



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

**historic name** South Broadway Historic District  
**other names/site number** N/A

**2. Location**

**street & number** 101-129 (odd only) South Broadway N/A **not for publication**  
**city or town** De Pere N/A **vicinity**  
**state** Wisconsin **code** WI **county** Brown **code** 009 **zip code** 54115

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination \_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets \_ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_ nationally \_ statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official/Title Dec 2, 2009  
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer - Wisconsin

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_ meets \_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( \_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

South Broadway Historic District

Brown

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:)

*Edson H. Beall*

*1-21-10*

*[Signature]*

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as apply)

private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

building(s)  
 district  
 structure  
 site  
 object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

	contributing	noncontributing
	6	1 buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
6		1 total

**Name of related multiple property listing:**  
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources is previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)  
COMMERCE/TRADE/business

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)  
COMMERCE/TRADE/business

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)  
LATE VICTORIAN

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)  
Foundation STONE

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other IRON

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

#### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

#### Period of Significance

1882-1888

#### Significant Dates

N/A

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

LeClair, David

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)



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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

**Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs** Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional Items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

**name/title** Various, see separate listing.

**organization**

**street & number**

**city or town**

**state**

Wisconsin

**date**

**telephone**

**zip code**

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Continuation Sheet

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South Broadway Historic District  
De Pere, Brown County, Wisconsin

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**Description:**

The city of De Pere is divided into east and west portions by the north-south-flowing Fox River. The South Broadway Historic District is located on the east side of this river and it contains the most intact concentration of nineteenth century commercial buildings that are located in the historic downtown commercial district of this portion of the city.<sup>1</sup> The District consists of seven buildings, all of which face west onto the 100 block of the highly important thoroughfare known as Broadway, whose route parallels that of the adjacent Fox River. Of these seven buildings, six are considered to be contributing resources and they were all built between 1882 and 1888 as masonry clad replacements for earlier buildings on the same sites that had been destroyed in a major fire early in 1882. The seventh building is considered to be non-contributing because of its late date of construction.

The District's six contributing buildings range from one to two stories in height, all are rectilinear in plan, all are good, representative examples of the Commercial Vernacular form, and all are clad in brick. As is typical of the older commercial buildings in other Wisconsin cities, most of the original first story storefronts of the District's buildings have been lost to subsequent modernization, but two still retain their original cast iron supporting posts and lintels and two others their historic brick pilaster strips. The upper stories of these facades, however, are all still largely intact and most still retain their original masonry cornices as well. In addition, these buildings all have concrete sidewalks in front of them that are edged with concrete curbs and gutters.

The South Broadway Historic District is part of a larger commercial district that once extended for four blocks along both sides of the 100 and 200 blocks of the north-south-running N. and S. Broadway and for three blocks along both sides of the intersecting east-west-running George Street. This commercial district came into being because the west end of George Street originally ended at the east end of the first bridge that was built across the Fox River in De Pere in 1851. This bridge was the only means of crossing the river for many years thereafter and since George Street intersects with Broadway at this point, a commercial district quickly established itself around this point and it grew along with the rest of the city. It continued to be the principal hub of economic activity on the east side of De Pere throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and much of the early twentieth century as well.

Design, integrity, and density set the buildings in the South Broadway Historic District apart from the other historic period commercial buildings in the downtown area of this portion of the city of De Pere. Many of the other nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings that once flanked the District have now been demolished and many of those that remain have now been either greatly altered or else their

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<sup>1</sup> The population of De Pere in 2000 was 20,559.

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group integrity has been seriously diminished by demolition and by the addition of modern buildings that have replaced demolished historic examples. Consequently, the South Broadway Historic District now constitutes the best remaining intact contiguous group of historic commercial buildings that survives in this portion of De Pere's historic downtown.

**INVENTORY**

The following inventory lists every building in the District along with the names of the original owners, the construction date, the address, and also the resource's contributing ( C ) or non-contributing ( NC ) status. The abbreviations given below for architectural styles are the same abbreviations used by the Wisconsin Historical Society's Division of Historic Preservation. These are as follows:

COM = Commercial Vernacular

CON = Contemporary

C	101-103	S.	Broadway	John Hahn Double Store Building	1882	COM
C	105-107	S.	Broadway	Minnich/Messing Double Store Building	1882	COM
C	109-113	S.	Broadway	John Smith Triple Store Building	1882	COM
C	115-117	S.	Broadway	Vanderweille/Martins Double Store Building	1882	COM
NC	121-123	S.	Broadway	W. P. Call Building/De Pere Federal Savings and Loan	1882/ 1959	CON
C	125-127	S.	Broadway	Robert McGeehan Building	1888	COM
C	129	S.	Broadway	John Hokers Building	1882	COM

What follows are brief descriptions of the District's resources, which are listed in numerical order by address.

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101-103 S. Broadway                      John Hahn Double Store Building                      1882                      C

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The John Hahn Double Store Building is a two-story-tall, rectilinear plan, Commercial Vernacular form building of very simple design that measures 36-feet-wide x 60-feet-deep. The building was constructed between 1882 and 1883, it has stone foundation walls, and the walls that rest on this foundation are fashioned out of cream brick, most of which has now been painted white. The main facade, which faces west onto S. Broadway, is asymmetrical in design and it rises up to a brick parapet that is crowned by a simple corbelled brick cornice.

An early photo taken around 1890 shows that this facade's first story originally featured two unequal-width storefronts that were both enframed by brick pilaster strips.<sup>2</sup> Both of these storefronts had centered, recessed entrances, these were flanked on either side by large four-light display windows placed over paneled bulkheads, and both the entrances and the display windows were held in place by cast-iron posts. Both of these storefronts have now been removed, the entire first story has now been remodeled and refaced with later materials, the original storefronts have been removed, and this story now has modern display windows that have a different design and fenestration pattern than the originals. The original second story of the facade, however, is still largely intact. This story is five-bays-wide and each bay contains a single segmental-arched window opening that originally contained a two-over-two-light double hung window whose upper sash also had a segmental-arched head.<sup>3</sup> These windows have now been replaced with later one-over-one-light double hung wood sash, but the openings themselves, which have corbelled brick heads and dressed stone sills, are still intact.

The Hahn building occupies the southeast corner that was created by the intersection of Broadway and George Street and consequently has an exposed north-facing side elevation as well. The first story of this elevation contains just a single window opening that is located at the far left-hand (east) end of the elevation, while the second story above is five-bays-wide and contains five window openings. All six of these openings are identical to the ones on the second story of the main facade and they also contain later one-over-one-light windows.

This building replaced an earlier double building of the same width owned by Hahn that was destroyed in the April 23, 1882 fire. Hahn's new building was begun less than a month later, it was among the first of the new buildings constructed in the so-called "burnt district," and it was built by David LeClair, a prominent De Pere carpentry contractor. The start of its construction was noted in the local newspaper:

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<sup>2</sup> De Pere Historical Society Collections. Folder No. 310.

<sup>3</sup> Three of these bays are placed above the wider left-hand storefront and two above the less wide right-hand one.

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On Monday last ground was broken for two buildings for John Hahn, one for Mrs. Messing, one for R. Weyenberg and one for Geo. Remmington. They will each be constructed of solid brick and be of uniform length and height. John Hahn's corner store will be 20x60 ft.; his saloon stand 22x60; Mrs. Messing's building 22x60; R. Weyenberg's 23x60; and G. Remmington's 21x60—all two stories high and in style of architecture and finish substantial and comely. D. LeClair is the contractor; the Phelps Brothers the masons. Iron roof and fire proof trimmings.<sup>4</sup>

The wider, left-hand corner store (101) of this building originally contained Hahn's drugstore, while a saloon that Hahn also operated occupied the right-hand store (103).

105-107 S. Broadway                      Minnich/Messing Double Store Building      1882                      C

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This double store building was built at the same time as the Hahn Building next door and by the same persons, and although it is slightly wider, its design is essentially identical to that of its neighbor and it was intended that the two would be seen as a single large four store building. The Minnich/Messing building is also a two-story-tall, rectilinear plans, Commercial Vernacular form building of very simple design and it measures approximately 50-feet-wide x 60-feet-deep. The building was constructed between 1882 and 1883, it has stone foundation walls, and the walls that rest on this foundation are fashioned out of cream brick. The main facade, which faces west onto S. Broadway, is symmetrical in design and it rises up to a brick parapet that is crowned by a simple corbelled brick cornice that is identical to and is a continuation of the one on the Hahn Building next door.

An early photo taken around 1890 shows that this facade's first story originally featured two equal-width storefronts that were both enframed by brick pilaster strips.<sup>5</sup> Both of these storefronts had centered, recessed entrances. These were flanked on either side by large four-light display windows placed over paneled bulkheads and both the entrances and the display windows were held in place by cast-iron posts. In addition, an entrance door opening that served this building's second story was placed between these storefronts and it too was enframed by brick pilaster strips. The pilaster strips that enframed these storefronts are still extant today, but both of the original storefronts have been removed and they have been replaced with modern ones of different design. The original second story

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<sup>4</sup> "Building up the Waste Places." *De Pere News*. May 20, 1882, p. 3. This item is somewhat misleading because not all of the people mentioned were the owners of the buildings that were under construction and not all of these buildings were on the east side of the Broadway.

<sup>5</sup> De Pere Historical Society Collections. Op. Cit.

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of the facade, however, is still largely intact. This story is six-bays-wide and each bay contains a single segmental-arched window opening that originally contained a two-over-two-light double hung window whose upper sash also had a segmental-arched head.<sup>6</sup> These windows have now been replaced with later, but not modern, two-over-two-light double hung wood sash. The openings themselves, which have corbelled brick heads and dressed stone sills, are still intact. The entire second story of this building is enframed on the right by a pilaster strip whose counterpart enframes the left-hand side of the second story of the Hahn Building. Together, these two pilaster strips enframe the entire second story of these two buildings and this helps support the illusion that this is all one large building, which was a common design strategy of that period.

This building replaced an earlier building on the same site owned by Mrs. Messing that was destroyed in the April 23, 1882 fire. Messing's new building was begun less than a month later, it was among the first of the new buildings constructed in the so-called "burnt district," and it was also built by David LeClair. The two stores would be occupied by Mrs. M. Beaver's millinery shop and L. Minnich's tailor shop for many years thereafter.

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109-113 S. Broadway	John Smith Triple Store Building	1882	C
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This triple store building was built at the same time as the Hahn and Minnich/Messing buildings next door. The Smith building is a one-story-tall, rectilinear plan, Commercial Vernacular form building of very simple design and it measures approximately 55-feet-wide x 70-feet-deep. The building was constructed between 1882 and 1883, it has stone foundation walls, and the walls that rest on this foundation are fashioned out of cream brick. The main facade, which faces west onto S. Broadway is almost symmetrical in design and it rises up to a paneled brick parapet that is crowned by a corbelled brick cornice. The way that the façade of this building subtly blends into the facades of the two-story buildings on either side of it is especially noteworthy. Typically, each building in a row of buildings such as these would have clear edges that announced where one building ended and the next one began. Here, however, there are no seams demarcating where the edge of one building ends and the next one begins. Instead, the brickwork of the pilaster strips that enframe the edges of the two two-story buildings on either side of this one blend continuously into the façade of the Smith building, something that was only possible because all of these buildings were under construction at the same time and utilized the same cream brick cladding.

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<sup>6</sup> Three of these bays are placed above the left-hand storefront and three above the right-hand one.

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An early photo taken around 1890 shows that this facade originally featured three almost equal-width storefronts that were each enframed by brick pilaster strips.<sup>7</sup> All three of these storefronts had centered, recessed entrances, these were flanked on either side by large four-light display windows placed over paneled bulkheads, and both the entrances and the display windows were held in place by cast-iron posts. The original pilaster strips that enframed the left-hand storefront are still extant today, but the original storefront has now been removed and has been replaced with a modern one of different design. The other two storefronts and their enframing pilaster strips, however, have now been removed and they have been combined into a single storefront that is filled with modern elements and which has a contemporary design.

This building replaced three earlier buildings that were destroyed in the April 23, 1882 fire. The start of its construction was noted in the local newspaper:

Messrs. Merrill & Smith have decided to build two solid brick stores with iron roof and iron trimmings. They have not as yet, however, determined whether the building shall be two stories high or one story. The dimensions of the buildings are to be: one 18x70 feet, the other, 15x70. They expect to commence building operations inside of a week or ten days.<sup>8</sup>

By the time construction started, the decision to make the building one-story-tall instead of two had been made and a third store had been added as well. The 1884 Sanborn-Perris map shows that the first of these stores (109) was vacant in that year but the other two were occupied by a toy store and restaurant (111) and the third by an insurance office (113).

115-117 S. Broadway      Vanderweille/Martins Double Store Building      1882      C

This double store building was built at the same time as the buildings already described and its design is essentially identical to that of its two-story neighbors to the north. The Vanderweille/Martins building is also a two-story-tall, rectilinear plan, Commercial Vernacular form building of very simple design and it measures 43-feet-wide x 60-feet-deep. The building was constructed between 1882 and 1883, it has stone foundation walls, and the walls that rest on this foundation are fashioned out of cream brick. The main facade, which faces west onto S. Broadway, was originally symmetrical in design and it rises up to a brick parapet that is ornamented with a narrow band of dogtooth-coursed brick, this being the only real difference between it and the other two neighboring two-story buildings.

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<sup>7</sup> De Pere Historical Society Collections. Folder No. 310. In reality, the left-hand (north) storefront is the widest of the three, the middle one is slightly less wide, and the right-hand one is less wide still. All three, however, had the same design.

<sup>8</sup> "Building up the Waste Places." *De Pere News*. May 20, 1882, p. 3.

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The façade is crowned by a simple corbelled brick cornice that is identical to the ones on the Hahn Building and the Minnich/Messing Building next door.

An early photo taken around 1890 shows that this facade's first story originally featured two equal-width storefronts that were both enframed by brick pilaster strips.<sup>9</sup> Both of these storefronts had centered, recessed entrances. These were flanked on either side by large four-light display windows placed over paneled bulkheads, and both the entrances and the display windows were held in place by cast-iron posts. In addition, an entrance door opening that served this building's second story was placed between these storefronts and it too was enframed by brick pilaster strips. The outer pilaster strips that enframed these storefronts are still extant today, but both of the original storefronts have now been removed and they have been replaced with modern ones of different design. The original second story of the facade, however, is still largely intact. This story is six-bays-wide and each bay contains a single segmental-arched window opening that originally contained a two-over-two-light double hung window whose upper sash also had a segmental-arched head.<sup>10</sup> These windows have now been replaced with modern one-over-one-light double hung sash, but the openings themselves, which have corbelled brick heads and dressed stone sills, are still intact. The entire second story of this building is enframed by simple pilaster strips that are located on both sides and whose downward continuations originally enframed the first story storefronts as well.

This building also replaced earlier buildings on the same site that were destroyed in the April 23, 1882 fire. The acquisition of the site and the start of its construction were noted in the local newspaper:

The building boom on Broadway continues with increasing activity. ... J. Vanderweille and Arnold Martin have secured of C. R. Merrill the forty-three-foot lot whereon stood the old Barrows block and will begin work at once on two new stores.<sup>11</sup>

The 1884 Sanborn-Perris map shows that the first of these stores (115) was occupied by a grocery and china store, and the other, by a saloon (117).

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<sup>9</sup> De Pere Historical Society Collections. Op. Cit.

<sup>10</sup> Three of these bays are placed above the left-hand storefront and three above the right-hand one.

<sup>11</sup> "The Building Boom." *De Pere News*. June 17, 1882, p. 3.

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121-123 S. Broadway W. P. Call Building/De Pere Federal Savings and Loan 1882/1959 NC

Historic photos show that as originally built, this was a one-story-tall, cream brick-clad triple store building that was identical to the John Smith Triple Store Building described earlier.<sup>12</sup> In the 1920s, however, the two northernmost stores of the original building were either drastically remodeled or were demolished and rebuilt to house the Majestic Theater. The theater showed motion pictures and appears to have been a mock Tudor Revival style building. By this time the facade of the southernmost of the three stores had been remodeled and modernized. In 1959, the former Majestic Theater was demolished and was replaced by a two-story Contemporary Style building that originally housed the De Pere Savings & Loan (119-121).<sup>13</sup> This building retains much of its original 1959 appearance today but it lies well outside the period of significance of the District and it is considered to be a non-contributing resource, as is the now greatly modified and almost unrecognizable third store building (123), which was originally part of the Call Building but was later converted into a two-story building.

The Call Building also replaced earlier buildings on the same site that were destroyed in the April 23, 1882 fire. The acquisition of the site and the start of construction were also noted in the local newspaper:

The building boom on Broadway continues with increasing activity. ... W. P. Call is preparing to build three stores instead of two on his lots.<sup>14</sup>

By November, the building was in readiness.

W. P. Call's new building is about completed. It comprises three business stands. The two to the south will be occupied by A. Barrett, one as a saloon and the other as a restaurant. It is rumored that the post-office is to be removed to the other stand, but Mr. Call knows nothing of such a proceeding.<sup>15</sup>

The 1884 Sanborn-Perris map, however, shows that the first of these stores (119) was occupied by a furniture and cabinet shop, the middle store was vacant (121), and the third was occupied by a restaurant (123).

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<sup>12</sup> De Pere Historical Society Collections. Op. Cit.

<sup>13</sup> City of De Pere Building Permits. City of De Pere Building Inspection Unit.

<sup>14</sup> "The Building Boom." *De Pere News*. June 17, 1882, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *De Pere News*. November 4, 1882, p. 3.

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125-127 S. Broadway                      Robert McGeehan Building                      1888                      C

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The Robert McGeehan Building is a very well restored, two-story-tall, rectilinear plan Commercial Vernacular form building that measures 36-feet-wide x 120-feet-deep. The building was constructed in 1888, it has stone foundation walls, and the side and rear walls that rest on this foundation are fashioned out of cream brick. The main facade, which faces west onto S. Broadway, is asymmetrical in design and it rises up to a tall brick parapet that is crowned by a simple corbelled brick cornice. No good historic photos showing the original appearance of the first story of this façade have been found, but other views suggest that the design of this story has changed more than once over the building's lifetime. Its present appearance contains mostly new elements, but they have been designed in a way that carefully respects the historic appearance of the building. The first story is divided into six bays. The left-hand bay contains the recessed entrance to the building, which consists of a one-light entrance door that has an equally tall one-light transom above it. The second bay from the left consists of a large four-light display window that is placed above a shallow paneled bulkhead. This window is enframed by a fluted cast iron post to its left and a cream brick pilaster strip to its right. The third bay from the left is half the width of the second bay and it is enframed by cream brick pilaster strips on both sides, while the fourth, fifth and sixth bays from the left also each contain large four-light display windows that are enframed by fluted cast iron posts. This entire story is then crowned with its original cast iron lintel, which is decorated with equally spaced cast iron rosettes.

The second story of this façade is also six-bays-wide and it is notable for its polychromatic use of red and cream brick. The principal wall surface of this story are clad in red brick with cream brick being used both as an accent and to delineate the bays. Each of these six bays contains a single segmental-arched window opening that has a multi-colored corbelled brick head and these openings now contain modern one-over-one-light double hung windows that are close approximations of the original one-over-one-light windows. Each of these bays is also enframed on both sides by cream brick pilaster strips that extend upward to the building's cornice, which is also comprised of alternating elements of red and cream brick that produce a decorative geometric effect.

This building was constructed in 1888 for R. J. McGeehan, whose agricultural implement business located on this block had been burned out by the 1882 fire. Following that fire, McGeehan moved his business to the 100 block of N. Broadway, where a second fire that occurred on Friday, April 13, 1888 burned him out once again.<sup>16</sup> Undaunted, McGeehan rebuilt once more on the only remaining vacant lot in the 100 block of S. Broadway, and this time his luck held.

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<sup>16</sup> "Big Fire." *De Pere News*. April 14, 1888, p. 1.

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129 S. Broadway                      John Hokers Building                      1882                      C

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The John Hokers Building is a two-story-tall, rectilinear plan, Commercial Vernacular form building that measures 22-feet-wide x 60-feet-deep. The building was constructed in 1882, it has stone foundation walls, and the walls that rest on this foundation are fashioned out of cream brick.

The main facade, which faces west onto S. Broadway, is nearly symmetrical in design, and it rises up to a tall brick parapet that is crowned by a simple corbelled brick cornice that is now covered over with a panel that is clad in vertical aluminum siding. No good historic photos showing the original appearance of the first story of this façade have been found. While the original entrance doors and display windows have been replaced with modern elements, the original supporting framework of this story is still intact. This framework shows that the left-hand (north) three-quarters of this story originally consisted of a storefront that was flanked on either side by brick-clad pilasters and consisted of a deeply recessed and centered entrance that was flanked on both sides by equal-width display windows, all of which were supported by fluted cast iron supporting posts. The remaining one-quarter of this story was located to the right (south) of the storefront and it contained the entrance to the second story of the building and it was also flanked by brick-clad pilaster strips. Today, all of this story's original doors and display windows have been replaced by modern elements, but the original pilasters and the cast iron supporting columns are all still intact.

The second story of this facade is three-bays-wide and it is symmetrical in design and it is clad in cream brick but also uses red brick as occasional accents. This story is flanked on both sides by thin cream brick pilaster strips and each of the three bays contains a single segmental-arched window opening that originally contained a two-over-two-light double hung window whose upper sash also had a segmental-arched head. These windows have now been replaced with smaller, modern one-over-one-light double hung metal-clad sash, but the openings themselves, which have molded stone sills and corbelled brick heads made out of both red and cream bricks, are still intact. A string course of red brick is located above these windows at the base of the parapet that crowns the façade.

This building also replaced an earlier building on the same site that was destroyed in the April 23, 1882 fire. The acquisition of the site and the start of construction were also noted in the local newspaper.

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The building boom on Broadway continues with increasing activity. ... J. Hokers has purchased the Boykin's lot and is preparing to build thereon.<sup>17</sup>

The 1884 Sanborn-Perris map shows that the first story of this building was occupied by a saloon in that year.

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<sup>17</sup> "The Building Boom." *De Pere News*. June 17, 1882, p. 3.

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**Significance:**

The South Broadway Historic District is a small, architecturally significant commercial district that is located in the historic core of that portion of the city of De Pere that is situated on the east side of the Fox River. The District was first identified by the De Pere Intensive Architectural Survey, which was undertaken in 2000-2001, as a potential historic district having local significance under National Register (NR) Criterion C (Architecture). It is located two blocks south of the North Broadway Street Historic District, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1983.<sup>18</sup> Research was undertaken to assess the potential for nominating the District to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) utilizing the NR significance area of Architecture, a theme that is also identified in the State of Wisconsin's *Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP)*.<sup>19</sup> This research centered on evaluating the resources within the District utilizing the Commercial Vernacular form subsection of the Architectural Styles study unit of the CRMP. The results of this research are detailed below and show that the South Broadway Historic District is locally significant under NR Criterion C as an architecturally significant collection of historic commercial buildings that together constitute a well-defined and visually distinct geographic and historic entity. The period of significance is 1882-1888, encompassing the construction dates of the contributing buildings.

The South Broadway Historic District contains seven adjacent historic commercial buildings located on the east side of Broadway, a north-south-running thoroughfare that is De Pere's principal historic commercial thoroughfare.<sup>20</sup> The District is comprised of six contributing resources and one non-contributing one and it contains the largest intact collection of historic commercial buildings to be found within the corporate boundaries of the eastern side of the city of De Pere. All of the contributing buildings in the District were built between 1882 and 1888 and are good, typical examples of the Commercial Vernacular Form whose designs were probably supplied by those who built them. The District is believed to be of architectural significance (Criterion C) because it contains the only intact historic streetscape of Late Victorian period commercial buildings that remains in the historic business center of the eastern side of the city of De Pere. The district gains added interest in that the buildings were all built within a relatively short period of time, resulting in a unique visual cohesion. Individually, the buildings in the District are good representative examples of Commercial Vernacular form designs, but they have a collective significance that is even greater than the merit they possess individually. While

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<sup>18</sup> Heggland, Timothy F. *City of De Pere, Brown County, Wisconsin: Intensive Survey Report*. [De Pere, Wis.: City of De Pere, 2001.] Copy on file at the Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.

<sup>19</sup> Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.) *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*. Madison: Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1989, Vol. 2, (Architecture) p. 3-10.

<sup>20</sup> Broadway is divided into North and South portions and this division begins at its intersection with the east-west-running George St., which is the cross street that is located at the north end of the District.

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other historic 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings are scattered throughout the downtown area of the east side of the city, many have been greatly altered by modernization and others are found either in isolation or in streetscapes that have been partially depleted by demolition and modernization. Consequently, the buildings in the District now constitute the sole remaining intact concentration of historic commercial buildings on the east side of De Pere and since intact surviving streetscapes of such buildings are rapidly nearing extinction in the changing economic and social reality that characterizes the downtowns of Wisconsin's cities today, the preservation of the District's buildings is essential to the future of this portion of De Pere's historic downtown.

**History:**

A detailed history of the city of De Pere and its built resources is embodied in the De Pere intensive survey report, printed in 2001. Consequently, the historic context that follows deals primarily with the history of the District itself and with the immediate surrounding area.

The city of De Pere has the distinction of being one of the oldest points of European-American settlement in Wisconsin. The first European to see it was, in all probability, Jean Nicolet in 1634, who claimed the surrounding territory for France. In time, Nicolet was followed by two Jesuit missionaries, Fathers Allouez and Andre, who established a mission at the first rapids of the Fox River in 1670. In 1671 the fathers erected a chapel and residence on the east shore of the river, which became their headquarters, and these were the first buildings that were constructed on the future site of today's city. In 1675 this chapel burned and several new, more substantial log structures, including a church, were built in its place. This mission, known as St. Francis Xavier Mission at Rapids des Peres, lasted for almost twelve years but was burned by the Indians in 1687 and the subsequent history of this place was then subsumed into the larger history of the French and English contests for supremacy in the region followed by the English and American ones.<sup>21</sup>

It was not until the creation of the military road system in 1832 in what was soon to become the Territory of Wisconsin that interest in the possibilities of utilizing the rapids at De Pere began to stir interest. The construction of the first of these roads from Fort Howard on the Fox River at Green Bay to Fort Crawford on the Mississippi River at Prairie Du Chien, established the first road across the territory and brought wagon and foot traffic up and down the river and past the future site of De Pere. But this opening up of the region was of only limited value to any economically significant movement

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<sup>21</sup> Maes, Matthew J. *The History of Brown County and De Pere, Wisconsin*. [De Pere, Wis.: St. Norbert College, 1975], *Brown County Democrat* article on April 3, 1914, p. 9 and April 10, 1914, p. 9. (Publication includes articles ... originally published in the *Brown County Democrat*.)

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of goods, and hopes fastened instead on improving the Fox River, which was navigable for much of its length but needed to be linked with the Wisconsin River in order to become a link between the Mississippi and the Great Lakes.

Thus, like most other early Wisconsin communities, the city of De Pere owes its existence to its proximity to water, which provided the state's first settlers with transportation routes, a reliable and easily accessible source of water for drinking, and the only readily available means of generating power for industrial purposes before steam power became wide spread. De Pere is situated on both banks of the Fox River at a point located some five miles south of the mouth of the river, which empties into Green Bay and Lake Michigan. Because there were considerable rapids at this location, further navigation upstream was impossible in the days before a lock system and canals were developed. While work was commencing elsewhere on this Fox-Wisconsin rivers waterway, others were laying claim to the heavily forested land that surrounded the site of what was to become De Pere.

In 1835, the De Pere Hydraulic Co. was formed and one of its first acts was to purchase a 100 acre plat of land on the east bank of the river abutting the rapids. A portion of this land was then platted into lots, which was called the Plat of the Town of De Pere, a contraction of the French "Des Peres." This plat, which is the original plat of that portion of today's city of De Pere that lies on the east side of the river, is bounded roughly by John Street to the north, Ontario Street to the east, Lewis Street to the south, and the Fox River to the west.

The following year the company started construction of a dam above the rapids that could be used to tap the water power potential of the river. When the dam was completed in 1837, the future growth of the city seemed assured. This growth did not materialize immediately, however, because the company lacked the resources to harness the water power potential and the situation was exacerbated when the dam washed out in 1847. It was only when a new dam was built in the following year that real efforts were made to harness the resulting water power for industrial purposes and it is from this date that the real growth of the future city begins.

By 1850, the population of the village had grown to 500 and another event of enormous importance for inhabitants on both sides of the river took place in the same year. This was the beginning of the construction of the first bridge across the river just below the dam. This was a toll bridge and it was lightly constructed but it was still the first bridge and it provided a vital transportation link whose importance would continue to grow in the years to come.

The earliest commercial activity that took place within and around what today is the city of De Pere was conducted by merchants catering to traffic moving up and down the old Military Roads on the east and

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west banks of the Fox River. It was not until the first dam was built across the rapids at De Pere in 1836-37, and especially after the first bridge connecting the east and west sides of the river was built across the top of the dam in 1850-1851, that commercial activity in De Pere really began in earnest. Because this bridge and its successors were the only ones in the entire area that crossed the river for a number of years thereafter, land near the bridge site on both sides of the river quickly evolved into hubs of both industrial and retail commercial activity.

In 1852, Chicagoan Robert Ritchie and his brother-in-law, Andrew Reid, built a saw mill (non-extant) at the west end of the bridge and three years later Capt. Elias Sorenson started a shipyard (non-extant) on the west bank of the river north of the bridge. The following year, a saw mill and agricultural implement factory (non-extant) was started by W. O. Kingsley just south of the bridge on the east bank of the river. The really big news in 1856, however, was the arrival of the first ship to make the voyage up the newly completed lock and canal system of the Fox/Wisconsin. This was the "Aquila," which had begun its journey in Pittsburgh and journeyed down the Ohio, then up the Mississippi to the Wisconsin and on up to Portage, Wisconsin, and then up the Upper and Lower Fox to De Pere and Green Bay.<sup>22</sup>

The following year, Mrs. A. B. Williams reported that De Pere had improved since she had left in 1850. "The population all told was about 400. Wilcox & Wager had a flouring mill. There were two saw mills, one owned by Ritchie and Reid and the other by Frank Thompson; four stores kept by Dominicus Jordan, C. R. Merrill, Mr. Kelsley and Mr. Wager, respectively."<sup>23</sup> Also in 1857, De Pere (on the east bank) was incorporated as the Village of De Pere.

Nearly all of the surviving historic buildings that are associated with the history of commerce on both sides of the river in De Pere date from the late 1870s onward and almost all of these buildings are now and were historically located in three distinct areas of present day De Pere that together form the historic downtown core of today's city. Two of these areas are located at the east and west ends of today's Claude Allouez Bridge, which is the modern successor to the first bridge that linked the two sides of the river. The third is located along the first five westernmost blocks of George Street, which extends eastward from the east end of the bridge. This downtown core grew up where it did because of its location at the ends of the bridges that have spanned the Fox River at this point and which unite the communities of West De Pere on the west bank of the river and De Pere on the east bank. Proximity to the Fox River was the critical factor in the establishment of both of these communities. The mouth of the Fox River empties into Green Bay and Lake Michigan and De Pere is located five miles south of

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<sup>22</sup> Maes, Matthew J. *The History of Brown County and De Pere, Wisconsin*. [De Pere, Wis.: St. Norbert College, 1975], *Brown County Democrat* article on July 10, 1914, p. 10. (Publication includes articles ... originally published in the *Brown County Democrat*.)

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, *Brown County Democrat* article on February 12, 1915, p. 7.

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this mouth at a place on the river where sizable rapids made further navigation upstream impossible in the early 1800s, which was also a time when shipping on nearby Lake Michigan was the only reliable means of transporting large quantities of goods and large numbers of people to and from this area in the period before adequate overland roads and later, railroads, were developed. Consequently, that portion of the river between these rapids and Lake Michigan gradually developed into an important Great Lakes port. Even more important was the fact that the rapids of the Fox River at De Pere were the most important potential source of water power in the area in the 1840s-1860s and were thus the logical place for the construction of a dam and of saw mills and flour and grist mills and other industries that could make use of the power that could be generated by mechanically harnessing the now somewhat regulated flow of the river.

The combination of transportation access and readily available water power made the rapidly growing communities on both sides of the former rapids economically viable. This combination also resulted in commercial districts being developed at both ends of the bridge and along the main roads that extended out of these two areas and into outlying areas that were in need of the resources that De Pere was increasingly able to supply. The most important of these roads on the east bank of the river was Broadway. What made this particular north-south-running road important was the fact that it was already the principal road running north to Green Bay from points to the south on that side of the river. Thus, Broadway was already an important local and regional thoroughfare when the first bridge was built at De Pere and the place where Broadway connected with the east end of the east-west-running bridge thus became a natural place for commerce to develop. This new commercial development was not limited just to Broadway. Commercial development also began to extend eastward from Broadway along both sides of the east-west-running George Street because the western terminus of George Street was the east end of the bridge. Consequently, the point of intersection of George Street with the already existing north-south-running Broadway became the focal point for commercial activity on the east bank of the river.

Similar development occurred at the west end of the bridge as well and for identical reasons. Here too, several already existing and newly created roads quickly came to focus on the area near the end of the new bridge. The most immediately important of these roads was the east-west-running Main Ave. What made this particular thoroughfare important was the fact that its eastern terminus was the west end of the bridge. Consequently, commercial development grew around this point as well, and along the three-block length of Main Ave. In 1861, a new bridge was built across the Fox by the Village of De Pere and by the Town of Lawrence on the west side of the river to replace the original one. In the following year an event of even greater importance occurred when the tracks of the Chicago & NorthWestern Railroad reached West De Pere on their way up the west bank of the river to Fort Howard. The importance of this event cannot be overestimated because by this time railroads were

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rapidly eroding the importance and advantages of river and lake transportation and a position on a rail line was imperative for a community that hoped to grow and prosper. Not surprisingly, the place where these tracks crossed Main Ave. further anchored the commercial district that was growing up along Main Ave.

The period from the end of the Civil War in 1865 until the financial panic of 1873 was a boom period for the communities on both sides of the river. The census of 1870 showed that the population of De Pere on the east side of the river had risen to 2800 and on the west side to 875. As a consequence, the community on the west side petitioned to be incorporated as the Village of West De Pere, which was approved in that same year. In 1871, the Village of De Pere on the east side received a railroad of its own when the tracks of the Milwaukee Northern Railroad (later the Milwaukee Road) reached the community on their way up to Green Bay, and as had happened on the west side, property owners on the east side responded with a flurry of platting activity of their own. A Bird's Eye View of the two villages, published in 1871, shows that the settled part of the Village of De Pere on the east side of the river was then bounded by the river to the west, Fulton St. to the north, Huron Street to the east, and Chicago Street to the south, while the settled portion of West De Pere was bounded by the river on the east and north, the C. & NW RR tracks on the west, and Butler Street to the south. Both communities had public schools, there were six churches (Irish, French, and German Catholic, Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian), three hotels (California House, National House, and Village House), and three large industries (De Pere Iron Works, Fox River Iron Co., and First National Iron Co.).<sup>24</sup>

By 1875, the two villages of De Pere and West De Pere had evolved into the principal trading center of the area around it and their two well-established business cores were both surrounded by residential plats. The architectural styles found in De Pere in the mid-1870s were typical of other communities of the day. Older commercial buildings tended to be built in the Greek Revival style or were vernacular expressions of it and were mostly built of wood, as were the village's first houses. By the 1860s, some of De Pere's older commercial buildings began to be replaced by larger brick examples whose designs were influenced by the newly fashionable Italianate style.

In 1876, the following description of De Pere was contained in an advertisement for land that was owned by the De Pere Co.:

The waterpower is made by the first dam on the Fox River of the Green Bay & Mississippi Canal Company. Depere [*sic*] and West Depere [*sic*] lie on opposite sides of the river, and are connected

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<sup>24</sup> *Bird's Eye View of De Pere, Wisconsin*. Madison: J. J. Stoner, publisher, 1871.

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by a commodious bridge of fifteen hundred feet in length. Their population numbers over four thousand people. There are eight churches, three public and one private school; four furnaces for smelting iron ore; one extensive railroad car manufactory and iron works; one machine shop; three flour mills; two large wooden ware factories; three shingle mills; four saw mills; two sash and door factories; one stave factory; one hub and spoke factory; five wagon ships; seven smitheries; a steam forge and various other manufactories. The Milwaukee and Northern Railroad runs on the river bank through Depere, [sic] and the Chicago and Northwestern Depot is at West Depere [sic]. The Goodrich line of steamers make regular trips between Depere [sic] and Chicago, and the Buffalo line takes freight from our wharves to Buffalo and intermediate ports.<sup>25</sup>

And yet, larger forces were then in operation that would have a substantial affect on the future of the two villages. By 1880, the combined populations of the nearby twin cities of Green Bay and Fort Howard (also located on the east and west sides of the Fox River) was 10,500, more than double the 3824 of the two De Peres, and this difference in relative size has continued until the present day. The reasons for this difference in size and rate of growth reflected many things, of course, and among them was the simple fact that the initial advantages that had led to the creation and subsequent growth of De Pere had slowly dwindled. By 1880, De Pere's water power advantage was gradually being offset by the construction of new coal-fired steam boilers. Green Bay also reaped the advantage of being the final destination point of all the land and water transportation routes that passed through De Pere. In addition, Green Bay's position at the mouth of the Fox River gave it advantages as a port that could not be matched by a site further upstream. As a consequence, the rate of De Pere's population growth gradually began to level off. Nevertheless, the growth that had occurred up to this point was sufficient to ensure that the commercial cores that had been established in the two villages would survive and would continue to grow and evolve.

The first commercial buildings built in what would become the South Broadway Historic District had been erected as soon as the first bridge was built over the river and they were almost all small one and occasionally two-story wood frame buildings. Gradually, a few brick buildings joined these wood frame pioneers and by 1880 both the east and west sides of the 100 block of South Broadway were almost completely lined with one, two and three-story commercial buildings. All of this was changed in a single night on April 23, 1882 when an enormous fire destroyed all of the buildings fronting on both sides of the 100 and 200 blocks of South Broadway and almost all of the rest of the buildings in this four-block area as well.

The most devastating fire ever visited upon the Village of De Pere, on Sunday wiped out the largest half of the business portion of the place. Beginning at 3 a. m., in three hours, thirty-six

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<sup>25</sup> Maes. Op. Cit., March 5, 1915, p. 10.

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buildings, exclusive of warehouses, barns, and sheds, were leveled to the ground, involving a total loss of not less than \$115,000. The fire broke out in the rear of the Messing saloon, and, being a mere tinder-box, under the influence of a driving wind from the northeast, the fire rapidly spread to the adjacent buildings, swept south and west, and only stopped when there was no longer anything for it to feed on. ... The fire engine companies were early at the scene of the fire and the steamers worked admirably, but so intense was the heat, suffocating the smoke, and fierce the gale, little resistance could be made to the march of the flames, till every business house and building except the residences of E. W. Persons and Geo. Wood in the blocks on either side of Broadway south of George street were swept away.<sup>26</sup>

One of the consequences of this fire was that the Village council immediately created a fire district along Broadway that specified that all new construction within the district boundaries had to be of masonry or brick construction. Thus, when the rebuilding of "the burned district," as the area was called, began, the previous mixture of wood-clad and brick-clad commercial buildings that had characterized the South Broadway streetscape before was replaced by a streetscape having a much more uniform brick-clad appearance. Not surprisingly, work on the new buildings began almost immediately after the fire, which was a matter of no small importance to those who lived and shopped on the east side of the river.

The work of building up the waste places occasioned by the late fire is now fairly inaugurated. On Monday last ground was broken for two buildings for John Hahn, one for Mrs. T. Messing, one for R. Weyenberg and one for Geo. Remington. They will be constructed of solid brick and be of uniform length and height. ... This is a commendable start-off in the work of re-building the burnt district. It is hardly doubted others will join the building gang, just as soon as mechanics can be secured. At present there appears to be quite a scarcity of competent mechanics and contractors. This is not strange since the building boom in the mining country this spring is beyond all precedent, and mechanics consequently float that way.<sup>27</sup>

Another article in the local newspaper that appeared a month later showed that the changes that were occurring in the burned district were meeting with general approval.

The building boom on Broadway continues with increasing activity. ... Thus it is evident that before the building season closes, the burnt district will have pretty nearly disappeared from view, and where once stood a lot of tinder boxes which were a menace to our permanent well being and prosperity will be reared, if not stately, certainly comely and substantial brick buildings built as

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<sup>26</sup> "Devastating Fire." *De Pere News*. April 29, 1882, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> "Building up the Waste Places." *De Pere News*. May 20, 1882, p. 3.

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near fire-proof as means and the ingenuity of man can make them. And so what was a few weeks since regarded as little less than a calamity will inure to our lasting good and betterment.<sup>28</sup>

By 1884, the Sanborn-Perris map of De Pere published in that year showed that the east side of the 100 block of S. Broadway had been almost completely rebuilt. Six new buildings that housed 14 stores and other commercial establishments occupied all but two of the lots on this block, which is the location of the South Broadway Historic District, and one of these empty lots would subsequently be occupied by the McGeehan Building, which was built in 1888. The west side of the same block, however, could claim only four new buildings housing five commercial establishments by this time and it would be several more years before this side of the 100 block was also completely rebuilt.

The fire of 1882 would not be the last one that would reshape De Pere in the 1880s. For instance, nearly 30 houses located on blocks just north of the South Broadway Historic District were destroyed by a major fire on August 9, 1886. This fire began on the roof of a barn on George St. and by the time it was finally extinguished, it had destroyed the Presbyterian Church and most of the other houses in the same block and on blocks located as far east as N. Huron St., as far west as N. Michigan Street, and as far north as Fulton Street; six blocks in total.<sup>29</sup> Positive events that were of importance to the future of the communities on both sides of the river also happened in the 1880s as well. In 1883, the two villages were incorporated as the city of De Pere (east side) and the city of Nicolet (west side). Nicolet subsequently changed its name back to West De Pere in 1887 and the two cities finally agreed to merge on August 7, 1889, and became known as the City of De Pere.

By 1900, De Pere's population had dropped slightly to 4038, and the city was entering a more mature phase of its history. Changes in the lumber industry that had been of such importance to De Pere were dictating that certain kinds of manufacturing that had once been done in factories like those in De Pere could now be done more efficiently in plants located nearer to the forests themselves, forests that had largely been depleted in Brown County. In addition, other types of manufacturing that had once been done in the city were now being done by much larger firms with regional and even national markets. As a result, industrial production was slowly beginning to lose its importance in the economic life of the city.

There were also more positive signs of the increasing maturity of De Pere. One was the City's 1904 decision to purchase the two privately owned water companies in the city for the combined sum of \$27,300 and create a municipal water supply entity instead. Another positive development that occurred between 1900 and 1905 benefited the citizens of the city in general, but had a less pleasant effect on the

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<sup>28</sup> "The Building Boom." Ibid, June 17, 1882, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> *De Pere News*. August 14, 1886, pp. 1, 4.

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city's merchants. This was the granting of a streetcar franchise to the Knox Construction Co. on March 23, 1903, which resulted in two lines being constructed to the city, one of which ran through a loop on the east side and the other through the city on the west side.<sup>30</sup> These lines connected De Pere with the city of Green Bay to north and the city of Kaukauna to the south and they gave the citizens of De Pere ready access to goods and services they had not had before and also made it possible for them to work in places that had hitherto been located too far away to be realistic options. This last fact was of enormous importance because it was one of the facts of life during the period before automobile ownership became common that most persons needed to live near their work place if some form of public transit was not available. Once streetcars became available, however, the possible range within which one could live and commute to work was expanded significantly, a factor that also tended to benefit the larger cities on the lines such as Green Bay, where more employment opportunities were available. The streetcar line also greatly expanded the number of places where one could shop, a fact that also tended to work to the disadvantage of local merchants in smaller communities such as De Pere.

Despite the changes that have been wrought by a 125 years of continuous development, the east side of De Pere still retains a small core of intact historic commercial buildings that were constructed for the most part on the 100 blocks of N. and S. Broadway in the 1880s, six of which constitute the small but high quality South Broadway Historic District that is the subject of this nomination. Thus, some of the city's best historic representatives of its commercial past are still largely intact and are very much in evidence and are well into their second century of useful service.

Fortunately for the east side of De Pere, few new buildings were built in the downtown core of the city between 1890 and 1970. As a result, some of the most historically important commercial buildings in the city still survive today, but the only intact grouping of these buildings is the one that constitutes the South Broadway Historic District. The buildings within the District are an important part of the historic business core of east De Pere and they also bear witness to the way in which this core evolved during the 1880s. Besides their significance as the most intact buildings in the larger business district that once encircled them, these buildings represent the commercial enterprises that existed in De Pere during the period of significance. These enterprises have included hardware stores, general stores, post offices, drugstores, grocery stores, saloons, restaurants, and other usages, all of which were once central to the commercial and social life of De Pere and of the surrounding area.

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<sup>30</sup> McDonald, Forrest. *Let There Be Light: The Electric Utility Industry in Wisconsin, 1881-1955*. Madison: The American History Research Center, 1957, pp. 72-73 and 150-152.

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**Architecture**

The South Broadway Historic District was identified by the De Pere Intensive Survey as one of the areas in De Pere that is most worthy of being listed in the NRHP. It is being nominated to the NRHP under Criterion C for its local significance because it contains the only intact historic streetscape of nineteenth century commercial buildings remaining in the historic business center of that portion of the larger city of De Pere that is located on the east side of the Fox River. Individually, the buildings in the District are good representative examples of Commercial Vernacular form designs. Collectively, the buildings in the District have a significance that is greater than the merit they possess individually. While other groups of historic commercial buildings are located adjacent to the District, the integrity of these groups has been compromised by demolition, by the inclusion of later modern buildings that have replaced demolished historic ones, and by the alteration and modernization of many of the historic resources in those groups that do still exist. In addition, the significance of the District is further enhanced by its generally high degree of integrity and its well maintained condition.

The contributing buildings in the South Broadway Historic District consist of six Commercial Vernacular form one and two-story buildings that were built between 1882 and 1888 as replacements for earlier buildings that were all destroyed in a catastrophic fire early in 1882. Five of the District's buildings were built between 1882 and 1884 and they are all clad in cream brick, while the sixth was built in 1888 and is sided in reddish brown brick. The one exception is the District's sole non-contributing building, which was also originally built in 1882-1884 as well, but which was totally remodeled twice, once in 1920, when part of it became the Majestic Theater, and again in 1959, when it became the De Pere Federal Savings and Loan building and was given a Contemporary Style design.

**Commercial Vernacular (ca. 1850-1910)**

Simply designed commercial buildings built between 1850-1910 are called Commercial Vernacular Form buildings. These buildings are usually two or three stories-tall, although one and four story-tall examples are also found. In multi-story examples the first floor is given over to retail space and the upper floors are often used for apartments, although other commercial uses such as offices are also common in upper floors. A typical original feature of such designs is a large ground floor show window(s) and frequently transom windows placed above the show window help to light the ground floor. Upper stories usually have simple multiple window openings which are treated identically on buildings of the simplest design. Commercial Vernacular Form buildings were often joined together by party walls, though many free-standing examples exist. Unless a building occupies a corner site or is free-standing, decoration is usually limited exclusively to the main facade. A visually emphatic cornice featuring one or more decorative treatments such as brick corbelling, wooden moldings, and a

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stamped metal frieze usually terminates the main facade and the only other decoration is usually a decorative cornice or iron I-beam above the first floor display window(s). Doors leading to both the ground floor and the upper floors are simple and are generally of paneled wood with a single window. Commercial Vernacular Form buildings are most often built of brick, although both wood and stone examples are also found. While the mixing of two or more materials in the wall cladding of an individual building is sometimes seen, most examples usually feature just one material.

The understanding of the Commercial Vernacular form is still in its infancy and it is probable that the form will be subdivided into smaller, more descriptive categories in the future. Until then, such buildings will, of necessity, be lumped together in a somewhat undifferentiated way. This includes many buildings which have a slight stylistic identity but which do not yet merit a separate category of their own. Nineteenth century examples of the form are taller and narrower than their twentieth century successors, which are said to be examples of the Twentieth Century Commercial Style, and they are sometimes somewhat more elaborately decorated. (Twentieth Century Commercial Style examples are broader and less tall and often have some Prairie School or Period Revival style elements.)

All but one of the contributing buildings in the District was built between 1882 and 1883. The single exception is the Robert McGeehan Building at 125 S. Broadway, which was built in 1888. All of the buildings were built out of cream brick except, again, for the McGeehan Building, whose main façade is mostly clad in reddish brown brick. In addition, all of these buildings are also good, representative examples of Commercial Vernacular form design and several are almost identical in appearance, which is not surprising given the circumstances surrounding their construction.

### **Builders**

The great majority of the historically and architecturally significant buildings in De Pere and elsewhere were designed either wholly or in part by the persons who built them. These designers played an important role in the creation of the built environment and the best of them are now considered to be fully deserving of the term "master" as it is used in National Register Criterion C. These persons possessed widely differing skills and design capabilities, but were generally distinguished from those persons calling themselves architects by their less formal education and design training and by their greater degree of physical involvement in the building process. The first builders were usually skilled or semi-skilled carpenters and masons whose design sense developed out of the direct experience they acquired working with traditional building methods and designs. Prior to 1850, this experience was much the same for both builders and for those persons then calling themselves architects in Wisconsin. As a result, builders proved to be more than adequate designers for the vast majority of buildings built

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in this early period of Wisconsin's history, a period whose chief need was for shelter and functional utility. Even as the needs of society became more complex and buildings larger and much more numerous, builders were still able to satisfy the great majority of client's requests by resorting to pattern books for design ideas and to an ever-growing number of mail order catalogs which made available an endless variety of increasingly complex architectural details. In its essentials this system continues to exist today and most residences in particular are still built "from plans" much as they were in the nineteenth century.

The earliest builders in De Pere were probably mostly itinerant craftsmen whose portable skills gave them great flexibility in choosing where to locate. Many of these persons probably stayed in De Pere just long enough to finish a job and get paid. As De Pere grew, however, it became possible for some of these men to move from job to job within the community and become permanent residents. For many of these men, part of the attraction of the work was the independence they enjoyed and such men did not often form lasting business associations with others. The associations that typical occur were between different generations of the same family, a pattern that gave a definite family feeling to the building trades.

Researching buildings constructed in Wisconsin's smaller cities seldom produces the identities of the designers and/or builders of these buildings, and unfortunately, this proved to be true for all but one of the buildings within the South Broadway Historic District. Partly this is due to the fact that the newspapers in De Pere seldom included such information when noting that a building was under construction, regardless of the building's size or the importance of its owner. Most of the District's buildings were probably designed by those who built them, using either published plans or designs based on their previous work. The name of one nineteenth century De Pere builder who constructed buildings in the District has been identified, however. Additional information about this man and his other identified projects located elsewhere in De Pere is contained in the De Pere intensive survey report.<sup>31</sup> What follows is information that is specifically related to LeClair's two identified projects in the District.

David LeClair

David LeClair was one of the most active contractors in De Pere in the 1880s and although nothing is known of his personal history, the identity of many of his projects is known and some are still extant. The following District buildings were identified by mention in the De Pere newspaper as having been built by LeClair and they were also cross-checked with historic De Pere Real Estate Tax Records for

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<sup>31</sup> Heggland, Timothy F. *Op. Cit.*, p. 60.

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confirmation. It is known, however, that LeClair also built several other buildings in the "burned district" at this time and it is possible that other buildings in the South Broadway Historic District were built by him as well.

101-103 S. Broadway	John Hahn Double Store Building	1882
105-107 S. Broadway	Minnich/Messing Double Store Building	1882 <sup>32</sup>

**Conclusion:**

The South Broadway Historic District is therefore being nominated to the NRHP for its architectural significance because it represents a coherent whole that is clearly visually distinct from surrounding neighborhoods and because it contains individual buildings that are representative of the architectural styles and vernacular forms that were prevalent elsewhere in De Pere and in the state during the period of significance. The District contains the largest remaining concentration of intact historic nineteenth century commercial buildings on the east side of the Fox River in De Pere and six of these were built between 1882 and 1888 to replace ones on the same sites that were destroyed in a fire in 1882. As a result, these buildings, five of which are built out of cream brick, display a uniformity of materials and design that is one of the most notable characteristics of the South Broadway Historic District and these characteristics are further enhanced by the largely intact, well maintained state of almost all the District's resources and, indeed, of the entire streetscape. Today, the District is the most intact collection of historic commercial buildings remaining in the eastern half of De Pere and their survival is a testament both to the continuing relevance of the District in the city's commercial life.

**Preservation Activity:**

The South Broadway Historic District has been fortunate in that the many changes that have affected the commercial life of De Pere in recent years have left the buildings in the District largely intact. In addition, the De Pere Historic Preservation Commission has been very active in educating property owners of historic resources in De Pere as to the importance and value of historic preservation, including acting as the sponsor of this nomination.

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<sup>32</sup> *De Pere News*. May 20, 1882, p. 3.

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**Archeological Potential**

The extent of any archeological remains in the District is conjectural at this time. It is known that there were previous buildings on these lots that were destroyed in the fire of 1882 and it is also known that the District's buildings were built on or over the foundations of these previous buildings. Nevertheless, it is possible that some archeological remains may still be extant despite subsequent construction activity. No information about possible prehistoric remains in this area was found in the course of this research. It is likely, however, that any remains of pre-European cultures located within the District would have been greatly disturbed by the building activity associated with the subsequent development of the area.

**Acknowledgment**

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:**

The District boundary begins at a point on the E curbline of S. Broadway that corresponds to the NW corner of the lot associated with 101-103 S. Broadway. The line then continues S along said E curbline to the SW corner of the lot associated with 129 S. Broadway, then turns 90° and continues E along the S side lot line of 129 S. Broadway to the SE corner of the lot, then turns 90° and runs N along the rear lot lines of 129, 125-127, 119-123, 115-117, 109-113, 105-107, and 101-103 S. Broadway to a point on the S curbline of George St. that corresponds to the NE corner of the lot associated with 101-103 S. Broadway. The line then turns 90° and continues W along the N side of said lot to the NW corner of the lot and to the POB.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:**

The boundaries of the District enclose all the land that is historically associated with the District's resources. In addition, the last building on the east side of the 100 block, 131-135 S. Broadway, was not included within the District because of its loss of integrity. The buildings on the opposite west side of the 100 block of S. Broadway that were built after the 1882 fire were originally comparable to those in the District in terms of both age and design, but this streetscape has now been considerably altered by the demolition of several of these historic buildings and by the modernization of others and while there are a few buildings in this block that retain integrity, the block as a whole does not.

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**Items a - d are the same for photos 1 - 7**

Photo 1

- a) South Broadway Historic District
- b) De Pere, Brown County, WI
- c) Timothy F. Heggland, June 2008
- d) Wisconsin Historical Society
- e) General View with 101-103 S. Broadway in the foreground. View looking SE
- f) Photo 1 of 7

Photo 2

- e) 105-107 S. Broadway. View looking E
- f) Photo 2 of 7

Photo 3

- e) 109-113 S. Broadway. View Looking E
- f) Photo 3 of 7

Photo 4

- e) 115-117 S. Broadway. View looking E
- f) Photo 4 of 7

Photo 5

- e) 125-127 S. Broadway. View looking E
- f) Photo 5 of 7

Photo 6

- e) 129 S. Broadway. View looking E
- f) Photo 6 of 7

Photo 7

- e) General View with 135 S. Broadway in the foreground. View Looking NE
- f) Photo 7 of 7

