

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JAN 28 1987

date entered MAR 12 1987

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

1. Name 12 map

Historic Resources of Allegan
historic Partial Inventory: Historic and Architectural Resources

and or common

2. Location

street & number Incorporation limits N/A not for publication

city, town City of Allegan N/A vicinity of

state Michigan code 026 county Allegan code 005

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 type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> multiple resources	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple owners

street & number

city, town N/A vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds Office

street & number Allegan County Courthouse

city, town Allegan state Michigan

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Michigan State Survey Data has this property been determined eligible? U. S. Post Office
 yes no

date 1984-86 federal state county local

depository for survey records Michigan Bureau of History

city, town Lansing state Michigan

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

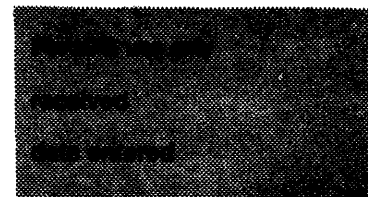
original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

See continuation sheets.

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Introduction

In 1982 the City of Allegan undertook to survey its historic and architectural resources with the intention of nominating the significant resources identified by the project to the National Register of Historic Places and to a city landmarks register. The city received federal Historic Preservation Fund grant-in-aid assistance administered by the Michigan Department of State for this survey and registration project. Sanborn-Wielenga Associates of Kalamazoo, as subcontractor of the Wilkins & Wheaton Engineering Co., was retained as consultant. The consultants completed the survey work in the fall of 1982. In December, 1982, John Pahl, Allegan historian, and Robert Christensen, National Register Coordinator of the Department of State's Bureau of History, met in Allegan with the consultants to review the consultants' proposed districts (and their boundaries) and individual sites. Sanborn-Wielenga presented the survey and nomination materials in July, 1984.

Review of the nomination materials by the Bureau of History resulted in a determination that the written and photographic materials contained many deficiencies and were not acceptable. The city then turned to Wilkins & Wheaton, to whom it had originally awarded the contract for this work, to complete the project. In October, 1984, Dr. Kathryn Eckert, Michigan Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Robert Christensen, John Pahl, and Kenneth Dettloff and Wesley Blackman of Wilkins & Wheaton met in Allegan to review and re-confirm the districts and individual properties. Wilkins & Wheaton retained Dr. Peter J. Schmitt, Professor of History at Western Michigan University, to perform additional research and re-write the nomination texts for the districts. Local historian John Pahl was asked to review Dr. Schmitt's work and research the background of the individual properties. Kenneth Dettloff and C. Wesley Blackman of Wilkins & Wheaton oversaw the project. National Register Coordinator Robert Christensen reviewed and edited the revised nomination text. Vicki Proctor of the City of Allegan provided additional information from city records and Scott Erbes, a Bureau of History intern, prepared nomination texts for the individual properties. The text, map, and photo revisions were completed by Wilkins & Wheaton.

This nomination excludes archaeological resources, which were not documented as part of this project, and excludes several other areas and individual properties of importance because of a present-day lack of sufficient historical data. Thus the list of sites included in these materials should not be considered complete and final.

— Currently Allegan has the following National Register-designated property: Second Street Bridge

AENR86317A

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Introductory Description Statement

City of Allegan, Allegan County, Michigan

Rarely in western Michigan has any town retained so clearly its nineteenth century character and surroundings. Allegan is unusual first because its historical portions are both shielded and defined by the river and its bluffs. The older portion of the town spreads in a "Y" shape from west to east. The great horseshoe bend which historically provided the town's eastern boundary still sweeps around the downtown area, confining older commercial and public buildings to the original plat. The river and mill race equally confine the original industrial locations. Residential development spread west up the gently sloping bottomland to the edge of the river bluffs. Somewhat later it also spread across the river to the east. There the precipitous bluffs remained undeveloped near downtown. A deep gully etched by a tributary brook divided the eastern portion into a north district and a south district. Marshall Street, one of the oldest roadways in the county, led along the narrow plateau above the river bluffs to the southeast. It attracted home builders in the 1850's and 1860's and continued to offer dramatic building sites into the twentieth century. Bounded by the bluff on the south and the gully on the north, Marshall Street and nearby Bond Street remain as isolated by landscape as the downtown has been by the river.

Historically, Allegan provides a particularly valuable object lesson in the development of "Company" towns on the frontier. Many townsites were developed by individuals. This was true, for example, of Kalamazoo, Battle Creek and Marshall along the same Kalamazoo River. Other towns fared badly when local proprietors lacked the finances to provide first buildings, factory sites, and public buildings. In some cases, absentee investors formed companies to provide such expensive services, and to reap their profits from rising land values in favored locations. Allegan was developed in the middle 1830's by such a group calling itself the "Allegan Company." Older histories give much credit and lengthy discussions to the company and its proprietors. Fortunately, some of the company's earliest buildings still survive, both small cottages and the large frame structure which served as the first courthouse and general meeting space.

Allegan has much significant architecture as well. Its relatively slow growth compared to sites like Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo has meant that urban sprawl has not yet destroyed early village spaces. Not only does the original plat largely survive, but many early buildings do as well. Because of the unusual geography, railroads entered the town east of

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the river and passed out to the north, sparing the near downtown. Similarly, in the 20th century, when automobile travel brought larger and straighter highways, most bypassed the near downtown. Thus, M-89, running from the east to the northwest, passes across the river below Second Street and behind the older area. Turning through the eastern residential district, it left intact the older homes until a recent decision to widen one curve cost one of the town's last "Gothic" houses. Illustrating the benign influence of the highways better than anything else is the fact that the major entrance to downtown from Marshall Street on the southeast continues to be a single-lane iron bridge. The community has recently restored this iron bridge and made it not only an historic site but the center of an annual "Bridgefest" celebration.

Because modern expansion has been pushed toward the edge of Allegan, the downtown and near downtown, like that of Madison, Indiana, looks much as it did a century ago. This old-fashioned charm is evident in the Horseshoe Bend industrial area where the three older factory structures date from nearly a century ago. The business district, defined on three sides by the river, survived a serious fire in 1884. As a result of rapid rebuilding, many of the downtown business blocks date from 1884 to 1885. To the west, the commercial core ends in a buffer of public buildings--courthouse, library, local churches, civic center, etc. Then begins a large 19th-century residential area which extends west to and up the western bluff.

Historic Allegan is worth preserving for the natural beauty of its riverbank and wooded home sites. It is noteworthy for the integrity of its mill-race industrial area and its commercial core. Its civic center includes both the county's first courthouse and its third, as well as a significant Carnegie library and civic center. Several of its churches stand on original lots as they did in the middle of the 19th century. Nearby residential areas include most of the significant building styles of pioneer Michigan. Many early buildings are in splendid condition and offer object lessons in early design.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1830s-1930s **Builder/Architect** See attached inventory

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

See continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property N/A

Quadrangle name Allegan

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References See continuation sheets.

A

Zone	Easting						Northing													

B

Zone	Easting						Northing													

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Entire city limits of City of Allegan, Michigan.

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Peter J. Schmitt, Professor of History
Wesley Blackman & Kenneth Dettloff

organization Western Michigan University date 1984
Wilkins & Wheaton Engineering Co. date 1984-86

street & number _____ telephone 616/945-9314

city or town Kalamazoo state Michigan

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Walter M. Bigelow

title Director, Bureau of History

date Jan 20 '87

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

Bill Crovino
for Keeper of the National Register

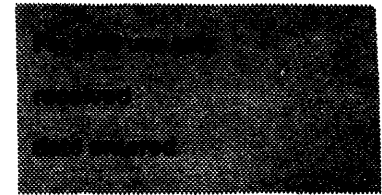
date 3/12/87

Attest: *See Continuation sheet for listing*
Chief of Registration

date _____

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General Historical Overview -- Introduction

Important themes in the early historical and physical development of Allegan include settlement, government/politics, transportation, industry, commerce, and architecture. The settlement period extends from the initial purchase of the site in 1833 into the 1840s and coincides with the period of initial platting and water-power development by "The Company." Remaining from this period are the power canal, several company houses, and a few other early homes.

The government/politics theme relates to Allegan as the seat of Allegan County government from the 1830s on and is represented by the school that served as the original courthouse and by the old county jail.

Transportation played a key role in the city's development from the 1830s to the 1920s. The Kalamazoo River served as an artery for trade, carried logs to the sawmills, and supported shipbuilding. After 1868 railroad connections supported a diversified manufacturing economy. Little remains of the city's historic transportation-related facilities.

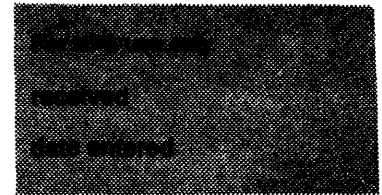
Industrial development began in the 1830s with the cutting of the power canal. Saw and grist mills, followed in the 1850s and 1860s by furniture plants and foundries, clustered along the canal and river banks. Lumbering died out in the 1870s and 80s, but furniture, picture-frame, and pail factories, foundries, and flour mills remained active into the twentieth century. The mill race with the present dam (date unknown) and several of the old plants along it remain. Eventual National Register nomination of this "Horseshoe Bend Mill District" awaits more complete historical documentation.

The commercial theme relates directly to the downtown, which also began to develop in the 1830s and 40s. The downtown's building stock, dating from the 1850s to the 1950s, reflects the rapid commercial growth of the city in the 1870s and 80s, continuing but slower growth thereafter and until the late 1920s, and the trailing off of commercial activity with the Depression and plant closings in the 1930s.

The architecture theme is an enormous one in Allegan, including public, church, social/cultural, commercial, and residential buildings dating from the 1840s into the early twentieth century. In the Michigan context the building stock for a town the size of Allegan is extraordinarily rich in quality. The early housing stock has been subjected but little to the common onslaughts of aluminum and vinyl siding. The town's nominated properties include six of the town's nineteenth-century churches -- two of them by prominent Michigan architects -- exemplifying Greek Revival/Italianate, Gothic, pre-Richardsonian Romanesque, and Richardsonian Romanesque tastes, and a

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seventh exotic, early-twentieth-century, Romanesque-inspired church. Allegan's downtown is notable for its concentration of uniformly sized and often intricately detailed commercial blocks dating from 1884-85, along with other structures of individual note, such as the Art Deco city hall. Allegan's most opulent housing stock, dating largely from the 1840s to the 1920s, is centered in the near west side (Pritchard's Outlook Historic District) and south side (Marshall Street Historic District) areas. Many houses in these districts and others scattered about town, including the individually nominated ones and others in the Brooklyn district, possess architectural importance in a local and county context as outstanding examples of various styles. These include Greek and Gothic Revival, Italianate (Allegan is especially rich in fine examples of this style), Queen Anne/Colonial and Neoclassical Revival, Craftsman, and the bungalow.

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General Historical Overview

City of Allegan, Allegan County, Michigan

Michigan Territory seemed a forgotten wasteland for years after the War of 1812. Despite Territorial Governor Lewis Cass' best efforts, settlers looked elsewhere. Only a single roadway linked Detroit with the West: the old Chicago Military Road along the Indiana border. Travel elsewhere proved difficult even along the area's many rivers.

Settlers began to trickle north from Indiana and up the rivers from Lake Michigan in the late 1820's. They reported rich bottom lands, prairie openings and heavy timber. In the area around Allegan they found heavy stands of virgin oak and pine. When the federal government opened its western land office at White Pigeon in 1831, a wave of interest in wild lands spread, particularly among speculators with money to invest. Eastern capitalists came to the Territory or hired local agents to represent them.

Often the land boom preceded settlement. Early landlookers spied out potential power sites along the rivers. The lucky ones entered these choice locations and hoped to develop towns around them. Some succeeded in attracting settlers and industry. Others went bankrupt trying to finance internal improvements.

Allegan became just such a river town. When water power was vital for saw mills, grist mills, foundries and other industry, Allegan seemed marvelously situated. A local engineer found an eight-foot drop in the river level as the water coursed around the tortuous "Horseshoe Bend." This "fall" offered great opportunities, should anyone dig a mill race across the narrow neck of land to the southeast of downtown.

George Ketchum of Marshall joined Stephen Vickery and Anthony Cooley of Kalamazoo to enter the Allegan townsite at the government land office in 1833. They took a quick paper profit, however, disposing of part of their interest the same year to Elisha Ely of Rochester, New York, who agreed to dig a mill race and build a sawmill. In 1834, with a rough plat of the village in hand, they sold their remaining interest to Samuel Hubbard of Boston, Charles Trowbridge of Detroit, and their associates. These gentlemen formed "The Allegan Company" and "the Boston Company," retaining George Ketchum for several years to manage their interests, then turning to a resident manager, Flavius Littlejohn, in the 1840's.

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Early historians claimed 1836 as "the year everybody came." The great land rush to western Michigan began in earnest, and perhaps as many as 500 people pushed through the wilderness to reach the village that year. Flavius Littlejohn came to Allegan from Herkimer, New York, hoping to regain his health. He found scarcely four downtown acres cleared of timber. A single sawmill clattered away and company laborers worked on another. Littlejohn went to work for the Allegan Company; soon he was asked to correct the original village survey. He became the company's resident agent in 1841. Many of the oldest homes yet standing in the village went up under his supervision. Down at the horseshoe bend, the company built its second sawmill in 1836 and a gristmill the next year; but hard times struck the West in the Great Depression of 1837. A sketch of the village in 1840 shows how isolated a frontier town could be, as spartan homes straggled along stump-filled fields. Nevertheless, Allegan won the county seat, which meant that lawyers, newspapermen, bankers, and others who might be involved in public business located there, as did merchants and other professionals. When Allegan could claim both the county seat and the waterpower site, its future seemed secure.

The river provided the major highway for travellers and freight until the Michigan Central Railroad reached Kalamazoo in 1846. It carried lumber rafts and flatboats loaded with grain from upriver settlements, sweeping them around the bend and on to Saugatuck at the lakeshore. Allegan residents turned shipbuilders, putting together barges which could carry as much as a thousand barrels of flour, as well as river steamers, both paddle and propeller. As late as the 1860's, local shipwrights built the schooner "Lavinda" for the lake trade. Ira Chaffee commissioned both the steamer "Aunt Betsey" and the propeller "Ira Chaffee." The importance of the river highway and the shipbuilding industry both faded when the railroads reached Allegan after the Civil War.

If the river provided transportation, the forest supplied raw material for the town's first industries. The company cut lumber for local shanties and rafted the surplus down to Lake Michigan where it was transferred to lake boats for distant markets. One entrepreneur after another added sawmills up and down the river and its tributaries.

Seemingly endless supplies of logs floated down to the mill race by 1850. Water-powered industries lined the banks; a flour mill and a foundry shared the water power with no less than five sawmills, two sash and door factories, a "turning" shop and a barrel maker. Ira Chaffee owned the largest and oldest of the mills. He cut two million feet of lumber in the eight month season.

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Wood products dominated the economy for many decades. In 1860, Ira Chaffee kept 23 men busy at six saws. They cut three million feet of virgin white pine and five million feet of hardwood, valued at nearly \$70,000. Easy access to both hardwoods and pine stimulated interest in woodenware factories. Local businessmen made farm implements and fanning mills, wooden bowls and pails, and a variety of furniture. The Oliver Company began making furniture in 1855. By 1860, the firm produced 5,000 bedsteads and 500 chairs, using local whitewood, walnut, cherry, and mixed hardwoods.

In the boom years after the Civil War, railroad builders pushed their tracks north from the Michigan Central. The first train of cars reached Allegan Thanksgiving Day in 1868. Allegan pioneers had always known the value of rail links. Practical railroads first appeared on the East Coast in 1830, and as early as 1836, "The Allegan and Marshall Railroad Company" was incorporated. Nothing came of this first adventure, nor did the second in 1848 fare any better. Things changed quickly in the late 1860's. Within a few years, Allegan boasted three different lines, including the Grand Rapids and Indiana and the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern. The new railroads entered from the southeast and passed out of the bottomland to the north, by-passing the downtown area and its horseshoe bend.

Local products now passed quickly east to distant markets. The railroads brought boom times. Scarcely a thousand people lived in the whole township in 1860. In 1870 the village alone held 2,374. Improvements to the dam and the mill race brought more and bigger factories and a last great boom for the lumber industry. By 1870, Allegan township boasted seven mills--all water-powered--and produced nearly eight million feet. But virgin timber, stripped from the river banks, was harder to find. By 1874, the cut fell to three million feet. It continued to fall, and ten years later, 31 of the county's 40 mills were driven by steam engines as mill owners left the river banks to reach inaccessible stands in the back country.

Fortunately for Allegan, however, furniture and woodenware firms continued to prosper along the mill race. New and powerful "turbine" water wheels whirled to provide the power for all ten riverbank companies. Four such wheels drove the machinery for flour mills, four more brought power to farm implement makers. Oliver & Company's bedstead business boomed, carrying along with it two local bedspring and mattress makers.

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The end of the lumber era did bring a period of slow growth (which helped to preserve the 19th-century streetscape). Population actually declined in the 1880 census, and a disastrous fire gutted the downtown in 1884. Storefronts reappeared almost immediately, however. Area farmers planted fruit orchards among the pine stumps. By 1895, population returned to lumbering era numbers. Nevertheless, the town seemed to reach a balance point where its 1880 streets and storefronts continued to serve the town as the years went by. 3,000 people lived in the town in 1910; twenty years later, the count stood at 4,000.

Though Allegan kept its 19th-century charm, it did leave its mark. L. Perrigo, one of the nation's major pharmaceutical companies, got its start in 1888. Baker & Company, internationally known for its fine furniture, began on the mill race in 1895. Blood Brothers machine shops, famous for automotive universal joints, came from Kalamazoo in 1915. As the depression of the 1890's receded and new industries made their mark, contractors added new bungalows to side street lots and suburban developments. State factory inspectors reported the new activity centered in the horseshoe bend district. They found 26 establishments of all types in the town in 1904. By 1917, they inspected 59. They found 206 men and a handful of women working in 1904, and a workforce of more than 500 by 1917.

Two thirds of thirty firms examined in 1914 were less than ten years old. More than half the workforce labored in the five largest plants. All five were engaged in some way in the furniture industry. Oliver & Company had grown up with the town, and Baker began in the 1890's. The Allegan Mirror and Frame Company dated from 1913. The Imperial Carving Company, with its seven workers, started in 1912. Woodworking and related industries continued to provide the sights and sounds and smells of the Horseshoe Bend district for years to come.

Allegan's history stands revealed in its tree-lined streets and tasteful homes, as well as in its civic and commercial core. The great riverbend remains, as do many of the earliest buildings, to remind us of the town's early beginnings. Landlookers first recognized the powersite long before settlers reached the area. The Allegan Company brought the necessary capital to develop the site. Later settlers carried on from there. Their mill race, their streets and homes and public buildings were shaped by historical circumstance, but they in turn shaped the town as it is today. The river bend kept at bay modern intrusions like the railroads and highways that have eaten away so many older townscapes. The town's

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stable growth meant fewer modern high-rise buildings in the downtown core. Early mill buildings still stand along the quiet race because transportation routes made perimeter locations more desirable in recent years. Allegan today gives us a priceless look at what it means to have been a "river town," a town sustained by water power and lumber mills and the turn of the century furniture industry.

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Allegan MRA
State Allegan County, MICHIGAN

Nomination/Type of Review

1. Born, Edward D., House

~~Substantive Review~~
Entered in the
National Register

Cover Beth Grosvenor 3/12/87

Date/Signature

Keeper Melona Byers 3/12/87

Attest

2. Born, Englebert B., House

~~Substantive Review~~
Entered in the
National Register

Keeper Melona Byers 3/12/87

Attest

3. Brown, William H., House

Substantive Review

Keeper Beth Grosvenor 7/8/87

Attest

4. Downtown Allegan Historic District

Entered in the
National Register

Keeper Melona Byers 3/12/87

Attest

5. Franks, Henry, House

Entered in the
National Register

Keeper Melona Byers 3/12/87

Attest

6. Griswold Civic Center Historic District

Substantive Review

Keeper Beth Grosvenor 3/12/87

Attest

7. Lilly, Augustus, House

Entered in the
National Register

Keeper Melona Byers 3/12/87

Attest

8. Marshall Street Historic District

Entered in the
National Register

Keeper Melona Byers 3/12/87

Attest

9. Messenger, William C., House

Entered in the
National Register

Keeper Melona Byers 3/12/87

Attest

10. Oakwood Cemetery Chapel

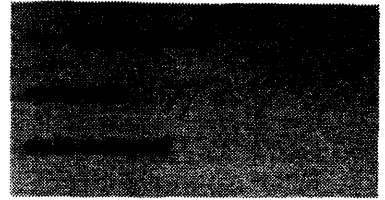
Entered in the
National Register

Keeper Melona Byers 3/12/87

Attest

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Thematic Group

Name Allegan MRA
State Allegan County, MICHIGAN

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

11. Pritchard's Outlook
Historic District

Substantive Review

Keeper

Beth Grosvenor 7/8/87

Attest

12. Stedman, Sarah Lowe, House

**Entered in the
National Register**

Keeper

Delana Byer 3/17/87

Attest

13.

Keeper

Attest

14.

Keeper

Attest

15.

Keeper

Attest

16.

Keeper

Attest

17.

Keeper

Attest

18.

Keeper

Attest

19.

Keeper

Attest

20.

Keeper

Attest