

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received OCT 16 1984
date entered NOV 15 1984

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

1. Name

historic N/A
and/or common Historic Resources of the Village of Trempealeau, Wisconsin
(Partial inventory: Historic and Architectural Properties)

2. Location

street & number Various - see continuation pages not for publication
city, town Trempealeau vicinity of
state Wisconsin code 55 county Trempealeau code 121

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership - see continuation pages, and Individual Survey Forms
street & number
city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Trempealeau County Courthouse
street & number 1720 Main St.
city, town Whitehall state Wisconsin 54773

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Trempealeau Intensive Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1980-81 federal state county local
depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin
city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Village of Trempealeau is situated in one of the most scenic areas of the upper Mississippi River Valley. Located in the southwestern portion of the county which bears the same name, the Village of Trempealeau is nestled on a hillside east of the perpendicular limestone formations called the Trempealeau Bluffs. The area takes its name from one limestone bluff which was described by early French explorers of the seventeenth century as being steeped in water--"Trempealeau." The village stretches out on an incline between the river and a table of higher land to the north. Roughly paralleling the river are the Burlington Northern Railroad tracks and then, in ascending order, First through Tenth Streets. Intersecting these, in a somewhat irregular grid, are the major streets that slope toward the river--Main, South, Gray, Jay, King, Sumner, Chase, and Fremont Streets. In addition to these, there are five streets that are only one or two blocks long. Spring, Hastings, and Pine Streets are interrupted by the rugged landscape they encounter to the north (the bluffs).

The principal artery of the village is State Highway 93 which leads into town from the north, following Main Street until it turns east just above the commercial district and follows Third Street out of town. Virtually all of the business establishments front on the two block section of Main Street south of Third Street. Most of the other streets in the village are entirely residential. Trempealeau is not a particularly "dense" town, with both residences and commercial properties sited on spacious lots. The U.S. Corps of Engineers Lock and Dam #6, a boat launch, and a few backwater ponds are located to south of the village, and Perrot State Park is along the Mississippi River to the west. Across the river are the limestone bluffs of Minnesota.

The village underwent a major change in the late 19th century. The original commercial district, settled in the mid-1800s, originally faced the Mississippi, the focus of transportation during that time. Many warehouses and businesses fronted First Street (then Front Street), which extends along the river. In 1888 a major fire destroyed almost all of these commercial structures and the business district was rebuilt in its present location, along Main Street, perpendicular to the river, which was no longer the center of the village's transportation or commercial activities. Since this time, though, the basic layout of the village has remained stable, and since the village has not grown significantly since the turn of the century, little expansion or building infill has occurred over time.

II. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Most of the buildings in Trempealeau were built during the mid to later 1800s, the village's primary development period. Since Trempealeau's population has changed little in the twentieth century (609 in 1900, 743 in 1980), there has been relatively little new construction other than some newer houses on the periphery of the village. Consequently, Trempealeau has a predominantly nineteenth century character.

Most of the village's residences are small, simple structures, of one or two stories, with clapboard or aluminum siding or brick exteriors. The houses usually have simple L or rectangular plans, asphalt shingle roofs, and very simple decoration. In fact, Trempealeau has a notable lack of houses with significant architectural detailing, although some houses have a shape or plan which hints at a particular style.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered NOV 15 1984

Continuation sheet Historic Resources of Item number Page
Trempealeau, Wisconsin 7 1

II. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

There are a few exceptions to this lack of architectural detailing, however. The older section of the Methodist Church, for example, displays Greek Revival details; the residence at 183 E. Fourth St. displays a Queen Anne massing with later Queen Anne details; and the elaborate residence at 581 Third St. is clearly Italianate in design.

The commercial district of Trempealeau also consists of relatively small, simple commercial structures which are sited on larger lots than usually is the case in downtown areas. Because of this, there is no real downtown density of commercial structures. Most of the buildings are two-story rectangular structures with flat roofs sometimes concealed behind false fronts. Most all of the buildings that are not brick have been covered with some form of siding over the original clapboards. Most of the buildings which retain their second story detail have wood, cast iron, or pressed metal cornices decorated with brackets, dentils, or modillions. Two significant exceptions are the more elaborate Victorian commercial style E. J. Hankey Building at 193 Main Street, and the "Sullivan-esque" Citizens State Bank Building at 240 Main Street.

III. ARCHEOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

Several potentially significant prehistoric archeological sites have been identified in the Trempealeau area. However, it is not possible to evaluate these sites without detailed archeological investigations which are not possible at this time. The Melchoir Hotel and Brewery Ruin is considered to be of industrial archeological significance.

IV. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The content of this multiple resource nomination is based on 3 surveys. In 1978, the Historic Preservation Division of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (SHSW) conducted a reconnaissance survey that was updated in 1980. Through these efforts, approximately 23 sites of architectural or historical interest were identified within the corporate limits of the village. The 1978 survey was conducted by graduate students working under the supervision of the Historic Preservation Division of the SHSW. Using the SHSW Survey as a starting point, Pfaller Herbst Associates, Inc. conducted an intensive architectural/historical survey of the village in the latter part of 1980 and in 1981. Bruce M. Kriviskey, AICP, was Project Director and Project Architectural Historian; Diane T. Turner served as Research Assistant; and Richard Zeitlin, Ph.D. was the Project Historian. While conducting the intensive architectural historical survey, the team identified 7 additional structures which merited investigation, bringing the total of buildings researched to 30. Of these 30 buildings, however, only six were felt to be of sufficient architectural significance to be either pivotal within the Main Street Historic District or eligible for individual listing on the National Register. Architectural data was collected in the field and historical information was gathered through tax rolls, atlases, published histories of Trempealeau County, and other manuscripts. (See Major Bibliographical Refs.) In the summer of 1983, SHSW staff conducted another reconnaissance survey to provide as broad a context as possible for the nomination. In the winter of 1984, Carol Lohry Cartwright, history graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, conducted additional historical research and re-evaluated the entire survey effort.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

10-16-84

date entered

NOV 15 1984

Continuation sheet Historic Resources of Trempealeau, Wisconsin

Item number 7

Page 2

V. DESCRIPTION OF MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT - Roughly Main St. between 1st and 3rd Sts.

This district includes the most significant architectural and/or historical commercial buildings in Trempealeau. Clustered together in a two-block area along Main Street north of the Mississippi River, the buildings of the district are relatively well-constructed turn-of-the-century structures which not only possess some significant architectural uniqueness in the pivotal structures, but also possess a continuity of scale and design in the remaining buildings even though they are widely spaced and present little streetscape density. This continuity of design may be explained by the fact that this commercial district was formed primarily after 1888, when a fire devastated the original Trempealeau commercial district along the riverfront. Unfortunately, after the fire, Trempealeau declined economically, and building density in the new Main Street commercial district was never achieved.

Most of the district's buildings are two-story frame or brick structures with flat or gable roofs and simple to elaborate cornices of wood, pressed metal, or other materials. Gable roofed buildings have "boomtown" falsefronts, are frame constructed, and show the most alterations. Brick buildings have the highest integrity overall, as well as the most elaborate architectural details including belt courses, decorative brickwork, parapets, and elaborate cornices. Many first-floor storefront alterations have been done to buildings in the district, including replacing original storefronts with the application of wood, metal, asphalt, or asbestos siding and new openings. Again, the frame buildings have fared worse in this regard than the brick buildings. However, many decorative elements on all the buildings remain, particularly at the second story level.

Despite some loss of integrity, this district maintains its turn of the century charm and character because the buildings, while widely spaced, are clustered in a small two-block area, and because they have many complementary features reminiscent of the period when this district was a stable, if not highly successful, commercial area. This district is also important for the individual distinctiveness and overall integrity of its pivotal buildings.

The district is divided into three types of buildings. Pivotal buildings are the most architecturally elaborate or unique buildings in the district, or the buildings which possess the most integrity. Contributing buildings are the less elaborate structures of the district, but because of their compatibility of design or scale, contribute to the overall character of the district. Non-contributing buildings or portions of buildings are those obvious intrusions into the district's character. Each of these categories will be full explored below.

Pivotal Buildings

The four pivotal buildings in this district were selected because they have the highest level of integrity and/or have the most significant architectural quality in the district. The Edwin Elkins Buildings at 151 Main St. (1895) is an attractive, well-constructed brick building which is decorated by an elaborate cornice. The pressed metal cornice has a central "parapet", pilaster decoration, and a date and masonic emblem inscription. Second-story windows are topped with denticulated

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered NOV 15 1984

Historic Resources of

Continuation sheet Trempealeau, Wisconsin

Item number 7

Page 3

lintels which match a belt course just above. The storefront features what appear to be the original entry doors, transom, and four-pane show windows, two panes each which have had a recent addition of stained glass. The integrity of this building is very good, making it a pivotal structure in the district.

Another building that is classified pivotal because of its high integrity is the W. C. Thomas Building at 201 Main St. (c. 1890). Although of a simpler design than the Elkins Building, this structure is also an attractive, well-constructed brick building with a plain cornice and original storefront. The second-story windows feature segmental arches and stone sills, while the storefront has a central entrance with double doors and a large transom, flanked by two four-paned show windows and two small, thin columns. Both the Elkins Building and the Thomas Building have housed numerous commercial and service activities from their date of construction to the present.

The E. J. Hankey Building at 193 Main St. (1888) is pivotal because it is a good example of a small Queen Anne commercial building. Large for this district, the Hankey Building stands out as a landmark in the district. Its roofline is highlighted with a pedimented parapet rising from the center of the Main Street facade. Another outstanding feature of the building is the oriel corner window which is topped with a turret roof covered with pressed metal "shingles" and accented with a finial. The central second-story window has a border of small, square lights, topped by a sunburst motif tympanum and a round arch. The corner entrance has the original double doors flanked by heavy piers. Piers also flank the storefront windows. A side entrance, somewhat altered by a new garage door, is flanked by less elaborate piers culminating in a parapet. This building also has stone belt courses and sills, round arch windows, and brick corbelling. While the building has suffered some from neglect, it has good integrity, with almost all its original features intact. It is also an elaborate building for a community the size of Trempealeau, making it unique and pivotal to the district. The Hankey Building housed a thriving mercantile establishment from 1888 to the 1920s.

at 240 Main St.

Housing Trempealeau's only bank, the Citizens State Bank Building is a significant architectural element of the Main Street Historic District. Constructed in 1912, the original section of this building is reminiscent of Louis Sullivan's small town bank designs, and was designed by noted Wisconsin Prairie School architect, Percy Dwight Bentley. The 1981 addition to the original building, of white stucco, features a half-arch entry, and is a contemporary but complementary design which mimics the scale and design of the original building. The addition, though, is considered a non-contributing part of the building. The one-story original building, of red brick, appears to be modeled after Sullivan's National Farmer's Bank of Owatonna, Minnesota (1906-08). It is a simple rectangle, framing an arched window crowned by a thin frieze and broad cornice. A painted reveal forms the archivolt and outlines the spandrel. Originally, the arch was glazed with clear glass surrounding the entry and divided by numerous muntins, giving a vertical expression. This has been replaced with broader but still vertically divided bronzed glass, with the entry now transferred to the addition. This building, although somewhat compromised by the recent changes, is an important example of a significant architectural style by an architect known for a number of Prairie School designs in the La Crosse area. As such, it is an important pivotal building in the district.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

Historic Resources of
Trempealeau, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 4

For NPS use only

received

date entered

NOV 15 1984

Contributing Buildings

The six contributing buildings of this district complement both the pivotal buildings and each other. The brick buildings of 155 Main St. and 251 Main St. exhibit the same quality of workmanship as the pivotal brick buildings (Charles Thomas, a local mason responsible for several buildings in Trempealeau, may have built most or all of the brick buildings in the district). While these two buildings have had more alterations than the pivotals, their cornices and other decoration contribute to the overall quality of the district. The frame buildings at 150, 220, 245 Main St. and 4 E. Second St. exhibit a continuity of design and scale in that they are all two-story buildings with gable roofs and falsefronts. They have all suffered from the application of siding over the original clapboards, and have all had extensive first-floor storefront alterations, but do maintain details which contribute to and complement the other buildings in the district. For example, the buildings at 245 Main St. and 4 E. Second St. have decorative wooden cornices, and the building at 220 Main St. features an interesting box bay window. All these contributing buildings have housed a variety of commercial and service activities from their construction date to the present time.

Non-Contributing Buildings

One building, 225 Main St. is an obvious intrusion in the district. It is a completely remodeled one-story structure and its exterior materials and design detract from the other buildings in the district. Also, the addition to the Citizens State Bank Building (240 Main St.) is considered non-contributing because of its recent construction (the addition). The addition at 220 Main St. is also non-contributing because of its size and construction materials, which are inappropriate to the original building and to other buildings in the district.

Of the 11 buildings located within the boundaries of the Main Street Historic District, 4 are pivotal (36%), 6 are contributing (55%), and 1 is non-contributing (9%).

VI. BOUNDARY OF THE MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

The boundary of the Main Street Historic District is formed in the following manner: Commencing at the intersection of the center line of Main Street with the north lot line (as extended) of 251 Main St., thence west along said lot line to the west lot line of said property, thence south along said line (as extended along the west lot lines of intervening properties to the center line of the alley just south of the lot line of 151 Main St., thence east along this center line, crossing Main Street and along the south lot line of 150 Main Street to the east lot line of said property, thence north along the east lot lines of all intervening properties to the center line of the alley just north of the north lot line of 240 Main St., thence west along said line to the center line of Main St, thence north along this center line to the point of beginning. The area thus enclosed is equal to approximately 1.63 acres.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered NOV 15 1984

Historic Resources of
Trempealeau, Wisconsin

Item number 7

Page 5

Continuation sheet

VII. JUSTIFICATION OF THE MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY

The boundary of this district was selected because it includes the most significant architectural and/or historical buildings of the commercial area. The buildings in the district comprise most of the original post-1888 commercial district and have remained so to the present time. Buildings outside of the district boundaries are either residences, newer constructed buildings, or buildings which have no relationship to the historic commercial area.

VIII. INVENTORY OF MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT PROPERTY OWNERS

<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>OWNER</u>	<u>LEGAL DESCRIPTION</u>
150 Main Street	Thomas P. Mikrut Sr. R. 1 Trempealeau, WI 54661	Consolidated Plat, North 41' of Lot 11 & 12 Block 7
151 Main Street	Winston Elkins 401 W. 2nd St. Trempealeau, WI 54661	Consolidated Plat, South 20' Lots 8, 9, Block 6
155 Main Street	Edith Ziegler 155 Main St. Trempealeau, WI 54661	Consolidated Plat, North 20' of South 40' Lots 8 & 9, Block 6
193 Main Street	James Stull Jr. Trempealeau, WI 54661	Consolidated Plat, N 60' Lots 8, 9, less W 10' of Lot 9 in Block 6
4 E. 2nd Street	Esther & Lester Leavitt Trempealeau, WI 54661	Consolidated Plat, North ½ Lots 11 & 12, Block 7
201 Main Street	Carol Bagley 1165 Sassafrass Lane Niles, MI 49120	Consolidated Plat, East 49' of South 50' of Lot 6 and South 50' of Lot 7, Block 11
220 Main Street	Norma Roberts Trempealeau, WI 54661	Consolidated Plat, South 75' of Lots 1 & 2 Block 12
225 Main Street	Robert Beardsley 225 Main Street Trempealeau, WI 54661	Consolidated Plat, South 40' of Lot 10, Block 12
240 Main Street	Citizens State Bank 240 Main Street Trempealeau, WI 54661	Consolidated Plat, North 45' of Lots 1 & 2, Block 12
245 Main Street	David Niedfeldt 245 Main Street Trempealeau, WI 54661	Consolidated Plat, North 50' of Lot 7 and East 40' of North 50' of Lot 6, Block 11
251 Main Street	Roseann Ristow Ristow Insurance 143 Davis St. Galesville, WI 54660	Consolidated Plat, South 40' of Lots 8 & 9, Block 11

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/
<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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Main Street Historic District: 1880-1934

Specific dates	See individual inventory forms also	Builder/Architect	See individual inventory forms also	Industrial Archeology
-----------------------	-------------------------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------------------	------------------------------

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

I. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This nomination consists of one historic district and two individual properties. The Main Street Historic District is significant in the areas of architecture and commerce. Individual properties are significant in the areas of architecture, commerce, and industrial archeology.

A thorough discussion of significance for all resources follows and is structured in the following manner: a brief historical overview is given, followed by a statement of significance for the historic district; then statements of significance are given for each area of significance checked above with each of the resources discussed where appropriate.

II. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Trempealeau village began during the early 1840s as a fur trading center and Mississippi River landing place. At that time it was known as James Reed's Landing, named for a local frontiersman, James Reed. In the early 1850s, new settlers arrived and saw the community as a shipping center for the lumber industry. In 1852 James Reed's Landing was platted and its name changed to Montoville. Speculators platted the future growth of the village and as the surrounding farm lands were settled, village lots became prime speculative territory. In 1856, the community changed its name to Trempealeau, but already the lumber industry was bypassing the village due to the efficiency of new cutting techniques which utilized different shipping routes.¹

The panic of 1857 stunted Trempealeau's growth, but shortly thereafter, the Civil War decade brought the wheat prosperity of Wisconsin to the village. Grain farmers in the area raised record crops of wheat and the demand for flour was high. Flour mills flourished (at least four were located in tiny Trempealeau during the heyday of the wheat era) and the village made good use of its shipping facilities along the Mississippi. Numerous warehouses and businesses arose along the riverfront (now First Street) forming a bustling commercial district.²

In 1871 a railroad line, the La Crosse, Trempealeau and Prescott Railway (later known as the Chicago and Northwestern [C & NW] Railroad) established a rail link in Trempealeau. For a while, it assisted in the growth of Trempealeau as a shipping center for wheat, but when rail links were made to Galesville, the more successful mill in that community became the primary miller of local produce and Trempealeau's mills declined, coinciding with the decline of the wheat crops in Wisconsin. Also, the railroad link helped kill off Trempealeau's shipping industry along the Mississippi, as railroad shipping was more efficient and economical.³

As fast as Trempealeau grew, it declined. On top of the economic blows of the 1870s and 1880s, a devastating fire destroyed the riverfront commercial district in 1888. A new commercial district was built on Main Street, north of the River, but never saw the prosperity the old district had achieved. The community has maintained

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

NOV 15 1984

Historic Resources of
Trempealeau, Wisconsin

Item number 8

Page 1

Continuation sheet

a stable, yet small population since the turn of the century, but, by and large, important commercial, industrial, and service activities have bypassed the village.

The most important development in the area during the twentieth century was the founding of Perrot State Park. Local leading citizen Eben D. Pierce convinced the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and Minnesota philanthropist John A. Latsch to pressure the State of Wisconsin to accept a gift of 910 acres to start the park in 1916. Today, Trempealeau's location along the picturesque Mississippi River and close to a State Park has made it possible to maintain a small, yet stable community with a future catering to the recreational needs of a regional population which increasingly utilizes such natural attractions.

Notes:

¹Merle Curti. The Making of an American Community: A Case Study of Democracy in a Frontier Community (Stanford, 1959), pp. 18, 29; Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge, History of Trempealeau County, Wisconsin (Chicago and Winona, 1917), pp. 72-73; Benjamin F. Heuston, "Original Conditions and Early History of Trempealeau County, Wisconsin," 1980, pp. 158, 200, 209.

²Curti, pp. 230, 244; Curtiss-Wedge, pp. 77-78; Heuston, p. 208; Frederick Merk, Economic History of Wisconsin During the Civil War Decade (Madison, 1916), pp. 15-20.

³Curtiss-Wedge, p. 78; Heuston, p. 159.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

Historic Resources of

Continuation sheet Trempealeau, Wisconsin

Item number 8

Page 2

12

For NPS use only
received
date entered NOV 15 1984

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Main Street Historic District is significant for both commerce and architecture. The buildings in the district form the post-1890 commercial hub of Trempealeau. After the 1888 fire destroyed the Mississippi riverfront commercial district, established in the 1850s, this new district was the focus of commercial activity in Trempealeau. It is significant that commercial activities moved away from the river after the fire, indicating a decline of the river shipping business, once so important to Trempealeau's livelihood. Also, the riverfront buildings emphasized shipping (warehouses) and other river-related activities. The new district was composed mainly of service and retail businesses, another significant change in the community. While the new commercial district along Main Street never reached the success level of the old riverfront district, it did house important commercial and service activities for a small turn-of-the-century Wisconsin community. Two of the most impressive buildings in the district housed two of the more important businesses. The E. J. Hankey Building (193 Main St.) housed a large and successful mercantile business into the 1920s. The Citizens State Bank building housed Trempealeau's only bank (established 1912), an institution which has succeeded until the present time. Because it represents the newer, post-1890 economic era in Trempealeau after the riverfront heyday, the Main Street Historic District is a significant part of the commercial history of the community.

The Main Street Historic District is also architecturally significant. For a small and somewhat spacious group of buildings, there is a continuity of scale and design apparent, particularly in the contributing buildings' relationship to each other. The frame buildings are all two-story with false fronts; the brick buildings are well-constructed, mostly two-story buildings which harmonize with each other, and in scale, with the frame buildings. Most buildings in the district have simple to elaborate cornices, and two of the pivotal brick buildings show high levels of preservation and integrity (Edwin Elkins Building, 151 Main St.; W. C. Thomas Building, 201 Main St.). But the architectural significance of this district does not rest solely with the buildings as a group. Two pivotal buildings are architecturally unique in the community. The E. J. Hankey Building (193 Main St.) is an ornate Queen Anne commercial building which, though neglected of late, possesses much integrity and interesting architectural detailing (ornate parapet, turret window, sunburst tympanum, brick piers, brick corbelling). The Citizens State Bank (original section) is an important local example of Sullivan's bank designs, done by a local master architect, Percy Dwight Bentley. Together, these two outstanding buildings, along with the overall continuity of the district architecturally, makes the Main Street Historic District an interesting example of a turn-of-the-century small commercial area, which has held up remarkably well under the pressure of time and declining economic conditions.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only	
received	
date entered	NOV 15 1984

Continuation sheet	Historic Resources of Trempealeau, Wisconsin	Item number	8	Page	3
--------------------	---	-------------	---	------	---

IV. AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

A. Architecture (581 Third St. (Coman House), Main Street Historic District)

The architecture of the Village of Trempealeau reflects the primary period of growth the community went through in the nineteenth century. The housing stock consists mainly of mid-to-late nineteenth century simple structures with little architectural detail. Some houses suggest the Greek Revival or Italianate form in their plan or shape, and a few residences have Queen Anne details or massing. A notable exception is the Italianate residence at 581 Third St. (c. 1862-1872). Its architectural detailing and scale make it stand out among the less elaborate and smaller residences of the community. But its bracketed eaves, cupola, rectangular form and other details make it the best example of the Italianate style in Trempealeau, and it is also the best example of any residential architectural style in the village.

The Main Street Historic District is significant for architecture as well. Many of the buildings in the district possess a similar scale and complementary design which makes them a good example of a turn-of-the-century Victorian commercial district in a small town which thrived for a time, but never saw the success developers had in mind during that era. But not only does the district exhibit overall Victorian commercial architectural details, there are two outstanding examples of specific building styles unique for a community the size of Trempealeau. The E. J. Hankey Building (1888, 193 Main St.) is an ornate Queen Anne commercial building highlighted with an elaborate pedimented parapet, sunburst tympanum and arch, and corner turret window. While somewhat neglected of late, the building is a Trempealeau landmark and a fine example of this late nineteenth century building style. The Citizens State Bank Building (1912, 240 Main St.) is architecturally unique in the area because it is an example of a local interpretation of the Sullivan commercial style by noted Wisconsin Prairie School architect, Percy Dwight Bentley. The exterior of the original section of this building has been little changed over the years and it is an important local example of a major architectural style by a master architect.

B. Commerce (Main Street Historic District, Melchoir Hotel and Brewery Ruin)

Commercial activity began early in Trempealeau with its location on the Mississippi River. As a shipping center for the lumber and wheat industries during the 1850s and 1860s, Trempealeau experienced an economic boom, and a thriving commercial district grew up along the riverfront. With the coming of the railroad to Trempealeau in 1871, the community again experienced a growth period shipping grain by both river and railroad. By 1890, though, the railroad linkages with La Crosse and Galesville, along with the success of the Galesville flour mill, were significant in Trempealeau's decline, as no new industries or economic activity replaced the shipping and milling industries which were rapidly leaving the village. A massive fire in 1888 destroyed most of Trempealeau's riverfront commercial district and new commercial buildings were built, not along the river, but further up Main Street, leaving the old district undeveloped.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

NOV 15 1984

Continuation sheet Historic Resources of
Trempealeau, Wisconsin Item number 8 Page 4

B. Commerce (continued)

The new buildings along Main Street form the core of the Main Street Historic District and reflect Trempealeau's new role after 1890 as a small commercial center for area farmers, and a tourist center for visitors in the area. The buildings in the district have housed a number of commercial activities since the turn of the century, including a pharmacy, confectionary, furniture factory, repair shop, grocery, as well as other service or recreational enterprises. The Elkins building (1895, 151 Main St.) housed the Masonic Lodge well into the twentieth century; the E. J. Hankey Building (193 Main St.) was a successful general store until the 1920s; and the Citizens State Bank has been in operation since its founding in 1912. The Main Street Historic District includes the only important commercial buildings in Trempealeau, and although currently suffering from some neglect and unsympathetic remodeling attempts, the district retains much of the character and purpose of the turn of the century commercial activity in the village.

One of the individual properties reflects the riverfront commercial era in Trempealeau. The Melchoir Hotel and Brewery Ruins is the last remnant of the thriving riverfront commercial district which existed along the Mississippi River in the mid and late 1800s. Founded in 1857, the Melchoir Hotel (which at that time included a small brewing operation) was part of the old commercial district. During the early 1880s, the brewery aspect of the enterprise expanded, with Melchoir even exporting beer out of the region. By the late 1880s, though, the brewery declined, and the 1888 fire, while not destroying the stone portion of the building, was significant in the decline of the Hotel, as the new business district was built away from the riverfront. Today, the ruins stand as a significant reminder of Trempealeau's heyday as a vital riverfront community from the 1850s to the 1880s.

C. Industrial Archeology (Melchoir Hotel and Brewery Ruins)

The brewing of beer locally was a significant industry in Wisconsin during the late 1800s. The many German and other immigrants both desired the product and had the knowledge to make it. One such person was Jacob Melchoir, who came to Trempealeau from Prussia in the early 1850s, and began a small brewery in a log house left over from the frontier days. In 1857, Melchoir invested in a building which housed both an expanded brewery and a hotel. He built this business along the thriving riverfront commercial district in the village, and the riverfront trade soon made his business a successful one. In fact, the brewery was soon one of the largest businesses in the county. By 1880, the Melchoir Brewery produced 150 barrels of beer annually, and even shipped beer as far away as Minneapolis. But the boom ended almost as rapidly as it began. By the late-1880s, the brewery operation ended, and the 1888 fire put a dent in

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered NOV 15 1984

Continuation sheet Historic Resources of Trempealeau, Wisconsin Item number 8 Page 5

C. Industrial Archeology (continued)

Melchoir's business, as the commercial district was rebuilt away from the river and away from Melchoir. Currently, the site exists as ruins, with only three walls intact, and no interior features remaining.

The ruins are significant, though, because they provide important historical and potential archeological evidence about the brewing industry in Wisconsin in a small community. The existing walls show a building plan, but most importantly, the original brewery caves are extant and in excellent condition. These caves were the storage area for the beer product before the era of refrigeration and show earthen "shelves" where the beer would have been stored, as well as ventilation shafts which were drilled into the sandstone bluffs. Because of its remarkably unvandalized condition (the site is open to anyone passing by), it is a valuable historical and archeological property which, with further investigation and/or excavation, could provide even more valuable insights into the construction and operation of a small nineteenth century brewery in Wisconsin.

V. PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION ACTIVITIES/USE OF SURVEY

The Village of Trempealeau, in cooperation with the County Resource Agent, has begun to use survey data in developing a central business district revitalization strategy as well as other community planning activities. This effort at downtown revitalization will focus on the Main Street Historic District, as described herein, and the fact that the survey has ascribed significance to this area--as well as to other structures in the village--has encouraged the cultivation of a stronger sense of local heritage and pride.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation pages

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property Main Street Historic District: 1.63 acres; all other properties

Quadrangle name Trempealeau on sites of less than 1 acre Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	B	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	D	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
E	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	F	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
G	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	H	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

DIST (next to A, B, C, D)
MARKER (next to E, F)
COMBAT (next to G, H)

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation pages and individual inventory forms.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carol Lohry Cartwright

organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date 15 April 1984

street & number 816 State Street telephone (608) 262-1339

city or town Madison, state Wisconsin

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 [Signature] date Oct. 3, 1984

title DIRECTOR OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION,

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register date 11-15-84

[Signature]
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: See Continuation Sheet for listings date
Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered NOV 15 1984

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 1

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (continued)

Unpublished Materials:

Anderson, Judge A. H. Papers, Trempealeau County Historical Society, housed at Office of County History, Whitehall, Wisconsin.

Arnold, Alexander A. Papers, 43 volumes of diaries, 15 volumes of memos, State Historical Society of Wisconsin Archives and Manuscripts Division, Madison, Wisconsin.

Bersing, Otis S. "The Beginnings of Trempealeau County." Unpublished B.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin (1923).

Heuston, Benjamin F. "Original Conditions and Early History of Trempealeau County, Wisconsin." (1890), State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Madison.

Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Madison, Wisconsin.

Newspaper Files, Trempealeau County Historical Society, Office of County History, Whitehall, Wisconsin.

Prescott, Gerald L. "Yeomen, Entrepreneurs, and Gentry: A Comparative Study of Three Wisconsin Agricultural Organizations, 1873-1893," 2 vols. unpublished Ph. D., University of Wisconsin (1968).

Rusch, Lynn A., and Penman, John T. "Historic Sites Along the Great River Road", Wisconsin Department of Transportation Archaeological Report 7. Madison, Wisconsin (1982).

Sander, Dorris L. "History of School Districts of Trempealeau County," Trempealeau County Historical Society, Office of County History, Whitehall, Wisconsin.

Office of Historic Preservation. "Site Files: Trempealeau County," State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

Sletteland, Oscar B. "The History of Trempealeau County," unpublished B.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin (1918), State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

MAPS

Anon. Map of Trempealeau, Trempealeau County, Wisconsin. N. p., n.d., State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Gillespie, J. L. Assistant Engineer, St. Paul, Minnesota. "Original Three Foot Channel Wing Dam Construction," March 31, 1883, MSS, St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Map File.

Hixson, W. W. Plat Book of Trempealeau County, Wisconsin. Rockford, 1931.

Pierce, Hetti M. Trempealeau Mountain Park, (N.p., 1926).

Mississippi River Commission, Survey of the Mississippi River, made in 1893-1894, J. Bien and Co. Lith, n.p. Chart #166, St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Map File.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 2

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (continued)

- _____ Mississippi River, 1899, Sheet #127, St. Paul District,
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Map File.
- Ogle, George A. Standard Atlas of Trempealeau County. Chicago, 1901.
Sanborn-Perris Map Co. Ltd. Trempealeau, Wisconsin N.Y., 1894
- _____ Trempealeau, Wisconsin. N.Y. and Chicago, 1900.
- _____ Trempealeau, Wisconsin. N.Y. and Chicago, 1903.
- _____ Trempealeau, Wisconsin. N.Y. and Chicago, 1910.
- _____ Trempealeau, Wisconsin. N.Y. and Chicago, 1932.
- Tucker, Milo G. Map of Trempealeau County, Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 1877.
Webb Publishing Co. Atlas and Farm Directory of Trempealeau County.
St. Paul, 1914.
- Wisconsin Highway Commission, Highway Map of Trempealeau County.
N.p., 1912.

PUBLISHED SOURCES

- Bunnel, Lafayette H. Winona and Its Envisions on the Mississippi in
Ancient and Modern Days. Winona, 1897.
- Railroad Commissioner of the State of Wisconsin. Annual Reports.
Madison, Wisconsin 1873-1930.
- Rhodes, Henry. Memoirs of a Merchant. Seattle, 1952.
- Secondary Works--Books
- Bua, Deborah K. and Truax, Margaret M. Trempealeau, Wisconsin A Little
History. Trempealeau County Historical Society, 1978.
- Centennial Executive Committee. Trempealeau 1867-1967 Historical
Album. n.p., n.d.
- Curti, Merle. The Making of an American Community: A Case Study of
Democracy in a Frontier Community. Stanford, 1959.
- Curtiss-Wedge, Franklyn. History of Trempealeau County, Wisconsin.
Chicago and Winona, 1917.
- Edwards, M. J.; Bailey, E. H.; and Geib, W. J. Soil Survey of
Trempealeau County, Wisconsin, Series 1927, no. 35 (U.S.D.A., 1930).
- Fremling, Calvin R.; Gray, Donald V.; and Neilson, Dennis N.
Environmental Impact of Pool Six of the Northern Section of the
Upper Mississippi Valley, Phase III Report. Winona, 1973.
- Gale, George. The Upper Mississippi. Chicago, 1867. Early study
of Upper Mississippi region by founding father of Trempealeau
County.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 3

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (continued)

Gipple, Bert A. A Brief History of Trempealeau County. Galesville, 1948.

Hibbard, Benjamin H. The History of Agriculture in Dane County, Wisconsin. Madison, 1904.

Lewis Publishing Co. Biographical History of La Crosse, Trempealeau, and Buffalo Counties, Wisconsin. Chicago, 1892.

Mather, Cotton; Hart, John F.; and Johnson, Hildegard B. Upper Coulee Country. Prescott, 1975.

Merk, Frederick. Economic History of Wisconsin During the Civil War Decade. Madison, 1916.

Stennett, W. H. Yesterday and Today: History of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway System. Chicago, 1905.

Thompson, John G. The Rise and Decline of the Wheat Growing Industry in Wisconsin. Madison, 1909.

Trempealeau Centennial Committee. Trempealeau 1867-1967 Historical Album. N.p., n.d.

Western Historical Co. History of Northern Wisconsin. Chicago, 1881.

Articles

Carlander, Harriet Bell, "History of Fish and Fishing in the Upper Mississippi River," Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee (1954).

Gates, Paul W., "The Homestead Law in an Incongruous Land System," American Historical Review, vol. 41 (1936), 652-660.

Jensen, Mernill, "The Cession of the Old Northwest," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, vol. 23 (June, 1936), 27-48.

Pierce, Eben D., "Early History of Trempealeau County, Wisconsin," Proceedings of the State Historical Society (1906), 246-255.

_____, "James Allen Reed," Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (1914), 107-117.

Pierce, E. D.; Squier, George H.; and Kellogg, L. P., "Remains of a French Post Near Trempealeau, Wisconsin," Proceedings of the Wisconsin State Historical Society (1915), 111-123.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received 10/16/84
date entered NOV 15 1984

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 1 of 1

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Trempealeau Multiple Resource Area
State Trempealeau County, WISCONSIN

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Coman House

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Shelore Byers 11/15/84

Attest

2. Melchoir Hotel and Brewery
Ruins

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Shelore Byers 11/15/84

Attest

3. Main Street Historic District

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Shelore Byers 11/15/84

Attest

4.

Keeper

Attest

5.

Keeper

Attest

6.

Keeper

Attest

7.

Keeper

Attest

8.

Keeper

Attest

9.

Keeper

Attest

10.

Keeper

Attest