

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only
received FEB 20 1980
date entered NOV 4 1980

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Owosso Multiple Resource Area (Partial Inventory)
Historic Resources of the City of Owosso, Michigan
and/or common (Partial Inventory: Historic and Architectural Properties)

2. Location

street & number The center-city area of Owosso, delineated by...(cont.) not for publication

city, town OWOSSO vicinity of _____ congressional district 10th

state Michigan code 26 county Shiawassee code 155

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multiple Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership - Please see "Property Ownership List" for all
Historic Districts and Individual Sites provided
on Continuation Sheets #4-2 through #4-26.

city, town OWOSSO vicinity of _____ state Michigan 48867

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds

street & number Shiawassee County Courthouse

city, town Corunna state Michigan 48817

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Michigan Inventory of Historic Resources and... (continued) has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date Survey conducted: January - May, 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Michigan History Division/Michigan Department of State

city, town Lansing state Michigan 48918

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date Please see nomination text

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

(Please see the nomination text for descriptions of all historic districts and individual sites on Continuation Sheets #7/8-28 through #7/8-83.)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates Resources built between 1833-1929 **Builder/Architect** See nomination text

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Founded in the early 1830s by Alfred L. and Benjamin O. Williams, the City of Owosso is a mature community of 18,000 people located around a bend in the Shiawassee River in rural Shiawassee County, Michigan. Owosso experienced three major waves of growth between its settlement and the start of the Great Depression which molded the community's historical development and affected the quality of its architecture. These periods included the early pioneer, pre-industrial settlement from 1835 to 1856 that yielded structures built in simple Greek Revival styles; the middle period reflecting the coming of the railroads, the expansion of markets, and the development of the woodworking and furniture businesses from 1856 to the 1890s that yielded a prosperous and highly artistic display of High Victorian designs; and the late period of iron- and steel-related industrial development from the 1890s to the start of the Depression in 1929 that yielded buildings in the various Revival styles. To best reflect the history and architectural heritage of Owosso, this nomination highlights a Study Area including 1,400 resources spread over approximately 380 acres that reflects the City as it was by 1929, a point in time after which the Great Depression and the urban sprawl fostered by World War II significantly altered the nature of Owosso's development. Within the Study Area, the nomination presents four historic districts and twenty-three individual sites. The four districts include the Oliver Street Historic District, an area of opulent homes and religious structures; the Mason Street Historic Residential District, an area of tract workers' housing; the Michigan Avenue/ Genesee Street Historic Residential District, an area of homes built by skilled craftspeople; and the West Town Commercial and Industrial Historic District, an area including fine non-residential architectural materials. The group of twenty-three individual sites includes a variety of residential, non-residential, and "special" resources. These districts and sites best reflect the City's historical, architectural, and cultural heritage because of their associations with the events that made important contributions to the broad patterns of Owosso's history, because of their associations with the lives of people significant in the City's past, and because of their embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of types, periods, and methods of construction that belong to this unique Michigan community.

(Please see the nomination text for statements of significance for all historic districts and individual sites on Continuation Sheets #7/8-28 through #7/8- 83 .)

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PART I: METHODOLOGY FOR THE DELINEATION OF THE OWOSSO SURVEY AREA

Owosso residents have long been involved in the preservation of their landmark structures. Well before the Bicentennial, for example, interested citizens worked to have Curwood Castle, the studio of writer James Oliver Curwood, listed on the National Register of Historic Places (PHOTO #1). To honor Thomas Dewey, a famous prosecuting attorney and two-time presidential candidate, residents nominated both his Owosso birthplace (PHOTO #2) and his boyhood home (PHOTO #3) to the State Register of Historic Sites. Preservationists worked to place official Michigan Historic Markers at these three individual sites, open Curwood Castle to the public, and promote community awareness of Owosso's rich architectural and historical heritage.

In late 1976, however, a small group of Owosso residents recognized the need to work with more than just Owosso's landmark structures. They met with representatives from Michigan's State Historic Preservation Office, the Michigan History Division of the Michigan Department of State, to discuss techniques for completing a comprehensive survey of their City's architectural, historical, and cultural resources and developing a plan for preservation activities. By early 1977, this initial group of interested residents organized itself into a fifteen member Ad Hoc Survey Committee that the Owosso City Council officially recognized in March of that year. City Council assigned the Ad Hoc Committee the task of completing a comprehensive resource survey within the city limits of Owosso and budgeted the group \$500 for its task.

Two women well recognized within Owosso as community promoters and organizers co-chaired the Survey Committee. One woman, regularly referred to as Owosso's "City Historian,"* brought to the Survey Committee her skills in conducting historical research and writing about the City's heritage. As a native of Owosso and as a forty-year activist within the American Red Cross, she knew her community well. She employed her knowledge of Owosso's past by serving as Corresponding Secretary of the Shiawassee Historical Society, as Secretary of the Owosso Historical Commission, and as a regular speaker for educational and service groups interested in Owosso's heritage. Additionally, she actively promoted the writing of local history by serving as the author of Owosso's bicentennial text, Diary of Owosso, as a regular contributor to the Shiawassee Historical Society's publication, Shiawassee Gazette, as the author for a history of the Owosso Savings Bank, a local lending institution now called Pace-setter Bank, and as researcher for the historic calendar fund-raising program. Her skills as a factual, indefatigable student of Owosso's past well complemented the skills of her co-chairwoman.

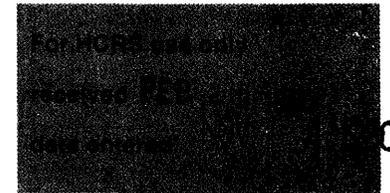
The co-chairwoman** of the Ad Hoc Survey Committee first came to citywide attention when her background as a communication arts major at Michigan State University and her experience as manager of her own business for twenty-five years helped her to serve as a strong and effective board member for the Flint Ballet Theatre, the Owosso Community Players, the Shiawassee Arts Council, and the Shiawassee Historical Society. While serving on these various boards, she further refined her organizational skills by developing and directing a wide variety of shows and entertainments for the Shiawassee County March of Dimes, the Owosso Memorial Hospital Auxiliary, the Owosso Mus-icale, and the citywide Curwood Festival.

*Helen Harrelson

**Sally Sue Gale

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With the new Survey Committee assignment, the co-chairwomen combined their research and organizational talents to tap the skills of several retired teachers, an attorney, a professional archivist, a builder/contractor, a professional photographer, students, members of City Council, businesspeople, and several dedicated volunteers who served on the Committee. The Ad Hoc Survey Committee members worked closely with their Regional Preservation Coordinator from the Michigan History Division,*a woman with a Master of Science in Historic Preservation from Columbia University and three years of experience on the staff of the State Historic Preservation Office.

The Ad Hoc Survey Committee's first task was to delineate the boundaries of a Survey Area within which a comprehensive photo-inventory and historical survey of resources would be undertaken. Accompanied by their Regional Preservation Coordinator, members of the Ad Hoc Committee carried out several exhaustive windshield surveys of all the architectural fabric contained within Owosso's city limits. After completing their broad-brush review of the close to 6,000 buildings, structures, sites, objects, and significant open spaces spread over the City's 2,880 acres, the Survey Committee members studied their findings and assessed their impressions.

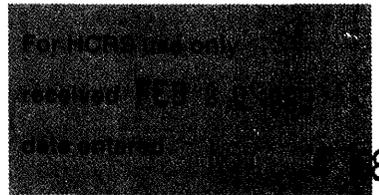
To delineate a rational Survey Area boundary, the members used a selection technique whereby they began at City Hall, the approximate center of town, and pushed outward on each proposed boundary limit until blocks were reached where less than fifty percent of the architectural fabric was of World War II vintage or older. The members repeated this selection technique in all directions, radiating from the center of town, until they had defined a completely enclosed Survey Area. This method of delineation, while somewhat arbitrary, successfully tailored the project to a manageable size for the Ad Hoc Survey Committee and defined an area where a majority concentration of pre-World War II architecture still dominated the streetscape.

The boundaries of the Survey Area roughly included (See Map #1 - "Owosso Historic Survey Area") the north side of King on the north; the east side of Dewey, north side of Main, east side of Gould, south side of Jerome, and centerline of Oakwood on the east; the Grand Trunk Western Railroad right-of-way, east side of Washington, all of Oak Hill Cemetery, south side of Gute, west side of Shiawassee, and south side of Stewart on the south; and the Penn Central Transportation Company right-of-way, centerline of Chipman, and the Shiawassee River on the west. The boundaries contained within them approximately 4,000 buildings, structures, sites, objects, and significant open spaces spread over approximately 950 acres. The composition and balance of the materials included within the Survey Area satisfied the members of the Survey Committee from several perspectives. First, the Area offered a good overview of building usage with residential buildings representing approximately seventy percent of the total Survey Area resources, commercial buildings representing twenty percent of the total, industrial buildings representing five percent of the total, and municipal, religious, and "other" buildings and open spaces representing the remaining five percent. Second, the defined Survey Area presented a good overview of building types and thus, provided an effective visual summary of Owosso and its architectural resources. Opulent housing, for example, as well as modest residences and workers' homes existed within the Survey Area; industrial as well as commercial material was available for study; open spaces, both man-made and natural, represented a part of the total Survey Area.

* Janet Kreger

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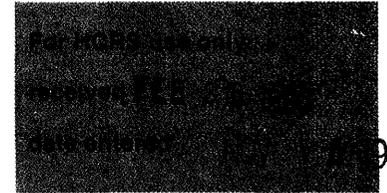
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With their Survey Area defined, the members of the Ad Hoc Survey Committee began the actual work of photo-inventorying and historically surveying the 4,000 resources. Five two-person teams took responsibility for individual sections of the Survey Area and systematically photographed every building, structure, site, object, and open space on thirty-five millimeter, black and white film. When the film was developed, these teams turned their materials over to a second team responsible for completing the Michigan History Division Survey Data Cards, keying all photographs to Survey Area maps, and organizing the project's negatives. When completed with the Survey Data Cards, the second team's members then forwarded their work to a final team that completed basic historical research on each site. When possible, the research team provided an exact or circa date of construction and an original owner's name for documented sites; for most all sites, the team recorded the owner of record at the turn-of-the-century and provided information about notable people and events associated with the sites. It is significant to note that research and refinement of historical information continued through the actual drafting of the National Register Nomination in an effort to make the final document a factual and reflective overview of Owosso's past. Altogether, the Survey Data Cards, photographs, negatives, and historical research became the data base for the Ad Hoc Survey Committee's upcoming activities focused on the production of Michigan's first Multiple Resource Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

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PART II: METHODOLOGY FOR THE DELINEATION OF THE OWOSSO MULTIPLE RESOURCE STUDY AREA

In June of 1977, the Owosso City Council accepted the Survey Report of the Ad Hoc Survey Committee and established the group as the official Historic District Study Committee for the City. The City Council charged Study Committee members with the task of working toward the nomination of historic districts and individual sites to the National Register of Historic Places. After careful consideration, the members determined that use of the new Multiple Resource Nomination format would be the most effective way to nominate Owosso's many significant resources in the shortest length of time.

The Historic District Study Committee members realized that they could use additional assistance in preparing the research and paperwork necessary for a Multiple Resource Nomination. To get this assistance, the group applied for, and received, an Intern through the Summer Internship Program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Intern*, a Princeton University graduate with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Architectural History, brought to the Study Committee the skills needed to turn the raw Owosso survey data into a draft Multiple Resource Nomination that could be refined by the State Historic Preservation Office staff and submitted to the National Register.

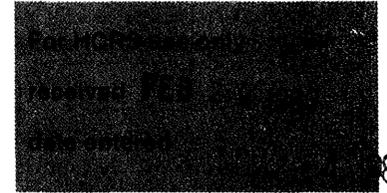
The Intern completely reviewed the survey data produced by the Ad Hoc Survey Committee as his first task during the Summer of 1978. His review, conducted in concert with the coding of all the photodocumented resources by age, indicated that a highly concentrated area of pre-Depression Era architecture rested at the heart of the original Survey Area. Indeed, by trimming the Survey Area along its eastern and southern borders, the Intern identified a concentration of pre-1930 resources that represented between eighty percent and ninety-five percent of the total architectural fabric of each block. This initial review of the raw survey data seemed to indicate that a strong architectural and historical focus could develop for the Owosso Multiple Resource Nomination with careful contraction of the Survey Area's boundaries.

The Intern tentatively delineated boundaries for the Study Area that roughly included (See Map #2 - "Owosso Multiple Resource Study Area") the north side of King on the north; the east side of Hickory, north side of Oliver, centerline of Oak, Laverock Alley, and centerline of Dewey on the east; the south side of Main, centerline of Park, centerline of Comstock, centerline of Washington, and the Penn Central Transportation Company right-of-way on the south; and the south side of Main, centerline of State, the Penn Central Transportation Company right-of-way, centerline of Beehler, west side of Union, and centerline of Third on the west. Approximately 1,400 resources spread over approximately 380 acres existed within these boundaries. A breakdown by use indicated that approximately seventy-five percent of the total number of resources were residences, twenty percent were commercial buildings, three percent were industrial structures, and two percent were municipal, religious, open space, and "other" resources.

*Stephen Byrns

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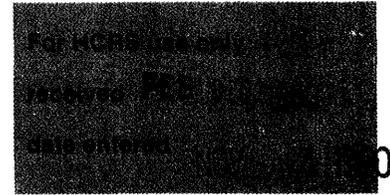
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The Intern's historical research on the growth and development of Owosso lent credence to the selection of these Study Area boundaries. He documented that the Multiple Resource Study Area roughly corresponded to the area of settlement established in Owosso by the 1890s. By this last decade of the nineteenth century, the railroads already had arrived, Owosso's most significant industries had been established, and a concentration of residential and commercial development in Owosso had given the City a mature and fully urbanized appearance. Growth had continued at a healthy pace within these boundaries for the next two decades with new development filling in the streetscapes rather than expanding the city limits. Thus, the Study Area reflected Owosso's growth until 1929, a point in time after which the Great Depression and the urban sprawl fostered by World War II significantly altered the nature of Owosso's development.

Equally important to the production of a National Register Nomination was the fact that the Owosso Multiple Resource Study Area, as defined, housed an unusually rich and varied display of nineteenth and early twentieth century architecture. The mixture ranged from fine workers' housing to elegant upper class mansions, from richly detailed commercial buildings to well designed industrial structures, and from fine churches to scenic river- and streetscapes. Fortunately, because history had never subjected Owosso's streetscapes to destruction by widespread fire or urban renewal, the first generations of buildings still existed in their original forms and reflected the full architectural evolution of Owosso; as mentioned above, the concentration of pre-Depression architectural fabric stood between eighty percent and ninety-five percent in every block of the Study Area. Additionally, because Owosso's residents had limited their remodeling efforts and their use of aluminum siding, an integrity of design existed that allowed the heterogeneity of Owosso's architectural heritage clearly to be seen. With this historical, cultural, and architectural documentation supporting his delineation of the Multiple Resource Study Area, the Intern finalized the Study Area's boundaries with the State Historic Preservation Office's preliminary approval and proceeded with production of the draft National Register Nomination.

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PART III: METHODOLOGY FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND INDIVIDUAL SITES WITHIN THE OWOSSO MULTIPLE RESOURCE STUDY AREA

The Historic District Study Committee, assisted by the National Trust Summer Intern and the SHPO's Regional Preservation Coordinator, made repeated assessments of the 1,400 resources documented within the Multiple Resource Study Area. Soon, the Committee realized that while all of Owosso's resources within this carefully defined and historically recognizable area were of interest, not all were of National Register quality. The group needed a selection criteria to allow for the consistent and equitable identification of National Register eligible districts and sites.

The Committee, with assistance from the Michigan History Division, developed a selection criteria that closely followed the "National Register Criteria for Evaluation" presented in 36 CFR 60.6; the Committee made only slight changes that it felt reflected the special needs of the City and its architectural heritage. Four criteria were thus developed:

The quality of significance in the history, architecture, and culture of Owosso is present in buildings, structures, objects, sites, open spaces, and districts that were constructed in 1929 or before, that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the City's history, and/or
- B. that are associated with the lives of people significant in the City's past, and/or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, and/or
- D. that have marked the City's streetscape for so many years that by age alone significance is established.

Note: Archaeological resources existing within Owosso's Study Area were not studied for purposes of the National Register Multiple Resource Nomination due to the lack of expertise available to identify sites. When information becomes available through the State Historic Preservation Office, archaeological resources will be recognized and added to the nomination through the amendment process.

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Through a broad application of these four selection criteria, the Intern initially defined five historic districts and ninety-eight individual sites for potential inclusion in the draft National Register Nomination. Next, the Regional Preservation Coordinator; her supervisor*, the Head of the Historic Sites Unit for the Michigan History Division; and both the State Historic Preservation Officer** and her Deputy Director***, carefully reviewed this first round of choices. After strict re-application of the selection criteria and a great deal of review and discussion, the group as a whole decided to further limit the included resources to four historic districts and twenty-three individual sites.

The resulting selections were strong National Register candidates reflecting the full range of building types and usages found in Owosso. Each historic district displayed at least an eighty percent concentration of resources meeting the City's selection criteria, and, district boundaries that made it clearly distinct from its surroundings. The four districts included the Oliver Street Historic District, an area of opulent homes and religious structures; the Mason Street Historic District, an area of tract workers' housing; the Michigan Avenue/Genesee Street Historic Residential District, an area of homes built by skilled craftspeople; and the West Town Commercial and Industrial Historic District, an area including fine non-residential architectural materials. Individual sites were those resources that fell outside the defined historic district boundaries but displayed a level of significance and neighborhood distinction warranting their individual recognition. The twenty-three selected resources reflected residential and commercial as well as industrial usages (See Map #3 - "Historic Districts and Individual Sites Within the Owosso Multiple Resource Study Area").

The districts and individual sites left unrecognized during this initial round of selections were those of post-1929 vintage, those altered to an extent that architectural integrity was lost, and those with minimal or undocumented historical or cultural significance. The Owosso Historic District Study Committee and its Summer Intern acknowledged, however, that during later rounds of selections made in years to come, these unrecognized resources might well be those added to this first National Register Nomination by amendment. Indeed, as the unrecognized resources aged, as restoration was undertaken, as unsympathetic alterations were reversed, or as additional historic and cultural documentation was completed, many of these resources would gain the integrity demanded for future designation. In this respect, the Multiple Resource Nomination would be instrumental in recognizing Owosso's future development; the nomination materials now being prepared were only the first step.

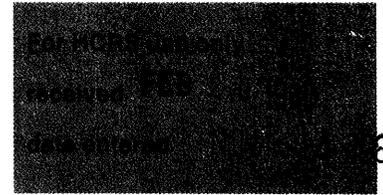
*Kathryn B. Eckert

**Dr. Martha M. Bigelow

***Michael J. Washo

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PART IV: GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND OVERVIEW STATEMENT OF
HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR OWOSSO'S MULTIPLE RESOURCE STUDY AREA

The City of Owosso today is a community of 18,000 people located in the heart of Shiawassee County, Michigan. Founded early in the 1830s at a bend in the Shiawassee River, Owosso is now a mature community with commercial areas at its center, industrial areas to the south and southwest, and a wide variety of older residential neighborhoods to the southeast, east, north, and northwest. Due to the existence of a strong commercial and industrial base that generated an early and continuing wealth, and, the presence of skilled artisans and craftspeople who came to work in the casket, furniture, and stove industries, the City displays a concentration of fine architecture at its center rivalling the best of Michigan's early communities. It is the urban complex of industrial, commercial, and residential architecture that existed at the center of Owosso by the 1890s and developed until the start of the Great Depression that constitutes the Study Area for the Owosso Multiple Resource Nomination.

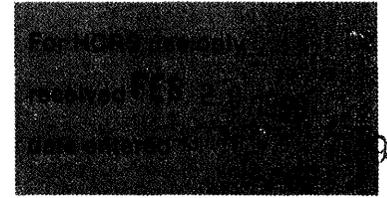
The earliest settlers in the area found the bends and white water rapids of the Shiawassee River both aesthetically and economically conducive to the establishment of a small village. By 1837, a dam and a millrace along the diagonal portion of what now is Water Street were supplying the Village with the water power needed to run its first industries. Owosso's urban configuration initially was established during these years as the area southwest of the millrace developed into the milling and industrial district, as the area to the immediate northeast became the commercial district, and as the land to the north became residential in character.

The coming of the railroads in the late 1850s and early 1860s further developed and cemented this early urban design. With the extension of the Detroit and Milwaukee, the Ramshorn, and the Jackson, Lansing, and Saginaw Railroads into Owosso, the town became an important rail junction in Shiawassee County. Owosso's largest industries developed along the railroad right-of-ways and spurred the growth of the City's southwest quadrant. With enlarged production capacity, ready access to a stream of supplies, and an effective way to transport its finished products, Owosso moved into a position of regional marketing importance. The community organization required to meet these new demands locked Owosso into its urban form; its identity was established as a distinct production-oriented urban unit.

While Owosso's urban configuration vigorously was molded by the pressures of economic development, growth was far from haphazard. The settlement's founding fathers, Alfred L. and Benjamin O. Williams, had witnessed other sections of the Michigan Territory being purchased by wild-eyed speculators looking only for an easy dollar. To guard against this exploitation and introduce a mark of quality from the beginning, the Williams Brothers carefully engineered and executed the physical development of their settlement and made a conscious effort to select and recruit only the worthiest citizens to populate it. For example, the brothers welcomed Elias Comstock into their community in 1835 as the first real settler to bring a family, build a home, and establish permanent ties in Owosso. As the son of Michigan's first

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ordained Baptist minister, Comstock set the tone for the community's future development. Next, the Williams Brothers travelled back to New York State in 1837 to persuade Daniel Ball, a trusted friend, to bring a group to Owosso to construct the millrace. Although Ball later moved on, many members of his colony remained to become permanent and prominent Owosso citizens. Other early settlers included Dr. John Barnes, a graduate of Amherst College, who arrived in 1842 to become one of Owosso's first physicians, and the Gould Brothers - Daniel, Amos, Ebenezer, and David - who arrived between 1837 and 1843 and gained prominence as the town's first lawyers, bankers, merchants, surveyors, railroad builders, and entrepreneurs.

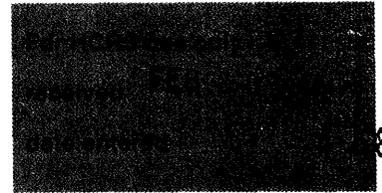
While hopes for prosperity and wealth ran high even during the early years, the residents were realists and the settlement they created was conservative. The fledgling community was seeking to become a permanent, self-sufficient, survival-oriented settlement in Shiawassee County. Its residents were most concerned with establishing prosperous farms, mills, and commercial establishments rather than with wasting their hard-earned capital on opulent displays of public and private architecture. Consequently, the architectural legacy from the period between 1836 to 1856 is largely restricted to modest Greek Revival structures.

The introduction of the railroads in 1856, however, brought an influx of new citizens, ideas, and activities to Owosso. Most significantly, the rail lines attracted an unusual number of new wood-based manufacturing enterprises that quickly became the major impetus for growth and change. Young Lyman Woodard, for example, established the Woodard Furniture and Casket Company in Owosso and began production. During the 1870s, the Estey Furniture Factory and the Robbins Table Company also selected Owosso as their home. Soon, the production of fine fabricated furniture was bringing to Owosso a new form of recognition that stretched far beyond the boundaries of Shiawassee County.

This early woodworking era spurred by the coming of the railroads cannot be over-emphasized. The market for wood and finished wood products made Owosso one of the nation's prominent manufacturing centers for the industry. The burgeoning wood-based enterprises attracted hundreds of craftspeople, artisans, and designers into the City. Satellite businesses specializing in door and trim manufacturing, cabinet making, and carriage fabrication developed. Affected by the City's total involvement in the woodworking trades, even the average Owossoite developed a strong visual and aesthetic tradition that led to a commonplace desire for lively and refined design work, a strong need for fashionable ornamentation, and a demand for quality craftsmanship. Happy to discard the austere architectural traditions of a few years earlier, Owosso residents displayed their good fortune and fine taste through the construction of attractive residences and commercial buildings. Homes and businesses constructed in a full range of Italianate Carpenter Gothic, Queen Anne, Romanesque, and Eastlake styles appeared and created a townscape matched by few of Owosso's neighboring communities.

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Additionally, Owosso's woodworking era cannot easily be overlooked because the dramatic surge in prosperity it spurred brought change to all sectors of public and private life. For example, the City's population grew from 3,000 residents in 1881 to over 8,000 in 1893 and gave Owosso a totally urbanized appearance. The downtown area on the east side of the Shiawassee River became the commercial center of the County. Hostelrys flourished and the City boasted a full complement of bankers, doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. A myriad of civic groups and small town cultural events made their appearances. With the community's focus changed from simple survival to the promotion of excellence in all fields of endeavor, Owosso seemed to nurture an unusual number of accomplished people. For example, James Oliver Curwood, a renowned author and conservationist, and Frederick Frieeseke, a recognized Impressionist painter, were both native sons; later, Thomas Dewey, a famous prosecuting attorney who served as Governor of New York State and as a two-time Republican presidential candidate, spent many productive years of his early life in Owosso. During these booming times between 1856 and the 1890s, Owosso was a community with a clear identity, a prosperity relished by its residents, and an outward display of fine craftsmanship and good architecture.

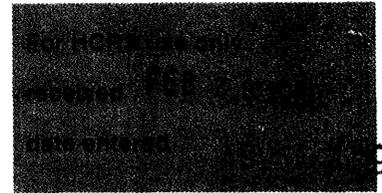
During the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth, Owosso's economic pulse quickened with the founding of new industries based on the use of iron and steel. In 1891, Alvin Bentley incorporated the Owosso Manufacturing Company which fabricated screen doors and snow shovels. This early company later became the Mitchell-Bentley Corporation, a large manufacturer of automobile trim that sold its products to such early automobile firms as General Motors and Buick. In 1903, the million dollar Owosso Sugar Company located in the City; in 1908, the Independent Stove Company, maker of the "Renown Stove," moved from Detroit to Owosso and grew to be one of the City's largest employers.

The continuing success of Owosso's industrial and commercial bases allowed residents to pour additional capital into the construction of fine buildings and public amenities. As Victorian styles began to wane in appeal, a new wave of Shingle, Bungalow, and Revival styles maintained the tradition of fine building in Owosso. Most all of this new construction took place within the boundaries of the 1890s settlement area; residents created full, fashionable streetscapes that produced an image of maturity and prosperity for their town. The overall economic picture continued to be bright for Owosso until the beginning of the Depression marked the temporary end of prosperity and growth.

In summary, two themes in Owosso's history interacted during three distinct eras of growth to make Owosso the architecturally significant component of Michigan's heritage that it is today. First, the consciously sought characteristics of quality and selectivity set a tone of refinement at the time of Owosso's founding. Second, two eras of industrial growth based first on wood and then on metal established and maintained a fine aesthetic and visual tradition in the community. As a result,

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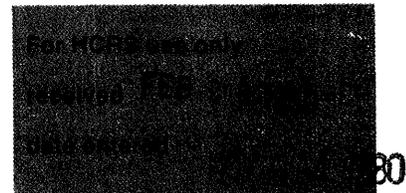
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quality architecture abounded in Owosso and created an environment that seemed to support both accomplished people and yet stronger waves of activity and growth.

Perhaps a third theme - a contemporary one - is developing in Owosso. People are beginning to recognize the outstanding architectural output of the period between the early 1830s and 1929 and to see that the first generations of building are still standing in an unusually complete state of preservation. This recognition is spurring public awareness and support for preservation of Owosso's older buildings. Tremendous volunteer activism, City Council approval, and widespread publicity in all the local media have generated momentum enough to start a new tradition of preservation in Owosso.

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PART X: PRESENTDAY PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES

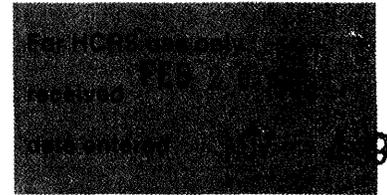
The preparation of the National Register Nomination for Owosso, the presence of a National Trust Intern in the City, the promotion of preservation activities by the Historic District Study Committee - now absorbed by the Owosso Historical Commission, the production of newspaper columns and radio shows on preservation issues, and the continual community-wide support for new historic preservation programs within the City of Owosso have led to a noticeable increase in preservation and restoration activities within the Multiple Resource Study Area.

For example, a December, 1979 release in the Argus Press, Owosso's local paper, noted that twenty-four commercial and income-producing properties in the City had undergone or were undergoing restoration for a total capital expenditure of approximately \$1.5 million dollars; the bulk of these buildings were located within the Study Area. While comparable figures are not yet available for residential restoration activities, the Owosso Historical Commission believes that residential property owners have expended close to this amount during the last three years. In terms of preservation efforts, the City of Owosso continues to maintain Curwood Castle and the Comstock Cabin and open them to the public on a daily basis. Most recently, the City has begun acquisition of the Amos Gould Residence on Oliver Street. After complete and historically accurate restoration, the City plans to preserve the structure as a headquarters for the Owosso Historical Commission and other community groups. In a general way, Owosso's property owners have continued to preserve many of the City's fine older buildings with a marked decrease in insensitive revitalizations and applications of aluminum and vinyl sidings.

Not all preservation activities have proceeded smoothly in Owosso. Even after three years of intensive public education, for example, the Owosso Historical Commission finds that many private residential property owners are still concerned about "federal involvement" in their community if the Multiple Resource Nomination is approved for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Second, the Historical Commission's members have not had complete success in convincing Owosso's commercial property owners that preservation is the most viable way to revitalize Owosso's central business district. As in many small Michigan towns, merchants and their Downtown Development Authority still embrace the philosophy that "new is better" and actively promote the packaging of entire blocks for clearance and new construction. Needless to say, downtown commercial property owners are extremely negative and openly hostile on the issues of National Register listing and determinations of eligibility because they fear federal funding review and the negative tax consequences of the Tax Reform Act of 1976. Third, the Historical Commission has found that the Downtown Development Authority is not an organization easily drawn to the side of preservation with economic incentives. Quite frankly, the DDA has drawn together such an enticing package of commercial revitalization district tax abatement programs, tax increment financing schemes, and privately supported revolving fund activities that it can offer the downtown merchants better development assistance than can the preservationists...and without the dreaded federal involvement in its activities.

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Owosso's preservationists do not appear to be disheartened. While their feelings have never actually been quantified, preservation activists in the City feel certain that more and more people are beginning to understand the philosophy of historic preservation and support its tenets. They point to the growing success of Owosso's historic homes tour, among other citywide preservation activities, as a measure of their beliefs. Until such time as preservation is seen as an integral part of the planning process in Owosso, the results of the survey and inventory process used for the National Register Nomination steadily remains in use. At the local level, the City's planners utilize the information to expedite A-95 State Clearinghouse reviews and the Environmental Review process in coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office. The survey materials have met with constant use for the production of historic calendars, newspaper articles, homes tour brochures, educational presentations, slide shows, and radio presentations. While a preservation component has not yet been integrated into the City's comprehensive planning document, the Historical Commission feels that its defined advisory role to the City Council on preservation-related issues is a step in this direction. Indeed, the Commission's present responsibilities include reviewing the City's development plans and commenting on how they will impact the resources within the Multiple Resource Study Area as well as expanding the list of those resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places; its responsibilities are likely to expand in the future as the City's preservation program grows.

While progress has been slow, time-consuming, and sometimes disappointing for Owosso's preservation program, community residents can see that the City's developing preservation philosophy has had a significant effect on Owosso in the past three years. A certain momentum is established now that will keep Owosso actively working to recognize, protect, and enhance its historical, architectural, and cultural resources.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see Continuation Sheets #9-84 through #9-87.

10. Geographical Data **UTM NOT VERIFIED**

Acreage of nominated property _____ **ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**
Quadrangle name _____ Quadrangle scale _____

UMT References Please see Continuation Sheets #10-88 through #10-100.

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
state	N/A	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Janet L. Kreger, Regional Preservation Coordinator

organization Michigan History Division date February 4, 1980

street & number Michigan Department of State telephone 517-373-0510

city or town Lansing, Michigan 48918 state

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Marta M. Bigelow*

title *Director Michigan History Division Dept. of State* date *Feb 5, 1980*

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Sally G. Debra date *11/4/80*
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: *Anna Jane Saxe* date *9-26-80*
Chief of Registration Regional Coordinator

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED	NOV 4 1980

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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INTERVIEWS:

Interview: Dr. A. L. Arnold. May, 1977. Interviewer: Helen Harrelson. Interview summary available in the site files of the Michigan History Division, Michigan Department of State, Lansing, Michigan 48918.

Interview: Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Colando. May, 1977. Interviewer: Helen Harrelson. Interview summary available in the site files of the Michigan History Division, Michigan Department of State, Lansing, Michigan 48918.

Interview: Mr. Ray Hall. 1799. Interviewer: Helen Harrelson. Interview summary available in the site files of the Michigan History Division, Department of State, Lansing, Michigan 48918.

Interview: Mrs. Helen Harrelson. December, 1979. Interviewer: Janet L. Kreger. Interview summary available in the site files of the Michigan History Division, Michigan Department of State, Lansing, Michigan 48918.

Interview: Mrs. Howard Sweet. May, 1977. Interviewer: Margaret Zdunic. Interview summary available in the site files of the Michigan History Division, Michigan Department of State, Lansing, Michigan 48918.