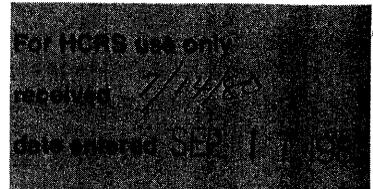


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

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



**1. Name** Downtown Lansing Multiple Resource Area (Partial Inventory)

historic Historic and Architectural Resources of <sup>Downtown</sup> Lansing (Partial Inventory: ~~Central Business District~~)  
and/or common Historic and Architectural Resources

**2. Location**

street & number Central Business District, \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication  
city, town Lansing \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of 6 congressional district  
state Michigan code 26 county Ingham code 065

**3. Classification**

Multiple Resources

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<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 type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input 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 ownership  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_  
city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ingham County Register of Deeds  
street & number Ingham County Courthouse  
city, town Mason state Michigan

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Michigan State Survey Data has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 1978-79  federal  state  county  local  
depository for survey records Michigan History Division  
city, town Lansing state Michigan

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## 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

#### A. Introduction

This nomination originated with a class project undertaken by students from an historic preservation class taught by Dr. Sadayoshi Omoto of the Michigan State University Art Department. During the winter of 1978/1979 students from the class performed an architectural survey of all structures in the Lansing central business district area bounded by Walnut Street on the west, Ionia Street on the north, Kalamazoo Avenue on the south, and the Grand River on the east. Historical information concerning individual structures was also gathered from Lansing city records, newspaper articles, interviews, city directories and various published sources. During 1979 background research concerning the history of the City of Lansing and the downtown area and further research concerning individual structures was performed by Rochelle Ellstein, a research assistant on the Michigan History Division staff, under the supervision of Kathryn Eckert, Historic Sites Supervisor. Robert O. Christensen, Regional Historic Preservation Coordinator, Michigan History Division, also performed additional research and prepared this nomination.

#### B. Description of the Multiple-Resource Area

The Lansing Downtown Multiple-Resource Area is a roughly square area -- about 2,000 feet long north to south and a maximum of about 1,800 feet broad east to west -- comprising the central core of Lansing's downtown business district. The area is bounded on the east by the Grand River (which runs generally south to north in this part of its course), on the north by Ionia Street, on the west by Walnut Street, and on the south by Kalamazoo Avenue. The land lacks any real hills, but slopes generally downward toward the Grand River on the district's eastern edge.

As in all of the "old-city," central section of Lansing, the street pattern in the downtown consists of a grid of east-west and north-south streets delineating roughly square blocks which average about 400 feet on a side. The principal streets are Washington Avenue, Capitol Avenue, and Michigan Avenue.

Washington Avenue, the downtown's primary business street, runs in a north-south direction and is located two blocks west of the Grand River. The entire section within the multiple-resource area has been closed as a through street and reconstructed as Washington Mall, a pedestrian mall with parking areas. Washington Avenue's character differs markedly from the section north of Michigan Avenue -- largely rebuilt since 1970 with office buildings (and parking lots) as a result of urban renewal -- and the blocks south of Michigan which have not been subjected to urban renewal. These more southerly blocks for the most part contain relatively modest, two, three and four-story, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century commercial blocks set close to the street line. Many of these buildings have been remodelled and refaced one or more times since 1950 and few present much of their original appearance. The avenue does, however, contain several visual landmarks of more considerable size and architectural distinction. These include the Bank of Lansing Building -- a stone, 1920s-style office tower with Romanesque decoration and rich sculptural ornamentation in stone and metal -- at the northwest corner of Washington and Michigan avenues; the Prudden Building, a Renaissance-style office tower opposite the Bank of Lansing on the southwest corner of Michigan and Washington; the red-brick, six-story, Late Victorian, Hollister Building at the northwest corner of South Washington Avenue and West Allegan Street; the broad-fronted, Renaissance-Classical Michigan Theatre and Arcade building between Allegan and Washtenaw streets; and the glowing, blue and yellow, Art Moderne, J. W. Knapp Company department store on the southwest corner of South Washington Avenue and Washtenaw Street.

(continued)

**United States Department of the Interior  
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For HCRS use only

received 9/8/80

date entered SEP 17 1980

Continuation sheet

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Amendment: Methodology for Assessing National Register Eligibility

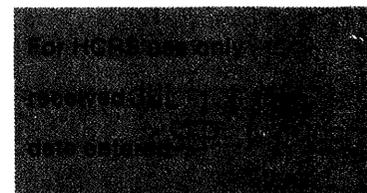
Assessments concerning the National Register eligibility of properties and areas within the multiple resource area were made entirely in-house at the Michigan History Division by Robert O. Christensen, Kathryn B. Eckert, Leslie J. Vollmert, and Janet L. Kreger of the Historic Sites Unit and with the concurrence of the Director, Dr. Martha M. Bigelow, and former Deputy Director, Michael J. Washo.

Reviewing the eligibility of properties in downtown Lansing was a complicated task because of the fragmented character of the downtown area context. The rapid growth of the city and the incessant demands for modernization and easy access by auto have together served in recent years to cause the destruction of the major portion of the downtown's historic fabric, leaving some highly significant individual monuments (such as the Strand Theatre and Arcade), but almost no unaltered examples of the more modest, typical, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century blocks which gave the downtown its character. Thus it proved difficult to establish a context for the evaluation of structures of this latter type in Lansing. In the end these typical buildings were evaluated not only in the local Lansing/North Lansing context, but also in terms of structures of the same types which survive in other Michigan localities of the same general population and size in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In assessing the eligibility of structures considered for nomination primarily on Architectural grounds, we considered the degree to which structures preserved integrity of design and materials to be a most significant factor. Structures whose exteriors and significant interior spaces have been substantially and unsympathetically altered were considered to have lost their integrity of design and materials and were in general deemed ineligible. For this reason the list of properties nominated from the multiple resource area should not be considered final. It is possible that in the future structures that are not now considered eligible because of unsympathetic renovations could require re-evaluation if sympathetic rehabilitations are undertaken.

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B. Description of the Multiple-Resource Area (continued)

Capitol Avenue is another broad, north-south street, located one block west of Washington Avenue. Downtown's most attractive street, it passes fine, large buildings constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to house many of the city's leading civic, religious, and commercial institutions and forms the eastern or front side of the capitol square. The capitol square occupies a level, 700-by-800-foot site bounded on the north by West Ottawa Street, on the west by Walnut Street, and on the south by West Allegan Street. In its center is the east-facing Michigan State Capitol, a buff-sandstone, Renaissance-style structure with a white cast iron dome. Key visual landmarks surrounding the square along Capitol Avenue and West Ottawa and West Allegan streets are the Richardsonian Romanesque First Baptist and Central United Methodist churches; the 1950s, International Style Lansing City Hall and the Georgian Revival Olds Plaza Hotel facing each other on either side of Michigan Avenue at Capitol Avenue; the Michigan National Tower -- a terra cotta-trimmed, Romanesque-inspired, bank/office building at the north-east corner of South Capitol Avenue and West Allegan Street; the Neo-Classical Masonic Temple Building; and, occupying an entire block to the south of the square, the ochre-limestone Federal Building.

Michigan Avenue runs in a straight line for several miles from East Lansing into downtown Lansing where it ends directly in front of the State Capitol at Capitol Avenue. The view of the Capitol -- flanked by the Bank of Lansing, Prudden Building, and the other structures which form the Lansing skyline -- looming larger as one moves west along Michigan Avenue toward the downtown is one of Lansing's more pleasant visual amenities.

Grand Avenue, the street nearest the Grand River, is largely given over to parking lots and decks built to service the Washington Mall. The street does, however, have one key visual landmark in the Ottawa Street Generating Station, located on the banks of the Grand River north of East Ottawa Street. Handsome by day as an example of the Art Deco aesthetic applied to a totally functional structure, the Ottawa Street Station is particularly appealing after dark when the end walls are illuminated with blue lights and the broad, side walls are bathed in the orange light emanating from the building's lofty windows.

Lansing's downtown has undergone continuous change over the years. The construction of new office buildings, the refacing of older structures, and the proliferation of inappropriate storefront treatments and parking lots and garages has taken place in every part of the downtown to a considerable degree since 1950; consequently there now remains no single area in the downtown that preserves as a district an historic flavor. Thus, no National Register historic districts are proposed in this nomination.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

**A. Introduction**

Nine structures (including the Michigan State Capitol, which is already listed in the National Register) from the Downtown Lansing Multiple Resource Area are being proposed for National Register designation. They are:

- Michigan State Capitol
- First Baptist Church, 227 North Capitol Avenue
- Central United Methodist Church, 215 North Capitol Avenue
- Mutual Building, 208 North Capitol Avenue
- Lansing Woman's Club Building, 118 West Ottawa Street
- Michigan Millers Mutual Fire Insurance Company Building, 120-122 West Ottawa Street
- Strand Theatre and Arcade, 211-219 South Washington Avenue
- Federal Building, 315 West Allegan Street
- Masonic Temple Building, 217 South Capitol Avenue

Some of these structures are being nominated because of their associations with individuals or with political, cultural, religious, community, or commercial institutions which have had a major impact on the historical development of the City of Lansing, the Lansing metropolitan area, or the State of Michigan. Many buildings are being nominated at least partly because of their architectural significance -- as notable examples of certain architectural styles or types, as rare survivors of types of buildings once common in the downtown, as major works by the city's leading architects, or as significant local exemplifications of the work of firms of region-wide or national prominence.

No archaeological resources are being herein proposed for nomination because no systematic archaeological study of any part of the downtown area has as yet been undertaken.

In addition to the nine structures listed above, it was intended to nominate four others:

- Bank of Lansing Building, 101 North Washington Square
- Ottawa Street Generating Station, East Ottawa Street
- J. W. Knapp Company Department Store, 300 South Washington Avenue
- Capital Bank Tower, 124-126 West Allegan Street

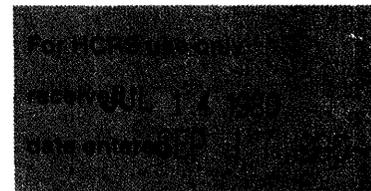
These structures, however, were not approved for nomination by the Michigan Historic Preservation Review Board because of the opposition of the building owners. It is hoped to nominate them in the future.

**B. Historical Development of Lansing and of the Downtown Multiple-Resource Area**

(continued)

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1. City of Lansing

The City of Lansing was founded as Michigan's capitol city. Its establishment was the result of a provision of the 1837 Michigan constitution. The constitution established Detroit as the state's temporary capitol, but required the legislature to select a permanent site in ten years. Thus in 1847 the legislature was faced with making a choice. At one time or another virtually every town of any size in the state was given consideration; in the end, however, all were rejected.

At this juncture and at the instigation of James Seymour of Rochester, New York, owner of lands in the area, the name of Lansing Township was proposed as a compromise. The township, located nearly midway across the state, lay north of the part of the state that was already thickly settled. Thus its selection was seen as a means of promoting the growth of the more northerly parts of the state. Accordingly Lansing Township was adopted as the site.

Commissioners appointed by the 1847 legislature to select the location for the "Village of Michigan" (the settlement's name was changed to that of the township in 1849) chose section 16--bounded by Saginaw Street on the north, Logan on the west, St. Joseph Street on the south, and the railroad tracks east of Larch Street on the east. This area is now the heart of the city. In the spring of 1847 they platted the section into streets and lots and designated a large square as the site for the capitol building. Another block, located to the southeast of the capitol square (bounded by Allegan and Kalamazoo streets and Capitol and Washington avenues) was reserved for temporary state buildings. On this latter block a temporary capitol and a house for the governor--both unpretentious Greek Revival structures--were soon constructed.

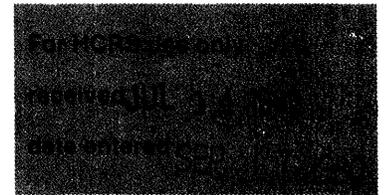
Recognizing Lansing's isolation, in 1848 the legislature financed the opening of roads from the town to other important points. The Legislature authorized the completion of the important Grand River Road which, projected by the U. S. Congress in 1832, was to run from Detroit through Howell and what is now North Lansing to Grand Rapids and the mouth of the Grand River. The section from Howell to North Lansing (present-day Grand River Avenue) was finally opened in 1849. Several of the new roads, including the Grand River Road and the road to Mason, were turned over to turnpike companies in the 1850s and rebuilt as plank roads.

The haste with which the state government was moved to Lansing and with which relatively convenient communication with the rest of the state was established led to the rapid development of the sections of Lansing Township near the capitol. As early as 1847 three villages existed in close proximity along the Grand River. The north village, known as the lower village because of its location downstream from the others, grew up about a dam and sawmill just south of the Grand River Avenue crossing of the Grand River. The dam had been built in 1843 by John W. Burchard, the area's first settler; the mill the following year by workmen on the payroll of James Seymour. In 1847, following selection of Lansing as the capitol, a bridge was built across the river and stores and hotels began to appear along what is now Grand River Avenue between North Washington Avenue and Center Street and north on Turner Street. Largely rebuilt in the 1875-1920 period, the North Lansing commercial district now contains Lansing's largest assemblage of Late Victorian business blocks. The district is listed in the National Register.

(continued)

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1. City of Lansing (continued)

The south or upper village began to develop in 1847 along Main Street and South Washington Avenue. In 1847 a Main Street bridge was constructed over the Grand River. The village's central element was the Benton House, a four-story, brick, Greek Revival-style hotel. Because of its distance from the capitol site, the upper village remained an embryo. The Main Street bridge was not even replaced when it was washed out in 1860.

The middle village, centered around Washington and Michigan avenues near the capitol, quickly became Lansing's focal point. The first Michigan Avenue Grand River bridge was built in 1848.

In 1859 the Village of Lansing, consisting of the three settlements and about three thousand residents, was incorporated as a city. Its population swelled to 5,241 in 1870 and to 8,326 in 1880. The 1874 Beers' atlas shows that the built-up area then extended from Cedar and Larch streets on the east to Sycamore on the west and from Willow and North streets on the north to Main Street on the south. The routing of railroads through the city is a major reason for this growth. Lansing's first rail link, connecting the city with Owosso and other towns to the northeast, was opened as far as North Lansing in 1861 and into the center of the city two years later. Lines were opened to Jackson in 1866, to Battle Creek and Ionia in 1869, to Detroit in 1871, and to Eaton Rapids-Albion-Jonesville in 1873.

Good rail service fostered industrial development. In the 1860s and 1870s the area along both sides of the river from Grand River Avenue southward to below Michigan Avenue and along the Northern Michigan Central tracks to the east of the river became the site of saw mills, chair factories, and other light industries using the area's rich timber supply until it was depleted in the 1880s. The area also contained a number of steam and waterpowered flour and grist mills; several produced flour exclusively for the New England market.

As the native timber disappeared, Lansing began to switch to heavy industry. In 1869-70 Edwin Bement and his son Arthur moved their foundry and machine shop from Fostoria, Ohio to Lansing to take advantage of the growing demand for farm implements. By the 1880s the firm of E. Bement & Sons was one of the city's largest employers. They manufactured stoves and farm equipment such as harrows and plows, but were more widely known for their sleds. Another prominent manufacturing firm was the Lansing Wheelbarrow Company (later known simply as The Lansing Company). Founded in 1881, it became one of the largest wheelbarrow-manufacturing firms in the country.

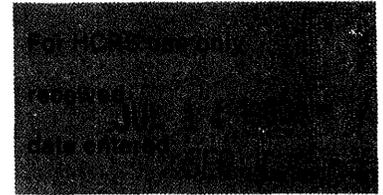
The Lansing boom was momentarily halted by the 1893 crash, which wreaked havoc with the city's industrial economy, but soon picked up new momentum. In 1900 the city had a population of 16,485 and in 1910 31,229. By 1920 the total reached over 57,000. The rise of the automobile industry and of auto-related industries was the major spur for this accelerating early twentieth-century growth. Lansing's automobile industry began with Ransom Eli Olds. In 1886 Olds (1865-1950) and Frank G. Clark constructed a "horseless carriage" powered by a gas-fueled steam engine. Olds' experiments resulted in 1897 in the formation of the Olds Motor Vehicle Company. The Olds Motor Works moved to Detroit in 1898 but established a factory in Lansing in 1901 when, after the burning of the Detroit plant, Lansing businessmen obtained for Olds a large tract of land on the city's south side. A plant of the Oldsmobile Division of General Motors still occupies this site.

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### 1. City of Lansing (continued)

Because of disagreements with the board (Olds wanted the company to build low-cost, mass-production models, while the board wished to manufacture high-priced, custom-made automobiles), R. E. Olds resigned in 1904 and established the Reo Motor Car Company. In 1904 the company began construction of a factory complex on South Washington Avenue on Lansing's south side. Although designated a National Historic Landmark, this complex was entirely demolished during the second half of 1979.

In 1921 Lansing's third major auto plant was constructed--at West Michigan and Verlinden avenues on the west side of town--for the manufacture of the Durant automobile. The plant closed in 1929, but was reopened in the mid-1930s to house General Motors' Fisher Body Division.

The development of Lansing's automobile plants led to the establishment of subsidiary, auto-related industries. A number of firms which remain prominent parts of the Lansing scene today were established during the first years of the twentieth century. They include the Motor Wheel Corporation, founded in 1903 as W. K. Prudden & Co., and Michigan Screw Products and the Atlas Drop Forge Company, both founded in 1906.

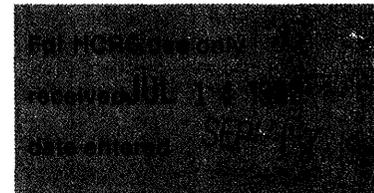
Unlike Lansing's earlier industrial development, which had taken place near the downtown along and near the Grand River, this new early twentieth-century, auto-related, industrial growth tended to take place along the city's thinly built-up fringes, where large tracts of land were still available. However, the presence of the plants encouraged the development of bungalow and cottage suburbs nearby. The ever-increasing availability of the automobile, which made it no longer necessary to live near work, shopping, or even public transportation, also fostered the growth of the suburbs. In the 1910s and 1920s housing developments rapidly gobbled up the last vacant lands within the 1859 city boundaries and began to expand beyond them. This growth resulted in the annexation of 414.60 acres on the city's east side in 1916 and of 1698.30 acres on the south and west sides the following year. In 1928 the city annexed another 557.70 acres on the north sides. By 1930 Lansing had a population of 78,397.

Lansing's development since 1930 parallels that of many another American city. The city has witnessed rapid population growth and suburban expansion in the metropolitan area and extensive strip development on all the major arteries leading out from downtown. The city's population, which expanded by only a few hundred between 1930 and 1940, grew to over 92,000 in 1950 and to over 131,000 as of 1970--largely as a result of frequent annexations of burgeoning suburban areas. As suburban growth has continued outward in all directions, however, the old core city--bounded by Logan and Huron streets on the west, Willow and North streets on the north, Mount Hope Avenue on the south, and Pennsylvania Avenue on the east--has become an inner-city, urban area, and suffers to some degree from urban ills common to many American cities. Civic and commercial development has expanded from the downtown into old residential neighborhoods, giving them a spotty, half-commercial, half-residential aspect. In some neighborhoods many single-family homes have been converted into multi-unit structures. The pattern of crowding has often been compounded by intrusive development in the form of oversized apartment houses and office blocks squeezed onto small city lots.

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## 1. City of Lansing (continued)

Beginning in the late 1960s, the vitality of the city has been further eroded by urban renewal, which has resulted in the demolition of virtually all of the Washington Avenue commercial area north of Michigan Avenue; by the depredations of the state government which, planning for possible future expansion of the state office complex, has cleared more than ten blocks of homes; and by the city's recent demolition of six more blocks of early twentieth-century housing for the Capitol Commons housing project. Although these and other projects--such as the construction of Interstate Route 496 across Lansing's south side in the early 1970s--have considerably disrupted the city's historic fabric, Lansing nevertheless retains a considerable number of districts and sites significant to its historical development.

2. Downtown Lansing

The area that is now downtown Lansing developed about the site reserved for the state capitol. The first, "temporary" capitol building was constructed in 1847 on the block bounded by Capitol and Washington avenues and Allegan and Kalamazoo streets. As it turned out, this temporary capitol, enlarged in 1863, served until 1878. (Turned into a factory, the building burned in 1882.) The governor's house--never used by a chief executive (it is said to have been thought too modest)--remained at the southeast corner of West Allegan Street and South Capitol Avenue until 1923, when it was moved to its present location, 2003 West Main Street.

To house additional offices, in 1853 the state erected a Renaissance-style, brick, office building in the center of the capitol square. In 1871, when this structure was demolished to make room for the new state capitol, a larger state office building was constructed at the southwest corner of South Washington Avenue and West Allegan Street. Demolished in 1923 after the completion of the Lewis Cass Building (the oldest of the present-day state office buildings), this was a three-story, Italianate structure with bracketed cornices.

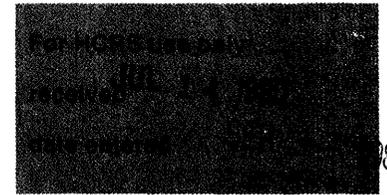
The present Michigan State Capitol was begun in 1872 and completed in 1878. This Renaissance-style structure, the first of several state capitols designed by Elijah E. Myers, is in historical and architectural terms the most significant structure in downtown Lansing. It is already listed in the National Register.

Commercial development of the so-called middle village began to take place as soon as the location of the capitol square was announced. Washington Avenue, the most direct route between the lower and upper villages, was the obvious site for commercial development. Before 1847 was over, the area's first hotel, the Lansing House, was constructed at the southeast corner of South Washington Avenue and East Washtenaw Street. A log structure, it was replaced a year later by a second Lansing House--this one a frame, Greek Revival structure. About the same time, Christopher Columbus Darling built another hotel, the Columbus House; it stood on the site of the Michigan Theatre and Arcade on the east side of South Washington between Allegan and Kalamazoo streets.

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2. Downtown Lansing (continued)

The opening of the Michigan Avenue bridge over the Grand River in 1848 helped to solidify the middle village's pre-eminence. The removal of the post office from a general store on South Cedar Street south of East Main Street to the middle village in 1851 by then postmaster Colonel Whitney Jones also strengthened the position of the middle village. (Jones, a real estate speculator, later built Lansing's only octagon house--long ago demolished--which stood at the southeast corner of South Washington Avenue and East Kalamazoo Street.)

By the late 1860s, it appears, the section of Michigan Avenue from Capitol Avenue to the Grand River and the five blocks of Washington Avenue from Ionia Street on the north to Kalamazoo Avenue on the south presented an almost solid front of business blocks. Very old photos show occasional two-story, end or flank-gable, clapboard structures whose first-floor storefronts have large, multi-paned windows set between heavy antae. Two such structures, similar to what might have been seen in New England or upstate New York, once stood on the southwest corner of Michigan and South Washington avenues. These Greek Revival buildings have long since disappeared from Lansing.

Extensive growth of the Washington-Michigan Avenue commercial area took place in the late 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s. By 1890 the two blocks of East Michigan between the capitol and the Grand River and the eight blocks of Washington Avenue from Shiawassee Street to Lenawee Street were virtually lined with two, three, and four-story, brick, commercial blocks. The great majority were "commercial Italianate" structures with boldly projecting iron or corbelled-brick cornices and round-head or segmental-arch windows trimmed with molded-brick or florid, iron window caps. Most of these structures have been demolished; of the few which survive, none retains more than a trace of its original appearance.

Two of the most outstanding and unusual of these "commercial Italianate" structures were the c. 1880 Dodge Block on South Washington Avenue and the 1882 block which once stood at 110 East Michigan Avenue. The Dodge Block's elaborate facade was unique in Lansing in having certain elements which reflected the Ruskin-inspired interest in the decorative forms and effects of the Gothic architecture of northern Italy. The block at 110 East Michigan Avenue had an irregular, bracketted roofline broken by a campanile-like tower and a panel brickwork facade with light, stone, lintel and sill bands and other trimmings. Both structures have been demolished.

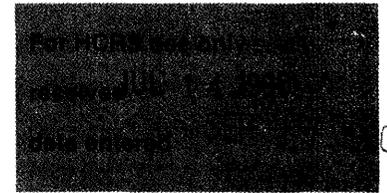
In the 1880s and 1890s the eclectic approach to the design of such business blocks as those above became even more pronounced. One of the most eclectic of these structures is the 1890 building of the Michigan Millers Mutual Fire Insurance Company at 120-122 West Ottawa Street. One of the few little altered nineteenth-century blocks surviving in the downtown, the structure combines Italianate, panel-brick, and Richardsonian Romanesque features into a pleasing, unified whole.

Its designer, Darius B. Moon, was one of Lansing's most prominent late nineteenth and early twentieth-century architects. Raised in nearby Delta Township, Moon (1851-1938) began his career as a builder who did design work on the side. His professional career as an architect evidently began in 1888. Moon was known chiefly for his residential

(Continued)

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2. Downtown Lansing (continued)

work and particularly for the lavish (by Lansing standards) Queen Anne and Queen Anne/Colonial Revival homes he designed around the turn of the century for leading local businessmen such as Ransom Olds. The Michigan Millers building is one of only a relatively few commercial/office blocks Moon ever planned. It is also the oldest known surviving structure of those he designed during his professional career.

Lansing's increasing size and importance during the late nineteenth century was reflected in a need for increased accommodations for travelers. The city's Late Victorian hotels were among its most significant landmarks. The second Lansing House, burned in 1861, was replaced in 1866-67 on the same site by a third. The owner, Gen. Lafayette C. Baker, was one of the captors of President Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth; he used his \$20,000 reward money to help defray the cost of the structure. Purchased in 1887 by Henry J. Downey, the hotel became the Downey House. It was raised to six stories in 1910. This largest and finest of Lansing's Victorian hostelries was torn down in 1936 to make room for the J. W. Knapp Company Department Store.

Another prominent hotel was the Hudson House, built in 1875 by Martin Hudson, one-time proprietor of the third Lansing House. A three-story, brick, Italianate block with segmental-arch window caps, it stood on the site of the Columbus House. The Hudson House burned in 1920.

New structures built downtown after the Civil War also bore witness to Lansing's growing cultural aspirations. In 1865 James I. Mead opened Mead's Hall, the first downtown theater and public auditorium, at the southeast corner of North Washington Avenue and East Ottawa Street. Although this building stood until 1967, when it was demolished as part of the city's urban renewal program, it served as the center of Lansing social life only until 1872, when Buck's Opera House opened. The Second Empire-style Buck's (later Baird's) Opera House at the southwest corner of North Washington Avenue and West Ionia Street was the city's grandest Late Victorian theater. Its richly appointed auditorium contained 1,100 seats. On opening night Macbeth was presented, with Edwin Booth playing the leading role. Buck's Opera House was replaced in 1939 by the (itself now defunct) Gladmer Theatre.

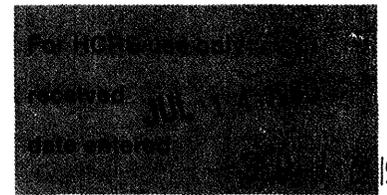
Also located downtown was the clubhouse of the Lansing Woman's Club. The club was established in 1874 to counter the lack of educational and cultural opportunities for women; it had as its object "the study and improvement of its members in Literature, the Sciences and Fine Arts." In 1889-90 the body constructed their clubhouse at 118 West Ottawa Street. The Lansing Woman's Club moved to a new home outside the downtown area in 1949, but their historically significant Ottawa Street clubhouse still stands and is now being refurbished for continued commercial use.

Lansing's predominantly Protestant settlers established churches at an early date in what is now the downtown. At first the church buildings were located principally along Washington Avenue, but in the decades after the Civil War many congregations built new structures adjacent to the capitol square. By 1900 no less than five churches ringed the square and others stood nearby. Among the now vanished capitol square churches were

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2. Downtown Lansing (continued)

St. Paul's Episcopal, a delicate Carpenter Gothic structure designed by Detroit architect Gordon W. Lloyd and built in 1873 on West Ottawa Street, and Plymouth Congregational Church, a stone-trimmed, brick, Victorian Gothic edifice constructed in 1876-77 on the southeast corner of West Allegan and Townsend streets from the designs of G. H. Edbrooke and Company of Chicago.

Although most of Lansing's Victorian churches have been demolished, two of the most architecturally significant of them--the Central United Methodist Church at the northwest corner of North Capitol Avenue and West Ottawa Street and the First Baptist Church next door to the north on North Capitol Avenue--have fortunately survived. Both are massive, stone structures in the Richardsonian Romanesque idiom, with well preserved, oak-trimmed sanctuaries. Built in 1889-90, broad-shouldered Central Methodist is the only known Michigan church designed by Elijah E. Myers, the architect of the Michigan State Capitol. First Baptist, architecturally the opposite of Central Methodist because of its narrow front and steep roof, was built in 1892-94. The two churches are among the most handsome Richardsonian Romanesque churches in Michigan's southern lower peninsula.

By the turn of the century, although Washington Avenue remained the commercial center of Lansing, the capitol square area was rapidly becoming the city's civic center. To the ring of imposing churches flanking the square were added in the 1890s two notable civic structures. In 1891-94 the federal government constructed a Richardsonian Romanesque post office on the site of the present city hall. It was enlarged in 1913. (This fine structure was torn down in the mid-1950s.) Next door to the post office, at the southeast corner of West Ottawa Street and North Capitol Avenue, the city constructed a monumental city hall in 1895-96. The City Hall was a high-roofed, three-story, Richardsonian Romanesque palace crowned by a square, pyramid-roof clock tower. (Despite its significance as a local landmark, the structure was abandoned as city hall in the 1950s and demolished in 1959.)

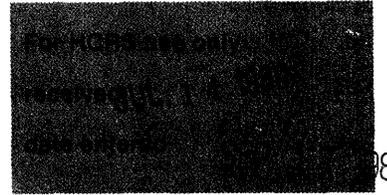
Both the First Baptist Church and the new City Hall were the work of a then newly established firm founded by Edwyn A. Bowd. Bowd (1865-1940) came to Detroit in the early 1880s from his native England. Working for a time in the office of Detroit architect Gordon W. Lloyd and later in Saginaw, Bowd moved to Lansing in 1888. His firm designed many of the major early twentieth-century landmarks of the Lansing area, including the 1905 Masonic Temple, the Lansing Public Library (1904), the Ingham County Courthouse in Mason (1904), the Lewis Cass State Office Building (1919-22), and buildings for the City of Lansing, the Michigan Agricultural College, and the Michigan School for the Blind.

A new period of development--coinciding with Lansing's population explosion--began in the 1910s and 1920s and, following a hiatus caused by the Depression, continued in the late 1930s. These years saw the continued westward expansion of the downtown area along Capitol Avenue and the construction of many of what are now the area's most prominent buildings.

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This new growth reinforced existing patterns. Capitol Square became more fully established as Lansing's civic center with the construction of a new Masonic Temple, hotel, and post office nearby. The new temple, located at 217 South Capitol Avenue, was built by the city's Masons in 1924-25 to replace an outgrown turn-of-the-century structure. Designed by Edwyn A. Bowd, the new temple is Lansing's finest Neo-Classical Revival structure.

The thirteen-story Hotel Olds (now The Plaza Hotel) was built in 1925-26 at the southeast corner of South Capitol and Michigan avenues. Erected as a civic project by the Lansing Community Hotel Corporation, the Olds supplanted the old hostelryes along Washington Avenue. The new structure was designed by Holabird and Root, a Chicago firm which planned a number of major hotels, including Chicago's Palmer House. However, although it still stands, the Olds has been much altered.

The present downtown post office/federal building at the southwest corner of Townsend and West Allegan streets was erected in 1932-34 to replace the building of 1891-94 (on the east side of the square) which, although greatly enlarged in 1913, was again inadequate by the 1920s. The new Art Deco-influenced building is one of the most imposing 1930s post offices in Michigan.

Architects for the new federal building were Edwyn Bowd and Orlie J. Munson. Munson had joined the Bowd office in the early 1920s as a draughtsman and became a full partner in the firm--reorganized as Bowd & Munson--in 1925. Incorporated as the Bowd-Munson Company in 1929, the firm continued to be one of Lansing's most significant architectural offices until Bowd's death in 1940.

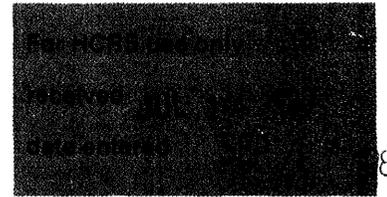
Two structures from the 1920s and 1930s epitomize the street's position as Lansing's business and entertainment center: the Strand Theatre and Arcade and the J. W. Knapp Company Department Store. The Strand Theatre and Arcade Building (now the Michigan Theatre and Arcade) at 211-219 South Washington Avenue was constructed in 1920-22. Combining the city's finest theater (built as a vaudeville house, but soon used for motion pictures as well), a two-level commercial arcade, a ballroom, and a bowling alley, the building is one of Lansing's architectural treasures. Knapp's, founded in 1908 as an outgrowth of an earlier store, is Lansing's largest department store. The store's present downtown home, at the southwest corner of South Washington and West Washtenaw streets, was constructed in 1937-38 and enlarged in 1949. The original portion was designed by the Bowd-Munson Company. The structure's glass-block and blue and yellow tile exterior is highly significant to Lansing and to Michigan as an excellent example of Art Moderne styling.

Another product of the prosperous 1910s and 1920s was the office block/tower. Lansing's first large office block was the Hollister Building at 106 West Allegan Street. It was erected in 1890 and enlarged to the west in 1915. The building's brick exterior is patterned in a cursory way on Burnham and Root's Rookery Building in Chicago. Although the Hollister lacks the fine sense of proportion and the broad areas of window that contribute so to the Chicago structure's aesthetic success and architectural significance, the building is nevertheless an important local landmark. Unfortunately, the structure's Romanesque, stone, lower stories were rebuilt in 1931 and recast again in the 1970s.

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In 1916 the construction of the narrow-fronted Bauch Building at 115 West Allegan Street inaugurated a period of high-rise office building construction in the downtown. It was followed in 1917 by the Neo-Classical American State Savings Bank Building at the south-east corner of South Washington and Michigan avenues (unfortunately entirely re-clothed in recent years) and in 1921 by the Prudden (now Washington Square) Building, an eleven-story, Renaissance-style tower. These two structures were designed by local architect Samuel Dana Butterworth.

Without doubt, however, Lansing's finest office buildings from this architectural golden age are the Mutual Building of 1928, the Capital Bank Tower of 1929-31, and the Bank of Lansing Building of 1931-32. The six-story Mutual Building at 208 North Capitol Avenue, built to house the Michigan Millers Mutual Fire Insurance Company (whose offices had previously been located around the corner at 120-122 West Ottawa Street) is a fine, Elizabethan-inspired structure. Its architect, the Chicago firm of Pond & Pond, Martin & Lloyd, enjoyed a considerable reputation throughout the Midwest for their commercial, office, and university buildings.

The Capital Bank Tower (now the Michigan National Tower) at 124-126 West Allegan Street was built in 1929-31 for Ransom E. Olds to house the R. E. Olds Company offices, the Capital National Bank, and rental office space. Significant as one of the last remaining structures in Lansing personally connected with R. E. Olds---probably the most important individual in Lansing's history--the tower is also notable as one of the finest 1920s office buildings in Michigan outside of Detroit.

Equally distinguished architecturally is the Bank of Lansing Building. Like the Capital Bank Tower, the 1931-32 Bank of Lansing Building at 101 North Washington Square is a severely angular, "modern" office tower dressed up with a Romanesque decorative scheme. The structure's exterior and banking room are visual treats of sculptural, metalwork, mosaic, and painted decoration executed by firms of national prominence.

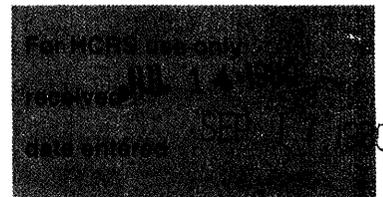
The Bank of Lansing tower greatly enhanced the reputation of its designers, Lansing architects Lee Black and Kenneth C. Black. Lee Black established the office in 1913 and took his son, Kenneth C. Black, into the firm in 1930 and into full partnership two years later. Lee and Kenneth C. Black designed many of the most important downtown buildings of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

New downtown buildings such as the Bank of Lansing meant increased demands on the city's downtown central steam-heating system. The service had been established about 1900 by the Piatt brothers--who owned a small electric-power generating plant on West Washtenaw Street--in order to make productive use of the steam exhausted from the engines which drove the power generators. The Michigan Power Company had built a new steam plant in 1908 at the foot of Ottawa Street. When the company went bankrupt in 1919, the city-owned Board purchased and operated this Ottawa Street Station. Because of the rapidly escalating use of the system, in 1937 the Board demolished the old Ottawa Street Station and began construction of a larger plant on the same site. Designed by the Bowd-Munson Company, the new Ottawa Street Station is Lansing's finest Art Deco landmark.

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In the period since 1945 downtown Lansing's growth has focused on the development of office space. Office buildings and subsidiary parking decks have been the principal types of structures erected. In addition, older buildings not originally used for office purposes--such as the Olds Hotel and the J. W. Knapp Company Capitol Avenue Annex--have been or are being converted to fill an ever growing demand for office space.

At the same time the churches and agencies whose buildings flanked the capitol square have in large part dispersed. The Masons, faced with declining membership in the city, deserted their temple in the mid-1970s. Three of the square's churches have vanished since World War II as their congregations evaporated or moved to the suburbs. Lansing's main post office, too, abandoned the downtown for a suburban location; only a branch office remains in the Federal Building on Allegan Street.

Washington Avenue has remained the commercial/retail heart of the downtown, but has suffered in the past twenty-five years from competition from East Lansing's satellite downtown and from suburban shopping centers and malls. Washington Avenue was also the victim of urban renewal in the late 1960s and early 1970s which razed the old commercial blocks on the east side of the avenue from Michigan Avenue north to Ionia Street. This area, still largely a wasteland, is gradually being rebuilt with office blocks.

The physical form of downtown Lansing has suffered considerably in the past twenty years through urban renewal, a proliferation of parking lots and decks, and insensitive alterations to old and not so old structures. However, there are signs that Lansing, which has shown little sensitivity to its heritage and to aesthetics in general in recent years, may be beginning to change its tune. In the last two years the owners of the adjoining 1890 structures at 118 and 120-122 West Ottawa Street have rehabilitated their structures in a manner that is consistent with their original appearance--probably the first time a sympathetic renovation has been carried out in downtown Lansing in recent years. The Strand (now Michigan) Theatre and Arcade has also been the subject of preservation activities for the past several years. An organization known as DaCapo, Inc., has been formed and is attempting to raise funds to purchase and rehabilitate this constantly threatened structure for use as a performing arts center. It is our hope that designation of the downtown structures herein nominated will serve to promote the cause of building reuse, rehabilitation, and restoration both in downtown Lansing and throughout the city as a whole.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

## I. General

Adams, Mrs. Franc L., Compiler. Pioneer History of Ingham County. Lansing: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck, Crawford Co., 1923 (Continued)

# 10. Geographical Data

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

Acreeage of nominated property N/A  
 Quadrangle name Lansing South

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

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C	<u>1</u> <u>6</u>	<u>7</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u> <u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>3</u> <u>5</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	D	<u>1</u> <u>6</u>	<u>7</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>3</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>
E				F			
G				H			

*See Continuation Sheet*  
 Verbal boundary description and justification: Multiple resource area is bounded on the north by Ionia Street, on the West by Walnut Street, on the south by Kalamazoo Avenue, and on the east by the Grand River. These boundaries correspond with those of the study area.

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

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert O. Christensen, Historic Preservation Coordinator  
 organization Michigan History Division date June 2, 1980  
 street & number 208 N. Capitol Ave. telephone 517-373-0510  
 city or town Lansing state Michigan

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:  
 national     state     local *per conversation w/ Bob Christensen 8-26-80 same*

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Martha M. Bixelow  
 title Director, Michigan History Division date 6-1-80

For HCRS use only  
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.  
 Keeper of the National Register [Signature] date 9-17-80  
 Attest: Camille Jane Sims date 9-16-80  
 Chief of Registration Regional Coordinator

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

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Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

Name Downtown Lansing Multiple Resource Area  
State Michigan

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

Knapp, J. W., Company Building

Keeper *Automatically listed*  
Attest 5/21/83

Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

Attest \_\_\_\_\_