NPS Form 10-900-b
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

cover

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

_X_ New Submission ____ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Iowa's Main Street Commercial Architecture

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Historical Patterns on Main Street: Commercial District Development, 1832-1952
The Landscape of Main Street, 1850-1952

C. Form Prepared by

name/title Jan Olive Nash

organization Tallgrass Historians L.C. date July, 2002

street & number 2460 S. Riverside Dr. telephone 319-354-6722

city or town Iowa City state Iowa zip code 52246

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Russell J. Lobb
Signature and title of certifying official

August 2, 2002
Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Linda McClelland
Signature of the Keeper

~~August~~ September (4th) 17, 2002
Date of Action

Iowa's Main Street Commercial Architecture
Name of Multiple Property Listing

Iowa
State

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

Primary location of additional data:
_X_State Historic Preservation Office
___Other State agency
___Federal agency
___Local government
___University
___Other
Name of repository:
_____

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E. Statement of Historic Context

1. Historical Patterns on Main Street: Commercial District Development, 1832-1952

Main Street architecture all over the United States, especially in the upper Midwest, largely reflects its marketplace function. While most European and many U.S. seaboard settlements have their roots in subsistence agricultural or religious covenants, the typical Midwest community developed with the expectation that commerce would sustain it, and the hope that it would become the area's entrepôt.[1] Though the size and location of Main Street varies, and the language used to describe it is often imprecise, its role was more certain and obvious. Main Street commercial districts are found in villages, modest towns, county seats, small cities, and large urban areas. The larger the community, the more likely it will have numerous enclaves of neighborhood commerce in addition to its core business district in the center of town. The smaller the community, the more diverse its main street tenants. In addition to the dry goods store, hat shop, and saloon or cafe, the smallest of Iowa's Main Streets might also have been home to the railroad depot, grain elevator, flour mill, lumber yard, library or school, city hall, or other industrial or civic building. Without a doubt though, Main Street meant commerce. Without a market place or commercial district, a place was not a town but just a wide spot in the road. Without a concentrated set of predictable buildings and traditional activities dedicated to commerce, a locale was but a rural neighborhood or a residential suburb. Main Street is both a place and a symbol. Midwest Main Streets are the icon for small-town America.

Settlement of Iowa

To understand the Main Street landscape, it is necessary to know the forces that created, sustained, and changed Iowa's towns. During the nineteenth century within the context of a growing and generally westward-moving national population, Iowa was a state of transitions. While it was settled from the east to the west, consistent with the nation as a whole, there was also an earlier north-south flow of settlement and trade along the banks of its two great rivers, the Mississippi and the Missouri. In addition to eastern architectural influences, therefore, it is possible to find subtle southern influences present in old river port towns like McGregor in northeastern Iowa, where second-story balconies hanging from red-brick facades are a tradition along Main Street.[2] Farmers and merchants streamed across the Mississippi in the mid-1830s and spread throughout the gridiron sections of prairie. By the end of the 1870s, only Lyon and Emmet counties in the northwestern corner of the state were still considered frontier, or very sparsely populated.[3] During this forty-year push

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[1] John Fraser Hart, *The Rural Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 301.

[2] During the mid to late nineteenth century, the north and south counties of the state saw a predictable borderlands movement of settlers back and forth. The southern tiers of counties shared similar settlement patterns as northern Missouri, including an infusion of native-born Americans and northern European immigrants seeking agricultural land. The southwest tier of counties in Iowa, especially, was also influenced by migrations from the central Missouri counties such as Boone. The original American settlers of *those* counties had come through the Appalachian Mountains from Kentucky and its neighbors. At the other end of the state, enclaves of Norwegian immigrants who had first stopped in Wisconsin traveled into northern Iowa counties, especially in the east and central part of the state, to create farms on the prairie and establish towns like Lake Mills. Southern Minnesota counties shared a relatively mobile population with northern Iowa counties, with families spreading out to available farmland with little regard for political jurisdictions. A more unusual settlement pattern was established in the northwest corner of Iowa by the English Close brothers who tried to establish an outpost of British gentry farmers. The Close brothers operated out of Denison and along the rail line from Le Mars to Sheldon, Sibley, and Ashton. While the *last* movement of all these groups may have been north or south, they were all still a part of the greater national movement westward.

[3] Duane Clarence Hawk, "Iowa Farming Types: 1850-1880" (M.A. Thesis, University of Iowa, 1957); also Dorothy Schwieder, *Iowa: The Middle Land* (Ames: Iowa State University, 1996), 51.

of settlement, the country as a whole underwent modernization of its transportation and communications industries and absorbed the tremendous social and cultural storms of the Civil War and the immigration of millions fleeing famine and civil war in Europe.[4] These historical events, together with the legions of farm families aggressively transforming the Iowa prairie into a tame patchwork of fields and roads, wrought changes to the physical landscape of the state that still dominate it visually today.[5]

Generally speaking, eastern Iowa towns and commercial districts of the 1830s, 40s, and early 50s developed during the period before the railroads entered the state and when published material was still precious and costly. Journals like the *Prairie Farmer,* established in Chicago in the early 1840s, linked farmers and residents of nascent communities with market conditions and architectural fashions in the east. Yet, the movement of information was slow and building in Iowa was still dominated by the traditions brought by the settlers, wherever they may have originated. The first eastern Iowa Main Streets, then, were mostly constructed of native timber locally produced in water-powered mills, and handmade pressed red bricks fired nearby or in small regional brickyards. Good limestone, ranging from a deep yellow color to nearly white, was readily available in naturally occurring outcrops, and hundreds of small quarries were opened to supply larger block stone. Sandstone was also used as a building material in the eastern part of the state but not as extensively, either because it was less available to the local mason or less durable under Iowa's extremes of seasonal weather. In some areas of the northeast and north central, granite boulders and cobbles—debris left by the state's most recent glaciers—could be collected for store building foundations.[6]

Eastern Iowa Main Street architecture took the familiar forms and simple shapes of vernacular buildings in the East and the old Northwest. Wooden store buildings were likely free-standing and resembled domestic architecture. The earliest of frame buildings might have been casually sited along a dirt road or at a convenient trading intersection.

Brick shops on more formal Main Streets platted by speculators often anticipated adjoining neighbors, so side walls were left windowless and firewalls and chimney stacks projected above the roofline. Flat stone or timber lintels, soft red bricks laid in a common bond atop stone foundations, and sloping rooflines that provided attic space and channeled snow and water away from the structure are all features of the earliest brick Main Streets. In more expensive buildings, decorative wooden brackets or brick corbelling may have been added at the eaveline. The essential characteristics of the earliest eastern Iowa commercial buildings, though, were the simplicity of their form and style, the use of local materials, and the hand-made nature of the structural components.

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[4] On modernization generally, see Richard D. Brown, *Modernization: The Transformation of American Life*, 1600-1865 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976).

[5] These historical patterns are the subject of the essays in Robert F. Sayre, ed., *Take This Exit* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989). Jean C. Prior explains the long view of the history of the Iowa landscape from a geological perspective, in *Landforms of Iowa* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991).

[6] Though good wetland habitat, the poorly drained surface of the land in north central Iowa, which had seen the state's most recent glacial activity, slowed the region's settlement until after the mid-nineteenth century. Prior, 45; also Robert F. Sayre, "Iowa's Lost Lakes," in *Take the Next Exit*, Robert F. Sayre, ed. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 2000), 207-232 .

Brick storefronts from the 1850s in Iowa City reflect the Eastern origins of many of the town's early residents. *From SHSI, IC; reprinted in Mansheim, 203.*

In contrast, by the time most Main Street buildings in western Iowa were under construction in the 1860s and 70s, the railroads had been completed across the state. Though not entirely treeless, the supply of native lumber in western Iowa was limited to smaller riverine environments. The supply of North Woods white pine lumber, on the other hand, processed in the mills of Chicago and eastern Iowa river port manufacturing centers like Clinton and Muscatine was more than abundant.[7] Lumberyards along the railroad tracks sold standardized framing studs, machined nails, and wood shingles for false-front stores, livery stables, elevators, churches, and schools. Millwork companies located in the same eastern towns produced decorative jigsawed brackets, incised headers, and other bric-a-brac to appeal to the Main Street customer. Brick and stone could now be hauled in by the railroad from distant locations. These bricks were mass produced, more uniform in size and quality, and were made of clays extracted in Ohio and other distant states. Dressed stone from Indiana and pink Sioux Quartzite from southwest Minnesota were among the options that could be incorporated as easily in a new bank in Rock Rapids, in the northwest corner of the state, as one in New London in southeast Iowa. New materials, like cast iron and pressed sheet metal, were also introduced to the array of building options by the time western Iowa commercial streets were developing. And all the while, the original Main Street buildings across the state were often being re-built to incorporate the newer fire resistant and stylish materials.

Architectural building forms of the 1870s also reflect the increased access to information about new fashions and building styles popular throughout the rest of the nation. Published builder books, previously available on a limited scale to carpenters, masons, and architects before 1850, were joined by a vastly expanded medium of printed trade catalogs, style-setter advice books, architects' design pamphlets and advertisements, and weekly or monthly periodicals, all

[7] On the upper Midwest pineries and the lumber industry, generally, see William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991). The importance of the Iowa lumber industry to eastern Iowa Mississippi River towns is discussed in Leland L. Sage, *A History of Iowa* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1974), 99; and Loren N. Horton and Robert F. Sayre, "Mississippi River Towns," in *Take This Exit*, Robert F. Sayre, ed. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989), 210-228.

distributed by the railroads that now crisscrossed Iowa and the nation. Regional distinctions blurred. The characteristic mansard roof of the French Second Empire style could now grace an upscale New York apartment flat constructed at the same time as a State Center, Iowa, opera house. Nationally popular styles became more common for Iowa's newest commercial buildings than the building shapes and forms inherited from past generations.

Understanding the general historical patterns of the state, then—settlement from east to west, ranging from the 1830s to the 1870s, and with the tradition of inherited designs built of locally-produced native materials being replaced by the use of widely popularized, mass produced and standardized materials—are the essential starting points for understanding the development of Iowa's Main Streets. Knowing why and where the towns themselves were located is another key element.

Town Creation

Iowa was and remains an agricultural state, but because of its crossroads location at the intersection of the Mississippi River and the great transcontinental railroads, it has always had an industrial and manufacturing component as well. At their inception most communities had the potential to grow, to a greater or lesser degree, to be both a market place for the exchange of goods and services, and a manufacturing site for the conversion of the region's raw produce. Location and access to natural resources, as well as the skill and determination of local boosters and residents, combined to govern the growth of Iowa's villages into towns and cities. Historians differ on what came first, settlement of the prairie by farmers or the establishment of outpost hamlets and villages on the frontier. Advocates on the one side—heirs to Frederick Jackson Turner's late-nineteenth century frontier theory—saw a predictable cycle caused by the westward moving line of settlement. After the trappers and traders moved further west, the vacated landscape filled with farmers from the east, only then to be followed by mercantile villages and towns that popped up to serve the needs of the rural residents. An opposite line of thought, associated with historian Richard Wade and still current, holds that the "western" towns of the 1790s to 1830s (like Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville, Lexington, and St. Louis) were actually vanguards of civilization that preceded the settling of the countryside by farmers.[8] Timothy Mahoney more recently applied this line of thought to river towns of the upper Midwest that were established between 1830 and 1870:

> [J]ust to the north and west [of central Illinois], and within a few years of 1830, towns were increasingly being laid out before people arrived to use them. By the 1834-6 economic boom, settlers no longer demanded towns, but rather prospective new towns which had been established by speculators, and investors demanded and even competed for settlers.[9]

Many Iowa towns, therefore, were consciously created outposts on an unsettled prairie. Main Streets were laid out on paper first, with narrow commercial lots for merchants, by land speculators and railroad surveyors who counted on selling the lots at inflated prices. Indeed, Iowa's local county history books are replete with stories of town founders who platted paper towns and then waited for Main Street to slowly fill. Every county has its list of disappointing paper towns that never materialized.[10] The competition for settlers created by this land speculation meant choosing the best possible

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[8] Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities*, 1790-1830 (1959, reprinted Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

[9] Timothy R. Mahoney, *River Towns in the Great West: The Structure of provincial urbanism in the American Midwest, 1820-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 90.

[10] See for example, "Factoryville," a paper town that appears on the Dubuque County map in the 1875 Andreas historical atlas of Iowa. There is no known record documenting a village of any type at this location and local historians claim it never existed. Sometimes the goal of land speculators had to dramatically change in order ensure success Northwest Iowa has the well-documented

location for a town site, surrounded by good potential farmland, was vitally important. Choice early locations included the intersection of wagon roads, or the crossing of a road and a river ford. Before the 1850s, a good town site included a river or stream with a year round flow of water for powering grist and lumber mills. In the 1850s, 60s, and 70s railroad land agents and engineers selected town sites based on the lay of the land for their tracks. In agricultural regions such as Iowa, it was in a railroad's interest to have collection points for outgoing crops and livestock that were a convenient day's journey for the surrounding farmers. This meant a railroad siding or town every seven miles or so, an accepted distance that had its roots in the English system of market charters.[11]

Town building by railroads and lucky speculators, however, does not account for all of Iowa's communities. Convenient transportation routes and access to natural resources resulted in many of Iowa earliest villages being established more spontaneously. Lead mining camps in the northeastern corner of the state, steamboat ports along the state's boundary rivers, rest stops on interior stage routes and drayage lines, early grist and saw mill operations, even provision suppliers along the trail the Mormons took across southern Iowa, all created a locus or focal point for the transformation of rural neighborhoods into trading centers that later became small villages, some of which would grow to towns and even cities. In southwest Iowa, the water-powered mill operations of Samuel M. Smith produced the small hamlet with the descriptive name of Milford. This mill site may have offered a good opportunity to ford the river that powered the mill. Later the name was changed to Grant, perhaps reflecting larger, national political feelings or leanings of the small town's residents after the Civil War. In northeast Iowa, the ridge top community of Key West formed as a result of the Y in a frontier road that lay at the end of a long, steep climb up from the riverbank town of Dubuque. Teamsters needed to rest and water their horses before heading on down one of the two roads at the Y, and the surrounding neighborhood of lead mining camps provided additional customers for crossroads commercial activities. In the 1870s, the William Tell Saloon offered such amenities in Key West and still stands today, though the road in front of it has been widened to four lanes and the traffic flows past it on the tireless horsepower of combustible engines.[12]

Once the railroads started building across Iowa, in the mid 1850s, many of these early towns graced by the fortunes of a nearby water course or crossroads location, were bypassed or lay too distant to be of relevance. Often village residents went to heroic efforts to ensure the survival of their communities, abandoning the old town site for a location closer to the tracks, or even wholesale moving of the existing buildings—hauling them on skids—closer to the rail line. The western town of Coon Rapids had developed on the bank of the Raccoon River, a prime location for a water-powered mill, but when the rail line was constructed a half-mile away in 1881, astute businessmen saw the writing on the wall. Edward and Warren Garst—brothers and members of a family that would later contribute a state governor and a promoter of hybrid corn that revolutionized agriculture—were such smart businessmen. When the co-owner of the building that housed the Garst store refused to agree to move it, Edward Garst literally cut it in half and hauled his portion over to the new and current Main Street.[13]

Patterns of town development in Iowa, then, range from informal crossroads communities, to speculative paper towns, to the standardized numerical and tree-named streets of railroad towns. By the 1890s, hundreds of Iowa towns dotted the landscape, each with a length of Main Street devoted to the provision of goods and services, or to the

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activities of the English speculators, the Close brothers who, acting as agents for the railroad, tried to create a colonial outpost on the Iowa prairie, but ended up building thousands of small tenant farms that sustained the nearby railroad towns like Ashton and Sibley.

[11] Hart, 304.

[12] Jan Olive Nash, "Dubuque Southwest Arterial Project: Intensive Level Survey and Evaluation" (unpubl. report prepared for WHKS & Co., 1998).

[13] Jan Olive Nash, "Will Likely Last a Thousand Years:" Coon Rapids Bridge, Symbol of Progress" (unpubl. report prepared for Calhoun-Burns & Associates, 2000), 8.

distribution of products and livestock. Some towns had the economic edge of sitting on a rail line, or being the county seat. Others benefited from a state institution like the land grant colleges in Cedar Falls and Ames. Most Main Streets though thrived or failed on the basis of the agricultural economy of the surrounding countryside. During times of economic expansion and rising town population, these Main Streets bustled and older buildings were replaced by more substantial and stylish ones. During the low times of financial panics, poor crop prices, and especially after the arrival of the automobile, these Main Streets were quiet and their buildings slowly declined from lack of maintenance. The smallest of Main Streets grew ever quieter and emptier throughout the twentieth century. Many of the buildings along these streets were actively torn down as eyesores or nuisances.

Without a doubt, some of Iowa's architecture reflects an Old World or ethnic influence—the Dutch in Pella and the Norwegians in the Decorah vicinity are especially familiar groups. Much of the architectural ethnicity seen today in these towns, however, is modern and reflects a renewed pride in ancestral origins as well as a hope for future heritage tourism and/or a currently growing ethnic community.[14] The streetscape of Orange City is replete with references to the town's Dutch heritage: a windmill drive-up bank, a windmill phone booth, and even a Dutch step-gabled Pizza Hut—an unusual corporate nod to local tastes—are all indictors of both the pride and the hopes involved with heritage tourism. West Liberty, on the other hand, is beginning to physically reflect its growing resident population of Mexican immigrants with a widely-patronized Mexican restaurant on Main Street. Still, the trappings of ethnicity displayed in this café are largely ephemeral—signage and the menu—not structural.[15]

The *historic* impact of ethnic groups on Main Street architecture, generally, is minimal, a result of what geographers call the "principal of first effective settlement." Simply put, "[t]hose groups first on the scene are likely to have the greatest influence and longest-lasting impact in determining the cultural landscape of an area."[16] In the United States, this was largely determined at the time of coastal settlement. Anglo-European influence on the East Coast, long before the settlement of Iowa, was especially dominant in the upper Midwest.[17] Only where the local density of a particular group remained high was there much chance for the persistence of an ethnic landscape. Entry neighborhoods in urban places are good examples of the type of dense population necessary to perpetuate an ethnic community strong enough to be reflected in the landscape.[18] Generally, though, places like Iowa's Main Streets, where the underlying motivation of occupants was commercial, and the surrounding population ethnically mixed, are unlikely places for ethnic

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[14] This phenomenon is linked to the theory that says "ethnic tenacity" is much like the "swing of a clock's pendulum. The first generation is completely ethnically oriented; the second is uncertain and insecure and 'thus prone to compliance with the demands of Americanizers' and the rejection of ethnicity; the third generation [if the ethnic community remains large enough] has none of these insecurities and can explore its ethnic heritage with confidence." Allen G. Noble, "The Immigrant Experience in the Nineteenth Century and Afterwards," in *To Build in a New Land: Ethnic Landscapes in North America,* Allen G. Noble, ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 400. Persistence of the deep Norwegian heritage of Lake Mills residents, lately expressed in a large new memorial to the community's immigrant pioneer families, is associated with this renewed interest in heritage. Still, the strong Norwegian heritage of Lake Mills is clearly *not* reflected in the buildings on Main Street.

[15] A gloved but severely critical discussion of heritage tourism and the commodification of Main Street is contained in Mira Engler, "Drive-Thru History: Theme Towns in Iowa," in Sayre, *Take the Next Exit*, at 255-276.

[16] Noble, 400.

[17] Ibid. See also Allen G. Noble, *Wood, Brick, and Stone: The North American Landscape*, vol. 1 *Houses* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); and Noble, *Wood, Brick, and Stone: The North American Landscape*, vol. 2 *Barns and Farm Structures* (1984).

[18] For example, Devon Street, in the Rogers Park area of north shore Chicago, where the ethnicity of modern residents changes almost block by block, reflected by the clothing on the pedestrians and the displays in the store windows. Note also the historic Flemish/German architecture of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which are "the architectural expressions that give Milwaukee its unique old world character...styles [that were] very popular with the city's large population of German-American and Polish-American merchants," during the 1895 to 1920 period. Paul J. Jakubovich and Les Vollmert, *Good for Business* (City of Milwaukee, 1995), 17.

landscapes. Historians add to this principal the distinction-blurring effect of modernization after the 1840s.[19] Key among the modernizing agents was the railroad.

The Impact of the Railroad and the Automobile on Iowa's Main Streets

After the deep, black prairie soils of Iowa, perhaps the railroad was the single most important factor in the shaping of the Iowa landscape in the nineteenth century and the building of the state's historic Main Streets. Though it had little to no influence from the 1830s to the early 1850s, it played a huge role for the next 100 hundred years. A few towns had the happy circumstance of being temporary terminals during the construction phase—Iowa City, for example, between 1856 and 1860, was the end of the line for the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific. These terminals were boomtowns that saw much Main Street building and re-building to accommodate the increased activity. Their depot yards served as collection points for the movement of western raw products to the manufacturing and processing centers in the east and as launching points for eastern settlers moving west.[20] Main Street outfitters like Iowa City's Thomas Carson prospered by supplying the essentials for overland travel and prairie homesteading. In Carson's case, business was so successful he eventually opened another store on the commercial street of the neighboring community of Oxford just down the wagon road to the west.[21]

Though mid-century railroad construction in Iowa may have slowed at times, historian Rebecca Conard found that railway building continued despite a nationwide panic and depression from 1857 to 1859 and the Civil War in the mid-1860s.[22] Following the war, construction rapidly increased across the state with main lines completed at an astonishing rate, including a system of short line routes that connected most towns. Iowa's rail system grew from a mere 130 miles in the entire state in 1857 to over 2000 miles by 1870.[23] The pace picked up even more over the next decade and from "January 1879 to January 1886, railroads expanded their trackage at a dizzying rate, adding 3403 miles to the state's network."[24] Integral to this construction frenzy was the railroads' town building strategy. Hundreds of Iowa towns were laid out by the various railroad companies, both to encourage growth in the surrounding rural countryside and to subsidize the construction of the railroad itself through the sale of town lots.

Railroad towns were platted with Main Streets running both parallel to the tracks, such as in State Center, and perpendicular to them, like Ashton's. Sometimes the platted Main Street failed to attract the expected shops and stores, and the commercial district instead developed on another street. Oxford's Main Street, which runs parallel to the old Rock Island rail line, is only a side street crossing the real main street, Augusta Avenue. Landform and grade slope dictated how the railroad builders laid their tracks across the countryside and the gridiron pattern of most railroad towns is oriented to the rails rather than to the compass. The nation's overarching system of township, range, and section lines runs deep, however, especially on the flat prairie states where little impeded its application. Later private property owners and land developers who filed new additions to the original railroad plat tended to adjust the orientation of their streets to align

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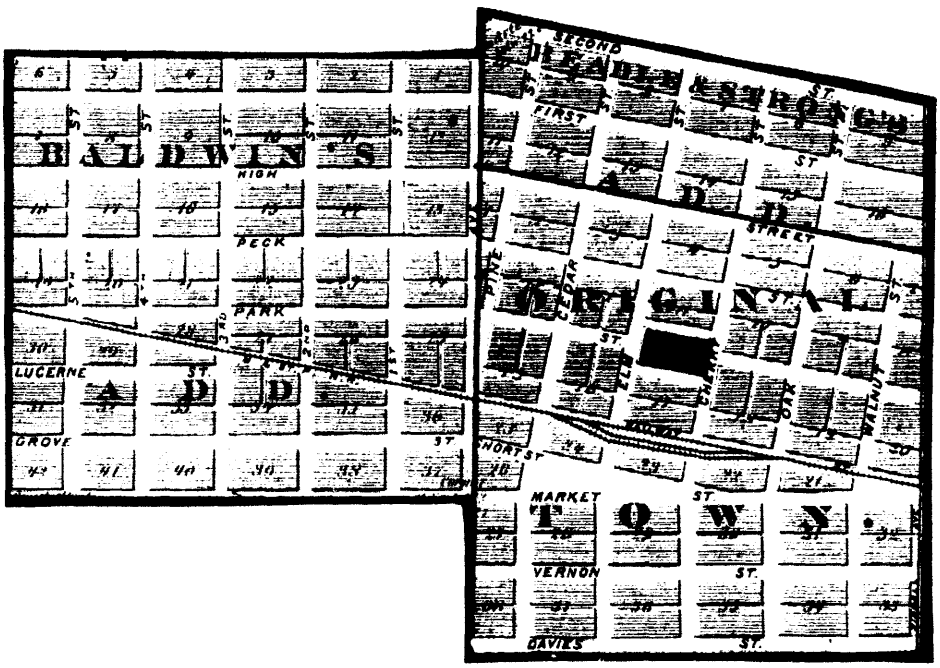
[19] See generally Brown, *Modernization.* For a discussion specifically related to architecture and national styles, see Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1984).
[20] William Cronon, in *Nature's Metropolis,* focuses on meat, grain, and lumber as the products of western agricultural regions that were processing in distant urban cities, especially Chicago, because of the railroads.
[21] Jan Olive Nash, "Intensive Level...Survey of the Oxford Historic Commercial District" (unpubl. report prepared for Oxford Project Main Street, 1995).
[22] Rebecca Conard and Tracy Ann Cunning, "The Advent and Development of Railroads in Iowa: 1855-1940" (National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1990), E8-E11.
[23] Ibid., E11.
[24] Ibid., E13.

with compass points. Iowa town plans, therefore, often reflect an inner core of early business streets laying parallel and perpendicular to the tracks, while outer streets are skewed toward true north. This creates unexpected angles in an otherwise predictable town grid.



Cresco, an example of a skewed original town plat with later realigned additions. ***From*** **Andreas,** ***1875.***

Railroads contributed far more to community building in Iowa than platting towns and delivering standardized building materials, great as those things may be. Railroads also disseminated rapidly changing *ideas and fashions* about new building methods, popular architectural trends, and the technological innovations—like premixed paint in transportable cans—that developed in the last half of the nineteenth century. Before 1850, architectural styles were largely the realm of eastern architects and trained builders who paid attention to European fashions. Copies of builders' books were rare and coveted by those in the trade. By mid-century, though, improvements in printing technology made newspapers, journals, and style books such as A.J. Downing's popular publications, much more available at affordable prices. By the time railroad construction reached western Iowa, and afterwards into the twentieth century, the choice of what to build on Main Street, how to decorate it, and what color to paint it were often choices influenced mostly by ads in newspapers and catalogs carried by the local lumberyard.

HOTELS.

"WE FURNISH THE POINTERS, YOU GET THE BUSINESS."

Rock Island, Ill.—About $6,000 will be expended by Wm. O. Negus for improvements to the Rock Island house.

Plattesville, Wis.—Wm. Goke will build a new building to replace the Plattesville hotel, which will be torn down. The new structure will be a 3-story brick, and cost about $13,000.

Lima, O.—J. C. Linemann will build a 5-story hotel building, 50x200 feet, on the site of the Burnett house, which will be torn down.

Cherokee, Iowa.—Josselyn & Taylor company, C dar Rap ds, are engaged on plans for a three-story brick and stone hotel to be erected by R. A. Lewis.

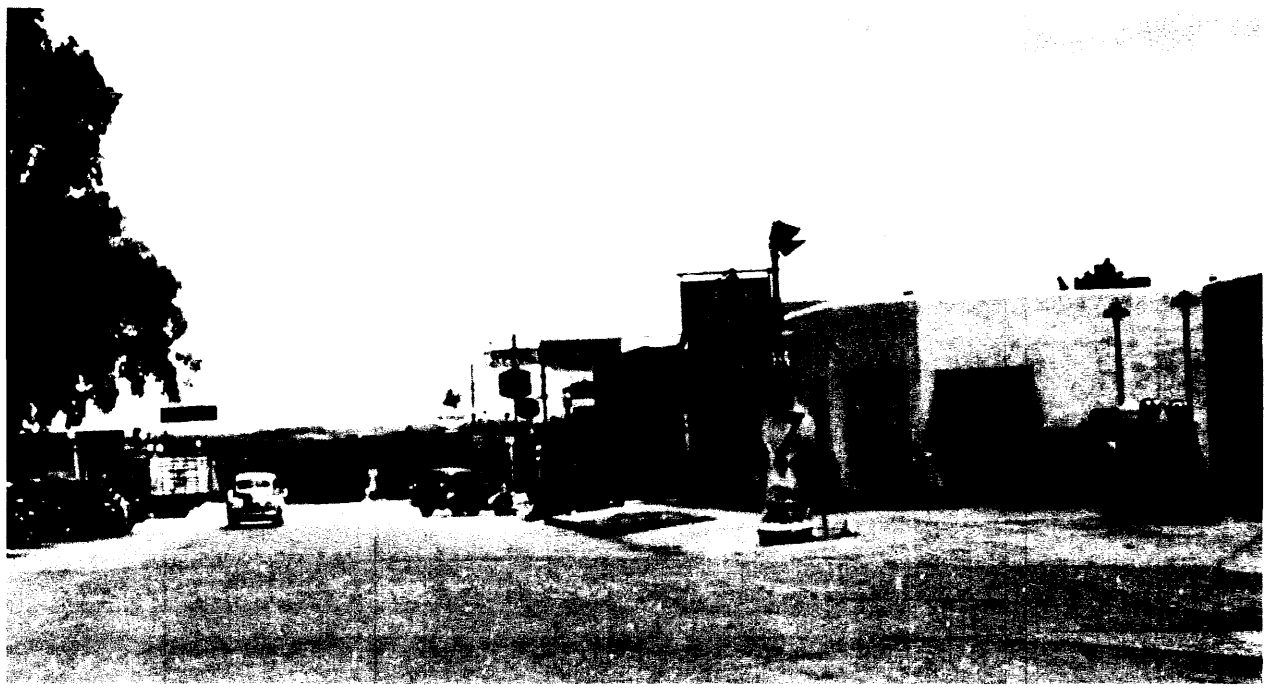
South St. Paul, Minn.—Plans have been prepared by Reed & Stem, architects, 601 Endicott building, St. Paul, for a brick and stone hotel to be built by R. Reber.

A form of architectural advertising, trade publication notices allowed a far flung community of builders and designers to communicate with each other. ***From*** **The Construction News,** ***March 9, 1898. Collection of SHSI, Des Moines.***

Changes in Transportation Bring Big Changes to Main Street

Not long after the peak of the railroad building at the end of the nineteenth century, a new agent of change appeared on the scene, creating a profound paradox for Main Street. The arrival of reliable and economically produced combustible engines in the first decade of the twentieth century—especially in the form of tractors, automobiles, and trucks—created tremendous opportunities for small town shoppers. On the one hand, freighting in manufactured goods became easier for communities that were not on a rail line, and getting into town to shop became vastly easier for rural residents all over the state. On the other hand, as roads improved in the 1920s and 30s, shoppers from both small towns and the countryside were not limited to their local Main Street. Often they kept right on driving down the road to the next largest town. Similarly, improvements in technologies on the farm resulted in fewer families being needed to produce ever increasing quantities of produce. Thinner numbers in the countryside translated to fewer Saturday customers for Main Street barbers and declining class sizes in the local school. "By the 1930s, the smaller towns across the country showed clear signs of business decline."[25] Larger towns benefited by the regionalization of shopping and the influx of rural dwellers to new residential suburbs, but overall their growth was slowed too.[26] The largest cities throughout the nation took the direct hit of the exodus from the countryside.

[25] Jakle, 122.
[26] Ibid.



This detail from a postcard reveals an impressive line up of auto-related services along a single block of Main Street in Logan, in western Iowa. Visible are signs for Shell, Mobile, and Standard gas stations, a local service garage, and a car wash. ***Courtesy of Lyell Henry.***

The dwindling population of farmers and small town residents shrank even faster after World War II, and a related trend severely affected the old business cores of Iowa's larger cities and towns. The automobile, combined with post-war prosperity, government finance programs, and a seemingly universal desire to live in a detached, single-family house surrounded by a grassy yard, resulted in massive movement to the suburbs. These suburbs remain the desired location for most Iowa and American families still today.[27] While some cities have managed to keep downtowns alive by replacing shoppers with office workers, many downtowns and old neighborhood commercial districts are in serious trouble. Servicing the needs of the new automobile culture at first brought new businesses to Main Street in the form of garages, dealerships, and gas stations, but eventually took so many people out of the core commercial areas, these new businesses struggled and failed too. There simply were not enough people coming downtown to do anything on Main Street. The automobile and related transportation improvements of the early twentieth century created easy and speedy travel, and with that, dramatically shifted patterns for shopping and living.

Living on Main Street and Gendered Space

Commercial districts by definition involve commerce, the exchange of goods and services, generally of a retail nature. An important secondary activity on Main Street though has always been domestic. In addition to hotels and

[27] See generally Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

"houses" that rented overnight sleeping rooms, larger cities had residential hotels for more permanent lodgers. Small towns often had one or more traditional houses mixed in with the store buildings on or near the edge of Main Street. The upper floors of nineteenth-century stores and brick blocks commonly were rented by workers, travelers, singles, families, and retired farm couples. Shopkeepers and craftsman kept sales rooms or offices in their residences at the edge or behind Main Street, and store owners mostly lived above the store. As the twentieth century progressed, second floor residential living declined as people moved to houses outside the commercial district. Second floor space was converted to meeting halls, libraries, professional offices, and often left vacant or used for light storage.

The vertical division of space on Main Street has traditionally had a gendered component to it. Though not well studied in Iowa, at the very least, the historical record suggests that gendered space on Main Street existed and this merits exploration in the study of any specific Main Street commercial district. With the exception of millinery shops, beauty shops, and eating places like tea rooms and cafes, ownership and control of street level floor space has largely been the domain of businessmen and craftsmen. Millinery shops were the exclusive territory of women, both in ownership and in staffing. Another, less predictable exception is the case of the widow who continued to operate the store or shop after her husband died. On the other hand, since much second floor space was devoted to lodging, both for a fee charged to boarders and lodgers, and as residential quarters for the shopkeeper families, the upper level of many Main Street buildings was under the control of females more of the time. The meeting halls of fraternal orders are the obvious exception to this. Records of upstairs brothels are predictably scant, however, local lore can often be tapped to locate such operations run by women. Buildings close to the railroad end of Main Street or near the depot are likely places to start. The mixed associations of commerce and gender, as well as of commerce and race and class, were viewed as undesirable by the 1890s, and thus are keys to understanding the movement of merchant families off Main Street and into the residential neighborhoods in town and, eventually, farther out to the suburbs of larger communities.[28]

2. The Landscape of Main Street, 1850-1952

The Fabric

Commercial streets, especially those that typify the traditional Main Streets in Iowa, share many of the same physical characteristics of business districts in other parts of the country. According to Carole Rifkind "the vast majority of towns laid down in America after the late eighteenth century employed the grid plan."[29] It was logical and efficient; it was also easy to accommodate on the flat topography of the upper Midwest. The eastern tradition of meeting-house village greens was translated in Iowa to central squares dedicated to county courthouses and grassy parks and usually faced by four blocks of attached brick business buildings.[30] Williamsburg, in the east central part of the state, has such a central park, the setting for a gazebo, benches, and a war memorial. Hampton, on the other hand, has an unusual double square that serves as home to the county courthouse on one block and a grassy park, bandstand, and fountain on the other. A centennial larch tree, planted in 1876, survives on Hampton's courthouse square. Grid plan business districts with central squares acknowledged the importance of maintaining public space in the midst of commercial activities. Where a town lacks a central civic space, Main Street itself becomes ceremonial public space. Many of the historic photographs

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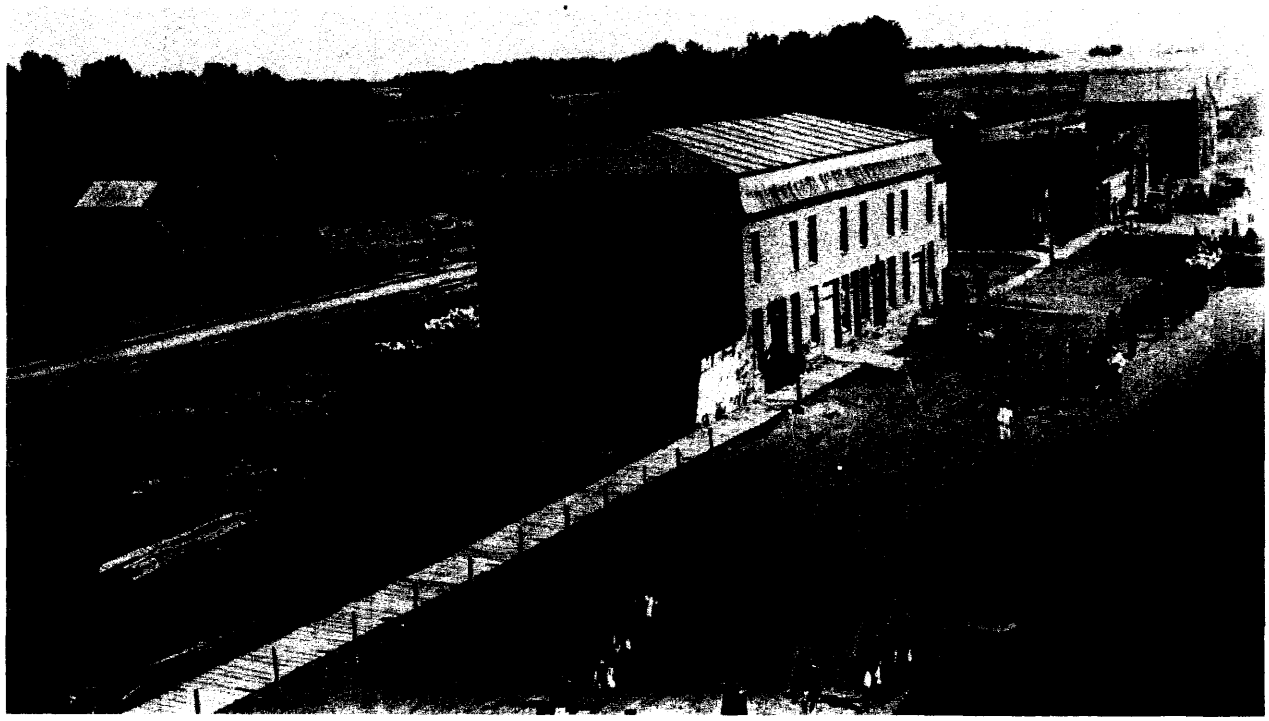
[28] Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 17.
[29] Carole Rifkind, *Main Street: The Face of Urban America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 17.
[30] Tom Schmiedeler explored the physical design of Iowa's 99 county seat towns, including central square plans, in "Frontier Forms of Iowa's County Seats," *The Annals of Iowa* 57(1998)1: 1-37.

that exist of commercial districts were taken only because the photographer wanted to record a Fourth of July or Armistice Day parade.

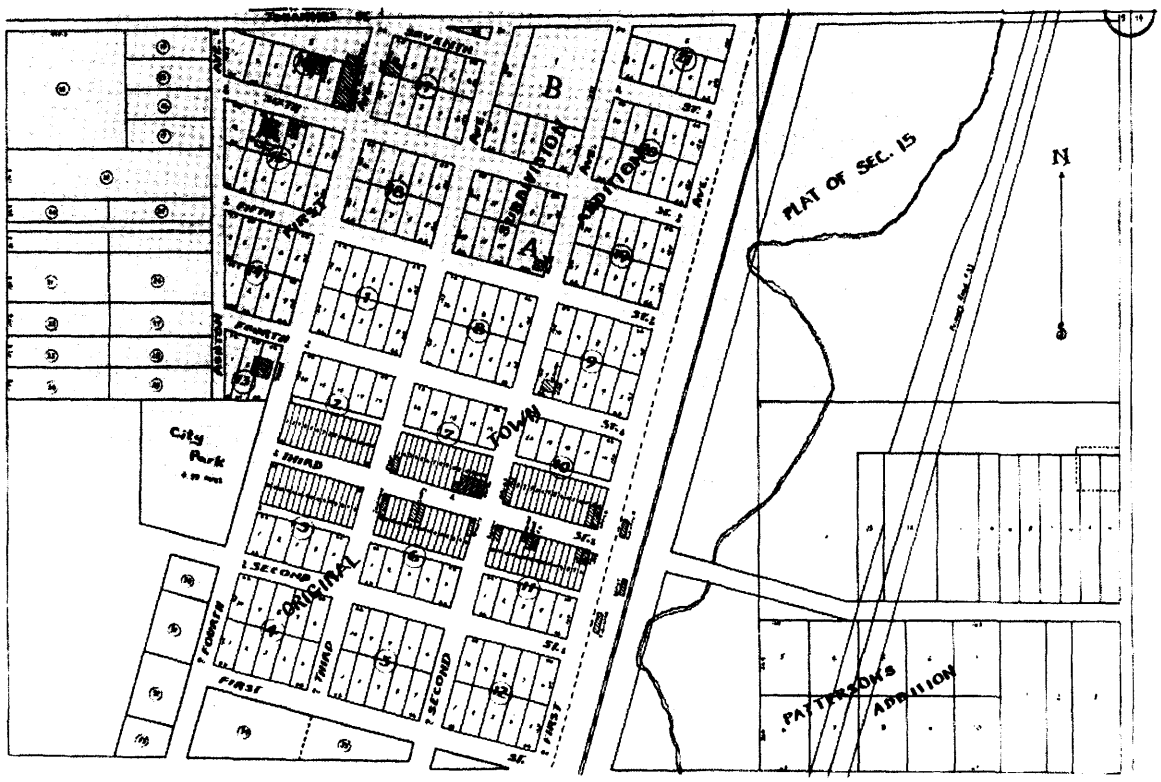


A turn-of-the-19th century Main Street parade marches past the opera house in State Center.
Courtesy State Center Historical Society.

Iowa Main Streets are mostly linear. Depending on the size and vigor of a community, its business district might be small, a block or two only, and capable of being entirely taken in visually from one end. It may be only a half-block or a single block deep, flanking the main road or highway through town. Or Main Street might parallel the railroad tracks through town or run perpendicular to form a T. In large communities, business districts spread out to encompass both the main street and the side streets intersecting it for several blocks. Cities could support commercial uses on both the main street and the minor streets paralleling it. Shops and businesses in larger districts then located according to their size and land values. In fewer locations across the state, topography dictated the course of Main Street, as in McGregor where stores and hotels lined up along a long natural drainage basin cut through the steep west face of the Mississippi River bluff. Side streets too, where they were possible, followed the course of smaller drainages to intersect the Main Street like branches on a tree, at sharp angles instead of the usual right. McGregor's steep bluffs also prohibited the town's businesses from spreading very far away from the main street, resulting in an elongated district rather than a more compact commercial core centered on the river port itself.

Town lots on Main Street were usually narrow and much deeper than they were wide. A typical residential lot could be divided on the town plat into two or three narrower lots for businesses that would be built to share party walls. Rear yards and alleyways behind Main Street provided access for unloading freight, and may have had space for a small barn to shelter the delivery wagon and team or the owner's buggy horse. After the 1910s, these were removed or

converted to garages. Outbuildings behind Main Street were used for storage, but the rear yard often gave way to building additions as the business prospered or changed over time. Corner lot buildings and detached frame stores had exterior staircases to second floor residential space; otherwise access was by way of stairs on the back or interior of the building.



Ashton town plat. Note the narrow Main Street lots. *From* Growing Together, 7.

It was the face of Main Street buildings, however, that was critical to their purpose and which now makes them so recognizable. For the most part, Main Street commercial districts are densely constructed blocks of attached brick buildings, each presenting a more or less standardized massing and arrangement of windows. Where the buildings are similar in height, materials, and width, development was likely rapid and the buildings constructed over a short period of time. Blocks that show a great variety of style, massing, and materials developed slowly over a longer period or had individual lots re-built, often after a fire. In small communities, residences still might be found along or at the edge of Main Street, where they are set back from the sidewalk, deeper on their lots than their neighboring storefronts.

Wood

The first Main Street buildings in new villages of the 1830s and 40s were likely wooden, and could have been of logs or hand-hewn beams. By the end of the 1840s, into the 50s, stores and other commercial buildings were more likely of rough-sawn native lumber. Industrious mill operators like S.M. Smith of Grant (aka Milford) in southwestern Iowa, and C.D. Smith (no relation) of Lake Mills in north central Iowa, located along watercourses all over the state where settlers were found or desired. Locally-milled native hardwoods—oak, walnut and hickory—were especially available in the

eastern part of the state. After the 1850s, Great Lakes white pine lumber became the staple construction material, especially in the tree-poor western counties where it was hauled in by the carload on the railroad.[31] Wood remained a favored construction material for the stores and shops of smaller towns, probably because labor was scarce and masonry skills unavailable. Local residents could manage the carpentry necessary for balloon framing. This fact also favored the use of sawn lumber when it became available, over heavy-timber framing, even in the eastern counties since the housewright skills required for working with heavy timber rivaled the level of expertise required for good masonry construction.

Fire was an ever-present threat on Main Street and it spread quickly along blocks of attached and closely spaced structures. Wooden buildings, therefore, were often replaced with masonry as soon as a store owner could afford it and the area had a local mason or two. Few towns escaped a fire in their downtown at some point in their development and before the 1860s, fire fighting systems were unorganized and often ineffective. "[W]hen fire erupted, men and women rushed to the scene and worked together in ad hoc bucket brigades, hauling water from cisterns or wells to [the] flames, while others carried goods from burning buildings."[32] Tiny Grant, Iowa, suffered through no fewer than three fires in 1915, 1920, and 1927. Oxford's 1890 fire, which burned 20 buildings and half the business district along Augusta Avenue, was started by an especially determined arsonist who also slashed the town's fire hoses.[33] Much larger Spencer, in the northwest part of the state endured a downtown fire in 1931 that leveled several blocks. If common sense did not lead to the replacement of wood buildings with masonry ones following a conflagration, fire ordinances were adopted to require it. By the 1870s, growing towns like Marshalltown and Boone had adopted codes that regulated the construction materials that could be used in their commercial districts. Fireproofing an existing building was also made easier with the introduction of stamped sheet metal cladding that could be applied over the top of wooden clapboards and generally by the increasing availability of iron and steel as building components.

The motivation for replacing a wooden store building was usually more complicated than just the avoidance of fire. Wooden store buildings were also replaced because they were too small to accommodate a growing business and for aesthetic reasons. Masonry was and is viewed as more substantial than wood. It could stand as a symbol of the prosperity and stability of the business. Masonry also replicated the older brick blocks of the eastern communities left behind by many Main Street businessmen and women. That familiar memory may have made it seem the natural evolutionary course of a town to convert wooden Main Street buildings to brick as time and resources permitted. Simple gable-fronted and false-fronted wood frame buildings were associated with the settlement period of a community's history, whether they were constructed in Michigan, Iowa, or Wyoming. Shopkeepers on Main Street in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were concerned with appealing to their customers. Certainly by late in the nineteenth century, plain and undecorated wooden store buildings simply looked out of date and that was bad for business.

Where wooden buildings are still found on Iowa's Main Streets, it is likely because the masons were unavailable or the town simply remained too small to need or justify rebuilding in brick. Considering the speculative origins of Iowa's towns, and the competition for residents, many small towns simply failed to thrive. The original Main Street shops continued to be used and re-used by new merchants and for new purposes through the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Failure of a town to thrive as its founders hoped also explains some of the open spaces in small-town commercial districts, though periodic fires and, later, active demolition does too.

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[31] Michael Williams, *Americans & Their Forests* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 161.
[32] Maureen Ogle, "Beyond the Great City: Finding and Defining the Small City in Nineteenth Century America," in *American Cities and Towns: Historical Perspectives*, Joseph F. Rishel, ed. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1992), 56.
[33] "Oxford's Holocaust," *The Oxford Journal*, September 4, 1890; also "The Fire Fiend," *Iowa City Daily Republican*, September 1, 1890.

Masonry

The masonry construction found in Iowa's commercial buildings includes stone, brick, concrete, and clay tile. Glacial erratics—boulders and cobbles—were collected in the nineteenth century from fields and through shallow excavations. Bedrock limestone was also an abundant building material throughout much of Iowa. It occurred naturally in cutbanks along rivers and was and still is quarried in operations of various sizes and mechanization. Limestone readily laminates or cleaves horizontally into long slabs, leaving only the vertical cut necessary to form it into building blocks. Only in the far northwest corner of the state was stone for building in truly short supply. There the rare exposures of Sioux Quartzite bedrock were quarried to produce a distinctive reddish or pink building block.[34] Commercial buildings in Sibley and Le Mars incorporate this building stone, which blended well with brick colors.

Stone was used extensively for the foundations of buildings constructed before 1870, but brick and later concrete eventually took over that function. Stone was also used in door and window lintels and sills, and as trim in beltcourses and water tables. After 1900, thin stone veneer became available to face storefronts, bulkheads, and store interiors.[35] While the state does not have a strong tradition of stone buildings on Main Street there are numerous examples of local masons executing entire buildings in stone. Immigrants from Luxemburg constructed stone buildings in far eastern Iowa and may have built buildings that served commercial functions.[36] Humboldt, in the north central part of the state, has a notable amount of limestone construction in its commercial district. Much of that stone was conveniently hauled out of a large quarry just behind Main Street itself. Once spent, the quarry was filled in and the land developed.[37] McGregor's stone, 1850s American House served travelers arriving at the river port.

Before the arrival of a railroad in the area, the bricks used to construct the walls of a commercial building or the foundation under a wooden one, were hand-pressed into molds, sun dried, and fired in small numbers near the construction site. After the railroad though, builders had access to mass-produced bricks from regional brick and tile manufacturers located elsewhere in Iowa and in other states. Brick, whether hand made or mass produced, constitutes the material used in the majority of Iowa Main Street commercial buildings. Storefronts and corner buildings often were faced with a finer decorative brick, while common soft, red bricks were used in the side walls. Decorative face brick could be produced in a wide range of colors, from dark reds and browns to contrasting tans and yellows. From the 1910s through 30s, extruded bricks produced by Midwest brick and tile manufacturers were raked or brushed while soft to produce a variety of surface patterns.

Brick pavers, larger and heavier than building bricks, covered the streets of commercial districts, usually before the community's residential streets. Cities and large towns paved their streets as municipal projects from the mid-1800s. Other early materials occasionally used were cedar blocks (Cedar Rapids) and cobbles (Burlington). After the turn of the century, smaller towns were pushed by the arrival of the automobile, with its thin tires that mired in Iowa's spring mud, to lay down pavers and macadam surfaces.

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[34] Prior, 80.
[35] Thomas C. Jester, *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1995), 193.
[36] Molly Myers Naumann, "A Survey of Limestone Architecture in Jackson County, Iowa" (unpubl. report to the Jackson County Historic Preservation Commission, 1990).
[37] Jan R. Nash, "Architectural Resources of Humboldt, Iowa" (Multiple Property Documentation form prepared for the City of Humboldt, 1994).

Increasing numbers of automobiles and trucks on Main Street necessitated hard surfacing the street as soon as a community could afford it. ***Courtesy Lyell Henry.***

As the1920s proceeded, concrete was increasingly used to pave rural roads and Main Streets that had not already been hard surfaced. State Center, on the Lincoln Highway, skipped the brick stage for its Main Street. A modern crowned concrete street and curbs replaced the dirt in 1930 and are still intact. Older brick streets were replaced by concrete eventually or were covered with black asphalt. The old brick pavers on the Lincoln Highway route down the main street of Woodbine in western Iowa, however, remain intact.

In the early twentieth century, the traditional materials of stone and brick, increasingly gave way to newer and improved masonry and concrete materials. These included concrete blocks (from about 1900 on), cast in molds to produce decorative faces and smooth-faced for hidden building areas. Lightweight cinder blocks were produced after 1917 and hollow concrete blocks were developed to eliminate weight. Between 1900 and 1920 blocks were made, like bricks, more locally using hand-operated metal machines that made single blocks. Foundations and whole buildings of rock-face concrete block that simulated the appearance of stone were fashionable during this period. "The early block machines came with a variety of face plates that imitated cobblestone, brick, and ashlar, as well as scrolls, wreaths, and roping. But the most popular face—the one that was standard on all machines of the period 1900-1930—was the rock faced, the rough-cut surface that looked like quarried stone."[38] Because there were many manufacturers of the small mold machines at this time, the decorative concrete blocks could vary in size considerably from one machine to the next. Downtown

[38] Jester, 60.

Calamus has a 1907-08 bank building in the center of a block that is made of unusually long rock-face concrete blocks, reflecting both the lack of standardization of block at this time and the tendency for bank building to be executed in stone, or stone-look-alike concrete. Fort Atkinson was among the Iowa towns that had small manufacturers of decorative cast concrete blocks for local consumption, and buildings in that town reflect the various faces that could be applied to concrete blocks using different mold sides. Oxford's local newspaper constructed a small, free-standing, building in 1915, of decorative blocks that including the swastika, a symbol of friendship and good luck before the Nazis in World War II forever altered its meaning.[39]

Cast stone and simulated stone products are also seen on Main Street buildings. Cast stone was developed in the late 1860s and is composed of a "highly refined form of concrete, made from Portland cement, fine and course aggregates, and water.[40] It could be used as veneer, block or ornament, and was labor intensive to produce. Popular especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "cast stone typically simulates evenly veined and colored stones." It was frequently used in ornate window hoods and window sills, much the way stamped sheet metal was. Though much of it is hidden behind modern plywood panels, a storefront in West Liberty contains an elegant two-story arcade of cast stone. Easily mistaken for cast iron, this form of storefront architectural component is probably much less common than its iron counterpart in Iowa. "Its manufacture—in molds—is labor intensive and site specific."[41]

Simulated masonry, on the other hand, is not uncommon and was used to remodel storefronts across the state after 1930. Often generically called by its most familiar trade name, Perma-Stone (made by Ohio based Perma-Stone Company starting in 1929), simulated masonry was molded to look like stone with a material made of cement, minerals, epoxy, and fiberglass, among other things. Some manufacturers made panels off site; other processes required mixing the material on site and directly applying it to the building. On site applications on existing buildings, like Perma-Stone, required first attaching wood or steel lath to wood walls (masonry and concrete walls did not require lath) and then applying the wet material directly to the building much like stucco.[42]

Concrete products became more standardized after 1920 as the industry organized to compete with other new masonry building materials. Chief among these competitors was structural clay tile, developed as early as the 1870s and used extensively through the 1930s. It was first applied to larger commercial buildings as a method of fireproofing iron and steel framing members. In smaller buildings, especially into the 1920s and 30s, it was used for foundations and wherever a glazed surface was desired for sanitation or waterproofing reasons. And structural "[c]lay tiles were widely used in the first half of the twentieth century for construction of infill walls in concrete and steel-framed structures."[43] Colorful facing tiles with a glazed, matte or mottled finish were also available by the late 1920s as an alternative to brick. Non-structural clay roofing tiles became popular from the late nineteenth century through the 1930s. The railroad depot in Atlantic, at the foot of Main Street, is clad in thin red clay roofing tiles. Second generation depots constructed across the state at the end of the nineteenth century made extensive use of clay tiles as a substitute for slate. Clay tile roofs had a stylish appearance and could withstand both the inclement Iowa weather and the cinders thrown off by steam railroad engines. During the 1910s and 20s, clay tile roofs were also found on Main Street buildings with Mission or Mediterranean-inspired styling.

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[39] On the development of concrete blocks, see Jester, 56-8; on the Calamus bank, see Jan Olive Nash, "Farmers State Bank, of Calamus, Iowa, and Farmers & Merchants Savings Bank, of Grand Mound, Iowa" (unpubl. report prepared for the First Trust & Savings Bank, Wheatland, Iowa, 1999), 2. For a discussion and photograph of the Oxford newspaper building see Jan R. Nash, "Oxford Historic Commercial District" (unpubl. report prepared for Oxford Project Main Street, 1995).
[40] Jester, 66.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 208.
[43] Jester, 168.

A similar material, terra cotta, has been available in the United States since the late 1860s, and was molded to produce both simple and intricate building decoration. In the nineteenth century, terra cotta manufacturers located near large clay deposits—central and eastern Ohio, parts of New Jersey, and Chicago. "Chicago was the center of the growing industry. The Chicago Terra Cotta Company, established in 1869, escaped the great fire of 1871 and provided materials for the rebuilding of the city...When the Chicago Terra Cotta Company failed in 1879, the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company took over many of its clients. Northwestern produced terra cotta for the early commercial buildings designed by architects of the Chicago School and by 1900 had become the largest manufacturer of terra cotta in the country."[44] Regional producers of concrete, clay tile and terra cotta also existed in Iowa. The Sioux City Brick & Tile Works, for example, produced its own materials and likely served as distributor for materials produced elsewhere. Sioux City's Lytle Company, organized in 1905[45] and builder of numerous early-twentieth century banks across Iowa, typically incorporated glazed terra cotta elements into its Main Street banks. Grand Mound still has such a bank sitting on the main corner of its commercial area, constructed in 1923 with walls of dark red face-brick trimmed with contrasting white glazed terra cotta.[46] Other banks were constructed by this company in Mapleton, Spirit Lake, and Sioux City among other places.

Glass

Glass served an important function on Main Street beyond the need for light and ventilation. Storekeepers relied on glass display windows to exhibit their goods and wares and attract customers. Where there was competition in town, window displays were necessary to catch the eye of sidewalk pedestrians and the occupants of vehicles on the street. The bigger the windows, the showier or larger the display could be. Similar to the story of other building materials, improving the quality and quantity of glass during the nineteenth century was a goal of industrializing manufacturers. Simple, thin window glass had served the earliest Main Street shops well because before iron beams were available most storefront windows were not any larger than domestic windows. Plate glass, thicker and stronger than window glass, was imported to the United States before the mid-nineteenth century making it costly and its use rare. Plate glass, however, perfectly fit the need created by the wider openings of new cast iron storefronts in the 1850s. Thus experimentation in its domestic production began in earnest.[47] It was not until the end of the Civil War, however, that British grinding and polishing machinery was imported and "polished plate glass was first successfully and continuously manufactured in the United States."[48] Ford Motors' invention in 1918 of a new method for producing thinner plate glass for its windshields ultimately resulted in consolidation of the plate glass and window glass industries.[49]

Store interiors before electricity were difficult to light, especially if the store faced north or had taller buildings across the street or trees nearby to shade the daylight. Prismatic glass was developed in the late 1890s to redirect available light to the back of the deep, narrow stores or, if installed in sidewalks, to basement storage rooms. Prism lights are small squares of glass with horizontal triangular ribs on the interior face that refract light. They were aligned in rows, joined by a grid of thin zinc caming and cement, and installed above the store windows and door, across the full width of the store's façade. Luxfer Company, founded in Chicago as the Radiating Light Company in 1896, was among the best known producers of prismatic glass. "The introduction of prismatic glass changed the architecture of office buildings and warehouses considerably. At a time when, especially in Chicago, facades were often reduced to little more than a simple post-and-beam construction with enormous windows, this new element assumed a prominent position: a horizontal

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[44] Jester, 175.
[45] Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 110.
[46] Nash, "Farmers Savings Bank...and Farmers & Merchants Savings Bank," 4-6.
[47] Jester, 212.
[48] Ibid., 213.
[49] Ibid., 214

checkerboard band, 2 to 4 feet high in the upper third of the storefront of the first one or two floors. It also occasionally influenced the floor plan, when existing light shafts were converted to additional floor space once prismatic glass had been installed. In newly planned buildings, light shafts were left out entirely and replaced by prismatic glass in the facades. Ceiling heights could also be reduced because light could reach deeper into the spaces, eliminating the need for high ceilings."[50] Electricity, combined with the installation and maintenance problems of the prism bands themselves, meant the disappearance of the building component itself by about 1940. The stylistic shift toward simplified Moderne storefronts in the 1930s and the development of large neon signs also contributed to the demise of prism glass. Glass blocks, first produced in 1932 and promoted by the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. at the 1933 Chicago "Century of Progress" world's fair, also proved a good substitute for prism glass, with fewer problems.[51]

Structural Glass

A thick, strong type of glass—structural glass—was manufactured during the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, and used extensively to remodel storefronts. Colored in opaque white, cream, black, red, blue, and other shades, large panels of this glass material were applied to buildings to achieve the sleek, modern appearance popular for the Art Deco and Streamline Moderne styles. The material is commonly referred to by its two best known trade names, Vitrolite and Carrara glass, and is only produced in Czechoslovakia at the present time.[52]

Metals

Increasingly after 1850, commercial and industrial architecture in Iowa benefited from the technological innovations in metal building components being developed in eastern states. No other single material changed the early brick-and-stone face of Iowa's Main Streets more than manufactured architectural ironwork, especially wrought and cast iron. The arrival of mass produced components in the form of columns and posts, window hoods, cornices, and even entire storefronts, converted Iowa's commercial districts from a simpler look of brick and stone to the exuberance of high Victorian design. Trade catalogs from eastern foundries circulated in the state and then railroads hauled in the orders. Cast iron, with its compressive strength, replaced the brick columns of the storefront's ground level, and thereby opened up the storefront for more window glass. Wrought iron and steel have better tensile strength than cast iron. Rolled into long lengths, wrought iron (and later steel) could replace the short heavy-timber headers that carried the load of brick above, further opening up the front of the store. Working together, cast and wrought iron storefronts could support themselves, independent of the building behind, but could also provide the support for the flooring system of the building too. Full iron fronts, though, were expensive like stone fronts, so the rest of the building was often constructed in brick and wood.

Virtually all cast-iron front buildings were erected during the mid to late 1800s.[53] They arrived in Iowa by the end of the 1860s and could be dispersed through the growing system of railroads. Local foundries produced cast iron columns and smaller architectural components, but where a local foundry was not available, the trade catalogs of larger regional foundries satisfied the demand. National foundries often "signed" their work, placing name plates in inconspicuous places on the store front. Cast-iron fronts and components were welcome additions to Main Street because they were perceived as fireproof, had no construction season to limit their installation, required little skill to bolt together, and, aesthetically,

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[50] Ibid., 227.
[51] Ibid., 231; also Jan R. Nash, "Iowa City Press-Citizen Publishing Building" (unpubl. report to the State Historical Society of Iowa, 1994).
[52] Paul J. Jakubovich and Les Vollmert, *Good for Business* (Milwaukee: City of Milwaukee, 1995), 47.
[53] Margot Gayle and David W. Look, *Metals in America's Historic Buildings,* Part I *A Historical Survey of Metals* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Documents, 1980), 51.

came in almost any style and were easily decorated and painted to the owner's choice. Starting with relatively restrained classical lines, the style for iron fronts became more ornate through the 1880s and 1890s. Improvements in steel production ultimately led to cast iron's demise. During the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, numerous iron front and all iron buildings were dismantled across the nation and recycled.

Cast-iron front. ***From Bogardus, Plate LXXVI No. 39.***

In addition to cast iron, other metal innovations became affordable at the time Iowa was building and rebuilding its Main Streets. Following the Civil War, tin was used to coat sheets of iron and used for roofing. Standing seam "tinplate" roofs were light and resistant to corrosion, but could not be used on the flat roofs typical of commercial buildings in Iowa. Lightweight sheet iron and steel were stamped into patterns for interior ceilings and into ornate exterior cornices and window hoods that were galvanized or coated with zinc to resist corrosion. Many of the state's Main Street hardware stores had "tin shops" (a misnomer) in their back lots dedicated to the sale and installation of sheet iron ceiling panels and cornices. Pure zinc was used for smaller decorative elements since it molded easily and was not expensive. "Moldings on late-19th-century American buildings that appear to be carved wood or stone are often cast or pressed sheet zinc or a combination of both."[54] Sheet metals, then, that were available from about 1870 through the 1910s included iron and steel, usually galvanized but sometimes tinplated, and pure sheet zinc. Paint was applied to protect these metals

[54] Gayle and Look, 18.

though zinc formed its own protective coating and, as a result, paint did not adhere well to either galvanized metals or pure zinc.[55]

Two of the largest fabricators of sheet metal components were George L. Mesker and Company of Evansville, Indiana, and Mesker Brothers of St. Louis, Missouri. "These firms together sold over 12,000 storefronts and shipped them by railroad to practically every state. Each year the two firms and others sent out thousands of catalogues...These commercial facades generally imitated wood, stone, and cast-iron fronts at a fraction of the cost of the other materials. The pieces of sheet metal were riveted and/or soldered together and then nailed to wooden framing. They came complete with doors, windows, and glass—everything that was needed to make a complete façade...[including cast-iron columns to carry the vertical load of the storefront]. In many small towns, especially in the West, the only buildings of any significance on Main Street may be the galvanized sheet iron storefront purchased through a catalog."[56] The Mesker companies also signed their iron fronts, and one Osage, Iowa, Main Street store still carries the name plates.

Cast iron and wrought iron were used extensively for structural purposes until the 1870s, when steel began to be produced and used in larger quantities. Railroad construction drove the steel manufacturing process and by the 1880s, steel was used for most rails and railroad bridges. Steel beams were first used in a commercial building in 1885 when William Le Baron Jenney added them to the upper floors of the Home Insurance Building in Chicago, but the transition from iron to steel was gradual.[57] Steel framing for larger, taller buildings became standard by the 1890s, though few but the most urban Main Street profiles required the lightness and load carrying capacity of steel.

Architectural styles in the early twentieth century, especially the 1920s and 30s, created a demand for white metals like: Monel, a trade name for an alloy of mostly nickel and copper available from 1917 to the present; aluminum, commercially produced from about 1884 to the present; stainless steel, produced from c. 1927 to the present; and "nickel silver," which in fact contains no silver at all and at most only 30 percent nickel. Nickel silver has been produced since 1835. All types of decorative architectural components and cladding were made of these metals, including interior grilles, panels, railings, doors, plumbing, and trim.[58] A 1932 trade publication put out by the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA) boasted about the fitness of aluminum for the architectural styles and commercial buildings needs of the time. "The present vogue for white-metal trim and decoration," the company insisted, "is met completely with...aluminum...and the variety of finishes that may be applied...satin finish...highly polished surface...hand-hammered...[or] etched..."[59] Aluminum, ALCOA claimed, was light, strong, and durable for storefronts, in addition to "satisfy[ing] the esthetic requirements of a contemporary building."[60] Further, "[t]he versatility of aluminum is becoming widely known for store and shop interior work...Available in all forms known to the metal-working art, it can be worked and shaped to the most exacting details."[61]

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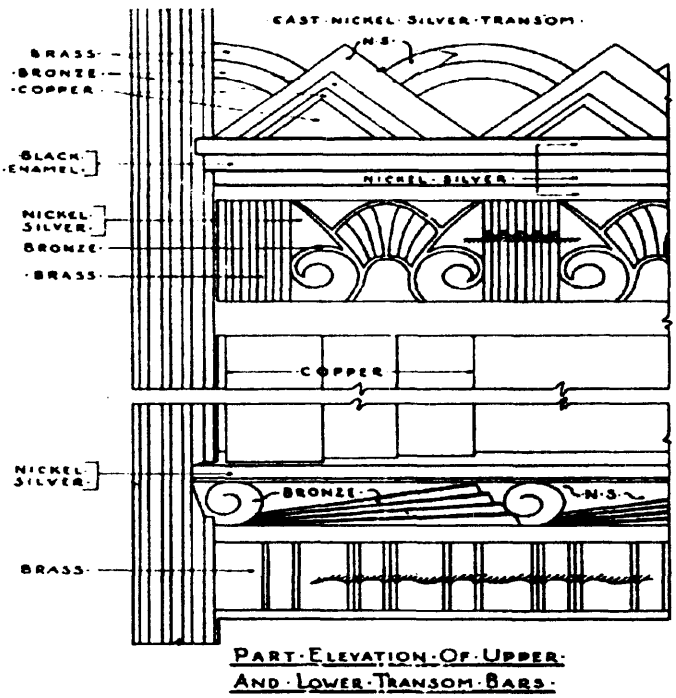
[55] Ibid., 20.
[56] Ibid., 21.
[57] Ibid., 74.
[58] A thorough discussion of the use of these metals in commercial architecture can be found in Jester, 2-55; and in Gayle and Look, Part I, at 35-41, 79, and 84-88.
[59] Aluminum Company of America, *Aluminum in Architecture* (Pittsburgh: n.p., 1932), 51.
[60] Ibid., 45.
[61] Ibid., 57.



PART ELEVATION OF UPPER AND LOWER TRANSOM BARS

Entrance details for a 1932 building in New York City reveal the range of modern metal alloys, including nickel silver, used to produce Art Deco styling. *From Gayle & Look, 38.*

Architectural Forms and Styles on Main Street

Depending on the size of the community, most Main Street buildings are relatively straight forward, functional structures. Generally, in all but the largest urban centers of Iowa, this meant common or vernacular forms dominated rather than architects' designs. A few traditional Main Street residents—banks and fraternal orders, for example—typically wanted to project more style and hired architects to plan their new buildings.[62] Banks wanted to express stability and prosperity; fraternal groups mostly made up of businessmen simply celebrated the success of Main Street itself. New office buildings constructed in the twentieth century were designed by architects and engineers as well, because of their increasing size and complexity. But whether vernacular or architect-designed, most new buildings on Main Street, if they were to be decorated at all, incorporated the styles popular at the time of their construction. The same fashionable styles that adorned the new dwellings in the state's residential neighborhoods were also found on Main Street. It was really the form and shape of commercial buildings not their styles that varied dramatically from house architecture.

Except for the general commercial function of Main Street, few scholars agree on a common property typology for understanding the buildings themselves. In *The Buildings of Main Street* (1987), Richard Longstreth pointed out that until the early nineteenth century, commercial buildings as separate identifiable property types did not really exist. The exchange of goods and services took place in shops that existed as a part of a residence, or in public markets without permanent structures.[63] After the early 1800s, though, until the mid-twentieth century and the rise of the automobile, *property lot configuration*—the size and shape of the piece of land on which a building would be constructed—was the "most important determinant of [commercial] form."[64] Since commercial buildings were clustered together, nestling right up to the sidewalk in front and often needing to maximize building size to the rear, the construction of any particular building was adjusted to fill the attributes of its lot. Narrow lots resulted in narrow buildings, corner lots resulted in more imposing buildings, a diagonal intersection resulted in buildings with odd angles. It reasons, then, that in densely populated areas, where land was expensive, lots would be small and buildings heights would increase. In smaller towns, property owners in commercial districts had little incentive to build tall. Once the nineteenth-century pattern of "living

[62]For example, architect Howard B. Burr designed the exotic Masonic Hall in Waterloo in the early twentieth century; Charles Dieman did the same for the Iowa City Masons in 1913. Sioux City's Lytle Company designed banks for small and medium sized towns all over the state. Even the famous Chicago architect, Louis Sullivan, was engaged to design banks in this state, such as Grinnell's well known jewel-box corner bank building.

[63] Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1987), 12.

[64] Ibid., 17.

above the store" was largely abandoned, new Main Street buildings in Iowa tended to be a single story. Where more space was needed, the business simply took over another adjacent lot.

In his study of Main Street architecture, Longstreth looked at only the core blocks of retail stores, hotels, banks, and theaters, reducing them to a series of façade components—two-part commercial block, stacked vertical block, central block with wings, enframed block, among others. Freestanding buildings like railroad depots, and gas stations and other automobile roadside businesses were ignored. In Iowa, though, many of these properties shared Main Street with traditional storefronts and contributed in significant ways to community life and the patterns of activity in the downtown area. While Longstreth noted the potential origins that shaped the form of his property types and referenced dominant stylistic details, his approach split the façade features of a very few buildings into many abstracted parts. In order to understand the streetscapes of most Iowa commercial districts, more information is needed about how the buildings functioned in the commercial world, who was using them, and how and why they changed to respond to shifting patterns of commerce.

Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings likewise addressed only a few commercial property types that they found dominant in their study, *American Vernacular Design, 1870-1940* (1988). Their focus was on post-railroad vernacular architecture affected by the increasingly industrialized, standardized, and mass-produced nature of building components. By their research design then, pre-railroad construction that used native resources and traditional production skills was not included in the authors' typology. Because eastern Iowa (and some Missouri River locales) was settled before the arrival of the railroads, however, such traditional buildings are a part of Main Street. Gottfried and Jennings did, however, distinguish between a "store," which traditionally operated in an entire building, and a "shop" which only used part of a larger building. In Iowa, this distinction is useful to keep in mind when looking at communities in eastern Iowa, and in the smallest villages anywhere in the state that failed to grow or thrive, or in towns that were abandoned very early in their history.

In addition to the store and the shop, Gottfried and Jennings identified several other distinct building forms including the movie theater, business block, corner business block, café, and hotel. Opera houses, stables, garages, and depots are not addressed as commercial buildings despite their proximity to Main Street in many small Iowa towns. Mills, elevators, and lumberyards–also a part of many Main Street commercial districts—are not classified as commercial but industrial. Key characteristics of commercial forms identified in the authors' study are described in greater detail. The false-front parapet of a wood frame building, for example, might be stepped, round- or peaked-pedimented, or pedimented *and* stepped.[65] Or the brickwork on a storefront included corbelling, beltcourses and pilasters.[66] But the authors struggled with the relative importance of architectural style versus building form in commercial construction, sometimes defining a store by its form—as in the "gable front" or "modern broad front"—and sometimes naming it by a predominant architectural style—the "Romanesque" or the "Italianate," for example.[67] This struggle typifies attempts to come to grips with a form of historic architecture and constructed landscape that was difficult to categorize, subject to remodeling and alteration at the whim and pocket book of the merchant, and undergoing a continuing evolution during late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from multiple functions sheltered in a single building, to specialized goods or services housed in unique structures constructed for the purpose.

The commercial building typology that follows, then, lies somewhere between Longstreth's abstract dissection of commercial facades and Gottfried's and Jennings's mixed categories of post-railroad form and style. It is both based on

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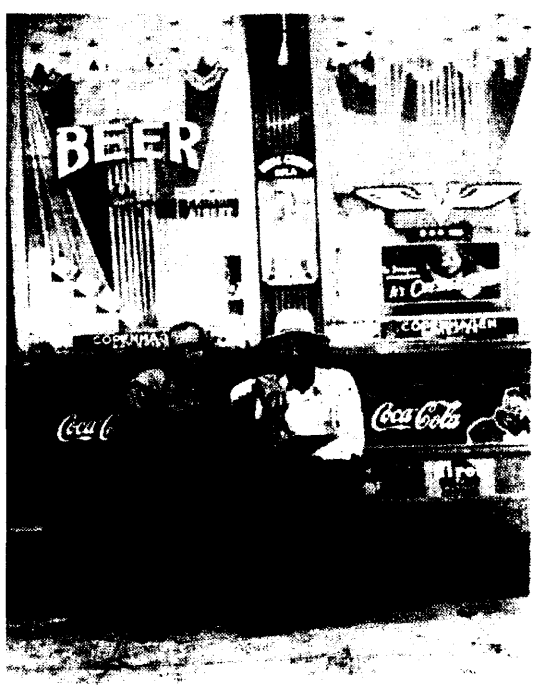
[65] Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings, *American Vernacular Design, 1870-1940* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988), 245.
[66] Ibid., 166-67.
[67] Ibid., 247, 249, 246, 239.

overarching historical patterns described earlier and on specific examples encountered in the field in Iowa and in the historical record, including historic line drawings and photographs. The typology attempts to define typical buildings that were constructed during broad eras of Iowa community building and chronological periods. Where style is a strong component of the overall building type it is included.

Commercial Districts

As important as evaluating individual buildings is, however, it is necessary to remember that the overarching significance for the majority of commercial buildings stems from their location on Main Street, not their individual status. The role these buildings played in the trade and commerce of a community is most fully understood by viewing them not as single players, but as members of a group that collectively constituted the town's business or commercial district. The commercial district—often referred to as the "heart" of a community—was central to the economic health of a town and crucial to providing a communal space where the social networks of the residents were reinforced. Commercial districts also provided the civic space where the political views and community memory could be expressed, either in verbal discourse or through symbolic actions like parades and flag displays.



Benches in front of storefront bulkheads invited conversation and reinforced the social networks of the town. *From* Growing Together, *73.*

Beyond the buildings themselves, numerous objects, sites, landscape features, and constructs of commerce are found on Main Street and contribute to its essential character. The street plan itself, together with parks and green spaces, and courthouse squares, are part of this special character of Main Street; so are the streets, curbs, gutters and other drainage structures. Streets that started as dirt were paved with bricks and then with concrete, usually before the town's residential streets. Early curbs and buggy steps were made of stone and later replaced with concrete. Street lighting and traffic controls, sidewalks, fireplugs, planters and trashcans all became familiar features of Main Street. In the park, bandstands, gazebos, picnic tables and benches, memorials to the Civil War and later conflicts, and fountains—especially those installed during the turn of the century when the City Beautiful movement was in full swing—all assisted in maintaining the shared sense of community.

Drinking fountain in the public square, Williamsburg, Iowa.
Photograph by Tallgrass Historians L.C., September 4, 2001.

Some features were attached to the buildings themselves and were more or less limited to a town's commercial districts. Sign painting on the blank walls of larger buildings augmented smaller signs and signboards at street level. Roll-out canvas awnings sheltered pedestrians and customers from rain and controlled the daylight into the interior, necessary in the hot Iowa summers. Hinged wood panels as wide as the storefront were used in the nineteenth century to provide security and shelter also. During the day, the wood panel was propped up to provide shelter for the store's entrance; at night the panel was dropped down to cover the face of the store for security. The significance of these ancillary resources, those that facilitated the flow of commerce or developed because of it—the streets, light poles, signage, and the like—and those that sustained the community's shared sense of place, all become more understandable within the group context too.

Finally, when viewing a district of buildings and secondary resources, it is also necessary to understand that most commercial districts are composed not of just one building type or another. More likely there will be a mix of building types, construction periods, and remodeling face-lifts present, representing an evolution of the district over time. Evolution and change over time are fundamental characteristics of nearly all Iowa commercial districts, especially at street level. Empty lots on Main Street may reflect the generalized failure of the town to grow and thrive as expected, but they also might reflect the occurrence of a catastrophe, frequently a fire or tornado. The nineteenth-century desire to locate a town along a good river, as a source of drinking water and power for riverbank industries, has resulted in seasonal flooding in most Main Streets that remain in the flood plain. Independence, Dunkerton, Sioux City, and Fayette are but a few towns that have suffered repeatedly from flooding. Eventually, merchants just stop rebuilding and move elsewhere. Empty lots on Main Street are also caused in more recent years by active demolition by property owners and the town officials themselves. Buildings are brought down because they are unstable or eyesores from lack of maintenance and because they are perceived liability risks and attractive nuisances.

First Generation and Settlement Period Buildings

1830s to late-1850s

Though masonry buildings were not unheard of, the first commercial buildings in town were typically constructed of wood and were close cousins to residential architecture. During the 1830s and 40s, the earliest trading house or crossroads store may have evolved from or shared space in the business owner's dwelling. Log construction and lumber from local water-powered sawmills, with foundations of fieldstone or soft clay bricks, reflected the handmade nature of the state's first stores and shops. A fewer number of stone or brick buildings date to this early period, usually because of the lack of the skilled labor necessary for such buildings. Gable roofs covered these simple, square or rectangular structures. Hotels, also called "Houses" at the time, often retained vestiges of their residential character longer than other types of settlement forms, with features like porches and balconies common.

Crossroads "store & residence of H. Noble, Edgewood, Clayton County, Iowa" in 1875. The main building's low-pitched gable roof and the symmetry of its windows and door reflect a construction period as much as two decades before this image was published. The sign above the front awning reads "post office," reflecting the multiple functions commonly served by early stores. ***From Andreas, 179.***

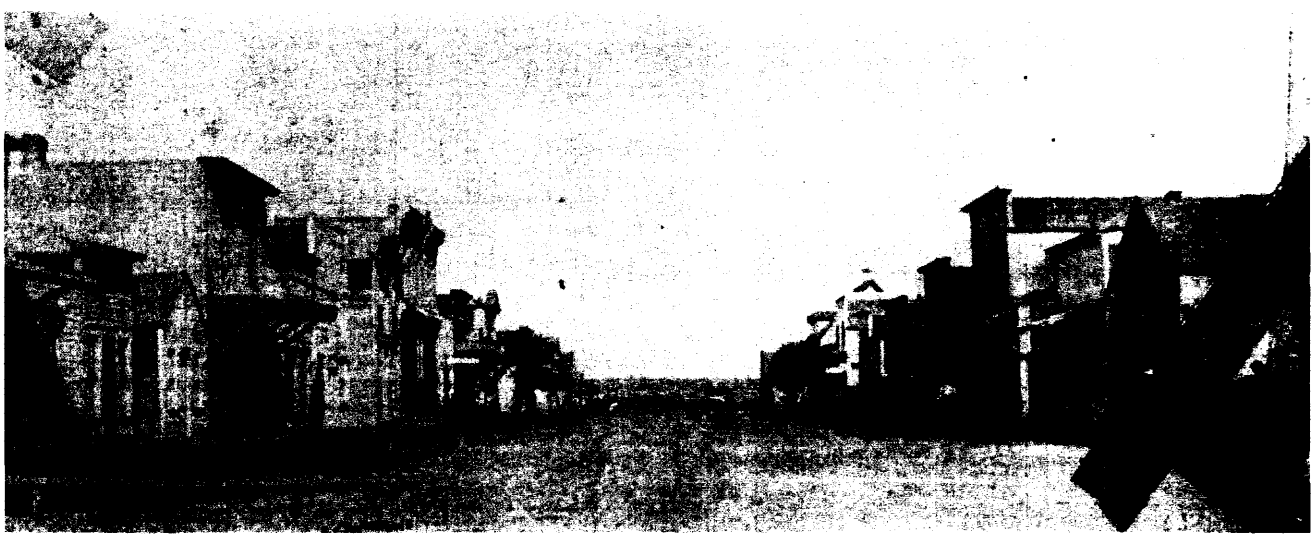
"The Union Hotel," c. 1859, in the east central, county seat town of Tipton offered its guests the benefit of a cool breeze on its second-floor sitting porch. The flat pitched roof and "temple-front and wing" overall shape are Greek Revival.
From SHSI, IC; reprinted in Bennett, 97.

Post Railroad (1860 and beyond)

The pattern of settlement architecture seen in eastern Iowa in the 1830s, 40s and 50s was repeated in towns farther west in the state's interior, but the long and narrow lots of new railroad town plats increasingly dictated a change in the shape of store buildings. Clustered together these store buildings—both wooden and masonry—were deeper than they were wide, and both one and two stories tall. Wooden buildings were covered by wood-shingled gable roofs and siding was sawn planks or later milled clapboards. False fronts with a raised parapet that hid the gable peak were common. The false front made a wooden store building look bigger than it really was and established a substantial and regular profile on the street. Both one and two-story wood-frame buildings sported false fronts. Generally, decoration was kept to a minimum, but Greek Revival and Italianate details were applied to buildings of this type and period. Peaked or pedimented false fronts and window lintels, pediment returns, oculus attic windows, and wide fascias are typical Greek Revival details. Heavy single and paired eaveline brackets, and rounded or arched window lintels are among the most common Italianate ornament applied to both wood and brick buildings of this period.

"First store" in Webb, in northwestern Iowa, 1899. The simple wooden building appears to have board-and-batten siding for its walls *and* covering its roof. Note the woman standing outside the canvas tent with a smokestack—maybe the town's first restaurant? *From SHSI, IC; reprinted in Bennett, 79.*

Ossian's "Great Western Emporium," in northeast Iowa in 1860. The gable-end front is clad in milled drop siding, while the less formal sides are covered with cheaper board-and-batten siding. The signage painted across the façade advertises "STAPLE AND FANCY...DRY GOODS...CLOTHING, PAT. MEDICINES, BOOTS & SHOES...HARDWARE, CROCKERY ETC." The store appears to be connected at the rear to another building, perhaps the storekeeper's residence.
From SHSI, IC; reprinted in Bennett, 78.



First generation buildings along Ashton's Main Street in northwest Iowa, 1885. Ashton is a railroad town in which the Main Street was drawn perpendicular to the tracks. Note the mix of one and two story buildings; the prominence of false-front pediments, and the drop-down wooden panels that provided both climate control and overnight security.
From* Growing Together, *24.

Street side amenities were few in the earliest generations of Main Street and existed largely due to the sporadic efforts of individual merchants rather than organized town authority. Sidewalks were wooden boardwalks if shoppers were lucky. If they weren't, plank platforms in front of individual stores may have been the only dry places available during Iowa's seasonal mud. Dirt streets were often defined by the traffic patterns of wagons. Where traffic was light, the street surface reverted to weeds and grass. Hitching posts and rails reflected the horsepower that drove transportation on Main Street and traffic controls were unnecessary. Signs advertising a store's wares were painted directly on the sides of buildings or were simple board signs hung across the side wall or façade of the store.

Second Generation Buildings: Reconstructing Main Street

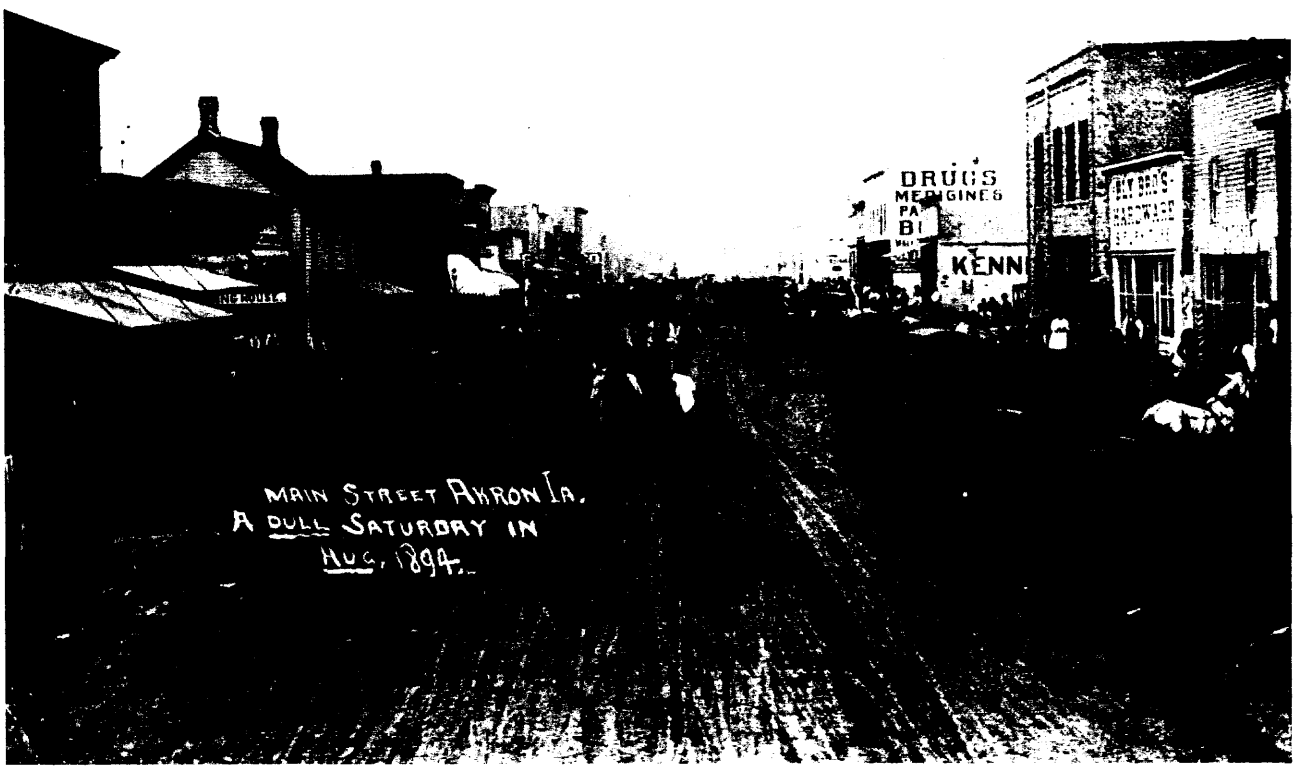
1850s-60s

By the 1850s in the eastern part of the state, in the growing cities like Des Moines, and in Council Bluffs, Sioux City and other spots along the Missouri River, population densities had increased and small wooden buildings were no longer suitable. The commercial districts in these towns expanded to fill empty lots and other lots were redeveloped after the wooden buildings were removed by demolition or fire. The new structures were more substantial buildings of brick or stone. The mostly native-born, East Coast, and Yankee origins of the earliest settlers are reflected in these larger buildings. Two and three stories tall, the attached buildings shared party walls that often had taller firewalls and chimneys; they had gently sloping roof lines, sometimes with attic dormers, and façade walls with small closely-spaced windows topped by flat lintels of stone or heavy timber. Street level openings were small and few because of the masonry mass required to support the upper floors. Decoration, where present, was usually limited to several courses of corbelling or other brick patterns at the eave line. The Greek Revival style was popular in Iowa during this period and classical details as well as the occasional "temple front" form could be found.

Iowa City's "Main Street" (Clinton Street), 1854 or 56, recorded in an extremely early photograph of a commercial street in Iowa. The buggies and covered wagons are stationed in front of the state capitol's green square, making the stores to the right prime real estate. An evolving commercial block is seen with a mix of small, wooden buildings—first generation stores—and larger brick blocks that clearly anticipate attached neighbors. A pile of dirt in the street may be the result of a new basement being scraped out by the horse team standing beside it. *From SHSI, IC; reprinted in Bennett, 267.*

1860s-80s

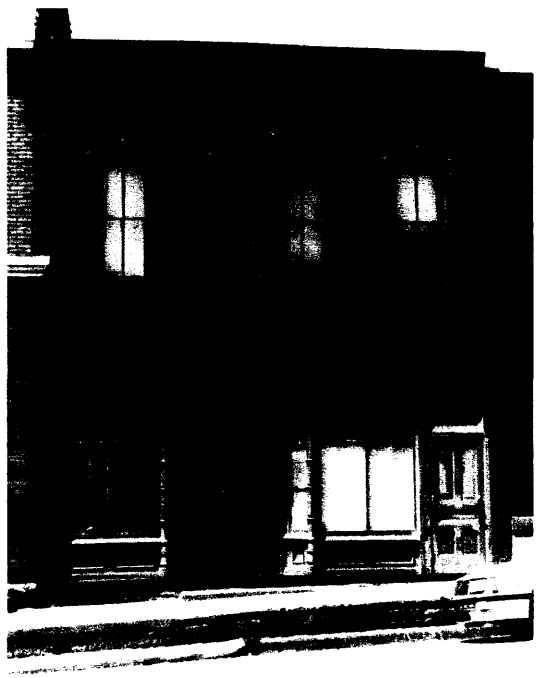
The arrival of the railroad, especially being the "end of the line" for a temporary period during the railroad's construction, brought prosperity to Main Street and continued growth in the commercial district. County seat towns had an additional advantage and Main Street stores shared space (often second floor offices) with lawyers and other professionals who served the needs of both town and rural residents. Larger hotels or "houses" and livery stables that rented rigs to traveling salesmen; passenger and freight depots, grain elevators, and related shipping buildings; and courthouses and small office buildings (that could be a converted residence) were built within the commercial districts of these fortunate towns. Market towns that lacked a railroad or government function had Main Streets that grew slowly, were more subject to economic boom-and-bust cycles, and were therefore constructed with the widest variety of building forms, materials, and stylistic influences.



"A Dull Saturday" in Akron, Iowa, on the border with South Dakota, 1894. Though most buildings are still wooden false-fronts, a few substantial masonry buildings have been constructed. The large building on the right, next to "Bly Bro's Hardware" has a façade of stone ashlar that changes to brick for the sidewall construction. ***From SHSI, IC; reprinted in Bennett, 280.***

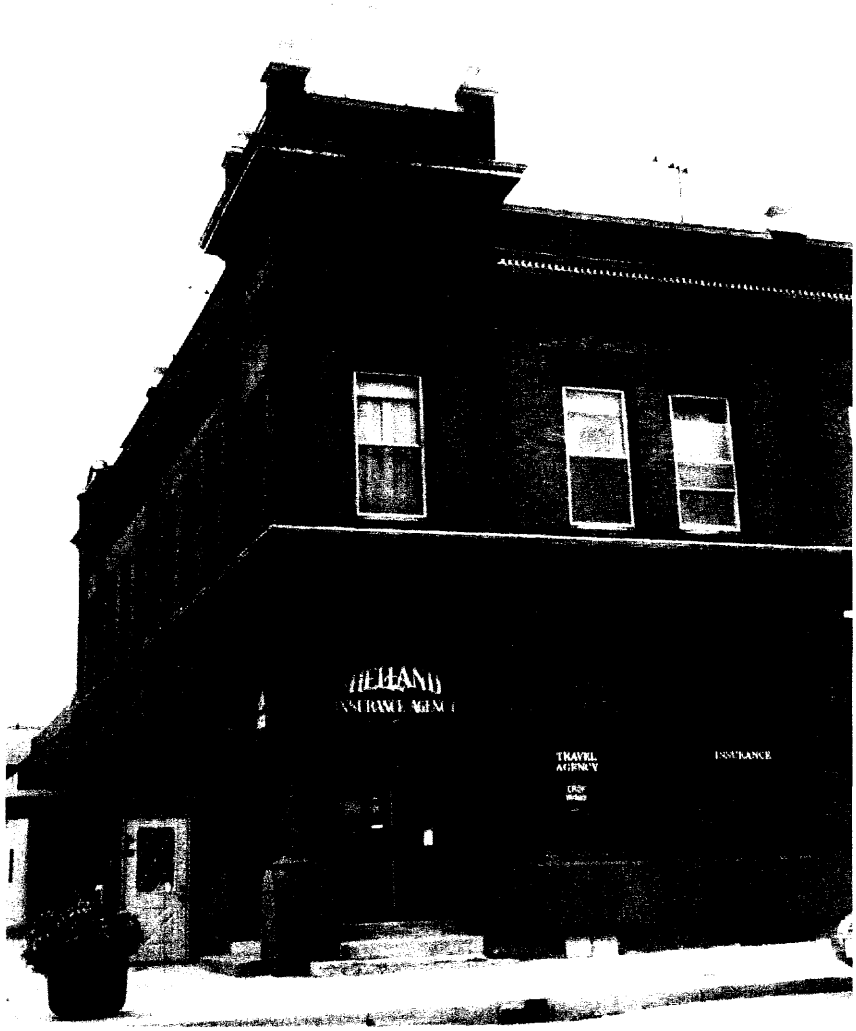
1870s – 1920s

Cast iron store fronts, stamped sheet metal architectural details, and an expanding array of manufactured building materials were increasingly incorporated into new construction on Main Street. Metal storefronts displayed stylistic influences ranging from understated classical dentils and column capitals, to complicated high Victorian Italianate designs. The façade of Main Street buildings protruded over sidewalks with oriel windows, conical towers, and exaggerated cornices. The towers and oriels had the added benefit of increasing light and air circulation in upper level residences and offices.



Jeweler William H. Poole's cast-iron storefront, c. 1891, Oxford, Iowa.
Photograph by Tallgrass Historians L.C., 1995.

By the 1890s, the Romanesque and, to a lesser degree, Queen Anne styles brought old materials back to Main Street, but used them in new ways. Richardsonian Romanesque and, more generally, the Romanesque Revival, incorporated rock-face stone, usually in rich colors, and contrasted it with highly polished granite columns, and ornamental terra cotta plaques. This treatment, together with the use of stout arcades of round-arched openings at the street level resulted in a massive and heavy feeling, perfectly suited to a corner lot on Main Street. The pivotal corner of Lake Mills's L shaped commercial district—the inside corner lot of the intersection of Main and Mill streets—is anchored by such as a grand building, the Joice building constructed by a prominent banker and real estate speculator in 1900. The Queen Anne influence is less obvious and largely felt on Main Street in the use of multiple surface textures, rounded step parapets, and colored art glass windows, with towers and oriels remaining popular.



The Romanesque P.M. Joice building, 1900, Lake Mills, Iowa.
Photograph by Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2001.

Newton's Lister Opera House block in the 1890s was a grand edifice that was likely architect-designed. It falls into the Queen Anne category because of its complex decorative brickwork, applied ornament, and varied window sizes and shapes. The "art glass" transom panels above the store windows are typical Queen Anne features that could be ordered from builder supply catalogs, often containing ruby red, cobalt blue, and sunny yellow glass panes. Three stories tall, the building is divided into three vertical bays, and has five entrances at sidewalk level. One of these doors no doubt led to the second floor opera hall; a second to third floor apartments or, perhaps, rooms for the traveling theatrical troupes. Other doors led into the three street level retail spaces: a newspaper, a bank (apparently), and a bakery. Note the array of secondary Main Street objects visible: canvas awnings over storefronts; brick streets, stone or concrete curbing, telephone wires hung from a tall pole, sign boards nailed to the side walls of the opera house and the building it faces across the street, and the hitching post to which the horse and buggy are tethered. *From SHSI, IC; reprinted in Bennett, 163.*

After the turn of the century, prospering Iowa merchants riding the crest of the golden age of agriculture in the surrounding countryside continued to respond to popular styles, especially Revivals. Merchants concerned with projecting a more modern appearance, though, incorporated Mission and Mediterranean details instead, like Spanish tiles and stucco surfaces.[68] The needs of the new sales and service businesses precipitated by the automobile introduced a new form of building to Main Street, usually located at its edges. These new buildings were low-slung, single story affairs that spilled

[68] The 1915 Lincoln Hotel, on the Main Street route of the Lincoln Highway through Lowden, Iowa, incorporated pebble dash stucco and wide overhanging eaves as an economical reference to the sun-drenched architecture of California. The hotel's owner counted on attracting transcontinental motorists traveling to the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. See Jan Olive Nash, "Lincoln Hotel" (National Register of Historic Places registration, 1996).

that eliminated interior posts and created a clearspan for the ease of moving vehicles around inside. Their arched roofs were hidden behind stepped gables that referenced the earlier false fronts of nineteenth century wooden stores. The facades of these new buildings most often used brick veneer in decorative ways, with colored brick with raked textures, recessed brick panels, and checkerboard placement of colored bricks or concrete squares common. Under the gable were enormous plate glass windows—the display window of the old Main Street merchant writ large. Often prism glass panels were placed over these plate glass windows. Because this new type of commercial building offered such ample floor space for retail goods, it was also adopted for use by the increasing number of "five and dime" stores that were opening.

Secondary resources from the next generation of Main Street building included streetway amenities initiated by local authorities and funded by tax dollars. Main Street dirt was replaced by brick, concrete, or asphalt. Curbs were installed to formally demarcate street from sidewalk and gutters channeled water through the district. Towns with special storm water drainage problems, such as McGregor, invested in infrastructure projects that made life for merchants and shoppers alike much easier. Civic authorities installed street lamps and then electric lights, and traffic controls were put in place. Store front signage became more elaborate as technology for illuminating them improved. Hanging signage increased in size also, to accommodate the increasing speed of the passerby, from a pedestrian and buggy rate to that of automobiles and trucks.

DeWitt, Iowa, with traffic controls installed, probably because of the increasing number of vehicles using the Lincoln Highway. ***Detail of postcard courtesy of Lyell Henry.***

Specialized Buildings on Main Street

The first buildings on Main Street served multiple functions. For example, the original wooden store at a modest mid-nineteenth century crossroads village may have served as trading center for produce brought in from the countryside, the only post office for miles around, *and* the lodging and refreshment stop for the stagecoach line. The first hotel in town could have been the second floor lodging rooms above the saloon, which also served the only meals in town. A town hall might have been located in a converted church as it was in Williamsburg before the 1930s. As the century wore on, however, and as towns grew, buildings tended to become more specialized and house fewer functions. Chief among these buildings tailored to their unique function, were civic, religious, and educational buildings like the courthouse and jail, churches, and schools and libraries. Banks and fraternal orders constructed freestanding, often architect-designed, edifices intended to project messages of success, order, and stability. Automobile related buildings come later in time and serve a distinctly different need than traditional Main Street commerce. They are often, therefore specialized building forms and located at the edge or corners of the commercial district. Gas stations represented the end of a long evolutionary line of fuel dispensation methods. The first gasoline was available only as a gravity-flow metal and glass tank on the curb in front of the local hardware or grocery store. The dangers inherent in this, plus the competition between gasoline companies, eventually led to freestanding gasoline and service stations with recognizable decorative motifs. Environmental regulations since the 1970s have led to closure of many locally owned, small town gas stations and service garages. Industrial buildings such as mills and elevators likely always reflected unique attributes, as did railroad depots.

Remodeling Main Street: Face-lifts and Later Additions

Older buildings that were substantial and serviceable were often updated with new materials as they became available, either to give a stylish new appearance to an older building or because of concerns for fire. Usually the updates that referenced a particular new or fashionable style were at the street-level only, but wooden buildings sometimes received a complete face-lift. The Candy Kitchen building in Wilton, Iowa, for example, a false-front wood frame building constructed in the mid-1850s, was retrofitted in the 1910s with sheet metal siding, stamped in a brick pattern. A wooden corner store in State Center, McMahon & Son, was likewise covered with patterned sheet metal, but stamped in a rock-face pattern. The stamped rock-face pattern resembled rock-face cast concrete, a fashionable new masonry project of the 1910s and 20s. It is hard to say whether the rock-faced sheet metal was meant to imitate stone or the new concrete block.

Art Deco and Art Moderne influences were very popular on Main Street during the late 1920s to the early 1940s, especially for storefront remodeling and theater buildings. Iowa City sported several such face-lifts downtown, including Smith's Café and Mott's Drugstore. A vertical zigzag Art Deco façade was also applied to a downtown movie theater after the original storefront building burned (Charles City also had a zigzag theater building downtown).

Structural glass dominated Smith's Café in Iowa City. ***From Mansheim, 175.***

Some face-lifts on Main Street have been more in the nature of quick fixes with inexpensive materials that leave little of the original character of the building exposed. Depressed local economies in many small towns, together with permanently altered patterns of using space on most Main Streets, led to a lack of general maintenance, "slipcovered" storefronts covered with corrugated sheet metal or Perma-stone, and bricked or boarded over windows.

Modern Infill

Once a historic Main Street building was removed for any reason, intentional or not, if the local economy can support it, a new building was constructed on the empty lot. New buildings after World War II often needed additional lots to provide for parking or more retail floor space and so an adjacent older building was removed as well. Grocery stores and automobile dealerships were often the type of business responsible for demolition and rebuilding parts of Main Street. With growing numbers of motor vehicles, however, these businesses now build new facilities at the edge of town, abandoning Main Street altogether.

F. Associated Property Types

Property Type I: Commercial Districts

Description

Historic commercial property districts in Iowa are generally found on the main streets of the heart of the community, within the original town plat. Street width of the commercial district is often wider than other streets on the original town plat in order to accommodate wagons, buggies and their horse teams. Secondary commercial districts are found in older neighborhoods of larger cities, where the streets may not be any wider than residential neighborhoods. Often generically and symbolically called "Main Street," a typical district is composed of mostly attached brick and wooden storefronts, though some districts have stone buildings and some buildings are detached and freestanding. Smaller Main Street commercial districts may contain buildings, structures, sites, and objects not generally considered commercial such as depots, elevators, mills, courthouses, schools, parks, and standpipes. The perimeter or fringe of a district may have increasing numbers of houses and other noncommercial buildings, some of which have been converted to commercial use. Occasionally, a freestanding residential dwelling is located in the middle of the district, between commercial buildings. While most of the buildings will be vernacular in nature, there may be one or more that have been designed by architects or which are very good examples of particular architectural styles. Often these are bank buildings.

Beyond the buildings themselves, numerous objects, sites, landscape features are found on Main Street and contribute to its essential character. The street plan itself, together with parks and green spaces, and courthouse squares, are part of this special character of Main Street; so are the streets, curbs, gutters and other drainage structures. Street lighting and traffic controls, sidewalks, fireplugs, planters and trashcans are familiar features of Main Street, as are benches in front of stores and in parks. Bandstands, gazebos, picnic tables, memorials and fountains are common features of commercial district parks and green squares. Sign painting on the blank walls of larger buildings, hanging marquees, and signboards at street level are also typical features of these districts. Roll-out canvas awnings and hinged wood panels may still be present.

The profile of Main Street is usually two and three stories high and more or less regular, though in districts that developed slowly, this profile can be irregular and there may be gaps in it, representing empty lots. The profile of the streetscape in larger towns might be four or more stories high. Empty lots are present for several reasons, some of which are representative of the history of the district. A failure of commerce to thrive on Main Street, generally, resulted in empty lots and reflects an important aspect of the community's overall history. Fires and other catastrophes may create empty lots. Failure to rebuild on such lots may reflect changes in the vitality of the community as a whole or a shift of population and shopping patterns in the region served by the Main Street. Active demolition may create empty lots. New buildings constructed in the 1910s through the 1950s often reflect the advent of the automobile as an agent shaping Main Street commercial activity.

Significance

Iowa's commercial resources and Main Street historic districts represent a lens through which much of the state's history may be viewed. Individual resources exhibit this historical and architectural significance best when viewed in relation to each other, as clustered and adjacent members of a streetscape with predictable features not found in other types of urban districts. Historic commercial districts are capable of reflecting the state's settlement patterns in the nineteenth century and they illustrate the essential link between the state's farm families and the agricultural markets and consumers in larger cities. A single town's Main Street district is one of the core ingredients that allowed residents to

define themselves a community, as opposed to a rural neighborhood or other group less identified with a specific place. The commercial district enabled the residents to survive as a group. Often referred to as the "heart" of a community, the district was central to the economic health of a town and crucial to providing a communal space where the social networks of the residents were reinforced. Commercial districts also provided the civic space where the political views and community memory could be expressed, either in verbal discourse or through symbolic actions like parades and flag displays. Resources in Iowa's historic commercial districts are capable of reflecting the golden era of small town life and culture in the upper Midwest from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, as well as the economic decline of small market towns after the 1910s as the state's population increasingly moved to larger urban centers.

Registration Requirements

The resources found in most commercial districts will be at least 50 years old and, generally, most districts will have been constructed between the 1850s and the 1920s.

Criterion A: Districts will be associated with the settlement and growth of the town or development of a neighborhood over an extended period of time and will have served an important role in the survival of the town or neighborhood.

Criterion B: Districts will rarely have significance under this Criterion, except where a single person was responsible for the construction of all or the majority of the district by financing or other activity *unrelated* to the design or construction of the district.

Criterion C: Districts will have developed quickly, over a short period of time, and exhibit the distinctive characteristics of that time or type of construction, for example, a "boom town" Main Street of mostly false-front buildings.

Criterion D: District empty lots will have potential to yield important information about the activities of the people who occupied and worked in the district only where the lot was never developed with a building or where a nonextant building's footprint was smaller than the lot boundaries.

Integrity Considerations

When viewing a district of buildings and secondary resources, it is necessary to understand that most commercial districts are composed not of just one building type or another. More likely there will be a mix of building types, construction periods, and remodeling face-lifts present, representing an evolution of the district over time. Evolution and change over time are fundamental characteristics of nearly all Iowa commercial districts, especially at the street level.

Judgments about the integrity of the district will take into consideration the expected alterations and typical motivations of Main Street tenants and owners. Change is a constant on Main Street because merchants treated their storefronts as an important way of inviting shoppers—both pedestrian and rolling—to stop in and buy something. Nineteenth and twentieth century merchants have generally linked attracting customers with having an updated and remodeled storefront composed of the latest materials and styles. Storefronts at the street level show more alterations than on the upper floors. Alterations range from stylish updates that reference specific popular architectural influences to piecemeal projects conducted over a longer period of time, perhaps by several tenants or property owners. Large upper floor window sashes are replaced by smaller windows and the excess space bricked in or filled with plywood. Sometimes these windows are simply covered over. Stamped sheet metal cornices are often missing at the roofline.

Since change is a historical factor present from Main Street's inception, a greater degree of alterations can be accommodated in a commercial district before the integrity of the district is seriously compromised. Essential characteristics such as massing, survival of the historic pattern of fenestration and storefront composition, and contribution to the street's overall profile are key components. Where a building's façade is hidden behind new materials, much of the original, historic fabric may still be present underneath since merchants had little motivation to spend more on a remodeling project than was commercially practical or necessary. Still, the application of an overlay material like metal siding or Perma-stone may have necessitated removal of projecting architectural elements. Inspection behind the cladding should be performed where possible in order to gauge the extent and condition of original features intact underneath. If a building is completely hidden behind materials that were applied after the period of significance and no inspection underneath is possible, then that building will be non-contributing to the district. The building should be reevaluated, however, if and when the cladding is removed. If the cladding was applied within the period of significance, then the building might be considered contributing if the remodeling reflected the context of continued progress and success in the commercial district and the desire to update an older building to reflect that progress.

Empty lots on Main Street may reflect the generalized failure of the town to grow and thrive as expected, but they also might reflect the occurrence of a catastrophe, frequently a fire or tornado. The nineteenth-century desire to locate a town along a good river, as a source of drinking water and power for riverbank industries, has resulted in seasonal flooding in most Main Streets that remain in the flood plain. Empty lots on Main Street are also caused in more recent years by active demolition by property owners and town officials. Buildings are brought down because they are unstable or eyesores from lack of maintenance and because they are perceived to be liability risks and attractive nuisances. An empty lot that was once the site of a smaller building and has remained undeveloped since its removal may have significant building remains and subsurface features. The impact of empty lots in a commercial district must be evaluated in light of each lot's individual history. Lots that have been cleared of historic buildings within the 50 years prior to the evaluation of the district will negatively affect the integrity of the district.

Modern buildings added to Main Street after the period of significance for the district will generally be non-contributing to the district unless they are of exceptional historical or architectural significance. Modern buildings that otherwise qualify may become contributing resources once they are 50 years old.

Property Type II: First Generation and Settlement Period: Buildings, Structures, and Objects

Description

Type II buildings date from the early platting and development of the town's commercial district and typically are of frame construction, although early log, stone, or even brick structures could date from this early period. These would be the first commercial buildings constructed and their survival into the later periods hinges on many factors including a failure to thrive for the commercial area. A Type II building could also survive because it was of substantial and important construction to begin with, such as a stone building that continued to serve a useful purpose through the years.

Frame Type II buildings are generally one to two stories in height and one to two store units wide. They often exhibit a boom-town or false-front configuration, with a parapet masking the front-gabled roofline of the building and presenting the impression of a larger building than is actually present. Stylistic influence is often limited to bracketed cornice overhangs and decorative details on the actual storefront, although more elaborate versions are known. The Italianate and Greek Revival styles had the greatest influence on Type II buildings in Iowa.

Significance

The significance of individual commercial properties will generally be established as contributing resources of a district, rather than as individually eligible resources.

Registration Requirements

Criterion A: Resources will be associated with the settlement and early building phases of a town's (or neighborhood's) commercial district and will have served an important role on Main Street.

Criterion B: Resources will have an association with important business men or women, the town's founder, or other key individual responsible for establishing the location and configuration of the town's Main Street.

Criterion C: Resources will be intact examples of their vernacular or folk type with good integrity; or resources will be the work of a well known architect, such as a Main Street bank designed by Louis Sullivan; or resources will be artistic renditions of influential architectural styles applied to Main Streets buildings, for example, a Masonic or I.O.O.F. hall locally designed in the Prairie School or Italianate style.

Criterion D: District empty lots will have potential to yield important information about the activities of the people who occupied and worked in the district only where the lot was never developed with a building or where a nonextant building's footprint was smaller than the lot boundaries.

Integrity Considerations

Most individual resources that qualify will qualify as contributing features of a commercial district and are subject to the integrity considerations stated for Property Type I. Single resources may also be individually eligible where they display high integrity and their historical associative or architectural characteristics are strong. Nearly every commercial building of some age has seen a number of storefront updates, with few buildings retaining their original storefronts. However, occasionally buildings have had their fronts completely remodeled to the point that the original façade is no longer discernible. The façade remodeling might consist of cladding the exterior with a "slipcover" of metal siding, Perma-stone, stucco or other cover-up treatment. It might also consist of the complete removal of the original façade materials and replacement with a new façade, such as a new face brick. If this type of complete remodeling, especially where there is a loss of historic fabric, was executed after the period of significance for a district, then the building would likely be non-contributing to that district due to insufficient integrity. However, if the remodeling was done within the period of significance, then the building might be considered contributing if the remodeling reflected the context of continued progress and success in the commercial district and the desire to update an older building to reflect that progress.

Property Type III: Second Generation and Reconstructing Main Street: Buildings, Structures, and Objects

Description

Type III buildings date from the succeeding years of a town's commercial growth, with Iowa's commercial districts typically reaching a peak in the very late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. The impact of the railroad, where a community was successful in obtaining a direct rail connection, was reflected in the continued building up of the platted commercial district, including infill on previously empty lots and the replacement of earlier buildings lost due to fires and

demolition as well as expansion of the original commercial district. Type III buildings are typically multi-story in height and can contain anywhere from one to a number of actual store units. Large block buildings were constructed during this period, with the store units often unified along the second floor by a shared façade, cornice, and other details.

Type III buildings are most often of masonry construction, particularly brick that was either locally manufactured or shipped in by rail. Face brick was often shipped in from larger brick plants in the state or the region, while the softer structural brick used in the side and rear wall construction was often manufactured locally. Stylistic influence was greater on Type III than Type II buildings reflecting the influence of national trends, local tastes, and a desire to demonstrate to the public one's business success by constructing a stylish, up-to-date building. The Italianate style continued to strongly influence decorative detailing and fenestration on Type III buildings, although Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne styles began to appear in commercial building designs in the 1880s-1890s. Classical Revival styles became popular in the early 1900s, particularly for bank buildings.

Significance

The significance of individual commercial properties will generally be established as contributing resources of a district, rather than as individually eligible resources.

Registration Requirements

Criterion A: Resources will be associated with the development and later building phases of a town's (or neighborhood's) commercial district and will have served an important role on Main Street.

Criterion B: Resources will have an association with important business men or women, the town's founder, or other key individual responsible for establishing the location and configuration of the town's Main Street.

Criterion C: Resources will be intact examples of their vernacular or folk type with good integrity; or resources will be the work of a well known architect, such as a Main Street bank designed by Louis Sullivan; or resources will be artistic renditions of influential architectural styles applied to Main Streets buildings, for example, a Masonic or I.O.O.F. hall locally designed in the Prairie School or Italianate style.

Criterion D: District empty lots will have potential to yield important information about the activities of the people who occupied and worked in the district only where the lot was never developed with a building or where a nonextant building's footprint was smaller than the lot boundaries.

Integrity Considerations

Most individual resources that qualify will qualify as contributing features of a commercial district and are subject to the integrity considerations stated for Property Type I. Single resources may also be individually eligible where they display high integrity and their historical associative or architectural characteristics are strong. Nearly every commercial building of some age has seen a number of storefront updates, with few buildings retaining their original storefronts. However, occasionally buildings have had their fronts completely remodeled to the point that the original façade is no longer discernible. The façade remodeling might consist of cladding the exterior with a "slipcover" of metal siding, Perma-stone, stucco or other cover-up treatment. It might also consist of the complete removal of the original façade materials and replacement with a new façade, such as a new face brick. If this type of complete remodeling, especially where there is a loss of historic fabric, was executed after the period of significance for a district, then the building would

likely be non-contributing to that district due to insufficient integrity. However, if the remodeling was done within the period of significance, then the building might be considered contributing if the remodeling reflected the context of continued progress and success in the commercial district and the desire to update an older building to reflect that progress.

Property Type IV: Specialized Buildings, Structures, and Objects

Description

Type IV buildings consist of those buildings constructed for specific purposes related to civic, religious, and educational purposes. Type IV also includes specialized commercial or industrial buildings such as elevators, mills, and gas/service stations, which may or may not be adaptable to other purposes once their original function ceases. Type IV buildings were often constructed according to a limited range of accepted or prescribed building designs, such as the libraries built with the assistance of the Carnegie Foundation and Depression-era post offices, which were designed by Treasury Department architects. Type IV buildings are typically stand-alone buildings, with open lots surrounding them and used for grassy lawns, green spaces, and parking in later years. Courthouses were often built on a center square, with the main commercial district then occupying the blocks fronting the square. Schools, churches, post offices, and libraries were typically built on corner lots, or occupy whole blocks by themselves. Early gas stations often reflected the influence of the Prairie School and Craftsman styles of architecture, while elevators, mills and other industrial buildings were often built more for function than for style.

Type IV buildings are often built on or near Main Street and may or may not be included within a commercial district's boundaries and can date from the earliest years of a commercial district's development or can reflect later periods of development and change along Main Street as the town grew and was influenced by national trends. For example, Carnegie's philanthropic program for funding local library building construction did not begin until the late nineteenth century and then expanded greatly in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Prior to that time, most town libraries had been housed on the upper floors of otherwise commercial buildings or in storefronts not used for commercial purposes. Likewise, post offices were typically housed with a commercial business, such as a general store, until the early twentieth century when government programs became available to fund the construction of separate post office buildings.

Significance

The significance of individual commercial properties will generally be established as contributing resources of a district, rather than as individually eligible resources.

Registration Requirements

Criterion A: Resources will be associated with the development and later building phases of a town's (or neighborhood's) commercial district and will have served an important role on Main Street; or resources will be associated with larger historic building programs, such as the Carnegie library program, the construction of federal post offices, or Depression-era buildings.

Criterion B: Resources will have an association with important business men or women, the town's founder, or other key individual responsible for establishing the location and configuration of the town's Main Street.

Criterion C: Resources will be intact examples of their vernacular or folk type with good integrity; or resources will be the work of a well known architect, such as a Main Street bank designed by Louis Sullivan; or resources will be artistic renditions of influential architectural styles applied to Main Streets buildings, for example, a Masonic or I.O.O.F. hall locally designed in the Prairie School or Italianate style.

Criterion D: District empty lots will have potential to yield important information about the activities of the people who occupied and worked in the district only where the lot was never developed with a building or where a nonextant building's footprint was smaller than the lot boundaries.

Integrity Considerations

Most individual resources that qualify will qualify as contributing features of a commercial district and are subject to the integrity considerations stated for Property Type I. More Property Type IV resources may also be individually eligible where they have maintained good integrity and their architectural characteristics are still largely intact. Nearly every building of some age has seen a number of updates. Occasionally, however, buildings have been so completely remodeled that they lose their original features and appearance. The remodeling might consist of cladding the exterior with a "slipcover" of metal siding, Perma-stone, stucco or other cover-up treatment. It might also consist of the complete removal of the original façade materials and replacement with a new façade, such as a new face brick. If this type of complete remodeling, especially where there is a loss of historic fabric, was executed after the period of significance for a district, then the building would be non-contributing to that district due to insufficient integrity. If the remodeling was done within the period of significance, and the essential features of the specialized function for which the building was constructed are still exhibited despite the remodeling, then the building might be considered contributing.

Property Type V: Remodeling Main Street: Face-lifts and Later Additions

Description

Type V buildings represent older buildings that were updated and remodeled through the years in the attempt to continue to put a progressive face forward in the community. Banks, in particular, often remodeled the façade of their older buildings in order to retain customer confidence in the solidity and progressiveness of the financial institution. Type V buildings, therefore, are not new construction but rather are older buildings that received some amount of reconstruction or remodeling, particularly on the façade and street level storefront. Stylistic influences seen on Type V building façade updates include early twentieth century Classical Revival, Art Moderne, and Art Deco.

Nearly every commercial building of some age has seen a number of storefront updates, with few Type II or Type III buildings retaining their original storefronts. However, Type V buildings represent older Type II or III buildings that have had their fronts completely remodeled to the point that the original façade is no longer discernible. The façade remodeling might consist of cladding the exterior with a "slipcover" of metal siding, Perma-stone, stucco or other cover-up treatment. It might also consist of the complete removal of the original façade materials and replacement with a new façade, such as a new face brick. If this type of complete remodeling, especially where there is a loss of historic fabric, was executed after the period of significance for a district, then the building would likely be non-contributing to that district due to insufficient integrity. However, if the remodeling was done within the period of significance, then the building could be considered contributing if the remodeling reflected the context of continued progress and success in the commercial district and the desire to update an older building to reflect that progress.

Type V resources also include later buildings added to the commercial district that reflect a continued economic vitality in the community. These buildings often replaced older buildings lost to demolition or fire but could also include new construction on previously vacant lots. These buildings would have been built within the period of significance for the district in order to be considered a Type V building.

Significance

The significance of individual commercial properties will generally be established as contributing resources of a district, rather than as individually eligible resources.

Registration Requirements

Criterion A: Resources will be associated with the development and later phases of a town's (or neighborhood's) commercial district and will have served an important role on Main Street.

Criterion B: Resources will have an association with important business men or women, the town's founder, or other key individual responsible for establishing the location and configuration of the town's Main Street.

Criterion C: Resources will be good examples of popular architectural styles executed as major remodeling projects of older commercial buildings affecting the entire façade or just the street level storefront.

Criterion D: There is little potential for significance under this Criterion.

Integrity Considerations

Most individual resources that qualify will qualify as contributing features of a commercial district and are subject to the integrity considerations stated for Property Type I. Single resources may also be individually eligible where they display high integrity and their historical associative or architectural characteristics are strong. Nearly every commercial building of some age has seen a number of storefront updates, with few buildings retaining their original storefronts. However, occasionally buildings have had their fronts completely remodeled to the point that the original façade is no longer discernible. The façade remodeling might consist of cladding the exterior with a "slipcover" of metal siding, Perma-stone, stucco or other cover-up treatment. It might also consist of the complete removal of the original façade materials and replacement with a new façade, such as a new face brick. If this type of complete remodeling, especially where there is a loss of historic fabric, was executed after the period of significance for a district, then the building would likely be non-contributing to that district due to insufficient integrity. However, if the remodeling was done within the period of significance, then the building might be considered contributing if the remodeling reflected the context of continued progress and success in the commercial district and the desire to update an older building to reflect that progress.

Property Type VI: Modern Infill

Description

Modern buildings added to Main Street after the period of significance for the district will generally be non-contributing to the district unless they are of exceptional historical or architectural significance. Modern buildings that otherwise qualify may become contributing resources with the passage of time.

Significance

These are non-contributing resources and as such do not have significance until they are at least 50 years old. As time passes and the 50-year cut off is met, some of these resources may become eligible or contributing as Type V buildings in their own right.

Registration Requirements

There are none.

Integrity Considerations

There are none.

G. Geographical Data

The State of Iowa.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

This multiple property listing involves a targeted property type—the historic commercial district—identified by the office of the Iowa State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) as an important state historic resource. The geographical boundaries were predetermined to include the entire State of Iowa. About a thousand communities once existed in the state, each with some area of physical landscape devoted to a commercial district, however budget constraints limited the study to a survey of only a small percentage of the total. It was determined by the SHPO to examine a sampling of 10 communities, or about 1% of the total. Of that sample, six historic districts were to become a part of the Multiple Property submission.

To collect enough new data from this modest sample to establish a statewide context, care was required in the initial selection process of the 10 communities. The early selection process was especially important to locating a sampling that would contain at least six communities with historic districts that qualified for listing. Once budget resources were committed to examining the 10 towns, there would be little chance of reversing gears and taking an alternative path. To inform the selection process, then, SHPO staff was consulted for likely candidates and SHPO records were examined. These records included prior survey materials from Certified Local Governments, planning organizations, and "gray literature" such as Section 106 compliance reports housed at the SHPO office. The SHPO's data base of property inventory forms was selectively examined and inquiries were made in other offices of the State Historical Society of Iowa, where the SHPO is located. Gray literature generated by consultants for the Iowa Department of Transportation was also examined where available. Additionally, letters and emails were sent out to two groups who theoretically would be aware of potentially significant historic commercial districts—architectural historians and historians who worked as private consultants in the state and members of CLG Historic Preservation Commissions across the state. Local advocates identified through the Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance were called and the Iowa Main Street program staff was contacted also.

The long list of suggested towns to survey was then filtered through a shorter list of criteria deemed important. These included geographical location to ensure a range of settlement periods and construction materials; population size to ensure a range of commercial district sizes and evolutionary stages; and type of town, loosely categorized for discussion purposes as county seat towns, market towns, and crossroads or river port towns. County seat towns are obvious, crossroads/river port towns tend have origins rooted in the surrounding topography, market towns—the majority of Iowa towns—served as regional collection points for the products of the countryside. These labels usually involve, to some degree or another, overlapping influences operating in the town's history. Many of the towns on the original list were also briefly visited early in the field work phase, if they could be added as a side trip during a field inspection of the selected towns. These towns included Bellevue, Guttenberg, Dows, Eagle Grove, Sheldon, Marble Rock, and others.

The 10 towns that were selected for surveying included the following. A single asterisk indicates a commercial district was found eligible for listing; two asterisks indicate a historic district registration was submitted as a part of this Multiple Property listing. Population figures for 2002 are listed parenthetically.

(1) McGregor** a river port town, northeastern corner of the state (871)
(2) Osage** a county seat town, north central Iowa (3,451)
(3) Lake Mills* a market town, north central Iowa (2,140)
(4) State Center** a railroad-platted market town, central Iowa (1,349)
(5) Ashton, railroad-platted market town, northwest corner of Iowa (461)
(6) Sibley, railroad-platted market town, northwest corner of Iowa (2,796)
(7) Spencer,* county seat town, northwestern Iowa (11,317)
(8) Grant,** crossroads town, southwest Iowa (102)
(9) Bedford,** county seat town, southwest to south central Iowa (1,620)
(10) Williamsburg, a market town in southeast Iowa (2,622)

The final six communities selected for listing did not completely reflect the initial filtering process. In order to maximize resources, other recently surveyed towns that had eligible districts were considered as well. This included West Liberty,** determined to be a good representative of southeast Iowa, and Cherokee,* eligible but as a representative commercial district for this study it duplicated other towns in that region of the state. The six communities for which listings are submitted herewith include the following:

(1) McGregor
(2) Osage
(3) State Center
(4) Grant
(5) Bedford
(6) West Liberty

Survey methods included inspection of the commercial districts and research in community archives and government offices, including public libraries, city hall offices, local historical societies, and newspaper archives. County offices were visited as were local history museums. Short interviews were conducted on the sidewalks of various Main Streets, and of members of the local breakfast clubs and coffee klatches, where these could be determined. Planning agencies supplied materials for some towns. Field inspection and photography were completed on the streetscape, block by block, looking at the overall district components, rather than focusing on individual buildings. The exception to this was individual buildings that were good representatives of the district as a whole, of their type generally, or were stylish from a design standpoint. Iowa Site Inventory forms were completed on Williamsburg, the first surveyed town, which was

then used as the model for the rest of the surveys. Grant was included relatively late in the field work phase and was surveyed by Jacky Adams, a preservationist and southwest Iowa advocate from Red Oak who volunteered generous amounts of her time to travel to Grant to take photographs, field check items, talk to local residents, and gather local history materials. When the final list of towns to be included in the Multiple Property listing was made, slides of these towns were presented to SHPO staff in Des Moines for comment and advice.

The historic context was organized into two broad categories—overarching historical patterns and the landscape of Main Street—based on both primary research and secondary literature. Primary research included the results of the present surveys, plus prior surveys and commercial district nominations, plus the results of consultants' prior experiences in completing Iowa surveys, writing numerous National Register of Historic Places registrations and cultural resource management (CRM) reports and evaluations. Secondary literature research was conducted at the State Historical Society of Iowa library/archives and collections of the SHPO in Des Moines, at the architectural and main libraries on the Iowa State University campus in Ames, at the art history and main libraries at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, and at the Iowa City office of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

Registration requirements were based on actual resources and commercial districts encountered in the field, combined with historic photography collections and line drawings from nineteenth century publications on Iowa and the historic contexts that were developed. Specifics of geographical range, function, and time period were largely pre-determined.

Jan Olive Nash authored the Multiple Property Documentation Form with the exception of the description of the building types contained in Section F. under Registration Requirements. Those descriptions were written by Leah D. Rogers. Rogers also authored the six commercial district registration forms submitted with this Multiple Property submission with the assistance of Lori Vermaas and Joyce Barrett. Marie Neubauer created, inserted and managed the images and graphics for all the documents, and performed the archival darkroom work.

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3. Additional Sources of Information

The following Iowa towns (by county) have commercial districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places as of July 2002. These nominations may provide useful information and examples for communities seeking to list their Main Street or neighborhood commercial districts:

Centerville Courthouse Square, Appanoose County
Kimballton Commercial District, Audubon County
West Branch Commercial Historic District, Cedar County
McGregor Commercial Historic District, Clayton County
Downtown Perry Historic District, Dallas County

Bloomfield Square Historic District, Davis County
Swedesburg Historic Commercial District, Henry County
Oxford Commercial Historic District, Johnson County
Sigourney Public Square Historic District, Keokuk County
Central City Commercial Historic District, Linn County
Dow Street Historic District, Ely, Linn County
Mount Vernon Commercial Historic District, Linn County
Oskaloosa City Square Commercial Historic District, Mahaska County
State Center Commercial Historic District, Marshall County
Osage Commercial Historic District, Mitchell County
West Liberty Commercial Historic District, Muscatine County
Albia Square and Central Commercial Historic District, Monroe County
Grant Commercial Historic District, Montgomery County
College Corner Historic District, Des Moines, Polk County
Highland Park Historic District, Des Moines, Polk County
Sixth and Forest Historic District, Des Moines, Polk County
Haymarket Commercial Historic District, Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County
Grinnell Historic Commercial District, Poweshiek County
Harlan Historic Commercial District, Shelby County
Bedford Commercial Historic District, Taylor County
Bentonsport Historic District, Van Buren County
Bonaparte Historic Riverfront District, Van Buren County
Fourth Street Historic District, Sioux City, Woodbury County

The following publications are available as well and should be consulted for information and guidance:

National Register Bulletins

How to Complete the National Register Registration Form
How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation
Researching a Historic Property
Post Offices (property type guidance)
Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties

National Park Service Technical and Preservation Briefs

#11 *Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts*
#12 *The Preservation of Historic Pigmented Structural Glass (Vitrolite and Carrara Glass)*
#25 *The Preservation of Historic Signs*
#27 *The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron*
#32 *Making Historic Properties Accessible*
#38 *Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry*
#42 *The Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Historic 'Cast Stone'*
Historic Glass #1: Repair and Reproduction of Prismatic Glass Transoms

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