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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name N/A
other names/site number South Omaha Main Street Historic District

2. Location

street & number 4723-5002 So. 24th Street N/A not for publication
city, town Omaha N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Douglas code 055 zip code 68107

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>33</u>	<u>9</u> buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>36</u>	<u>9</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

James A. Turner November 7, 1988
Signature of certifying official Date
Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. Beth Boland 2/14/89
- See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business
professional
financial institution
specialty store
GOVERNMENT: city hall

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business
professional
financial institution
specialty store
GOVERNMENT: government office

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN
Classical Revival MOVEMENTS
Richardsonian Romanesque

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
walls BRICK
roof ASPHALT
other STONE
TERRA COTTA

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located approximately four miles from the center of Omaha's central business district, the South Omaha Main Street Historic District extends along South 24th Street, generally from "O" to "M" Streets, a distance of about two and one-half blocks. Thirty-three civic and commercial buildings and three streetlights classified as objects comprise the district's contributing resources; nine buildings in addition to modern streetscape elements — benches, streetlights, sidewalk paving bricks and street trees — are considered non-contributing. Linked by function and historical development, contributing buildings in the district share similar physical characteristics of size, scale, materials and form. With a few exceptions, buildings were erected between 1890 and 1910; most are rectangular in plan and flat-roofed with masonry bearing-wall construction as the dominant technical system. Ranging from one to four stories and abutting each other, buildings front on the property edge forming an uninterrupted wall of facades square with the linear spine of the street. Facade design is the primary factor determining the distinctive architectural qualities of the district. In terms of compositional type, most of the street fronts follow the most common type of facade pattern used in small commercial buildings, the two-part commercial block. Though limited in type, facades show a diversity of stylistic expression related to their period of construction, extending from Romanesque to Prairie School idioms. Degree and richness of detail also vary considerably. Buildings designed for governmental use — specifically, a post office and city hall complex — differ from the majority of the district's commercial structures in certain aspects of their architectural form and detail; nonetheless, the civic buildings possess physical qualities and historic associations that contribute to the overall significance of the property. Although ground floor store-front alterations affect the majority of buildings in the district, historic and architectural integrity continue to be present to a degree sufficient to convey the property's identity as the civic and commercial center of South Omaha for the period of significance.

Generally rectangular in configuration, the land area encompassed within the South Omaha Main Street Historic District includes those parcels with frontage along South 24th Street from a point close to the middle of the block between "L" and "M" Streets, on the north, to "O" Street on the south. Two properties on "N" and "M" Streets, respectively, and the city hall lots south of "O" also fall within the district's boundary. The area, totaling about 13 acres, incorporates portions of blocks 72, 88, 78, 87, 79, 86 and 84 of the original 1884 City of South Omaha plat.

South Omaha's corporate limits at the time of its annexation by Omaha in 1915 define the geographical area considered in the evaluation of the South Omaha Main Street Historic District. Covering about six square miles, the annexed area is bounded by the Missouri River on the east and Harrison Street on the south. Forty-second street forms the western edge; on the north, the historic boundary between the two cities extends roughly along a path marked by Grover Street and Hoctor Boulevard. Leading the direction of South Omaha's urbanization, rail lines have run through the area since the Union Pacific first constructed its main route out of Omaha along the

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Commerce	1889-1938	N/A
Politics/Government		
Architecture		
	Cultural Affiliation	
	N/A	
Significant Person	Architect/Builder	
N/A	Unknown	
	Kimball, Thomas R.	
	Latenser, John, and Sons	

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

Related to the historic context, "The Livestock Marketing and Meat Packing Industry in Omaha, Nebraska, 1883-1938," the South Omaha Main Street Historic District is significant under Criterion A of the National Register Criteria in the areas of commerce and politics/government. A cohesive grouping of more than thirty buildings, the district encompasses the civic and commercial core of the former municipality of South Omaha, an industrial suburb founded by a group of Omaha capitalists in 1883 to support their business interests in the stockyards and meat-packing industry. In the area of architecture, under Criterion C, the district achieves significance as a collection of small commercial buildings that together give form to a distinctive urban building pattern commonly referred to as a Main Street. Because of its high degree of historic and architectural integrity, the district continues to convey its importance as the urban center of South Omaha for the period of significance, 1889-1938.

The business of marketing and processing livestock began in Omaha as early as 1867 with the establishment of a commercial stockyard. In the 1870s several small packing plants started production: two of the more prominent early firms were James F. Boyd's operation organized in 1871 and the Cook and Ballou plant established in 1873. After several years of business, Cook and Ballou sold out to John and Joseph Sheely who operated the facility at 27th and Martha until 1886 when the building was destroyed by fire. Boyd closed his successful pork processing business to pursue other interests in 1887.

Apart from these comparatively small and generally localized ventures in the meat processing business, there had been a number of efforts, beginning in the late 1870s, to establish a major livestock market in Omaha. At least five separate groups with plans to organize a large-scale stockyards operation failed before William Paxton started his yards in Council Bluffs in 1879. A combination of factors contributed to Omaha's prospects for industrial development as an important meat-packing center. Primary among them were the spread of cattle ranching to the northern plains; the availability of plentiful and cheap feed grain supplies; and the city's proximity to principal rail lines and freight-yards that could facilitate the transportation of stock from the region to eastern markets. In addition, western suppliers sought markets closer to their source of production, and the refrigerated box car's success in shipping dressed beef allowed the city to become more than a transit and feeding station for stock enroute to Chicago. Finally, Omaha's economic growth had, by the 1880s, produced a number of local businessmen who could invest large amounts of capital in new enterprises. Included among that group: freighter and financier John Creighton; Peter Iler, a distiller; stockman and politician John McShane; and William Paxton who was perhaps the key figure in the formation of the modern livestock industry in Omaha.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository:

Omaha City Planning Department

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 12.9 acres

UTM References

A

1	5	2	5	2	8	8	0	4	5	6	6	2	1	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

C

1	5	2	5	3	0	0	0	4	5	6	5	8	5	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

B

1	5	2	5	3	0	2	0	4	5	6	6	2	1	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

D

1	5	2	5	2	9	4	0	4	5	6	5	8	5	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the South Omaha Main Street Historic District is shown as the broken line on the accompanying map entitled "South Omaha Main Street Historic District".

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes those commercial and civic buildings retaining integrity that are situated on or near south 24th Street and have historically been considered part of the South Omaha Central business district. Limits of the district were selected on the basis of visual changes in architectural character due to a decline in the concentration of potentially contributing properties.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lynn Bjorkman, City Planner
organization Omaha City Planning Department date August, 1988
street & number Omaha/Douglas Civic Center; 1819 Farnam telephone (402) 444-4927
city or town Omaha state NE zip code 68183

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Historic Functions (cont.)

GOVERNMENT: correctional facility
 post office

Current Functions:

GOVERNMENT: post office

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Mud and Papillion Creek in the late 1860s. As at the time of the city's founding, rail lines continue to divide the large Union Stockyards tract from the original 100-block town site located directly to the east of the yards. A second major transportation corridor was cut through the area beginning in the late 1950s. Stretching across the city's northern limits and branching south to follow the rail lines' course, the interstate highway system has cleared a wide swath through the area, altering historic patterns of urban form and development.

The spine of the South Omaha Main Street Historic District, 24th Street, transverses Omaha on a quarter section line from the city's northeastern edge near the Missouri River, south to within about a mile of the Sarpy County line. At this point the street joins Railroad Avenue and proceeds to Bellevue. Town site developers laid out north-south streets in South Omaha to align with those of the existing Omaha grid and envisioned 24th Street, or Bellevue Street as it was then named, to be the primary link between the two cities. Resulting from its long-time role as South Omaha's major transportation corridor, the street has been built up with high density land uses: several churches, numerous commercial buildings, a high school, and more recently, gas stations, car sales lots and fast-food restaurants line the street. Residential development still predominates north of "E" Street in what was once the northern portion of the original city.

The Omaha/Douglas County Historic Buildings Survey has identified numerous properties of historic and architectural significance along South 24th Street. The boundaries of the South Omaha Main Street Historic District were drawn to contain the highest concentration of properties possessing physical and historical integrity sufficient to convey the street's importance as South Omaha's civic and commercial core. The immediate area surrounding the district holds primarily small commercial buildings. Residential development covers the hilly terrain east to the Missouri River bluffs and the stockyards fill the broad valley to the west, physically segregated from the district by the presence of the interstate highway.

With a ratio of more than three-to-one, contributing versus non-contributing buildings, the integrity of the district on the whole is relatively high. Thirty-three buildings and three streetlights classified as objects comprise the district's contributing resources; nine buildings and modern streetscape elements — benches, trash containers, streetlights, sidewalk paving bricks and street trees are considered non-contributing. In addition to modern intrusions, a noteworthy change in the area's visual appearance occurred through city-sponsored redevelopment efforts focusing on the intersection of 24th and "N". In 1980, "N" Street between 25th and 24th Streets was closed and buildings fronting on the street were removed — including a corner building at 24th and "N". A parking lot was located on the vacated land. The project also included the construction of a park-like strip that separates the lot from 24th Street.

Within the boundaries of the district, 24th Street travels a ridge, remaining level until it reaches "N" Street where it falls, then rises in grade about 15 feet. The street's 100 feet of public-right-of-way is divided into four traffic and two parking lanes in addition to 20-foot sidewalks. Streets intersecting the district, "M", "N" and "O", are narrower; each has a 80-foot right-of-way. Between "M", "N" and "O" Streets, the original plat established blocks with 420 feet of total frontage on 24th Street; the seven lots per block on 24th Street each had a frontage of 60 feet and extended back 150 feet to an alley bisecting the block parallel to the street. Although the district's buildings completely fill the available frontage on every block, their perimeter walls do not strictly conform to original lot lines and thus facade dimensions vary. Generally, lots were split and recombined in 20- and 30-foot increments. As a result, there are a number of 40- and 20-foot frontages, though 60 feet remains the norm.

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Individual components of the South Omaha Main Street Historic District are described below with available data arranged according to the following general format: building name; date of construction; address; facade compositional type; wall material; number of stories; historical information; notable exterior features including style, if applicable; and alterations. Brief descriptions of non-contributing components are also included. Contributing properties have been assigned site numbers through the Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey; maps are also keyed to this identification system.

Facade composition types are based on the typology developed by Richard Longstreth in his article, Compositional Types in American Commercial Architecture and the book, The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture. Three basic facade patterns appear in the district and are described as follows by Longstreth:

The two-part commercial block is generally limited to buildings of two to four stories and is characterized by a horizontal division into two distinct zones. Each zone receives its own treatment, often with little direct relation to the other. The division reflects differences in use: the one-story lower zone tended to contain more public spaces, the upper zone more private ones.

The one-part commercial block is used for one-story buildings and is characterized by a configuration akin to the lower zone of a two-part commercial block.

The enframed window wall is used for one-story and sometimes taller buildings. It is characterized by a large center section — often made of glass — that almost always suggests a thin membrane. This center is surrounded on three sides by a wide, more or less continuous border. The entire front is treated as a single compositional unit (Longstreth: Compositional Types in American Commercial Architecture, p. 17).

Several buildings in the district, by virtue of their function or form, do not fit the general pattern of the commercial building type and therefore are not referenced to any facade composition category.

Since original building permit records maintained by the City of South Omaha prior to annexation in 1915 have been lost, little is known about the work of architects and builders in the district. Information about original property owners and construction dates were established through Douglas County deeds, mortgage and assessors records. Further complications in data gathering stem from the fact that upon annexation, the city's original street numbering system was changed to correspond with that of Omaha.

Contributing Buildings; NeHBS No. D009:

0098-001. Neneman's Bakery (c. 1917), 4827 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 21)

Enframed window wall. Three stories, masonry with extensive cream-colored, glazed terra cotta wall trim, including a bracketed cornice, arched-window moldings, elaborate pilaster capitals and a band of festoons. First-floor facade altered, but overall integrity appears excellent. Structure was built as Eggers Building (0098-014, c. 1890). The date of the extensive facade renovation is uncertain but may date from a 1917 remodeling by Security State Bank.

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0098-002. Beck Building (c. 1905), 4723 South 24th Street (Photo No. 13)

Two-part commercial block. Three stories, masonry, faced with cast concrete block. Cast concrete ornament at cornice. Altered street-level facade. Built by George Beck for plumbing, steam and gas fitting business.

0098-003. Lewis Block (c. 1890), 4725 South 24th Street (Photo No. 14)

Two-part commercial block. Three-story masonry building with stone wall trim (window lintels) and pressed-metal projecting cornice. Three-bay, symmetrical facade composition, altered at street level. Palladian-motif second-floor windows. Recently rehabilitated. Built by Frank J. Lewis. Various printing companies frequent tenants, including the South Omaha Daily Times and Daily Sun newspapers. Hall on third floor occupied by Elks Club beginning in 1900.

0098-004. Mack Block (c. 1894), 4731 South 24th Street (Photo No. 15)

Two-part commercial block. Corner lot, articulated facades on west and south — store-fronts exclusively on west. Two stories, masonry with cornice embellished by projecting brick patterning and pressed-metal coping.

0098-005. United States Post Office (1898), 4736 South 24th Street (Photo No. 1)

Two stories, approximately square in plan with flat roof. Constructed of buff brick with terra cotta wall trim and granite entrance steps. Classical Revival stylistic features include: giant columns with Roman Corinthian capitals supporting an entablature; pedimented window heads; round-arched windows and doors. Original roofline balustrade has been removed; original interior woodwork intact. Constructed by U.S. Government as federal offices and postal facility for South Omaha.

0098-006. Commercial Savings & Loan (c. 1900), 4824 South 24th Street (Photo No. 4)

Enframed window wall. Three stories faced with light-colored stone veneer; contrasting dark panels in facade's center section which also contains casement windows. Incorporates Moderne stylistic elements. Shown as hardware store on 1901 Sanborn map. Facade remodeled in 1948.

0098-007. Melcher Block (c. 1907), 4826 South 24th Street (Photo No. 4)

Two-part commercial block. Two stories, masonry, with prominent corbeling and shaped roofline parapet. Built by Christian Melcher whose father established the first drug store in South Omaha. Melcher Drug Company also operated from earlier building on this site.

0098-008. S. S. Kresge Building (c. 1910), 4828 South 24th Street (Photo No. 5)

Two-part commercial block. Two stories, masonry. Stone trim; sill course; parapet coping and key blocks. Large, square windows with jack arches dominate building's upper zone. Altered store front. S. S. Kresge Co. long-term occupant.

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0098-009. Johnston Block (c. 1910), 4830 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 6)

Enframed window wall. Two stories, masonry, three-bay arrangement. Large, square, second-floor windows divided by brick pilasters. Stone wall trim includes sill course, upper wall string courses and ornamental globes topping pilasters. Built by Ed Johnston, active in the real estate business in South Omaha beginning in 1887. Johnston and Company acted as sole agents for the sale of the South Omaha Land Company's property. Johnston served as city treasurer and mayor of South Omaha.

0098-010. Stouffer Block (c. 1902), 4805 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 17)

Two-part commercial block. Original street facade obliterated. Integrity of second-story facade intact. Classical Revival features include: round-arched windows and pilasters with stone capitals and bases. Pressed-metal cornice is bracketed Italianate with frieze featuring a band of garlands.

0098-011. Murphy Block (c. 1899), 4811-13 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 18)

Two-part commercial block. Masonry, two-story with prominent patterned brick cornice and name tablet. Altered street facade. Built by James W. Murphy, member of important South Omaha family involved in real estate, insurance and city politics. Joseph F. Murphy and Henry C. Murphy, attorney, maintained their offices in the building.

0098-012. Glasgow Building (c. 1904), 4815 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 19)

Two-part commercial block. Two stories, masonry with stone sill course. Symmetrical, three-bay composition, segmentally arched windows with prominent keystones. Cornice features terra cotta ornamental panels.

0098-013. Epstein Block (c. 1911), 4821 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 20)

Enframed window wall. Two-story masonry. Extensive use of patterned brickwork for decorative effect. Cast concrete bracketed cornice and name plaque. Band of second-story windows reflects Prairie School influence. Street facade currently under reconstruction.

0098-014. Eggers Building (c. 1890), 4829-31 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 21)

Two-part commercial block. Three-story masonry with molded brick and stone trim. Queen Anne inspired details. Most notable feature is oriel with pressed-wood ornament (second, matching oriel removed). Altered storefronts, recently rehabilitated south bay. Original structure extends 24 feet to the north to include Neneman's Bakery (0098-001). Presumably, oriel and bay configuration continued across this portion of the facade as well.

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0098-015. Vanous Block (c. 1891), 4833-35 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 22)

Two-part commercial block. Three stories, masonry with molded brick ornamental details, including rounded column-like forms with carved stone corbels. Pressed-metal bracketed cornice. Ranks of paired rectangular windows alternate with narrower single openings. At street-facade level, original cast-iron columns and lintels exposed in recent renovation of north bay.

0098-016. Stockman Publishing Company Building (c.1890), 4837 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 23)

Two-part commercial block. First occupied by the Stockman Publishing Company, publisher of the South Omaha Stockman newspaper. The two-story masonry building has red sand stone trim and features two prominent round-arched windows at the second floor. The windows associate the building with the Romanesque Revival style. A certified historic rehabilitation of the building is in progress.

0098-017. Brandes Block (1889), 4839-41 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 24)

Two-part commercial block. Built by Walter Brandes, early South Omaha business leader who made substantial commercial real estate investments in the city in the late 19th century. Corner, three-story masonry structure with stone wall trim and a pressed-metal parapet coping. Articulated on west and south walls, with storefronts exclusively on south; residential space above. Simple Romanesque stylistic details include a corbeled cornice and central round-arched window. Certified historic rehabilitation in progress.

0098-021. 2312 "N" Street

(Photo No. 25)

Two-part commercial block. Two-story, masonry with paired, regular window openings. Former hotel rooms on second floor; five commercial bays. Shaped roofline parapet and geometric brick-patterning provides decorative interest.

0098-066. 2314 "M" Street

(Photo No. 16)

Small one-story masonry structure. Corbeled cornice. Large window and door openings.

0098-067. (c. 1895), 4808-10-12 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 2)

One-part commercial block. Masonry, three-bay arrangement. Substantially altered, however original fabric remains evident in upper portion of central bay. Bakery long-term tenant.

0098-068. Partridge Block (c. 1910), 4816-14-22 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 3)

One-part commercial block. Lower facade area altered, however major portion of storefront cornice appears intact. Built by J.J. Partridge, South Omaha businessman. Masonry with contrasting stone panels in upper zone.

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0098-073. 4801 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 17)

Two-part commercial block. Masonry with stone coping. Altered street facade. Nine bays with irregular windows on north elevation.

0096-001. Singer Building (c. 1890), 2401 "N" Street

(Photo No. 7)

Two-part commercial block. Masonry, three-stories, fronting on "N" Street (now vacated as a through street). Queen Anne features include oriels and a corner tower. Stone wall trim and pressed-metal cornice. Recent rehabilitation includes exposure of cast iron columns and cornice at north elevation storefront. Commercial bays on east facade have been bricked-in.

0096-002. Joslin Block (c. 1898), 4910 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 8)

Two-part commercial block. Three-story, masonry with quarry-cut stone sill courses. Cornice features elaborate molded-brick corbel table and diamond patterning. Altered storefront.

0096-003. Roseland Theater (c. 1923), 4932 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 11)

Two-part commercial block. Omaha architect James T. Allen produced the project's plans for client James W. Murphy, South Omaha businessman. Constructed as a moderately-sized movie theater, also incorporating retail and office space. Converted to use as a commercial arcade and bowling alley in the 1950s. Facade wall is clad in white-glazed terra cotta. Decorative detail — including cornice balustrade, modillions, pilasters and moldings — associate the building with the Classical Revival style. Certified historic rehabilitation currently underway.

0096-004. Packers National Bank (1907), 4939 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 29)

Temple front. One-story masonry structure on corner lot with extensive stone trim including: entablature; roofline balustrade; base and window moldings. Stylistically representative of Renaissance Revival and Classical Revival. Architect: Thomas Kimball. Packers Bank founded in 1891, one of three major banks in South Omaha that began in the first decade of the City's history. Certified historic rehabilitation in 1984. Listed in National Register (1985) and as City of Omaha Landmark.

0096-005. South Omaha City Hall (1906), 5002 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 12)

Masonry, two stories, occupies corner lot fronting along 24th Street. Principal facade features projecting center block with entry porch; large, square windows on first-floor level, segmentally arched on second floor. Projecting stone cornice with Classical Revival-inspired details. John Latenser and Sons Architects. Property includes adjacent former police station on the west, also designed by Latenser, and linked to the city hall in 1982 rehabilitation.

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0096-006. Carpenter Building (c. 1907), 4916 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 9)

One-part commercial block. One-story masonry. Cast concrete inset panels, wall coping and name plaque provide contrast with dark masonry in upper zone. Transom area filled-in with glass brick.

0096-007. Vacek Building (c. 1910), 4926 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 10)

Two-part commercial block. Vacek family operated dry goods business from previous building on site. In current building, business developed into Vacek Department Store. Masonry, two stories. Classical Revival stylistic features include: pressed metal entablature with block modillions; pilasters with stone bases and capitals; pressed metal window heads. Dominant decorative feature is second-floor center window with Palladian-like motif. Also prominent is shaped roofline parapet with stone coping and detailing.

0096-008. Holmes-Adkins Building (c. 1900), 4911 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 27)

Two-part commercial block. Built for livery, carriage and transfer company. Two-story, masonry with stone wall trim. Cornice features band of geometric ornament. Three-bay arrangement with corbeled pilasters and extended parapet emphasizing center bay. At street level, three large wall openings are segmentally arched. Center bay serves as vehicular entrance to structure which currently operates as a garage.

0096-009. 4917 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 28)

Two-part commercial block. Masonry, two stories with altered first-floor facade. Wall area above second-floor windows contains architectural ornament including round-arched window heads with stone voussoirs and key-stones; a lintel course; and bracketed parapet coping.

0096-014. 4901 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 26)

One-part commercial block on corner lot. Masonry, one-story shaped parapet with coping, altered storefront.

0096-192. 4914 South 24th Street

(Photo No. 9)

Two-part commercial block. Masonry, two stories. Strictly utilitarian facade with no visible stylistic details, however metal panel above storefront appears to cover some form of cast concrete ornament.

Contributing Objects

Cast iron streetlights, c. 1925.

(Photo No. 32)

Two located on north side of "N" Street, one on south side. Base original, modern brackets and light fixtures.

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Non-Contributing Buildings

4802 South 24th Street

One-part commercial block. Masonry. Substantially altered.

4806 South 24th Street

One-part commercial block. Masonry. Substantially altered.

4807 South 24th Street

One-part commercial block. Masonry with cast concrete wall trim.

4918 South 24th Street

Two-story structure with upper windows covered-over. Substantially altered.

4938 South 24th Street

Two-story, corner masonry building, c. 1950s.

4903 South 24th Street

One-story, masonry faced with wood panels. Altered storefronts.

4907 South 24th Street

One-story, masonry. Corbel table in upper zone. Substantially altered storefronts.

4921 South 24th Street

One-story, masonry. Storefront altered.

4935 South 24th Street

Former Phillips Department Store, c. 1955.

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William Paxton's success in cattle ranching in western Nebraska in the 1870s led him to organize a group of investors, Creighton and McShane among them, to incorporate a stockyard company on a site north of Omaha. Within several months — over the winter of 1879 — Paxton moved his Union Stockyards Company across the Missouri to Council Bluffs. Although he had achieved some success with his Iowa yards, Paxton was persuaded by Wyoming rancher Alexander Swan to give up his operation and join Swan in a new venture planned on a tract of land that the rancher had been assembling south of Omaha. At the time the largest stock handler in Wyoming, Alexander Swan determined that Omaha held excellent prospects for the location of a market west of Chicago that would boost his profits. Working through two local businessmen, Swan acquired 1,875 acres by May of 1883 for \$312,000 and formed a land syndicate. When he found he needed additional capital, he approached Paxton and his group of investors in the Council Bluffs yards, convincing them to abandon their existing business and join with him in the new enterprise. Paxton was made president of the new Union Stockyards Company which was incorporated in December of 1883; within six months the yards were ready to receive a first shipment of 531 Wyoming cattle.

From the beginning, company investors knew that the full success of the stockyards depended upon its ability to attract meat packers to build new facilities near the yards. As an inducement, the company erected a building for this purpose and in 1885, the Detroit-based firm of George H. Hammond & Company moved into the structure under a nominal lease arrangement. Further offers of stock, cash bonuses, rent-free facilities and land brought to Omaha the Chicago-based firms of Philip D. Armour, Michael Cudahy, and Gustavus and Edwin Swift — all had established plants near the yards by 1890.

The presence of Hammond, Swift, Cudahy and Armour in Omaha reflected an important trend affecting the structure of American business institutions emerging most notably in the last quarter of the 19th century: new modes of production and improved transportation networks led to immense increases in the size and scope of industry. For example, Swift from his base in Chicago had built an extensive national business with numerous lines of related products and multiple plant locations. His Omaha operation which opened in 1888 consisted of several multi-storied buildings whose floor space covered two and one-half acres; more than 96,000 cattle, sheep and hogs were butchered in the first nine months of operation. By 1892, more than 1,000 workers were employed in the company's continuously expanding facility.

Undoubtedly influenced by Chicago's Union Stockyards and related business development there, the Omaha industrialists were early in appropriating a new model of land development better suited to accommodate the requirements of the new large-scale industry. That land-use pattern was the industrial suburb, described as follows by urban historian Sam Bass Warner in reference to Chicago, but equally applicable to Omaha: "The stockyards forecast a special urban characteristic of the industry of the 1870-1920 period — the movement of mammoth enterprises completely outside the confines of the core city . . . (A)ll industries that needed good transportation for great quantities of shipments as well as vast open land for future expansion, followed the meat packers' example in seeking locations at the fringes of the manufacturing sectors" (Warner, p. 104-105). In his 1915 study of the industrial suburb, Graham Taylor notes Omaha's place within the historic development of what he terms the satellite city, "This industrial exodus from city center to suburb was first seen conspicuously in the establishment of Pullman and Homestead (PA.) in the early eighties. These two places were by no means the only forerunners. South Omaha, for example, in 1883, sprang up around the stockyards at a railway junction so rapidly as to win the name "Magic City" (Taylor, p.4).

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Residential settlement in the area near the stockyards had indeed advanced at a very rapid rate: the population had risen from about 150 in 1885 to 8,000 in 1890. However, this aspect of the area's evolution from farm land to urban center was not unanticipated by the stockyards organizers; it had, in fact, been directed by them. With the knowledge that a large labor force would be needed to support their feeding and marketing operation — and moreover, to fill the thousands of jobs they expected the packing houses to create — the laying out of a town had been an original part of their plan. Toward that end, the land syndicate that had been formed to assemble the initial 1800-acre parcel, commissioned the surveying and platting of a 389-acre tract which they named South Omaha and filed in July of 1884.

Comprised of 100 blocks generally measuring 320 by 360 feet, the South Omaha plat featured a grid plan that aligned north-south streets with those already existing in Omaha. Names for these streets — 23rd through 29th — also corresponded; east and west streets were assigned letters of the alphabet, "A" through "O." Blocks were divided into 1070 lots, each measuring 60 x 150 feet. Two blocks were reserved for a park near "D" and 25th Streets, and on a large tract northeast of the plat, the investors developed Syndicate Park, later reduced in size and renamed Spring Lake Park.

In 1887, the original land syndicate incorporated as the South Omaha Land Company. John Creighton, John McShane, Peter Iler and Alexander Swan numbered among its directors; William Paxton was elected the company president. The articles of incorporation set forth the general nature of the business: "to be the purchase and sale of lands in this State and such other business as may be incident whereto." Because a comprehensive history of the syndicate and land company's activities has not yet been compiled, it is difficult to assess the full extent of the role these two groups played in the development of South Omaha, apart from their major efforts in early platting, improvement and sale of land. Discrepancies between written accounts describing plans for the town with actual patterns of settlement would indicate that the founders were most interested in the scale of growth, and not the particular form it might take. South Omaha was not organized as a "model" industrial community in the sense of Chicago's Pullman.

Another issue that remains somewhat unclear concerns the land company's notions about the town's form of government. An early report printed in the Omaha Board of Trade by an associate of the syndicate stated that, "It is intended to inaugurate a proper system of self-government, independent of Omaha, confining the taxation within the limits of the South Omaha corporation;" Nevertheless when residents petitioned Douglas County Commissioners for incorporation — primarily in the interests of maintaining law and order — syndicate trustees filed a remonstrance. Their objections may have been over minor issues such as boundaries, however, the historian Consul W. Butterfield notes that after differences were apparently worked out, the syndicate "still stood aloof." Butterfield elsewhere states that land developers had "nothing to do with . . . the establishing of the village," and that ". . . the organization of the village . . . was wholly a public affair" (Savage, Bell and Butterfield, p. 646). Regardless of the syndicate's intentions, the wishes of the public petitioners were realized when South Omaha became incorporated as a village on October 16, 1886. In little more than a year, the village was proclaimed a second-class city by virtue of its increase in population to more than 5,000; in 1889, with 8,000 residents, the municipality was granted a charter for a city of the first class.

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By 1890, the three principal factors shaping South Omaha's future development over the next 25 years had all been set in place. Livestock marketing and processing were firmly entrenched as an industry of national importance fueling the city's economy and creating jobs for thousands of workers, many of whom were recent immigrants. The foundations of the city's urban form had been laid through major subdividing activity by the land company and independent developers, expanding upon the basic grid pattern laid out in the original plat. And, finally, a system of municipal government had been instituted.

Rapid expansion followed by a period of stabilization characterized the city's economy and population growth during the years 1890 to 1915. While the number of animals passing through the yards rose to between six and seven million 1915, the city's human numbers had leveled off at about 26,000 in the first decade of the twentieth century. When the South Omaha was platted, its northern boundary was set about a half mile from Omaha's southern corporate limit. But beginning in 1889, transit lines had linked the two cities, soon resulting in an uninterrupted pattern of urban settlement. Omaha's interest in annexing its smaller neighbor first surfaced in 1890 when the issue was put to a vote and was defeated by the South Omaha citizenry. The city was able to retain its independence for twenty-five more years until a 1915 city-wide vote brought South Omaha under the city of Omaha's jurisdiction.

Despite changes in the city's political system, annexation did not alter the other fundamental aspects of South Omaha's community structure: its traditional physical matrix and stockyards-based economy persisted for at least another four decades. However, by 1930 when the market processed more than eight million animals and achieved its highest total production, important changes in the industry's methods of supply and distribution had already marked the decline of the South Omaha yards. In the early 1920s trucks replaced the railroad as the market's primary means of transport and signaled the trend that would later lead to the decentralization of the meat processing industry. At about the same time, the private automobile also emerged as a force that would drastically alter the structure of the urban landscape. Related to the new systems of transportation based on the truck and automobile, perhaps the first major discontinuity in South Omaha's physical form and traditional patterns of development came with the building of the interstate highway system in the late 1950s which cut a path through the area near the former city's northern boundary. The highway encouraged population movement out of Omaha's older neighborhoods and advanced the development of shopping centers that lessened the significance of the central business district. Yet, the most devastating blow to South Omaha's historic structure did not occur until the late 1960s when obsolete facilities, high labor costs and changing market conditions forced all four major meat packers to close their operations. Although a number of smaller packers remained and the yards continued to function, the cornerstone of the area's economy for nearly eighty years had been dislodged.

The preliminary development of the historic context, "The Livestock Marketing and Meat Processing Industry in Omaha, Nebraska, 1883-1938," appearing above, has focused on information relating to the establishment of South Omaha as an industrial suburb. This approach was taken in order to evaluate the historic and architectural significance of civic and commercial properties located on South 24th Street. A complete exploration of the theme, time period and geographical area would identify and assess additional property types related to the context—stockyards pens and packing house workers' cottages are two such examples. Properties outside South Omaha's pre-annexation political boundaries might also be included, although after 1890 the industry had abandoned Omaha proper in conformity with prohibitive nuisance laws. Substantiated more fully in the discussion below, the period of the district's significance, 1889-1938, extends from the construction date of the first building within the property's boundary to the year in which the property continues to meet the National Register criteria.

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Significance In Commerce:

Reflecting the community's historic patterns of business activity, the South Omaha Main Street Historic District is significant under Criterion A in the area of commerce. From a small cluster of commercial enterprises focused around South 24th and "N" Streets in the last decade of the 19th century, the area within the district ultimately emerged as the core of a central business district that extended in a linear configuration the distance of about a mile along 24th Street.

South 24th Street's commercial development can be directly attributed to its traditional role as a transportation corridor. Prior to the arrival of the stockyards and the subdivision of nearby land, an early road through the area, "Old Bellevue Road," corresponded with part of the route that later became 24th Street; town site founders, in fact, designated 24th as Bellevue Street on early maps. It was, however, the street railway system that determined South 24th Street's character as a focus for business activity. Omaha and South Omaha had been connected by a commuter train operating on the Union Pacific line since 1886, but the arrival of the Omaha Motor Railway in 1889 brought the city into the era of mass transit. The line entered the city along Vinton where it turned south on 24th Street terminating at "N". Since that time South 24th has served as a major arterial for successive forms of public and private automobile transportation.

Because South Omaha experienced the advent of the street railway system soon after its founding, its pre-mass transit phase of urbanization was quite short in duration. Nonetheless, this earliest, pedestrian-oriented era had an important impact on the later development of the 24th and "N" Street intersection as the nucleus of the city's commercial district. Physical proximity to business activity connected with the stockyards, nearness to the train depot, and favorable topography—a natural pathway out of the valley where the yards were located to the higher city ground—all these factors determined that South Omaha's first and principal commercial thoroughfare would form along "N" Street. Radiating from this corridor, commercial buildings also filled lots on 25th and 26th Streets, however the main direction of development pushed east on "N" to link up with the main transit lines on 24th Street. The shift in the intensity of urbanization from "N" to 24th Street can be seen though the marked increase in the number of public works projects aimed at improving 24th Street beginning in the late 1880s. An 1892 petition to the South Omaha City Council filed by Omaha citizens (prominent businessmen and city officials among them) called for the construction of a viaduct across the railroad tracks on 24th Street, noting that: "The importance of 24th Street as a thoroughfare is an additional reason for constructing this viaduct. 24th Street is now the most important business street of South Omaha. . . (it) is the longest as well as the most important north and south street in the city of Omaha." (Supporting document, City of South Omaha Ordinance No. 3404). Based on this evidence and Sanborn fire insurance maps, the beginning point of the South Omaha Main Street Historic District's period of significance has been set at 1889. This date was selected because it is the construction date of the oldest extant building in the district and it also closely corresponds with 24th Street's ascendancy as the city's principal commercial corridor.

The wide range of business establishments that located in the district over the next ten years is represented in the pages of the 1900 South Omaha city directory which show listings for: barbers; druggists; florists; grocers; printers and jewelers; banks and investment companies; as well as the offices of architects; attorneys; and insurance agents. The next forty years of the district's period of significance were accompanied by myriad changes in the

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types and delivery of goods and services. Specialized functions tended to cluster in specific areas, such as drug stores selling convenience items at corners near transit stops. New building types such as automobile showrooms and movie theaters also appeared along the street, and storefronts, particularly at street-level, were altered to modernize their marketing image. Through these changes, however, the area retained its traditional spacial patterns related to commercial function: retailing predominated on street-level with services quartered in offices on upper-floors along with apartment or hotel-type residential units.

Due to the nature of the livestock industry, South Omaha's businesses had always drawn customers from beyond the limits of the immediate area. Interurban streetcar lines to Ralston and Papillion operated on South 24th since the time of horse-drawn cars. The opening of the South Omaha bridge at Missouri Avenue in 1936 directly linked the city with rural areas to the east in Iowa, further expanding its service area. During the decade of the 30s, the South 24th Street district reached its ultimate level of development as a central business district, second only to downtown Omaha in volume of retail trade. It retained that status through the 40s, but lost its prominence in the 1950s to new suburban shopping centers. The WPA Guide to Omaha provides the following description of commercial activity in South Omaha's central business district in 1939:

A Saturday night town, the taverns and retail stores have tremendous business at this time. From early afternoon until dark all types of automobiles, shining and new, old jalopies and trucks, stream in from Sarpy and Saunders counties, and from Iowa across the new bridge. The cars are parked along the curbs and in them farm children wait for their parents who come presently with armfuls of groceries. . . innumerable packages fill the back seats—summer sausage and bananas, candy and cold cream from the dime store, modish hats and "rayon" formals from Phillips Department store (Federal Writers' Project, Vol. II, p. 621).

Considered within the historic boundaries of South Omaha, the central business district is a unique property type—there are no similar groups of properties that approach the district with respect to its spacial structure and economic function. Other types of commercial development, the small retail cluster and neighborhood business district, for example, fall outside the boundaries of comparison. On a broader geographical scale, compared with the commercial cores of other formerly independent towns annexed by Omaha—Benson and Millard, for example—the South Omaha central business district stands apart in terms of its level of development and degree of historic and architectural integrity.

Significance In Politics/Government:

In the area of politics/government, the South Omaha Main Street Historic District achieves distinction for the inclusion of two of the city's important civic buildings within its boundary: the former South Omaha City Hall and Police Station; and the U.S. Post Office, now known as South Station. Considered together, the city hall complex and the post office differ from the majority of buildings in the district in several ways. Their fundamental dissimilarity lies in the fact that both the post office and city hall are public buildings housing governmental institutions, as opposed to places of commercial trade. Related to this difference in function, formal aspects vary: both civic buildings were designed to be free-standing structures set apart on large lots, in contrast to the district's commercial buildings which were built to fill narrow-and-deep parcels and abut neighboring structures. Consequently, the post office and city hall tend to be more square than rectangular in plan and have distinctive side and rear elevations, in addition to those of the principal street facades. Stylistically, they remain

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among the more richly elaborated buildings in the district, each with ornament and detail derived from classical sources. In several respects, specifically their form and stylistic detail, the buildings reflect aspects of the turn-of-the-century City Beautiful movement which sought to improve the urban environment through the design of classically inspired civic buildings on planned sites, such as parks or squares. The post office and city hall, however, do not stand apart from the street in a park-like setting. Though they occupy larger parcels than their commercial neighbors, both buildings maintain the prevailing facade line which runs along the front edge of each lot.

Unless a two-block part allotment was intended to function in conjunction with public buildings, South Omaha town site developers reserved no land within their original plat for future governmental buildings. Early city offices were moved in and out of a number of commercial buildings on "N" Street, before locating with the police station on 25th Street in the late 1890s. City directories also show that the post office—which by 1890 ranked third in the state in volume of business—also operated from several locations on or near "N" Street.

The current post office building was authorized by Congress in 1895. Two years later the site was purchased for \$15,000; in July of 1899, construction was completed for \$84,700. The building's architect is not known. Measuring 70 by 88 feet, the buff brick structure is trimmed with terra cotta and features Classical Revival details including, giant columns supporting a projecting entablature, an arched entrance portal and pedimented window heads. Two blocks to the south, the city hall was built for \$70,000 in 1906 to the plans of John Latenser, a prominent Omaha architect who designed, among other important commissions, the Douglas County Courthouse, Central High School and the South Omaha High School at 4519 South 24th Street. The Latenser firm was also responsible for plans for the police station, built adjacent to the city hall in 1907. Similar in materials and design, both the city hall and the police station are constructed of dark red brick with stone wall trim. The designs for both buildings focus ornament on the cornice, employing stylized, stone elements such as triglyphs and block modillions derived from classical sources. Stone is also used for pedimented entries, including a columned, projecting porch on the city hall. In 1982, a glass-walled passageway joined the police and city hall buildings.

The post office and city hall complex are the only known buildings yet extant that were constructed to house important governmental functions related to South Omaha's status as an independent political entity. The post office still serves its original purpose, though it is now a station within the metropolitan Omaha system. Provisions of South Omaha's annexation stipulated that the city would continue to maintain its own police court, jail and sub-treasury, and for a number of years these activities were centered in the city hall and police station. Subsequently, the provisions were altered, but the complex has continued to quarter local government; currently, several Douglas County branch offices operate from the building. Together the post office and city hall complex reflect South Omaha's pre-annexation history, and the continuing role of South 24th Street as a focus for the community's civic activity.

Significance In Architecture:

As a collection of small commercial buildings that together give form to a distinctive urban building pattern commonly referred to as a Main Street, the district is also noted for significance in architecture under Criterion C. The property type has been a feature of the dominant streets of small and moderately sized American cities since the early 19th century. In characterizing the type, Richard Longstreth states that, "most commercial districts are relatively homogeneous, with buildings with two to three and seldom more than four stories abutting one another, their street elevation defining the property's edge." The origins of this property type in South Omaha occurred virtually at the start of the city's settlement, on "N" Street where the city's first brick building

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was erected in 1885. Sanborn maps dating from 1890 show a dense configuration of two- and three-story, rectangular structures sited along the street-facing edge of almost every lot on "N". At this time 24th Street was neither as intensively developed nor strictly differentiated according to use—a number of small frame dwellings were present—but with the construction of the Mack and Brandes blocks, by 1890 the street's commercial appearance had been established. The contiguous building-to-building relationship that characterizes the property type would be realized within the following decade, Sanborn maps indicate.

Consistent with most Main Streets nationwide, common features among the individual components comprising the type include building form, materials and facade compositional pattern. In the South 24th Street district, almost uniformly, buildings are flat-roofed, masonry structures of bearing-wall construction rising no more than three stories. The city's building codes and fire limit ordinances first adopted around 1890 account for some degree of this consistency. As a result of their form and site orientation, all of the district's commercial structures were designed as "facade" buildings. Again, most of the facade arrangements can be categorized by one of a few basic patterns: the one- and two-part commercial block, and the enframed window wall.

A building pattern defined by its location on the dominant corridor of a city, Main Street represents a singular property type within the context of a community. The boundary of the South Omaha Main Street Historic District was drawn along South 24th Street to include those components that best represent the qualities of the property type for the period of significance. South Omaha's earliest Main Street buildings on "N" Street were removed in the construction of the J.F. Kennedy highway and later redevelopment efforts. Other major streets, such as portions of "Q" Street along the southern edge of the stockyards, exhibit several physical aspects of the property type, however, none meet the requirements for integrity of location, setting and association.

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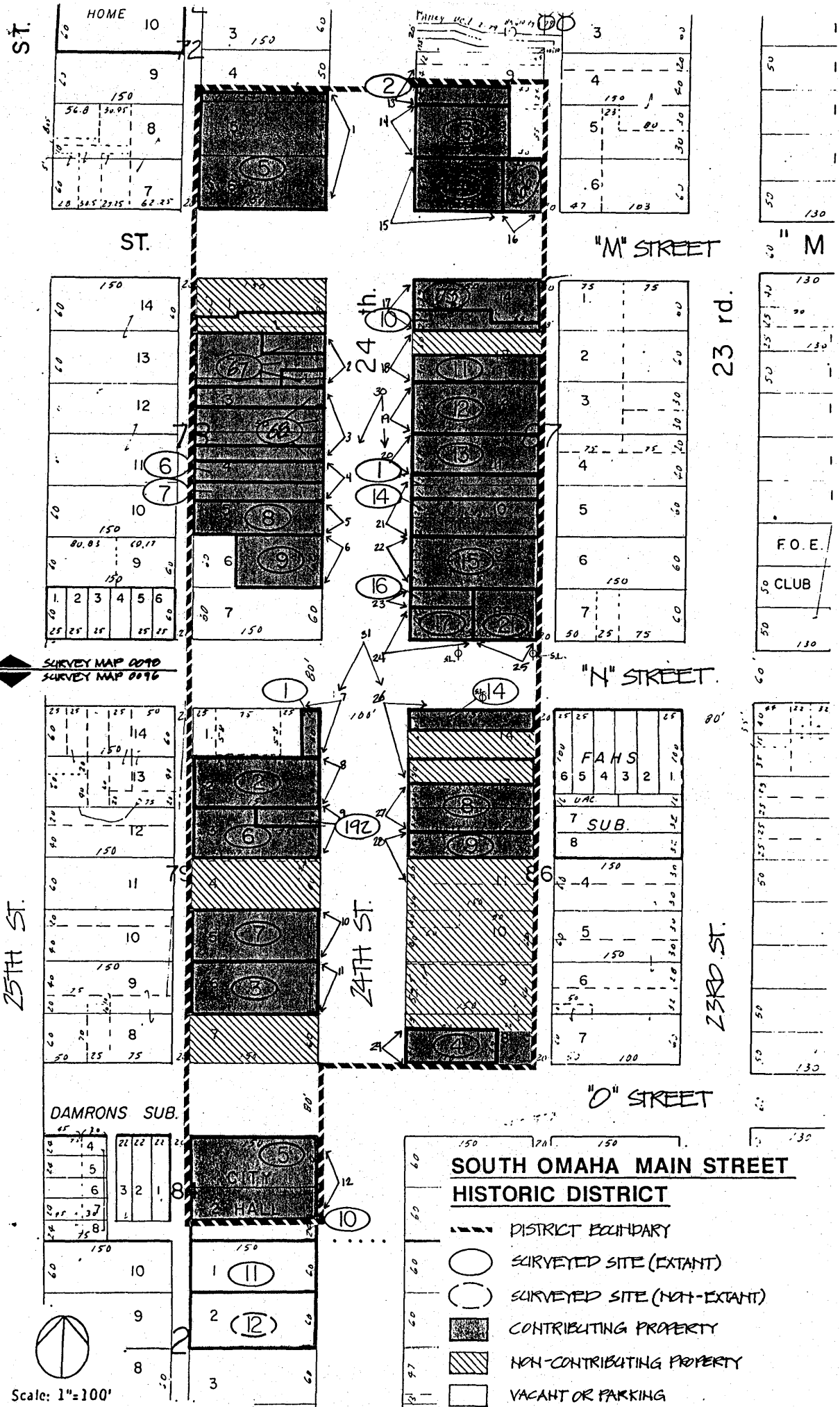
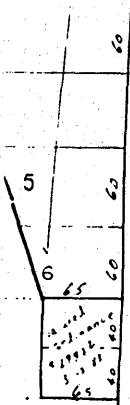
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Geographical Data

E 15 252 930 E 4565 800 N

F 15 252 880 E 4565 800 N



SURVEY MAP 0090
SURVEY MAP 0096

25TH ST.

24TH ST.

23RD ST.

Scale: 1"=100'

Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission

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