcourse formed out of two courses of rock-faced brick spans the width of this story about two thirds of the way up. The second story is eight-bays-wide and each bay contains a window opening or openings that are still filled with their original windows, which are of the same type, size, and design as those described earlier that are found on the main facade. The first, third, sixth and eighth bays from the left each contain a single window opening while the remaining bays each contain paired window openings. The elevation is terminated by a continuation of the same corbelled brick parapet and metal cornice that spans the main facade.

The first story of the east-facing side elevation of this building was originally covered by another building that has since been demolished and it has no openings.

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<sup>19</sup> Early photos show that these caps were originally decorated with flame-like finials that have since been removed.

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A single segmental-arched door opening located towards the rear of the second story of this elevation is now filled with plywood. Earl & McGuire subsequently sold this building to Henry Seifert, who ran his own grocery store here until 1923, when he sold the building to the Omro Co-operative Shipping Association. The Co-op used the building as a store until 1966, and the first story is now a dentist office. As a consequence, the interior of the first story has retained few of its original features. The exterior, however, is in very good condition and the building continues to be a prominent resource in the community.

E. A. Earle Building (Non-Contributing) 122 S. Webster Ave. ca.1895-1900<sup>20</sup> Map No. 11

Little is known about the original appearance of this one-story frame construction building, which is now combined with the building next door (Map No. 12) to make up the Friendly Tavern. Sanborn-Perris maps show that the building was built between 1895 and 1900 and that it was originally a 46-foot-wide x 46-foot-deep L-plan building, the tip of the ell being a small office extension that extended west from the main west-facing South Webster Avenue facade of the building. The remainder of the facade was set back from the street, allowing for a small yard in front and the front facade and the rear elevation of the building were then covered with metal sheets for fire protection.<sup>21</sup>

Between 1913 and 1929, the front of the building was rebuilt and the entire facade was moved up flush with the sidewalk, just as it is today. A poor early photo shows that this facade was crowned by a simple cornice and that it had an entrance door opening to the left and two flat-arched window openings to the right, but nothing else is known about its appearance during this period.

The present facade of the building reflects the late Art Moderne style of 1930s and 1940s. This facade is clad in a concrete veneer that extends from the base of the facade to the simple metal cornice. This veneer appears to have been worked either with a mold or by hand to produce a surface that imitates broken coursed rock-faced stone. The facade is four-bays-wide and the entrance is placed in the left-hand bay. This entrance is deeply inset into the building and the solid wood door, into which three small stepped lights are set, is located to the left side of the rear of the entrance. Just to the right of the door is a nearly full-height sidelight filled with glass block. This sidelight is actually a part of a larger window that is set into the curved side wall (the south wall) of the entrance and also filled with glass block, both the curved wall and the use of glass block being

<sup>20</sup> Sanborn-Perris Maps of Omro, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1890 and 1900.

<sup>21</sup> This yard was probably used to display agricultural implements since the Sanborn map shows that this building was an agricultural implement warehouse in 1895. The building does not have a basement story.

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distinctively Art Moderne stylistic features. To the right of the entrance are three evenly spaced oblong window openings, each of which has a concrete sill and is filled with glass block.

The whole main facade has a simple but distinctively modern appearance. Although the date of its construction is not known, the strong similarity between it and the facade of the Club Omreau (Map No. 14), which is known to have been built in 1950 suggests a similar date for this facade as well.

The south-facing side elevation of this building has always been covered by the building next door (Map No. 12). The north-facing side elevation has no openings and is entirely clad in metal sheeting that has been stamped to resemble rock-faced cut stone. This elevation culminates in a sloping parapet that hides the gently pitched asphalt-covered roof of the building.

The original owner of this building was Eugene A. Earle. Earle came to Omro in 1864. He was a dealer in agricultural implements, grain, hay, and coal and operated grain elevators in Waukau, Fisk, Allenville, and Larson in addition to having grain, wood, and coal elevators in Omro. By 1913, Earle's implement business and garage occupied both this and the adjacent building to the south (Map No. 12). He was succeeded in 1932 by a former employee, Bruce Carter, who continued the use of this and the adjacent building as an implement salesroom and garage.<sup>22</sup> The altered exterior of this building is in good condition today, but nothing of the original interior has survived.

Building (Contributing) 122 S. Webster Ave. ca.1895-1900<sup>23</sup> Map No. 12

Little more is known about the original appearance of this one-story frame construction Commercial Vernacular form building than is known about the building next door (Map No. 11), the two of which now make up the Friendly Tavern. The building is rectilinear in plan, measures 34-feet-wide x 53-feet-deep, and has a concrete slab foundation. Sanborn-Perris maps show that the building was built between 1895 and 1900, and that it was constructed with a main facade that was faced in brick and side and rear elevation that were clad in metal sheets over a wood frame. This is still true today.

The main facade faces west onto South Webster Avenue. It is constructed out of cream brick, is enframed at either end by corbelled full height brick pilaster strips, is surmounted by a corbelled brick parapet wall, and is divided into two equal-width bays by a third full height pilaster strip that is centered on the facade. Originally, this facade is believed to have consisted of a storefront of

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<sup>22</sup> Smith, Marian. Op. Cit., pg. 146.

<sup>23</sup> Sanborn-Perris Maps of Omro, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1890 and 1900.

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unknown composition, which was surmounted by the very tall, brick parapet wall. This storefront has since been replaced, but all the rest of the facade still retains its original appearance. The two original equal-width storefront openings, which are separated by the centered pilaster strip, were filled in with red-brown brick some years ago. The original left-hand (north) storefront opening now contains two large equal-sized flat-arched window openings that are filled with glass block and separated from each other by a wide brick mullion. The original storefront opening to the right now contains an entrance door opening to the left that is now filled with wood boards, and there are two equally tall but less wide flat-arched window openings to its right that are also filled with glass block. A header course brick stringcourse serves as a common sill for the windows, a soldier course brick stringcourse serves as their lintel, and a second header course brick stringcourse terminates the wall space above the lintel of the windows and the top of the original openings. The elevation terminates in a tall brick parapet wall that is crowned by a corbelled brick cornice.

The north-facing side elevation of this building has always been covered by the building next door (Map No. 11). The south-facing side elevation has no openings and is entirely clad in metal sheeting that has been stamped to resemble rock-faced cut stone. This elevation culminates in a sloping parapet that hides the gently pitched asphalt-covered roof of the building. The rear elevation is covered in the same material.

The original owner of this building is unknown, but may have been E. A. Earle. The Sanborn maps show that this building was originally occupied by a general store. By 1913, Earle's implement business and garage occupied both this and the adjacent building to the north (Map No. 11). Earle was succeeded in 1932 by his former employee, Bruce Carter, who continued the use of this and the adjacent building as an implement salesroom and auto garage. The altered exterior of this building is in good condition today, but nothing of the original interior has survived.

Building (Contributing) 100 W. Main St. ca.1887-1892<sup>2\*</sup> Map No. 13

This long narrow one-story two or three store Commercial Vernacular form building was constructed between 1887 and 1892 and its earliest known occupant was the dry goods store of Day and Larrabee, but it is not known if they were also its owners. The building measures 22-feet-wide x 96-feet-deep and it rests on 24"-thick rubble stone foundation walls that enclose a 3/4 basement story. The exterior walls that rest on this foundation are 12"-thick and they are fashioned out of cream brick. These walls rise up to a tall corbelled brick parapet on the main facade and on the east-facing side elevation.

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<sup>2\*</sup> Sanborn-Perris Maps of Omro, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1887 and 1892.

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The building's location on the southwest corner of the intersection of West Main Street and South Webster Avenue gives it two principal facades. The shorter of the two faces north onto Main Street, but early photos of the building show that this facade has been altered over the years. These photos show that this facade originally contained a single very large display window that was framed by brick pilaster strips at each end of the facade. This window occupied the whole width of the space between the pilaster strips, a paneled wood bulkhead was placed below it, and a cast iron lintel spanned the width of the opening above the window. In recent years, however, the lower two-thirds of the original display window opening has been filled with cream brick (this brick also being used to replace the bulkhead) and the upper third of the original window opening now contains an oblong two-light window set into a metal frame. In addition, a fish scale and diamond pattern wood-shingle-covered pent roof that is supported by small wood brackets is now placed just above the window opening and it spans the facade (this roof also wraps around the corner of the building and extends half the length of the east elevation as well). The remaining portion of this facade's wall surface above this roof was apparently remodeled earlier in this century and was resurfaced with a different cream brick at that time. While entraining pilaster strips were retained as a stylistic element, the ornate original corbelled brick parapet wall was replaced with one having only a minimal amount of decoration at the cornice.

The lower two-thirds of the northeast-facing corner of this building has been cut out from the portion above and it is canted and contains the principal entrance to the building. Originally, this flat-arched entrance opening was as tall as the display window opening on the main facade and one ascended a cut stone step to reach it. This entrance has been since been modified, however, and it now features sidelights and contains a one-light wood frame entrance door, while the transom above has been filled with the same cream brick that now fills the lower portion of the display window opening. The pent roof described previously is placed just above the entrance and the wall surfaces above this have both been resided.

The much longer east-facing South Webster Avenue facade of the building is divided into four equal-width bays by five pilaster strips, one at each end and three more in between. Originally, the two left-hand (south) bays each contained storefronts that most likely consisted of display windows similar to the original one on the main facade and possibly an entrance door as well. These bays have now been filled in with vertical metal panelling into which small oblong and square window openings and an entrance door opening have been cut. The third bay from the left originally contained a single segmental-arched side door entrance located at the left side of the bay and a small square window opening to the right. The window opening has since been filled with brick, but the door opening still exists, although it has since been modified into a flat-arch opening that is filled with a modern door. The right-hand bay has never contained any openings. The upper portion of the elevation is still crowned with its original tall corbelled brick parapet. This same parapet originally terminated the shorter Main Street facade as well and it features two

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stringcourses of dog-tooth soldier course bricks placed below a corbelled upper portion. Early photos show that a wooden cornice originally crowned the parapet wall as well, but this has since been removed.

The west-facing side elevation of this building was originally covered by another building that has since been demolished and it has no openings and is now covered by modern metal siding.

The main store of this building was originally occupied by a dry goods store that was begun by Day & Larrabee and afterwards carried on by James Sharpe, while the rear stores were occupied by a variety of businesses including a meat market and a millinery shop. By 1900, the main store had become a saloon and it remained one for many years (the same space also appears to have housed a restaurant from time to time). Today, the building houses a drugstore and it is in very good condition. The alterations to the building, while considerable, are also reversible, and they have not obscured the building's historic origins. The existence of historic photos of the original exterior makes the possible restoration of this building to its original appearance quite feasible.

Club Omreau Lanes (Non-Contributing) 120 W. Main St. ca.1900/1950<sup>20</sup> Map No. 14

The present L-plan Club Omreau building consists of two one-story buildings joined to make one; a rectilinear plan concrete block building to the left (east) constructed as a saloon between 1900 and 1913, and a larger rectilinear plan concrete block building constructed in 1950 as a bowling alley. When the newer building was constructed, the smaller building was recycled as a pool hall that was used as an adjunct to the bowling alley operation in the new building and the two buildings were given a common main facade, which was designed in a late Art Moderne style. The exterior and the interior of these buildings now date from 1950 and they are both in a remarkably intact state of preservation.

A poor early photo suggests that the ca.1900 building was a simple Commercial Vernacular building whose original north-facing principal Main Street facade had a tall flat-arched entrance door to the left and a storefront of unknown design to the right (west). This building was rectilinear in plan and measured 24-feet-wide x 49-feet-deep and it featured concrete block walls that terminated in a shallow parapet wall that hid its shallow-pitched roof from view. This building's original door and window openings were retained when the new building was built to the west of it in 1950, but the original door and window units were replaced with the present ones. Today, the entrance door opening contains a three-light over-three panel varnished wood door and the transom above now contains an air-conditioner unit. The original

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<sup>20</sup> Sanborn-Perris Maps of Omro, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1900, 1913, and 1929. Also, City of Omro Tax Assessment Rolls, kept in the Omro City Hall.

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streamlined metal and neon "Club Omreau" sign is still in place above this entrance opening. The large display window opening to the right of the entrance now has a rock-faced concrete sill and it is filled with glass blocks.<sup>4\*</sup>

The 1950 bowling alley building is rectangular in plan, measures 38-feet-wide x 119-feet-deep, and it features concrete block walls that terminate in a shallow parapet wall that hides its shallow-pitched roof from view. Its three-bay-wide north-facing main Street principal facade is symmetrically designed and features a wide flat-arched entrance door opening in the center that is flanked on either side by large oblong display windows. The large display window openings on either side of the entrance have concrete sills and they are filled with translucent glass blocks. The entrance door opening has curved side walls that are also made out of translucent glass blocks and these walls flank a pair of deeply inset varnished wood entrance doors, each of which has a single lozenge-shaped light, while a three-light transom is placed above them.

The main facades of these two buildings lie in the same plane with each other and when the 1950 building was constructed, both were coated with a thick veneer of concrete or stucco that appears to have been worked either with a mold or by hand to produce a surface that imitates broken coursed rock-faced stone. The result is a unified asymmetrical Art Moderne style facade that is very similar in its execution to that of the one given to the north portion of the Friendly Tavern (Map No. 11).

Neither the east or west-facing side elevations of the the Club Omreau have any openings, but the earlier, much larger, and very roughly laid concrete blocks of the earlier east-facing elevation are in marked contrast to the smaller blocks and neater execution of the west-facing elevation. So far as can be determined, the exteriors of the combined buildings have remained virtually unchanged since 1950.

The interior of the ca.1900 building now consists of a single large room whose rear (south) corners are occupied by two small rest rooms that flank a rear entrance that is centered on the rear wall. The walls of this room are now lined entirely with varnished tongue and groove boards that are believed to date to approximately 1950. Metal lockers that are utilized by patrons of the bowling alley are placed around these walls but are not attached to them and a broad flat-arched opening in the west wall of the room opens into the bowling alley.

The interior of the bowling alley is the most intact historic interior in the district and it is remarkable for having survived for over 40 continuous years of use as a bowling alley with so many of its 1950 details intact. The north end of the bowling alley (the Main Street end) is given over to a bar and one enters this area either through the centered entrance in the main facade or from the locker

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\* The oblong center portion of this window is filled with transparent glass block while the blocks surrounding it are translucent.



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room. The lower portions of the walls of the bar room are lined with a tall wainscot covered in brown leatherette and this is framed by a varnished wooden chair rail. The remaining portions of these walls are panelled partially with celotex panels, which are original, and with varnished plywood sheets, which are later additions. The bar itself is sheathed in varnished plywood sheets and it is rectilinear in plan. The wall behind the bar where the back bar would normally be has instead been left open to the bowling alley behind and sliding sheets of glass that run along the back edge of the bar are the only physical barriers between the two spaces. The work area within the bar itself is also still largely intact and the storage areas and coolers under the bar still have their original varnished wood doors and their original stainless steel sinks and cabinet hardware.

The bowling alley itself has a lounge and seating area at its north end adjacent to the bar with the remainder of the space being given over to six bowling lanes. The lower portions of the side walls of the lounging area are also covered with the same brown leatherette wainscot as the walls of the bar, while the portion above is plastered. Because the floor level of the lanes is slightly lower than that of the lounge area, the wainscot steps down as well. Three original curved banquettes made out of laminated wood strips offer seating for the bowlers and the scoring stands in front of them, although not original, are of the same period and have streamlined pedestals. All of the equipment of the lanes is original, much of it having been made by the Brunswick Company. The ball returns are original and are made of varnished laminated wood decorated with streamlined Moderne style metal fittings, and while automatic pinsetters have now been installed, the balls are still returned to the bowlers via raised wooden channels set between the lanes. The ceiling above the lanes steps down towards the rear in several equally deep steps, and hidden lights behind each step illuminate the length of the lanes. Even the Brunswick Co. ball-washing machine located on the west side of the lounge area is part of the original fittings of the Club. In addition, the present owners have kept the original multi-color paint scheme of the bowling alley as well. The overall result is not unlike stepping into a movie set from the 1950s.

The Club Umreau was constructed for Stanford Vincent, who was the original proprietor of the bowling alley. Vincent sold the Club to the present owners, Glenn and Loretta Frank, nineteen years ago and they have continued to run it ever since. Fortunately, the Franks are very aware of the uniqueness of their property and they have been at pains to maintain it in as near an original state as possible.

8. Statement of Significance

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

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

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

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

ca.1870 - 1927<sup>27</sup>

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

Significance

The proposed Omro Downtown Historic District constitutes the most intact remaining portion of the historic commercial core of the small city of Omro and consists of a fine largely intact concentration of mostly one and two-story nineteenth century and early twentieth century commercial buildings. This district was identified by the Upper Fox River Intensive Survey (1991) as being a potential historic district having local significance under National Register (NR) criterion C. Research was undertaken to assess the potential for nominating this area to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) utilizing the NR significance area of Architecture, a theme which is also identified in the State of Wisconsin's Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP). This research centered on evaluating the resources within the district utilizing the Commercial Vernacular form and Twentieth Century Commercial style subsections of the Architectural Styles study unit of the CRMP.<sup>28</sup> The results of this research is detailed below and shows that the Omro Downtown Historic District is locally significant under NR criterion C as a small, but architecturally significant grouping of mostly late nineteenth and a few early twentieth century commercial buildings whose size, integrity, and prominent location all serve to create an entity that is visually distinct from the surrounding area.

This district is comprised of eleven contributing resources and three non-contributing ones. Of the contributing buildings, nine are largely intact examples of the Commercial Vernacular form and one is an example of the Twentieth Century Commercial style. Individually, these buildings are fine representative examples of

<sup>27</sup> The period of significance for architecture spans the years from the date of construction of the district's oldest known building to that of its newest contributing building.

<sup>28</sup> Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Historic Preservation Division, 1986. Vol. 2 (Architecture).

X See continuation sheet

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architectural styles that are typical of this period in Wisconsin's history. These buildings also typify the stylistic evolution of the downtown of Omro from its early years through its maturity in the early 1900s. As a group, these buildings represent the still largely intact core of Omro's only collection of historic commercial buildings and their highly visible location makes them potential models for restoration activity in the rest of the community.

#### Historic Development

The city of Omro is located in the civil town of the same name and both are located in Winnebago County. Like so many of Wisconsin's earlier communities, Omro owes its existence to its proximity to an early transportation route and to a source of water power, in this case the Fox River. Prior to and even after Wisconsin attained statehood the Fox and Wisconsin rivers were the subject of great interest as the principal links in a potential water route that was envisioned as connecting the Great Lakes with the Mississippi River. Consequently, the land bordering on these two rivers was also the object of considerable interest and speculation on the part of those who hoped to benefit from a location on the future waterway.

Even before permanent settlement occurred in the vicinity a trading post had been established on the present site of the city of Omro by Charles Corro, Jed Smalley, and Capt. William Powell and was known as Smalley's Landing. Here, trade with the Native American population took place, the proceeds of which were then shipped by boat downriver north to Green Bay. The first permanent settler in the area, however, was Edward West, who purchased some 500 acres southeast of Omro in Section 23 of the future town in 1845, and upon which he erected two log cabins. Because the land in the vicinity was gently undulating, largely open, and fertile, other settlers quickly followed and within a year west had been joined by at least fifteen others, nearly all of whom were farmers intent on cultivating their land. In 1847, at least thirty-three others joined the first pioneers and by 1848, "This town was well settled; for this lovely tract of country was so attractive to immigrants, that, in less than three years after the advent of the first settler, the land was very generally occupied."<sup>29</sup>

Among the settlers who came in 1847 were the men who would become the founders of the future city of Omro. The most important of these was David Humes, who came to Omro in the spring of 1847, and selected a site on the south side of the river in Section 16 just to the east of the present city for his residence. Humes built a log cabin on the site and this was the first structure on the site of the future city.

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<sup>29</sup> Harney, Richard J. History of Winnebago County, Wisconsin. Oshkosh: Allen & Hicks, 1880, pg. 296. Omro was named after Charles Omro, an early Indian trader in the area

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It was Mr. Humes' ambition to build a thriving town. He settled here for that purpose and laid every plan for the accomplishment of that end. He had a plan of his own, and in the following Spring he proceeded to carry it out. Taking his axe, he proceeded to the north side of the river, which was then known as "Indian Land," and selecting his trees, he struck the first blow toward the building of the "Grouser," or upright anchor boat, for towing logs against the current. The idea was Humes' own invention. "I am going to build a boat which will tow logs up this river, and there will be saw mills built here and a town will grow up," was his reply to all attempts to discourage him. He went on with the work, and soon had the satisfaction of making it a complete success. The boat was propelled by horse power -- four horses on a sweep, and was known as "Humes' Horse Boat."<sup>20</sup>

As Humes had hoped, the success of his invention led others to begin the construction of saw mills along the river bank in the vicinity. The first to do so was Humes' son-in-law, Nelson Beckwith, who, with Elisha Dean, built the first mill on the south bank of the river on the site of what would later be Daggett's Woolen Mill (extant). Other mills were built on both sides of the river, including a second one by Beckwith, who also built the first frame house in the village in 1848. In 1849, Beckwith, Dean, and Joel V. Taylor laid out the original plat of the village of Omro and this plat was followed by another to the west of it in 1850, known as the Western Addition. Also in 1850, the ferry that had previously linked the north and south sides of the river was replaced by a float bridge located at the foot of what was then called Main Street (today's Jefferson Street), an event that materially contributed to the subsequent expansion of the village to the north side of the river.

New settlers continued to arrive in a steady stream and among the newcomers in 1850 was N. Frank, "who came up the river on the steamer "Badger," the first steamer so far as known, that ever came up as far as the bridge."<sup>21</sup> Frank soon set about building the first mercantile establishment in the village, a small frame building (non-extant) located next to the south end of the bridge. Another "first" also occurred in that year when Omro's first hotel, the Larrabee House (non-extant), was constructed on the site of the present Omro Masonic Temple at 160 E. Main Street. In the years that followed the first school and the first churches were built in the village. N. Frank built a second and larger store on a corner lot that was later replaced by his third one, the building at 103 E. Main Street that is still extant today (Map No. 1), and others also followed suit, creating the original commercial core of the village, which was on the same site as the one that is being nominated as the Omro Downtown Historic District today. "In the year 1856, the grist mill (non-extant) was built by Mr. McLaren. This was quite an event for the place and was the means of drawing a considerable trade into the village."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Wright, P. M. Op. Cit., pg. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pg. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, pg. 7.

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Thus, by 1857, the village of Omro, which was chartered as a village in that year, had established itself as a commercial hub for the surrounding area. The village of that day contained a flouring mill, two or three saw mills, about eight mercantile establishments on a small scale, a harness shop, two taverns, two churches, a hotel, and a school. The bridge across the Fox had been rebuilt and moved east to the present site of the new footbridge at the end of Webster Avenue, new commercial enterprises were being constructed on both sides of the river, and produce grown on the surrounding farms was processed in the mills of the village and could then be sent on to larger markets via the small steamboats that ran daily between the village and the city of Oshkosh in the warm months. Not surprisingly, area population had also increased dramatically; from eighteen in 1847, to 1605, in 1855.<sup>33</sup>

The stage was thus set for the arrival of the first railroad in the vicinity, the Ripon & Wolf River Railroad, which was chartered in 1857. The laying of track for the road began in 1860, and on January 1, 1861, the track was completed to Omro.

This was the most important event in the history of that place, up to that time. Hitherto, there had been no outlet for the lumber manufactured here (Omro), except by water, and all mails and communications with other towns was either by the same means, or by teams. The completion of the railroad was therefore a very important event for Omro, and although regular trains were not put on until June, 1863, it was a benefit to the village which but few have estimated at its true value. Too many have looked only at the cost of the road, forgetting that it doubled the population and business of the place, created a better market for farm produce, and placed many advantages within reach, which without it would have been absolutely unattainable.<sup>34</sup>

Partly these advantages were due to Omro's status as the last stop on the line, a situation that gave it an advantage over other communities in the area for a number of years. Like most other communities in Wisconsin, Omro weathered the Civil War years as best it could and it experienced little change during these years. In the years following, however, business boomed. In 1866, the first brick commercial building in the village was constructed -- the Gibbs building (non-extant) -- and new buildings were soon lining both sides of Water Street (today's Main Street), the principal commercial thoroughfare of the village. In the 1870s, the first of the commercial buildings that comprise the proposed historic district began to appear; the Northwestern Hotel (Map No. 1) ca. 1870, and the W. W. Race building (Map No. 8) in 1871. Continuing prosperity gradually filled the lots on Main Street and Webster Avenue and occasional fires resulted in the replacement of frame buildings with more substantial ones built of brick.

<sup>33</sup> Reetz, Elaine. Come Back in Time. Princeton, WI, 1982, Vol. 1, pg. 157.

<sup>34</sup> Wright, P. M. Op. Cit., pg. 8.

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By 1880, a history of Winnebago County published in that year described the village as follows:

The place contains something over two thousand inhabitants, and has twenty-odd stores; two steam saw-mills, one a large first-class mill (H. W. Webster's), which manufactures some four or five million feet of lumber per annum; a foundry and machine shop (Geo. Challoner's) 36 by 170 feet, one of the principle articles manufactured being Challoner's famous patent shingle-mill machinery. There is also a large carriage manufactory and several smaller wagon and carriage works; a sash and door factory; a barrel factory, employing a number of hands; grist mill, cheese factory, and a number of mechanic shops of various kinds. A stock company has also built a very fine brick structure for a woolen mill (Daggett's Mill).

The main business street is quite a busy mart of trade, and presents a lively appearance, and is frequently thronged with teams. It is a well built street, and contains several fine brick blocks. There are also two good hotels, the Larrabee House and the Northwestern.<sup>22</sup>

Unbeknownst to the writer of the above, however, Omro was then in its heyday. Ironically, the railroad, which had been the source of growth in earlier years, would now be the cause of the town's gradual economic stagnation. The Ripon and Wolf River Railroad had by this time been subsumed within the much larger Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad system and as the line that had once ended in Omro was pushed further west to serve other communities, Omro lost its relative advantage as an area shipping point. As a result, Omro's population began a gradual decline, which by 1900 had reached 1500. This trend was unaltered by the arrival of an interurban line connecting Omro with the fast-growing city of Oshkosh to the east in 1902. This new transportation alternative gave Omro area shoppers still better access to the much larger stores in Oshkosh, the area metropolis, but brought little business to Omro merchants in return, a situation that was only exacerbated by the subsequent development of the automobile. Consequently, Omro settled more or less peacefully into its natural role as the trading and shipping point for the area immediately surrounding it, but village population continued to decline and by 1929, had reached a low of 1052.

The subsequent history of the village (Omro did not become a city until 1944) is uneventful and is typical of the histories of hundreds of similar communities in Wisconsin. Indeed, population did not begin to grow again until relatively recently, when the proximity of Omro to Oshkosh and other Fox River Valley cities made it attractive to both relocating Fox River Valley area businesses and persons desiring a more pleasant way of life. Today, the city's population is just over 2900 and growing and the city now finds itself in the position of having to plan for the next stage in its history.

<sup>22</sup> Harney, Richard J. Op. Cit., pg. 296d.

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Today, almost all traces of Omro's earlier aspirations as a manufacturing center are gone, but its historic retail and commercial center still survives because it continues to offer the inhabitants of the city many of the same goods and services that it provided more than a century ago. The best and most intact of the buildings that make up the core of this commercial center have now been included within the boundaries of the Omro Downtown Historic District and it is hoped that this act will help them retain both their historic appearance and their current usefulness.

Architecture

The Omro Downtown Historic District is significant architecturally as an excellent collection of mostly nineteenth and a few early twentieth century commercial buildings that for the most part are fine representative examples of both the Commercial Vernacular form and the Twentieth Century Commercial style. The district contains 11 contributing buildings and 3 non-contributing buildings. The contributing buildings include three Italianate style-influenced Commercial Vernacular form buildings (Map Nos. 7, 8, and 10), six other nineteenth century examples of the form (Map Nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 12 and 13), and an example of the Twentieth Century Commercial style (Map No. 6). These buildings comprise an architecturally significant concentration and they have additional significance because they represent general trends in the development of commercial building styles and vernacular forms during the period of significance, both in Omro and elsewhere.

Commercial buildings such as those found in the district currently represent the leading edge of work involved in the development of more sophisticated and accurate architectural typology. This is attested to in the introduction to the Vernacular Forms Section of the Architecture Theme in the CRMP which states that "Descriptions of vernacular forms are offered (here) with full knowledge that this is a little understood aspect of the built environment and that much more study is needed."<sup>20</sup> Before the CRMP was written, buildings such as those found in the Omro Downtown Historic District were evaluated largely on the basis of their integrity and whether or not they were close enough in design to recognized architectural styles to warrant being nominated to the NR on that basis. Gradually, however, more sophisticated views of these buildings have developed and "Common buildings whose distinguishing characteristic was their simplicity began to be viewed as keystones in the architectural history of Wisconsin."<sup>21</sup> Today, enough work has been done in identifying and categorizing such resources on both the state and national levels to make it possible to evaluate vernacular forms of commercial buildings using criteria other than integrity alone. This is apparent in the creation of the Commercial Vernacular form and Twentieth Century Commercial style categories developed by the staff of the Historic Preservation Division of the State of Wisconsin and it can

<sup>20</sup> Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). Op. Cit., Vol. 2, 3-1 (Architecture).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

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also be seen in such new works as the recently published book The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture, written by Richard Longstrein.

Commercial Vernacular

Simply designed store buildings built between 1850 and 1920 in Wisconsin are now considered to be examples of the Commercial Vernacular form. This label was developed by the Historic Preservation Division to answer the need for a category into which could be placed the vast number of such buildings within the state that do not fall under the standard architectural styles. The description of this form included in the CRMP states that:

The label "commercial vernacular" is less specific to a visual type than other significant Wisconsin building forms, and can be generally applied to simply-designed commercial buildings of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. All varieties, if not radically altered, include large retail show windows on the ground story. Upper stories, whether meant to serve business or residential uses, are characterized by simple window openings. Doors to serve ground-story shops and upper stories are simple and, when original, are generally of paneled wood with a single window above. An emphatic cornice with some decorative treatment (compound brick corbeling, wood moldings, or metal friezes, with finials or thick corbels at the ends) and a cornice or I-beam above the storefront are usually the only decorative touches. Simplified period motifs are implied, but without any overt stylistic character. Frequently, vernacular commercial buildings, as other commercial buildings, were partially illuminated on the ground floor by a transom across the facade. The transoms are often covered with modern signage. Although there are free-standing vernacular commercial buildings, many are joined by party walls into continuous commercial streetscapes.<sup>20</sup>

As knowledge of this form increases it is probable that it will be subdivided into smaller, more descriptive categories. Until then, such buildings will, of necessity, be thrown together in a somewhat undifferentiated way. Currently, the form includes many buildings which appear to share slight stylistic identities but that do not yet merit a stylistic category of their own. For now, examples of the form can be roughly differentiated from one another on the basis of their date of construction. Generally speaking, nineteenth century examples of the form grow taller as the century progresses and they are generally narrower than their early twentieth century counterparts and are somewhat more elaborately decorated. Early examples are also very much orientated toward a single street front, even when they are placed on corner lots, and decoration tends to be limited to the principal facade. Early twentieth century examples, on the other hand, are often broader and less tall than nineteenth century equivalents and frequently display some period

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<sup>20</sup> Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). Op. Cit. Vol. 2, 3-10 (Architecture).



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revival style elements. Examples built on corner lots also are more likely to be designed in such a way that both the main facades are accorded a similar status and decoration is often employed on both of the principal facades.

Of the fourteen buildings within the district, all eleven of the nineteenth century ones are (or were originally) examples of Commercial vernacular design. Three of these buildings; the N. Frank Building at 103 E. Main Street (Map No. 7), built ca.1881; the W. W. Race Building at 109 E. Main Street (Map No. 8), built in 1871; and the Earl & McGuire Building at 100 E. Main Street (Map No. 10), built ca.1890-95, also exhibit Italianate style influence as seen in their tall, rather narrow stilted and segmentally arched second story windows and in the bracketed cornice of the latter building. All of these buildings also exhibit many of the hallmark features of the Commercial vernacular form as listed above.

Twentieth Century Commercial style

The single remaining contributing resource in the district is a small, typical examples of the Twentieth Century Commercial style. The identification of this style is the most recent fruit of research into commercial buildings of this era and its salient features are described below in a draft subsection written for the CRMP.

The Commercial Style or 20th Century Commercial Style is an early twentieth century commercial form. The style was rather utilitarian, and consequently was perhaps the most ubiquitous commercial style of the period. Examples may be found in both small and larger cities and range from one-story, single storefronts to large two or three story, multi-unit commercial blocks.

The style is characterized by a relatively unornamented, two-dimensional facade and a broad rectangular massing. Buildings are generally executed in "textured" brick, which has a coarse, striated appearance. A stepped or shaped parapet, often topped with a flat, stone or concrete coping is a common element. Ornamentation is generally confined to the use of contrasting materials or brick patterns in the cornice and a simply ornamented storefront often with prism glass transoms. Typical examples will have rectangular panels in the cornice framed by soldier or header brick courses, the insets of which are often detailed with decorative brickwork in herringbone or basket weave patterns. Small insets of tile, stone or concrete in diamond, square, or other simple shapes often form secondary accents. Window lintels and the storefront cornice line are often ornamented with soldier bricks.

The popularity of the Commercial style may be due to the simplicity of its design and ease of construction. A secondary factor was likely its versatility in application to needs and types of commercial enterprises emerging in the early twentieth century such as automobile showrooms and department stores. It appears

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to have been supplanted after the Great Depression by still more utilitarian and austere forms.<sup>22</sup>

The district's sole contributing example of the Twentieth Century Commercial style is a typical, albeit minor representative of the style as described above; the Fountain Inn Hotel Building (Map No. 6), which achieved its present form between 1900 and 1913. The district's sole non-contributing example of the style is the George H. Barr building (Map No. 2), which was built in 1948 and is thus too new to be eligible. Even so, the simplicity of this building and its small size make it an unobstrusive element in the district.

Art Moderne

The Art Moderne style is sometimes referred to as the "streamline style" after the design movement that was prevalent in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. This style shares with the Art Deco style an interest in the machine and in technology, but it differs from the earlier style in several major aspects. The Art Moderne style is a truly modern one whose designs lack any historical references and they are innocent of ornamentation in the historic sense of this term. Rather, such ornament as exists in these designs is made up of elements of the buildings themselves and is not just an overlay. In addition, the Art Moderne style stresses horizontal lines rather than vertical ones. Window openings are typically oblong in orientation instead of vertical, they are frequently filled with glass blocks, and are either grouped in bands or, if used singly, are evenly distributed along the lengths of the elevations in such a way as to emphasize horizontality. Hallmarks of the style include curved corners, circular window openings, flat roofs, and wall surfaces that are smooth and unbroken. Aluminum and stainless steel are typical door and window trim materials and exterior walls are typically made of masonry covered with a uniform coating of either stucco or concrete. In addition, the finest examples will usually have interiors to match.

The Art Moderne style was used for all types of buildings including everything from single family residences to gas stations, hotels, and hospitals. The remaining two non-contributing resources in the Omro Downtown Historic District, the E. A. Earle Building (Map No. 11), and the Club Omreau Lanes building (Map No. 14) are both late Art Moderne style buildings that achieved their present appearance in 1950 and thus do not currently meet the NPS 50 year rule for eligibility. It is believed, however, that the very intact state of the principal facades of these buildings and the remarkably intact late Art Moderne interior of the Club Omreau will make both buildings eligible for listing in the near future. Until that time, these buildings do not detract from the district's ability to convey a sense of time and place.

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<sup>22</sup> Draft subsection available at the State Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Society.

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The architectural significance of the Omro Downtown Historic District lies both in the fine, representative designs of its contributing buildings and also in the fact that these buildings are representative of important nineteenth and early twentieth century trends in the architectural history of Wisconsin's historic commercial buildings. Taken together, these buildings form a prominent, visually distinct entity that has historically been the center of commercial activity in Omro.

Local Preservation Activity

It is the intent of this nomination to encourage the understanding and appreciation of the historic commercial buildings of the city by listing the best surviving examples of such buildings. It is also hoped that the creation of this district will increase local awareness of the value of this city's entire historic building stock. Omro is currently experiencing a period of population growth and this growth will ultimately have a considerable impact on the historic buildings in this city if an awareness of their value is not developed now.

Omro has recently taken a number of steps to help ensure that its historic building stock will be preserved. The community already has an active local historical society whose fine museum is housed in the former City Hall located just to the east of the Omro Downtown Historic District. In addition, this nomination is the first step in a program initiated by the City that seeks to preserve and promote Omro's downtown by nominating its most important buildings such as those in the district and the former City Hall for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The City has also just recently received a DHP grant that will provide partial funding for erecting permanent descriptive plaques for some 25 historic Omro buildings both in and outside of the district. The same grant will also help fund a walking/driving tour brochure that will feature these buildings. It is also possible that an historic preservation ordinance will be enacted in the near future to ensure some level of protection for the city's historic resources.

Archeological Potential

The extent of any archeological remains in the district is conjectural at this time. Earlier buildings are known to have occupied almost all of the sites in the district, but it is likely that site excavation work for newer buildings would have obliterated most historic remains of such buildings. A possible exception might be remains associated with now vanished mill buildings that once lined the south shore of the Fox River within the district boundaries. Several of these buildings are known to have existed, but all were gone by the turn of the century, so any remains would now be located under the parking lots that now line the banks of the river behind most of the district's buildings.

No information about possible prehistoric remains in this area was found in the course of this research although the area in the vicinity of the city of Omro is

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known for its associations with the Fox and other Indian tribes. It is likely, however, that any remains of these pre-European cultures located within the district would also have been greatly disturbed by the building activity associated with the subsequent development of this area.



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Boundary Description, Cont.

approx. 375' to the intersection with the west curbline of South Webster Avenue. The line then continues approx. 12' south along said curbline, then proceeds due E across Webster Avenue to a point of intersection with the west elevation of 109 E. Main St. The line then proceeds north along said elevation to the NW corner of said building, then proceeds east along the rear elevation to the NE corner, then south to the NW corner of 115 E. Main St., then east along the rear elevation of said building to the NE corner, then proceeds south along the east elevation of said building to the north curbline of E. Main St. The line then proceeds east along said curbline to a point opposite the NE corner of 100 E. Main St. It then proceeds south across E. Main St. to said corner, then proceeds along the east elevation of said building until it intersects with the north elevation of 122 S. Webster Ave. The line then proceeds to the NE corner of said building, then proceeds south along the rear elevation to the SE corner, then west to the east curbline of S. Webster Avenue. The line then proceeds north on said curbline to a point opposite the SE corner of 100 W. Main St., then proceeds west to said corner and along the rear elevation of said building to the SW corner, then north along the west elevation of said building a distance of 15', then due west to SE corner of 120 W. Main St. The line then proceeds west along the rear elevation of said building to the SW corner, then north along the west elevation of said building to the south curbline of W. Main St., then proceeds north across W. Main St. to the north curbline of said street, then proceeds due west along said curbline to the POB. The boundaries enclose an area of approx. 5 acres.

Boundary Justification, Cont.

NPS standards. The eastern boundaries of the district were drawn so as to exclude greatly altered buildings and modern buildings located adjacent to the building at 100 E. Main Street and a large parking lot and modern gas station complex located to the east of the building at 115 E. Main Street. Similarly, the boundary running along the south side of 122 South Webster Street excludes a small parking lot located to the south of the building and the south boundary running behind 100 and 120 W. Main Street excludes a large modern grocery store and its parking lot. The west boundary was lengthened to include 120 W. Main Street because the exceptionally fine design of this 1950 building will warrant its reevaluation as a contributing resource in the near future. The north boundary of the district was also extended to the west to include the Hotel Omro at 207 W. Main Street because research showed that the space between this building and its neighbors to the east has always existed. Since the Hotel has historically been of considerable importance to the community it was felt that its inclusion in the district was justified because the boundary as drawn preserves its historic relationship to its neighbors. Other buildings located to the west on both sides of W. Main Street have either lost too much integrity, are of too recent a date of construction, or represent different resource types than those in the district.

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Items a-d are the same for each photo

Photo 1

- a) Omro Downtown Historic District
- b) Omro, Winnebago County, WI
- c) Timothy F. Heggland, November 13, 1993
- d) State Historical Society of Wisconsin
- e) 207 W. Main St., View looking NW
- f) Photo 1 of 14

Photo 2

- e) 127 W. Main St., View looking N
- f) Photo 2 of 14

Photo 3

- e) 123 W. Main St., View looking N
- f) Photo 3 of 14

Photo 4

- e) 111-17 W. Main St., View looking N
- f) Photo 4 of 14

Photo 5

- e) 107-09 W. Main St., View looking N
- f) Photo 5 of 14

Photo 6

- e) 101-03 W. Main St., View looking NW
- f) Photo 6 of 14

Photo 7

- e) 103 E. Main St., View looking NNE
- f) Photo 7 of 14

Photo 8

- e) 109 E. Main St., View looking N
- f) Photo 8 of 14

Photo 9

- e) 115 E. Main St., View looking N
- f) Photo 9 of 14

Photo 10

- e) 100 E. Main St., View looking SSE
- f) Photo 10 of 14

Photo 11

- e) 122 S. Webster Ave., View looking E
- f) Photo 11 of 14

Photo 12

- e) 122 S. Webster Ave., View looking E
- f) Photo 12 of 14

Photo 13

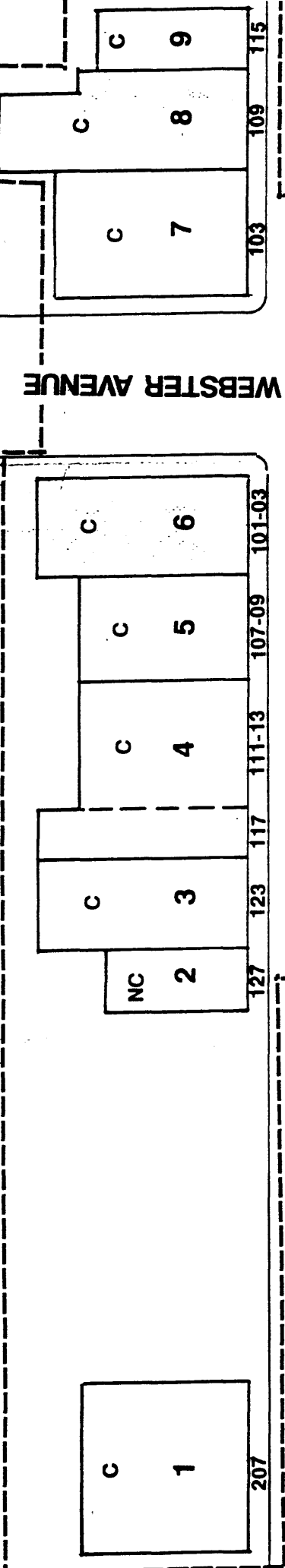
- e) 100 W. Main St., View looking SSW
- f) Photo 13 of 14

Photo 14

- e) 120 W. Main St., View looking S
- f) Photo 14 of 14

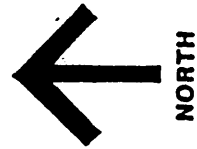


FOX RIVER



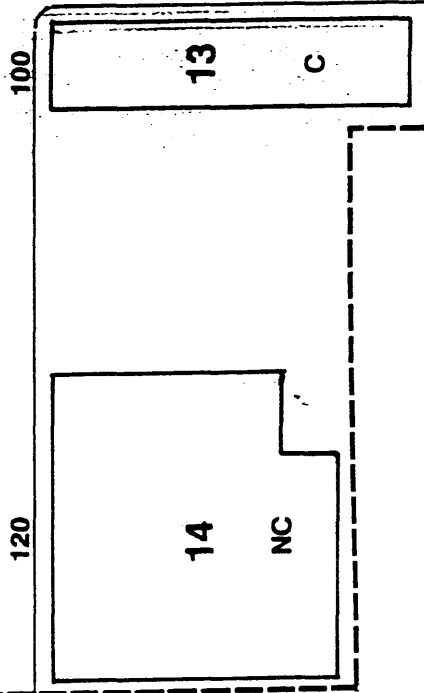
W. MAIN STREET

E. MAIN STREET



NOT TO SCALE

**OMRO DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT**  
**OMRO, WINNEBAGO CO., WI.**



SOUTH

- C CONTRIBUTING
- NC NON-CONTRIBUTING
- DISTRICT BOUNDARY