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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Stillwater Commercial Historic District
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number	vicinity of Main, 2nd, and Chestnut Streets	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> not for publication						
city, town	Stillwater	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> vicinity						
state	Minnesota	code	MN	county	Washington	code	163	zip code	55082

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	57	14 buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	2	4 sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	3	0 structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	1	0 objects
		63	18 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.

Signature of certifying official Ian R. Stewart

Date Feb 19, 1992

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
- See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.

- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain: _____)

entered in the
National Register

3/26/92

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
see continuation sheet

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
see continuation sheet

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Italianate, Queen Anne, Classical Revival
Greek Revival
Other: early 20th century commercial,
modern

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation limestone, brick, concrete
walls brick
stone
roof asphalt
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See continuation sheets.

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 N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1860-1940

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

various

Significant Person

N/A

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

See continuation sheets.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets.

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:

Minnesota Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 25 acres

UTM References

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

B	1 5	5 1 5 5 6 0	4 9 8 8 7 6 0
Zone	Easting	Northing	
D	1 5	5 1 4 9 4 0	4 9 9 0 0 4 0

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Norene Roberts, President

organization Historical Research Inc.

street & number 7800 Tessman Drive

city or town Minneapolis

date May 1, 1991

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Stillwater Commercial Historic District, Stillwater, Washington County, Minnesota

Section number 6 Page 6: 1

FUNCTION OR USE

Historic Functions:

Domestic

single dwelling
multiple dwelling

Defense

arms storage

Landscape

parking lot
park
garden
unoccupied land

Commerce/Trade

business
professional
financial institution
specialty store
department store
restaurant
warehouse

Social

meeting hall

Government

post office

Recreation and Culture

theater

Industry

waterworks

Transportation

rail-related

Industry/Processing/Extraction

manufacturing facility

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Current Functions:

Domestic

- single dwelling
- multiple dwelling

Defense

- arms storage

Landscape

- parking lot
- park
- garden
- unoccupied land

Commerce/ Trade

- business
- financial institution
- specialty store
- department store
- restaurant
- warehouse

Industry

- waterworks

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Stillwater Commercial Historic District, Stillwater, Washington County, Minnesota

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The Stillwater Commercial Historic District encompasses most of the older portion of the downtown commercial area. It includes some 11 blocks in the central business district and stretches from Nelson Street on the south to Commercial Street on the north along Main Street, the historic riverfront meander line and portions of Second Street and Third Street along the principal east-west streets: Nelson, Nelson Alley, Chestnut and Myrtle. The district contains 57 contributing buildings, including one building already on the National Register (The Freight House Restaurant); two contributing sites (Lowell Park and the Sunken Garden); four noncontributing sites (vacant lots); three contributing structures (Wolfe tunnel/cave system, the Lowell Park Pavilion and the Lowell Park Levee); one contributing object (the fountain in the sunken garden); and fourteen noncontributing buildings.

The buildings within the district are predominantly two and three stories high. Most are either red or yellow brick, with red predominating. Trim is stone, red sandstone or concrete. There are a significant minority of limestone buildings in the district, some of which have been brick faced or stuccoed. These were put up during the mid- to late 1860s through the 1870s and comprise the earliest structures in the district. Lateral and rear walls of the commercial buildings are common red or yellow soft brick. Architectural styles represent national architectural trends popular between 1870 - 1940. They include: Italianate, Queen Anne, Richardsonian, Classical Revival and early 20th century commercial.

The most common alterations in the district are to storefronts. Replacement materials include brick infill, vertical wood siding, obscured window transoms and new display windows and doors. Generally, second stories are intact, although few second story windows are original. Many of the buildings in the district have original masonry openings and Italianate hood molds and round or segmental arched lintels predominate. Elaborate metal cornices and raised parapets are missing on many, but not all, of the contributing structures. Noncontributing properties include four vacant lots, as well as several recent infill buildings constructed since 1940, and older buildings with irreversible alterations or substantial loss of integrity.

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The district is distinguished from surrounding areas by its virtually cheek-to-cheek concentration of solid storefronts along Main Street and its concentration of older structures, as well as the integrity of its historic structures and a certain uniformity of materials, mass and height. The riverfront is dominated by the levee and Lowell Park and is characterized by open space, trees and grassy area. Along the commercial thoroughfares, buildings are set back the width of the sidewalk and there are no plantings or street furniture.

Individual properties in the Stillwater Commercial Historic District are listed below. Each property begins with building address. The historic name is used if known or a generic name (underlined), followed by year of construction, current use and site number in parentheses and physical description. Known architects or builders follow. Properties are contributing unless otherwise noted.

South Main Street, west side:

414, Joseph Wolf Brewery Office, ca. 1878 (Vittorio's, #257): This is a two story brick structure with a flat roof. The brick has been sandblasted. The cornice is corbelled and dentilled. Segmental brick arches comprise the window lintels over single pane fixed lights with new steel.

412, Joseph Wolf Brewery Building, ca. 1872 (Vittorio's #335): This is a four story random ashlar limestone building with a flat roof. All windows are replacement fixed lights with steel. Windows on the first and fourth stories have round arched lintels with stone keystones on the first story; those on the second and third stories have stone headers and lintels. The top two stories were added between 1898 - 1902. The original triple-arched storefront has been altered.

412, Joseph Wolf Brewery Tunnel/Cave System, ca. 1872 (Vittorio's #256): A continuous tunnel with twists and turns in several legs extending into the limestone bluff to the southwest and connecting the Wolf Brewery Building with the Wolf Brewery Office.

406, Infill, ca. 1945 (Vittorio's #258, noncontributing): This two story stuccoed structure with new combination windows and shutters is infill on the east end of what had been an open courtyard for Joseph Wolf Brewery.

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402, Pacific Hotel, ca. 1872, (Vittorio's #259): This is a three story limestone block building with a flat roof. The South Main Street facade has been altered by new windows, the covering of the store front, and the application of stucco. The north and west sides of the building have not been stuccoed and retain the original limestone surfaces. The masonry window openings retain stone sills and lintels. Sufficient physical integrity remains on its north and west facades to convey original workmanship and materials.

330, Commercial Building, ca. 1885, (Port of Stillwater, #260): This is a two story red brick building with a flat roof and concrete faced foundation. The raised parapet is corbelled and panelled and the front facade is divided into three bays separated by pilasters with stone bases. Second story windows have new fixed lights and original stylized drip molds at the lintels. The storefront has been moderately altered. This building has been recently tuckpointed and the parapet repaired.

324, Grand Garage, 1973+ (#261, noncontributing): This two story multicolored brown brick structure with front gabled roofs and cupola has a brick and concrete foundation. It is trimmed in stone. It contains architectural details from a variety of demolished older buildings in the region. This is the site of the former Stillwater Motor Company Building.

312, Union Block, ca. 1873 - 1874, (Gnu Clothes, #262): This is a two story cream brick commercial building with a flat roof and brick foundation. The second story windows have replacement aluminum combination windows, but the masonry openings are original with arched hood moldings and keystones. The storefront has been altered but retains cast iron columns. The east facade walls are original; the windows are replacements.

310, Union Block, ca. 1873 - 1874, (The Wordsmith, #263, noncontributing): This two story stone building with flat roof has lost all historic fabric on the front facade. The storefront has been altered, the original three second story windows and openings with hood molds have been removed and the entire second story face has been covered in stucco and pierced with two small square windows.

308, Union Block, ca. 1873 - 1874, (The Croixside Press, #264): This is a two story cream brick (painted beige and brown) commercial building with a flat roof and brick foundation. The second story windows are smaller aluminum combinations with wood infill. The masonry openings are original with arched hood moldings and keystones. The storefront has been altered.

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302, Union Block, ca. 1873 - 1874, (John's Bar, #265): This is a two story cream brick (painted beige and brown) commercial building with a flat roof and brick foundation. The second story windows are new aluminum combinations. The masonry openings are original with arched hood moldings and keystones. New metal flashing has been installed. The storefront has been altered with vertical wood siding and new entry and windows.

236, Northern States Power Company Division Offices, 1927, (Tamarack House Galleries, #266): This is a two story hard red face brick building with a flat roof, limestone foundation and stone coping and lintels. Above the second story windows are three panelled decorative brick inserts. The central portion of the parapet is slightly raised. The front facade storefront has new display windows. Window openings on the south facade have segmental arches. Second floor windows on the front facade are original 3 over 1 vertical muntin lights. There is brick soldier coursing above the second story window openings at grade on the front facade.

232, Commercial Building, 1942 - 1943 (Hooley's TV and Appliance, #267, noncontributing): This one story brown brick structure with a flat roof with vertical wood signage above the display windows was infill in the early 1940s, after a fire destroyed two older structures.

226, Commercial Building, ca. 1888 - 1891, 1942 - 1943 alterations (Stillwater Pet and Supply Company, #268, noncontributing): This building is a two-story red brick building faced in cream brick with red brick lintels, a flat roof and brick foundation. It has vertical wood board signage, soldier course headers above the windows and a recessed entry and angled display windows. Visible fabric and windows and openings date from around 1942 - 1943 after a fire damaged this building and destroyed two adjacent structures to the south (Site #267).

224, Commercial Building, ca. 1884 - 1888 (south one-third, Mad Capper Saloon and Eatery, #269): This is a two story red brick building with a flat roof. The second story windows are replacements with stone window headers painted black. The storefront has been altered with stained glass and new display windows between case iron columns. The metal cornice area has decorative brick corbelling and brackets.

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214 - 218, Commercial Building, ca. 1884 - 1887 (north two-thirds, Martin's Clothing Store, #270): This is a two story red brick building with a flat roof. The metal cornice area has decorative brick corbelling and metal bracketted cornice. Second story windows are covered in shutters and the storefront is entirely new.

210, Commercial Building, ca. 1898 - 1904 (Sherburne's Jewelers, #271): This is a one story red brick single bay structure with horizontal infill in the transom area. The storefront is cast iron and the rear roof is hipped.

208, Commercial Building, ca. 1898 - 1904 (Estelle's #272): This is a one story brick building with a flat roof. The front facade was refaced probably during the 1920s. It is now brown wire-faced brick with soldier course flat panels. The display windows are newer replacements.

204, Commercial Building, ca. 1898 - 1904 (Mainstreet Hair Design, Poor Butterfly, #273): This one story double storefront red brick building has a flat roof and brick foundation. Brick chamfering decorates the cornice area with dentilling and metal flashing. The entrance on the southwest corner of Chestnut and Main is cant-cornered. Storefronts have been altered with new display windows.

132, Commercial Building, 1869 (St. Croix Rexall Drug, #274, noncontributing): This two story limestone block building with a flat roof has been entirely altered except for the stone window sills on the north three second story windows. The roof was originally hipped. Windows, parapet flashing, storefront brick and display windows and second story masonry window openings have all been altered. The south half of the building was stuccoed ca. 1930 and windows were replaced. The north half was stuccoed and original second story window openings made smaller ca. 1970 when part of the original dentilled frieze and metal cornice was removed.

126, Commercial Building, ca. 1904 (Main Street Square, south portion, #275): This is a two-story red brick building with a flat roof and brick foundation. The storefront has been altered to match Site #276. The second story windows have been removed and the four openings infilled with brick. Brick corbelling and a terra cotta panel decorate the front facade. Windows feature terra cotta surrounds and stone columns and lintels.

122, John Karst Block, 1891 (Main Street Square, north portion, #276): This is a two-story building of red brick with a flat roof and a brick foundation. The storefront has been altered to match #275. The second story windows have been removed and the three openings infilled with brick. Terra cotta trim above these windows has foliated and circular patterns of differing designs. The parapet is decorative brick with a central name and date block.

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118, Commercial Building, ca. 1867 - 1884 (Trade Winds Travel and Silver Light Photography, #277): This is a two story limestone block building with a brick decorative frieze and molded metal cornice. The second story windows have brick segmented arches. The storefront has been completely altered and faced with cream brick except for an entry door and transom above.

108 - 112, Commercial Building, pre-1884, refaced with new facade after 1913 (Meg's Cafe, apartments, Elks Lodge, #278): This three story building originally had a different facade with upper story windows grouped in threes in a round-arched Palladian motif. After 1913, the present facade was put up. There are two sets of three windows grouped on the upper stories. The prominent molded cornice with modillion blocks and brick corbelling date from ca. 1913 renovation. The storefront has been altered.

102, Joseph Wolf Company Building, 1911 (Stillwater Photo SIA, #279): This is a two story brown brick building with a flat roof and concrete foundation. It is classically inspired. It is trimmed with stone banding, coping and brick pilaster capitals with stone. The second story windows have been replaced with new windows and a bay window in the northeast corner of the east and north facades. The storefront has been covered with marble and smooth wood siding.

North Main, west side:

102 - 106, McKusick Block, 1880, noncontributing (Norwest Bank, Norwest Insurance, #282): This is a two story red brick structure trimmed in stone at the pilasters between the windows and tying together the two flanking bays of four windows on the east facade, second story. The storefront has been altered with new windows, entrance and polished marble facing. Decorative brick panels recessed above second story windows are original. Built in 1880, this was originally three stories tall with an elaborate decorative cornice. The third floor was lost to fire after 1928. Second story windows are now single paned fixed light. Parapet coping is red tile. A small one-story brick addition was added to the north in ca. 1970.

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110 - 112, Commercial Building, pre-1884 (Cat Ballou's Saloon and Eatery, #284): This two story orange red brick building has a brick decorative cornice and new metal flashing at the parapet. Second story windows have stone hood molds and new single pane fixed lights. The cast iron storefront columns are original, but the display windows are relatively new.

114, Commercial Building, pre-1884, altered ca. 1928 (Stillwater Book and Stationery, #285): These two story orange brick building was refaced ca. 1928. It has a decorative brick cornice and two Chicago-style second story windows which are not original. First floor display windows and red brick kicks are not original.

118 - 126, Excelsior Block, 1882 (Antiques, Saloon, R.L. Schneider, dentist, #286): This is a two story, four bay, red brick structure trimmed in stone. Second story windows have a Queen Anne-style colored glass window transoms. There is elaborate corbeling on the brick cornice and a panelled metal parapet with central gabled configuration. Second story windows have brick and stone segmented arches and the storefronts have been altered.

South Main, east side:

323, Smithson Paper Box Company Building, ca. 1910 - 1924 (Simonet's storage, #302): This two story red brick structure has stone sills, jack arched window lintels on the second story, original windows and doors and an asymmetrical front facade with raised basement.

319, Commercial Building, pre-1884 (Fancy Nancy's Jewelry, #303): This is a two story cream brick structure with a corbelled brick cornice and stone parapet. Second story windows have stone lintels and brick segmented arches. Windows have dark glass fixed lights. Original hood molds are not visible under the window awnings. The storefront has been rebuilt and refaced.

317, Commercial Building, pre-1884, first alteration 1937 and subsequently (Barbara Ann's #304, noncontributing): This is a two story red brick structure with a flat roof and little remaining original fabric. The original storefront was removed in 1937. More recently, the elaborate cornice and parapet, second story hood molds over the windows and windows have been removed. Second story windows are now dark glass single fixed light.

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301, Simonet's Furniture and Carpet Company Building, 1904, altered post-1953 (#305): This is a two story wide brick structure with a flat roof, painted brown. It was originally in Classical Revival style with a molded cornice, brick panelled parapet and second story window groups of 3: 5: 3. Two window openings have been added to the second story marring original window groupings.

There is new flat brick in the parapet and the cornice is missing. The storefront has been altered.

241, Commercial Building, ca. 1951 (Silver Lake Restaurant and McGarry-Kearney Insurance Agency, #306, noncontributing): This new two story brick infill replaced an older pressed metal building after a 1951 fire. The north facade is stuccoed. The second story front facade has four sets of windows and the storefront has been altered with wood infill and replacement windows.

237, Vacant Lot, (#307, noncontributing): This lot with maple trees and parking spaces has been vacant since a ca. 1951 fire destroyed the previous commercial structure.

233, Commercial Building, ca. 1900 (The Village II, #308): This is a one story cream brick building with a single bay and new brick infill at the storefront. The brick above the display window is cream colored and appears to have been sandblasted. The building has a decorative metal parapet with central gable, moldings and swags.

229, Commercial Building, 1910 (The Village, #309): This is a two story red brick structure painted red. There is a chamfered brick cornice, central panel with diamond-shaped insert and date block and an entirely altered storefront. Second story windows are shuttered.

227, Commercial Building, ca. 1884-1888 (The Eagles Club Aerie No. 94, #310): This is a two story hard face red brick with butter joint building which is noticeably listing to the south. It has a metal dentilled band separating the first and second stories. There are metal hood molds over the three second story windows set in a single recessed bay. The cornice is elaborately panelled and corbelled. The parapet is bracketted between raised finials. Windows on the second story are new and smaller with plywood infill above.

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223, Commercial Building, ca. 1904 - 1910 (The Outfitters, #311): This is a three story red brick Classical Revival style commercial building with red sandstone trim and sandstone banding between the second and third floors. It is topped by an elaborate broad metal paired bracketed and panelled swag parapet with dentilling. Second story windows are covered in fixed louvers. Third story windows are new and smaller with covered infill above. The storefront is entirely altered with new applied brick and clapboard in the transom area.

219, Commercial Building, ca. 1860s (Brines, #312): This three story stone building is faced in local Lily Lake brick laid in American bond on the front facade. The brick has been sandblasted. Stone sills and lintels are original. The original storefront has a violet small paned glass transom. The cornice and parapet area is plain brick and was rebuilt after a 1982 fire with destroyed the top of the third floor. Upper windows are new: one-over-one on the second story and single fixed light on the third story. The original cornice was removed prior to 1973.

215, First National Bank Building, 1888 (Winona Knits, #313): This is a two story red brick structure with a flat roof and three bays with a central bay window on the second story. It has an elaborate brick panelled and decorative cornice and a raised corbie-stepped parapet. The storefront has been altered.

209-211, Brunswick Block, 1889 (#314): This is a two story red brick structure with stone trim and horizontal stone banding. There is a metal bracketed cornice with decorative brick panelling above the second story windows. The central bay has two windows above which is a semicircular foliated decorative panel. The storefront is not original.

201, Reed's Block, 1965 (vacant, #315, noncontributing): This is a two story red brick building laid in American bond with concrete trim. It has a flat roof. The second story has vertical fixed light windows.
Architect: Ackerberg and Associates, Inc.

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129, Mosier Bros. Block, 1888 (Diamonds on Main, #317): This is a two story Queen Anne commercial style corner block with red brick and rusticated red sandstone trim. Bays are separated by plain red brick piers. There is a rounded tourelle at the second story at the corner of Main and Chestnut. A date and name panel is located on the Main Street facade. There are decorative brick panels above the second story windows and brick corbelling at the tops of the recessed bays. It is topped with a decorative metal parapet. The storefront has been altered with applied vertical wood siding and new display windows.

127, Jarchow and York Block, 1890 (#318): This is a three bay, two story red brick structure with rusticated red sandstone trim matched to the Mosier Bros. Block to the south (Site #317, above). It has a corbelled brick cornice, brick panelling, a metal cornice and the storefront has been altered with vertical wood siding. Second story windows are one-over-one in original masonry openings.

125, John Karst Block, 1887 (Thompson Hardware, #319): This is a two story red brick with butter joint single bay structure with horizontal stone banding at the lintels and sills of the second story windows. It has a decorative molded metal string course above the storefront and a molded metal cornice. Three newer second story windows are one-over-one. The completely altered storefront has newer display windows and new applied brick facade. The style of the front facade suggests that this 1887 building might have been refaced ca. 1905 - 1912.

119, Staples Block, 1890 (Kolliner's, #320): This is a three story red brick Renaissance Revival style structure with five unequal bays with foliated stone designs on the brick piers. Third story window openings are brick round-arched forming a stylized arcade. There are four second story windows with terra cotta block pediments above the window lintels. Replacement windows on the upper floors are smaller awning type with wood panel infill. There are terra cotta block designs in the spandrel areas between the upper two floors. There is a bracketted metal cornice with gabled ends and a panelled decorative brick parapet with a central name block carved in stone. The storefront is faced in glazed green hollow block and new display windows. Builder: O. H. Olsen, Stillwater.

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101, Cosmopolitan State Bank, 1967 (#321, noncontributing): This is a one story reinforced poured concrete and stone faced bank building with a sweeping roof supported by reinforced concrete. Architect: Kilstofe and Vosejpkka, Inc., Wayzata.

East Nelson Street, south side:

211-1/2, Barn, ca. 1891 - 1898 and Storage Building, ca. 1910 - 1923 (#336): There are two buildings, both contributing on this site, connected by a small frame addition. The barn is a 2-1/2 story building with a rock-faced coursed stone first story and brick veneer upper stories. The roof is jerkin-head gabled above a wide wooden frieze. Window openings have stone sills and segmented arched lintels. Attached to the west end is a wagon, auto and truck shed built between 1911 - 1923. This is a long rectangular one-story building of rusticated concrete block.

239, dwelling/storage building, ca. 1883 (#337): This is a random ashlar two-story stone building with stone sills and lintels and a completely new low-pitched gabled roof with asphalt shingles, including new rafters. In 1888, this was a dwelling. There is a wagon entry on the north facade ground floor with a new I-bean lintel and three windows and a door on the second floor covered in plywood.

South Water Street, east side:

239 - 305, Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul passenger and freight depot, 1883 (Freight House Restaurant, #329): This one-story masonry red brick structure with a new standing seam metal roof was rehabilitated in 1983. It is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Riverfront, north of Nelson Street - east of Water Street, Park restrooms and city lift station, 1960, 1984 (#331, noncontributing): This is a masonry building of red brick, one story and a flat roof. The city lift station was built in 1960 and has an addition of Lowell Park restrooms constructed in 1984.

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Foot of Myrtle Street and Chestnut at the St. Croix River's edge, Lowell Park, levee and Municipal Pavilion, ca. 1916+ (#325): Lowell Park stretches along the St. Croix River with a concrete levee along the river's edge, a drive, green grass, flower beds and trees, picnic tables, and a craftsman style open-air lattice work pavilion with a hipped roof and concrete foundation. There are two contributing structures this site: the pavilion (ca. 1916) and the concrete levee (pre-1940); the park is one contributing site.

127, Hooley's Supermarket, 1960 - 1961 (#327, noncontributing): This one story structure is concrete block with a flat roof and glazed red tile brick with display windows. Architect: Ames, Crommett and Associates, St. Paul.

113 - 121, Lumbermen's Exchange Building, 1890 (#328): This is an approximately square three story red brick building with a flat roof and new brick parapet. The recessed upper story bays terminate in brick corbelling. There is brick infill under the original jack-arched window lintels and new smaller one-over-one windows installed in 1966. The first story has alterations and brick infill.

East Chestnut Street, south side:

107, Stillwater Armory, 1921 - 1922 (#227): This is a red brick two story and raised basement structure with a flat roof. The brick is laid in American bond with white mortar. It is trimmed in cast concrete. Brick soldier course define the three floors (including the raised basement). There are new one-over-one double-hung metal replacement windows and a newer brick two bay garage addition on the east facade. Architect: Oscar T. Lang, Minneapolis.

121, Stillwater Laundry, Inc. Building, ca. 1910 - 1924 (Shorty Cleaner/Launderer, #214): This is a one story concrete block building with a corbie-stepped front parapet and rear gabled roof. The block walls are both smooth and rusticated with a contrasting brown brick parapet laid in Flemish bond. The foundation is concrete. Lateral windows have glass block infill. Front windows have a large single pane with wood infill surrounds. There are two glass and steel entry doors.

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213, First National Bank Building, 1905, 1977 (#234): The original north facing building is Classical Revival style with a Greek projecting fully pedimented portico and four fluted Greek Ionic columns flanking the tabbed stone faced entrance. The front facade is symmetrical. The building is tan brick on the rear and sides with cut Bedford limestone smooth block facing the front. The roof is flat. Windows on the second story have jack arched stone lintels with keystones. Over the portico is cut "First National Bank". There are new single light windows. Facing Second Street, the west facade is a new 1977 addition, too close in style to the original structure and of the same material. The west facing addition has single fixed light windows and tabbed window and entry surrounds and a gabled entrance which closely resembles the original structure. Because the original structure faces north on Chestnut and the much larger addition faces west, the addition does not mar the architecture and style of the original building. Original Chestnut Street cast iron lamp standards are intact. Builder: O.H. Olsen, Stillwater, 1905 and 1977 addition.

223, Tepass Block, 1885 (Country Classics, Anna Lou's, Tailor Maid, and Trimble & Associates, #281): This is a four bay two story red brick structure with hood moldings of metal around the second story windows. It has an elaborate metal cornice and parapet with an "1885" date block. The metal parapet is missing from the western most bay and this bay (Trimble and Associates) has the most storefront alterations with horizontal wood siding. The other three storefronts have new display windows and certain alterations. The red faced brick walls have a butter joint. Second story windows are new infill glass with applied materials.

235, Commercial Building, ca. 1898 - 1904 (Smitty's Barbershop #280): This is a one story red brick building with a flat roof and partially exposed original storefront with new display windows and entrance.

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East Chestnut Street, north side:

224, Commercial Building, pre-1884 (now vacant, #236): This two story double storefront building is red brick laid in American bond. It has a flat roof, molded metal cornice and dentilled frieze. Heavy drip moldings are located above the second story windows and central door. Windows are now one-over-one. The front facade is symmetrical and has stone lintels and sills on the second story windows. The central second story wood balcony has been removed. Storefronts have been altered with Vitriolite structural black glass sheathing. From 1936 -1956 this building was known as the Kalinoff Building.

226, Commercial Building, pre-1884 (St. Croix Cards & Gifts, Hallmark, #237): This is a two story red brick building painted grey with altered smaller masonry openings and one-over-one windows with brick infill above on the second story and original stone window headers still intact. There is a wide frieze and metal dentilled cornice. Storefront has been altered with new display windows and multi-colored glazed tiles as well as black Vitriolite facing.

306 - 308, Commercial Building, ca. 1910 - 1914 (Foxy's Shoe Repair, #316): This is a two story, single bay, Classical Revival style orange brick structure with wide stone lintels forming a continuous band above the second story windows. Second story windows have stone sills and one-over-one lights. There is a corbelled brick cornice and plain brick parapet. The transom area over the storefront display windows is infilled with plywood and the storefront is altered with new display windows and ceramic tile kick.

314, Vacant Lot, (#324, noncontributing): This lot is the site of a former structure. It is just a sand lot today on the northwest corner of East Chestnut and Water Street.

East Myrtle Street, south side:

221, Office, ca. 1913 - 1915 (The Mind's Aye, #251): This is a craftsman style red brick one story structure with limestone trim and original one-over-one wood double hung windows. It has a limestone plinth, coping, cornice and horizontal sill band and a flat roof.

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East Myrtle Street, north side:

220, Federal Building, 1903 (Old Post Office Shops, #225): This two story former Post Office Building is Classical Revival style with beige brick walls. It has a concrete foundation and a pyramidal slate roof with oculus dormers. Window openings facing south are brick round arched with stone keystones and wood surrounding multiple panes. The cornice has dentilling and modillion blocks. Some windows have corniced window heads with stone swags in decorative panels above the windows. Architect: James Knox Taylor, Supervising Architect of the Treasury.

Vacant Lot east of Old Post Office (#250, noncontributing): This is a dirt vacant lot used for parking. It has not been built on since at least 1884.

226, Residence/Office, pre-1884 (Stillwater Realty Company, #249): This is a two story red brick house and office in the Italianate style with a hipped roof of asphalt shingle and a brick foundation. It has an asymmetrical front facade with paired segmented arched window openings on the second story and added shutters. The eaves have Italianate paired wood brackets. The rear has a two story brick appendage. The front entry has been altered with flanking pilasters and a wooden dentilled arch over the front door since 1956 when the wooden one story flat roofed front port was removed. There is some glass block infill in openings on the east side.

South Union Street, east side:

119, Commercial Building, pre-1884 (#283, noncontributing): This two story painted brick building has a flat roof. The storefront has been completely bricked up and has no openings or entrances.

117, Commercial Building, 1882 (Community Volunteer Services, #248): This two story red brick building has a flat roof and sandstone block foundation. The date block reads "1882". Second story windows have segmented brick arches. The storefront has been altered, but retains fluted cast iron columns.

109, Vacant Lot, (#338, noncontributing): Dirt lot below street grade.

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Second Street, east side:

233, duplex/commercial, pre-1884 (Second Street Store, #233): This is a two story red brick building with a limestone foundation and hipped roof. The brick walls have been sandblasted and are pitted and soft. There are brick dentils under the eaves, a metal roof, a metal cornice and eaves and stone lintels and headers at the windows. The current windows are replacements: tinted single fixed lights. The storefront has been altered with new display windows and alterations.

113, H.C. Farmer Sunken Garden and Fountain, 1934 - 1935 (#224): This is a memorial sunken garden at the site of a natural spring. It was designed and built in 1934 - 1935. There is a rusticated limestone drinking fountain at the sidewalk level around 12 feet wide and 4 feet 10 inches tall with a bronze plaque stating "A.D. 1937 - dedicated by the Board of Water Commissioners of the City of Stillwater in memory of Henry Clay Farmer, 1858 - 1914." The sunken rock garden is symmetrical in arrangement and has two curved stone stairways leading down below street grade. The staircase has two limestone end piers with wrought iron railings, a small limestone plaza with pavers and stone benches and a standing pool. Planting in the rock garden include perennial and annuals such as: violets, ceteum, hosta, columbine, Lily of the Valley, flox, wild rose, Duty Miller, inpatients, Allisum, marigolds, mums, Arbor Vitae, snap dragons, day lilies, etc. The garden is maintained by the Perennial Garden Club of Stillwater, according to a second plaque.

123, Connolly Shoe Company Building, 1905 (Voyager Press; WR Medical Electronics Company, #223): This is a two story red brick building with a limestone foundation. The cornice area is decorated with brick corbelling with metal flashing at the coping. Trim is stone: at the window lintels and running bands. Window openings have segmented arches and six-over-six lights on the second floor front facade and single fixed lights on the first floor. At the rear, there are segmented arched window openings on the east facade. The remnants of a painted sign with "Connolly Shoe Company" is evident on the south lateral side.

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Second Street, west side:

102, Stillwater Gazette Building, 1905, 1978 addition (#219): This is a two story red face brick building with butter joint. It is trimmed with stone at the window sills. It has a corbelled brick cornice and plain brick parapet with red tile coping. Second story windows are new smaller replacements with plywood infill at the top of the original sash. There is a fluted Ionic corner cast iron column at the north entrance on the east asymmetrical facade. A one-story attached south addition is faced in brick over concrete block with a concrete loading dock put up in 1978. Builder: O.H. Olsen, Stillwater.

102, Lowell Inn, 1926 - 1927 (#221): This is a reinforced concrete and steel structure faced in brown brick with Federal-style end chimneys and a gabled asphalt roof. It has a 13-column, two-story, shed-roofed projecting wood portico on the front facade. Eaves are returned and four angled gabled roof dormers face east. The foundation is concrete. Some lateral windows on the south and north side have been infilled or altered with brick infill. There is an attached one-story addition on the north side. Architect: William M. Ingemann.

Third Street South, west side:

200, Jassoy Building, 1886 (#212): This is a three story frame red brick veneer structure designed in Queen Anne style with a flat roof. It has stone banding along the second and third stories and stone capitals. Bay windows flank the north and south ends of the second story. Masonry openings for windows are segmented brick arched. Some window openings are round-arched. The storefront has been altered.

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Significance:

The Stillwater Commercial Historic District is eligible under Criteria A and C within the following areas of significance: Architecture and Commerce. The historic contexts for this multi-property district are "The Development of Stillwater, 1860-1940," and "St. Croix Triangle Lumbering." The heyday of the district represents the period 1860s-1911, with the significance represented up to 1940. Architecturally, the properties in the district represent several predominant styles: Italianate, Queen Anne Commercial, Classical Revival, and Early 20th Century Commercial. The majority of the buildings are historically associated with retail commerce in the Central Business District, with a few properties associated with lumbering, manufacturing and government. The buildings in the district reflect the economic underpinnings of the local economy: lumbering and manufacturing. The only property within the district which is on the National Register is the 1883 Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul passenger and freight depot, the only surviving train depot in the downtown area.

The settlement of Stillwater began in 1838 with Joseph Renshaw Brown, the first settler. He was joined by several men who decided to build a sawmill which went into operation in 1844. This activity formed the nucleus of a small settlement which sprang up at the present site of downtown Stillwater and began Stillwater's reputation as an early and important lumbering town. Stillwater experienced a flood of settlement in 1848 when Wisconsin became a state and people flocked to what would be a new territory west of the St. Croix. In 1846, Stillwater became the county seat of St. Croix County, Wisconsin. In 1849, it became the county seat of Washington County, Minnesota Territory.

Stillwater sits along the St. Croix floodplain with its back against the high bluffs to the west. The area was greatly improved after an 1852 landslide which destroyed many of the early buildings and added around 10 feet of fill to a six acre area in the heart of what is now the downtown.

Early buildings were wood framed and generally Greek Revival in style, many with front-facing gables and returned eaves. These buildings have been demolished and replaced. The earliest buildings in the commercial district today date from around the Civil War. This is the period from the mid 1860s-early 1870s. Exact dates of the earliest structures are impossible to determine because these buildings pre-date accurate record-keeping.

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No buildings survive from the next boom in the mid-1850s, a time of general prosperity in Minnesota Territory during which Minnesota became a state.³ Between 1855-1857, the Stillwater population jumped from 1,000 to 2,500.⁴ The town was incorporated by the Territorial Assembly in 1854.

Initially based on lumbering, the economy of Stillwater began to diversify very early. By the late 1850s and early 1860s, downtown Stillwater was supplying several large lumber firms with a variety of goods and services: blacksmithing, general merchandise and dry goods stores, foundries and machine shops, and hardware stores. It also supplied the same services to other manufacturing concerns located there. The earliest buildings in the district date from the early 1860s by which time Stillwater was becoming known as both a lumbering and manufacturing town. From the early 1870s through the 1930s, Stillwater's businesses depended on the railroads to ship their products (millwork, sashes, doors, plows, drills, threshers, railroad cars, candy, beer, shoes and boots, carton boxes, munitions and casings, and so forth) to destinations in Minnesota, the Dakotas, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Canada, and Mexico.

The reputation of Stillwater as a lumbering center on the St. Croix has overshadowed the contribution that other manufacturers made to the downtown district and the local economy. From the 1870s until the 1930s, Stillwater was known throughout the trans-Mississippi west for its excellent machines and engines. Seymour, Sabin, and Company was the first large manufacturing concern in Stillwater. It was begun in the 1860s to manufacture doors, moldings, sashes, and office furniture. It ended up making machinery, engines, and railroad cars using convict labor from the state prison on North Main. In 1871 when the rails first reached Stillwater, this company alone turned out \$135,000 worth of products.⁵ In the early 1880s, the Northwestern Manufacturing and Car Company, successor to Seymour, Sabin, continued to make doors, sashes, flour barrels, and threshers, but added to its line traction farm engines and freight and passenger cars. This company employed some 1,200 civilians in addition to convict labor, and was the largest manufacturing company in Minnesota in 1882 when capitalized at \$5,000,000.⁶ The employment figure of Northwestern is remarkable when one considers that when lumbering was at its peak of production in the 1890s, the population of Stillwater reached a high of 12,318. In other words, Northwestern alone employed one in ten residents of Stillwater in the mid-1880s and a much higher percentage of the employable male citizens living in town.

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Throughout the period of significance in the downtown district, manufacturing continued to be a significant element in Stillwater's economy with such companies as Minnesota Thresher, Northwestern Thresher, M. Rumley and Company, and Twin City Forge and Foundry. From 1887 to 1930, these machinery manufacturers operated in Stillwater and kept the city from dwindling to the size of Taylor's Falls when lumbering gave out around 1910. Between 1920 and 1930, Stillwater's population dropped from 7,735 to 7,173. During this decade, the Twin City Forge and Foundry Company alone employed upwards of 650 men, somewhere above 15 per cent or more of the male work force in the city.⁸ Buildings in the downtown district today principally reflect the retail goods and services connected with the permanent working population of the city, a great many of whom were employed in non-lumbering occupations, such as manufacturing and the state prison. Structures associated with manufacturing and lumbering were located along the St. Croix River in what is now the area of Lowell Park and in areas north and south of the downtown district. All these buildings, which depended on spur tracks along the riverfront to move in raw material and ship out finished products, have been razed beginning as early as the turn of the century.

The earliest surviving buildings in the district were built, by local masons, of stone taken from two quarries just north of the downtown. These buildings, built between 1864-1875, resulted from a city ordinance forbidding frame construction after a disastrous downtown fire on Main Street. The stone work is very good in terms of mortar and piecing the stones together. The early stone buildings have withstood almost 130 years of continual use. The stone Union Block (#262-265), still standing, was built by three parties in 1873-4.⁹ Joseph Wolf also built his brewery (#335) on S. Main of stone in 1872 and it, too, is still standing. Some other buildings of stone which are still standing downtown, either faced with stucco or brick or un-faced include: the Pacific Hotel (#259) at the southwest corner of S. Main and E. Nelson, the building now housing Brines (#313) at 219 S. Main, and many of the buildings on the west side of Main between Chestnue and Myrtle (#274-278). These early buildings in the district date from the boom brought on by a good crop of grain and increased logging business in 1868, a year "unparalleled by anything in the history of the city."¹⁰ The post-war prosperity continued into the early 1870s. In 1870 and 1871, over 205 buildings were erected at a cost of over \$788,000.¹¹

The downtown gained a new street during these years: Commercial Street at the north end of Main. "Myrtle Alley" was cut parallel to Main to connect Commercial with Myrtle. Historically, Commercial Street became the northern boundary of the solid brick business blocks along the west side of N. Main.

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Stillwater thrived between the mid-1860s-1900. It had a solid and diversified economy which included huge lumbering operations as well as huge manufacturing operations. Economic reliance on steamboats up the Mississippi and St. Croix rivers ended in 1871 with the arrival of the first railroad. Railroads connected Stillwater with Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth and to the enormous markets in the upper midwest just opening up in western Minnesota and the Dakotas during the 1870s and 1880s. The railroads played a key role in the golden years¹² of lumbering in Stillwater during the seventies, eighties, and nineties.

The city had boiler makers, carriage manufacturers, dye works, cooperages, boat builders, agricultural implement manufacturers, foundries, flour mills, and lumber mills. These concerns were located both north and south of the CBD and also along the waterfront east of Water Street. The current core of the business area today south of Commercial Street was the location of a variety of retail concerns: dry goods stores, clothiers, hardware concerns, drug and jewelry stores, grocers, book sellers, confectioneries, cigar stores, meat markets, and shoe stores.

The decade of the 1880s was another period of prosperity which is still reflected in the commercial district of downtown Stillwater. The city renamed and renumbered its streets on August 3, 1881. Writing in 1944, Paul Caplazi, a local resident, recalled:

Stillwater was a busy town in the eighties with all the saw mills running, the boom, rafting ground, prison shops, three flour mills, two breweries, liquor stores, about 25 saloons and all kinds of other business and all the steam boats running on the St. Croix. . . The eighties were happy days for Stillwater. It was a time between the Civil War and the Spanish War. There were no wars, no strikes, no unemployment, no trouble of any kind, everybody was working and happy.¹³

However, Caplazi also remembered of the 1880s that Stillwater was also "hardboiled"¹⁴ citing the many saloons on Main Street where the lumberjacks found sport. These saloons virtually disappeared from the downtown area by 1891,¹⁵ and none are included in the district today.

The buildings constructed during the 1880s and 1890s contribute substantially to the district today. The 1880s was a period of general prosperity in Minnesota as well as in Stillwater. Some of these buildings, like the Grand Opera House built in 1880 on S. Main Street, have been razed, to be replaced in 1904 by the more modest Simonet furniture store (#305). Other 1880s buildings in the downtown area fared better and are still standing: the Jassoy Block (#212), built in 1886 at

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200 N. Third; the commercial block now housing Port of Stillwater (#260) at 330 S. Main, built around 1885; the commercial buildings at 214 and 224 S. Main (#269, #270); the Tepass Block (#281) at 223 E. Chestnut, built in 1885 and named after Hermann Tepass, Stillwater's first brewer; the McKusick Block (#282) at the northwest corner of Myrtle and Main, built in 1880; the Excelsior Block (#286) at 118-126 N. Main, built on the southwest corner of Main and Commercial in 1882; the current Eagles Club building (#310) at 227 S. Main; the First National Bank Building (#313) at 215 S. Main, built in 1888; the Brunswick Block (#314) at 209-211 S. Main; the Mosier Block (#317) at 129 S. Main; the J. Karst Block (#319) at 125 S. Main; and the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul passenger and freight depot (#329), now the Freight House restaurant, built in 1883 at 239-305 S. Water Street and now on the National Register.

In 1884, almost half of the downtown was still composed of wood-frame structures, none more than two stories tall. Old photos show that many were front-facing gabled and others were Boomtown style with false parapets hiding gabled roofs behind them. At that time, the downtown retail area was concentrated between Nelson Alley north to Commercial Street on the west side of Main, with the new Excelsior Block (#286) holding down the north end, and from Nelson to Myrtle on the east side of Main. The major east-west cross street was E. Chestnut from Water Street on the east to Second Street on the west.

By 1888, perhaps only twenty per cent of the business blocks on Main Street were wood-framed structures and new business blocks could be found south to Nelson on the west side of Main and along Second Street between Chestnut and Myrtle. Commercial Street was still the effective north end of the retail district on N. Main. While Main Street running north-south was the main thoroughfare, the major east-west cross street was still E. Chestnut. This street has not fared as well and many of the buildings on Chestnut between Second Street on the west and the river on the east (a three block area) have been lost.

The City of Stillwater decided to locate municipal/government buildings in the area of Third Street during the 1880s. It built a new city hall in 1882 and a new fire station in 1887. The city armory was in this area as well. These improvements may have influenced the erection of the Jassoy Block (#212), put up in 1886 at the southwest corner of Third and Chestnut. This large three story Queen Anne structure with elaborate metal parapet had a third story hall for social occasions. Over the years, the City of Stillwater has retained the area around Third Street and Myrtle for most of its governmental buildings. A block away at Fourth and Mulberry, the Carnegie Library was erected in 1902 which is not in the district.

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The early municipal buildings were torn down decades ago, but a prominent landscape firm, Morrell and Nichols proposed a city plan in 1913 which recommended that the city functions remain in this general area. As a result, in their recommendation to locate the new Stillwater Armory (#227) at the southeast corner of Chestnut and Third in 1921-22. The Federal Government located its 1903 Classical Revival style Post Office (#225) at the northeast corner of Myrtle and Second Street not far from other city functions.

The decade of the 1890s was interrupted by the Panic of 1893, a general national depression which dampened building activity in cities and towns throughout Minnesota. Stillwater was no exception. New building construction slowed. The two most important buildings to be put up in downtown Stillwater in 1890 were the Staples Block (#320) at 119 S. Main and the Lumbermen's Exchange Building (#328) on the northeast corner of S. Water Street and Chestnut. Both are associated with lumbering activity in Stillwater and the St. Croix triangle. The Staples Block was a prominent three story red brick structure in Classical Revival style. The Lumbermen's Exchange Building was the first modern business block in the city, equipped with modern heating, plumbing, electricity and even an elevator. It was built just south of the Union Depot, the Shingle style station designed by Cass Gilbert in 1887. Both buildings were put up by the Union Depot and Transfer Company. The two buildings were connected by a wooden platform. Early tenants included the largest and most successful lumbering concerns in the city, as well as the post office and the Surveyor General's office.¹⁶

Sanborn Insurance Maps from 1891 and 1898 indicate that little serious construction occurred on Main Street during the decade. Only a few of the older wood frame survivors on Main Street were replaced and the commercial area downtown had essentially spread to its current boundaries. Those Main Street commercial building which were erected were generally modest one or two story masonry structures, such as those at 223 S. Main (#308), 212 N. Main (#290), and 226 S. Main (#268). Five frame buildings on the east side of S. Main between Chestnut and Myrtle which contained a grocery, saloon, pawnbroker, barbershop, and two small retail stores were replaced, but this constituted brick infill and completion of the streetscape. A small commercial node also expanded around the intersection of Chestnut and Second Streets. Interestingly, the heyday and peak years of the lumber industry in Stillwater, 1890-1910, had little direct effect on the commercial and retail area of downtown Stillwater.

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By 1900, Stillwater had four railroads and its industries and lumbering operations were going strong. However, the buildings which give downtown Stillwater its character were largely completed by then. At the turn of the century, the handsome new additions to the downtown were the Carnegie Library at the northwest end of downtown and not in the district and the new Post Office (Federal Building) on Myrtle (#225). Both were taken from Classical Revival designs popular during this time. The post office gained its first permanent home in a Classical Revival structure designed under the administration of Supervising Architect of the Treasury James Knox Taylor. This building is one of the important Taylor-designed buildings in Minnesota and a testament to the importance of Stillwater in the opening years of the 20th century.

Three other important buildings to go up in Stillwater in 1905, were the Stillwater Gazette building (#219) at the southwest corner of Myrtle and Second Street; the Connolly Shoe Company Building (#223), forerunner of Connco Shoes; and the First National Bank building (#234) at 213 E. Chestnut. All three were inspired by the Classical Revival style. The first two are red brick structures and the bank is faced in cut limestone block. The location of the Connolly Shoe Company building at the corner of Commercial Street is consistent with the traditional light industry use of N. Main and the area north of Commercial and largely outside the district. Another major building from this period, the Classical Revival style Auditorium Building on Second Street was demolished in 1976.

Along Main Street itself, the largest addition to the east side was the Simonet Furniture and Carpet Company building (#305) between Nelson and Chestnut streets. This building was erected in 1904 after a fire destroyed the Grand Opera House on the same site. The one story brick buildings at the southwest corner of Main and Chestnut now housing Sherburne's Jewelers, Estelle's and Mainstreet Hair Design (#271, #272, #273) were modest ca. 1898-1904 additions to this important intersection.

The commercial area of downtown Stillwater indirectly reflects the rise and fall of business fortunes in lumbering and manufacturing, the chief industries which created the thriving city. Businesses in the historic downtown buildings were supported by the thousands of men who worked in the city's industries. In 1880, Stillwater boasted a population of close to 16,000. By 1920, the population was less than half of its peak 40 years before. And by the 1940s, it had dropped to a low of around 7,000. The year 1920 is generally taken as the end of the white pine industry in Minnesota. Stillwater, however, began to feel the decline in the lumbering business around 1900-1910.

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Never simply a lumbering town, Stillwater suffered a decline in manufacturing, an important local industry which provided significant jobs to as many as 2,000 year-around residents. Historians have neglected the reputation of Stillwater as one of the largest manufacturing cities of agricultural machinery in the state during the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s. Stillwater-made threshers and other agricultural machinery was sent as far as Canada and Mexico and shipped all over the western United States. A string of huge manufacturing businesses came and went and the last of these concerns ended up making munitions during World War I, and thereafter, casings, but it ceased operations on N. Main in 1930.¹⁷ Stillwater was deprived of most of its economic base. People moved on to other jobs, population declined, and the riverfront, so thriving for 80 years, went into decline.

The downtown buildings constructed during the 1860s, 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s undoubtedly survived because Stillwater became something of a backwater during the period from 1911-1970. South Main Street experienced several notable changes in the years after 1910. The Joseph Wolf Company built its Craftsman-style two story commercial building on the southwest corner of Main and Myrtle in 1911. But the changes to the commercial area came largely from some fires and occasional alterations to the retail buildings, especially to storefronts.

Landscaping and city planning played a role in the district. Morrell and Nichols helped insure that the governmental functions would be located up the hill from Main Street within two blocks of Third and Myrtle. They also designed a plan for the riverfront in Lowell Park, designing the current levee and municipal pavilion. Armed with the Morrell and Nichols plan for the downtown, the city continued to clean up the riverfront and established Lowell Park and the municipal pavillion (#325). Major work was done along the riverfront in 1913-16. Older wood frame buildings were removed along the riverfront and the pavilion and a concrete levee were constructed around 1916. Old tracks and trestles were removed in 1935. More buildings were torn down along the riverfront in 1946 after World War II.¹⁸ In addition, a private citizen insured the addition of a garden and fountain on Second Street. H. C. Farmer, who operated a livery in the 19th century which had a spring, donated at his death the property on Second Street east of the Lowell Inn for a garden and fountain (#224), which were built in 1934-35.

Buildings constructed during the 1920s were few, but some¹⁹ were significant additions to the downtown. The city hired Oscar T. Lang, a well-known Minneapolis architect to build the new Stillwater Armory (#227) in 1921-22. The new Lowell Inn (#221), designed by William Ingemann,²⁰ Minneapolis architect, went up in 1926-27.

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After 1930, changes to the district were largely a matter of alterations and new infill following fires. The first building to be stuccoed sometime in the 1930s was the St. Croix Drug Company building (#274). On S. Main, several other changes occurred. The last of the early wood frame buildings came down at the northeast corner of Main and Nelson. In its place, the Smithson Paper Box Company erected a fine new two story brick building (#302) and hired some 20 employees. A fire destroyed two older buildings at the northwest corner of Main and Olive. In its place in 1927, Northern States Power Company put up the brick structure now housing the Tamarack Galleries (#266). In 1924, the Stillwater Motor Company built a handsome two story Craftsman-style brick garage and showroom where the Grand Garage (#261) stands today.

The Stillwater infrastructure and civic improvements to streets, sidewalks and lighting can be pieced together from historic photographs. Early photos show wooden sidewalks and streets by turn muddy or dusty. In the 1890s, Main Street was a dirt road, but with stone curbs and sidewalks. By 1899, it sported tall telephone poles at each block and the downtown streets had pavers of wood or brick. The set-back in the principal thoroughfares has always been the width of the sidewalks, providing no room for boulevard trees or other accouterments. By 1928, the telephone poles flanking Main Street had been removed to more discrete locations at the rear of the buildings. Electrical street lights first appeared on Main Street in 1927. These were cast iron with fluted columns and opaque globes. They were replaced by tall new lights similar to the present ones in December 1957 by NSP.²¹

Fire has been responsible for some of the replacement buildings on S. Main. These include the structures at: 232 S. Main (#267, now Hooley's TV and Appliance) which was built after a 1942-43 fire; 226 S. Main (#268, now Stillwater Pet and Supply Company), substantially rebuilt in 1942-43 after the same fire; and the building at 241 S. Main (#306 now housing the Silver Lake Restaurant), which is a 1951 replacement for a 1907 pressed metal building which was destroyed by fire.

The late 'teens-1940s saw a wave of demolition along the riverfront which substantially improved the appearance and health of downtown. The next wave of demolition did not occur until the 1960s. Some notable buildings were lost as a result, but demolition was occurring all over the United States at this time and Stillwater was no exception. In 1976, the last concentration of old buildings in the CBD was demolished in the area of Chestnut and Second Streets to make way for new construction.

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The district has remained relatively intact because Stillwater was a backwater during the period from 1930-1970: older buildings downtown were largely ignored. Since the early 1970s, however, the district has seen a renaissance. It has become an area of specialty shops and a tourist mecca for residents in Minnesota and Wisconsin. It draws visitors from all over the midwest. With this economic boom has come attendant problems: traffic congestion, insufficient parking, and car exhaust which threaten the older buildings in the district. Main Street today is very busy. It is a major route between Minnesota and Wisconsin and suffers from bumper-to-bumper traffic trying to get across TH 212 and the 1930 lift bridge which spans the St. Croix River. The greatest danger today to the district comes from this motor traffic through downtown.

Stillwater has become active in preservation activities in recent years. In the early 1970s, Rivertown Restorations Inc., a private group of citizens, was formed. The City of Stillwater formed a historic preservation commission and revised the commission through a new ordinance around 1986. With the newly reorganized Stillwater Heritage Preservation Commission, Stillwater became a Certified Local Government in 1988.

The present study was based on an intensive survey of the entire CBD under a CLG grant between the City of Stillwater and the Grants Office of the Minnesota Historical Society. All buildings in the CBD were intensively surveyed and these Identification and Evaluation phases formed the basis for this nomination. In the Evaluation phase, architectural integrity was based on whether the buildings reflected the period of significance from ca. 1860-1939. All storefronts had been altered to varying extents, as is common in commercial areas in Minnesota's older cities. If the second stories were relatively intact and substantially resembled historical photos of the downtown, they were deemed "contributing"--this after exhaustive historical photographic research.

The Stillwater Commercial Historic District reflects the economic activities of both manufacturing and lumbering in the period from the 1860s to 1939 and, because it is primarily a retail district, contains very few properties directly connected with the lumbering industry which made Stillwater famous in the St. Croix region. The district is a tangible reminder of the foresight of local businessmen who built a diversified economic base, allowing the city to continue to thrive after the white pine industry collapsed in the early years of the 20th century.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The boundary of the Stillwater Commercial Historic District is shown as a heavy black line on the accompanying map entitled "Stillwater Historic Commercial District."

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The boundaries of the Stillwater Commercial District were decided after an intensive analysis of the Stillwater CBD. In order to include historic Lowell Park along the riverfront, the eastern boundary is the St. Croix River. The south boundary is on S. Main at the point where the concentration of historic buildings begins. On the north end of Main Street, the boundary is two different east-west cross streets. On the west side of N. Main the boundary is the south curb of Commercial Avenue, the traditional northern terminus of the retail district and visually the end of the solid commercial storefronts. On the east side of N. Main Street, the northern boundary is the south curb of Myrtle Street because new replacement buildings (not eligible) occupy the east side of the street north of Myrtle. The west boundary of the district is complicated in that it jogs from the alley west of Main Street up to a lot on the southwest corner of Third Street and Chestnut Street. Properties on the western boundary were included based on their historical significance to the historic context of the "Development of Stillwater, 1860-1940;" based on the visual concentration of historic properties, and on the integrity of the buildings at the west end of downtown.