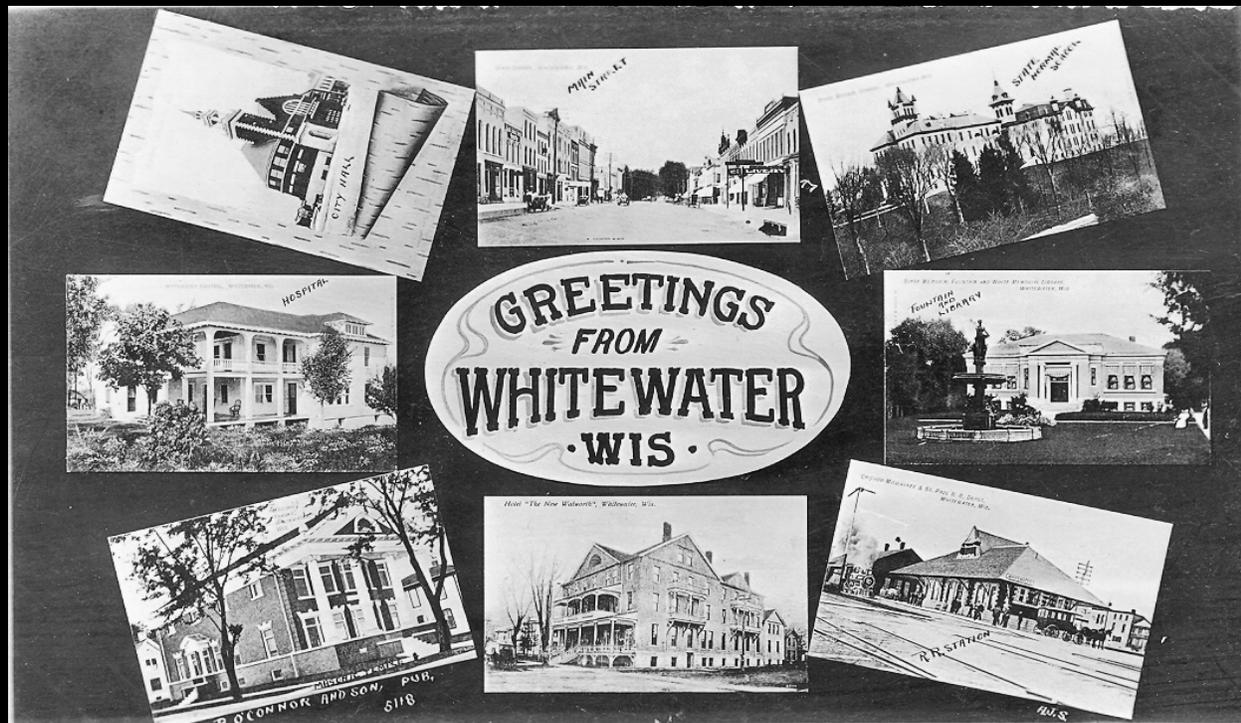


Architectural and Historical Survey of Whitewater, Wisconsin

by
Carol Lohry Cartwright



WHITEWATER LANDMARKS COMMISSION: CITY OF
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CITY OF WHITEWATER, WISCONSIN

Architectural and Historical Survey Report

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Landmarks Commission

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Cover Photo: Whitewater Postcard, c. 1910, from the collections of the Whitewater Historical Society, used with permission.

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CHAPTER ONE

Methodology

Introduction

The City of Whitewater Community Development Authority, working with the Whitewater Landmarks Commission, received funding from a federal survey and planning grant administered by the Division of Historic Preservation of the Wisconsin Historical Society to conduct an intensive architectural and historical survey of Whitewater. The Whitewater Landmarks Commission and the City of Whitewater awarded a contract for this survey to Carol Lohry Cartwright, Historic Preservation Consultant.

The intensive architectural and historical survey had four work elements: (1) a reconnaissance survey of the historic properties in Whitewater; (2) historical research for properties that were potentially eligible for the National Register and to provide historical context to evaluate surveyed properties and to prepare the chapters of the intensive survey report; (3) an evaluation of surveyed properties for their potential eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places and/or their contribution to potential historic districts; (4) completion of the survey report.

Reconnaissance Survey

The consultant surveyed the entire City of Whitewater, using the 1989 reconnaissance survey as a guide. The field work was completed according to the Wisconsin Historical Society's Historic Preservation Division's requirements for reconnaissance surveys. The consultant surveyed properties structure by structure and street by street for resources of architectural interest. Black and white photographs of properties of architectural interest were taken, along with properties included in the 1989 survey that had been altered.

After the site-specific research was conducted, the consultant prepared reconnaissance survey cards for each of the buildings that were photographed. Most of these cards were continuation cards for properties placed in the Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory in 1989. Surveyed properties were noted on a city zoning map by the use of photo codes as assigned by the Historic Preservation Division.

Research

The consultant undertook site-specific research for potentially eligible properties by reviewing Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps, historic plat maps, tax assessment roll information, and local history materials found in the collections of the Whitewater Historical Society and the Irvin L. Young Library. This research was used to prepare the reconnaissance survey cards and the Historic Preservation Division's Architecture and Historic Data Base, and to help in evaluating the surveyed resources.

The consultant also conducted general historical research in order to help prepare this report. For this research, the consultant used the many published materials on the history of Whitewater found in the Whitewater Historical Society and the Irvin Young Library. The consultant completed a newspaper search for the 19th century and reviewed newspaper scrapbooks from the 20th century on file in the Whitewater Historical Society and the Irvin Young Library. The consultant also used the information from local historian Fred Kraege's vast collections of newspaper clippings, copies of photos and materials filed in thematic notebooks located in the Irving L. Young Library.

Identification and Evaluation of Significant Resources

During the course of the project, the consultant analyzed the architectural and historical data to determine which resources were potentially individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and which groups of resources might form potentially eligible historic districts. These evaluations were reviewed with the chief of the Historic Buildings Section of the Division of Historic Preservation. The consultant noted the evaluations on the data base and in this report.

These opinions were based on the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register criteria are used to guide state and federal agencies in evaluating nominations to the National Register of Historic Places. The criteria is described in *How to Complete National Register Forms* (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1991), and read as follows:

“The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- “A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- “B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- “C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- “D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

“Ordinarily, cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions, or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- “A. a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- “B. a building or structure removed from its original location, but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic period or event; or
- “C. a birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life; or
- “D. a cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- “E. a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- “F. a property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with his own historical significance; or
- “G. a property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.

“As noted above, a historic district is placed in the National Register of Historic Places in a manner similar to individual properties; using essentially the same criteria. A historic district is comprised of resources; that is, buildings, structures, sites, or objects located in a geographically definable area. The historic district is united by historical factors and a sense of cohesive architectural integrity. District resources are individually classified as contributing or non-contributing.

- “A. A contributing building, site, structure, or object adds to the historic architectural qualities, historic associations, or archeological values for which a property is significant because (a.) it was present during the period of significance and possesses historic integrity reflecting its character at that time or is capable of yielding important information about the period, or (b.) it independently or individually meets the National Register criteria.
- “B. A non-contributing building, site, structure, or object does not add to the historic architectural qualities, historic associations, or archeological values for which a property or district is significant because (a.) it was not present during the period of significance [less than 50 years old or moved to the site], (b.) due to alterations, disturbances, additions, or other changes, it no longer possesses historic integrity reflecting its character at that time or is incapable of yielding important information about the period, or (c.) it does not independently meet the National Register criteria.”

The consultant formed initial opinions about the eligibility of resources in the survey. The opinions in this report were reviewed and approved by the chief of the Historic Buildings Section of the Division of Historic Preservation.

Intensive Survey Data Base

The consultant entered the architectural and historical information for the surveyed resources into the Historic Preservation Division's Architecture and History data base. This data base is a custom application that was created for the Division of Historic Preservation. The general public can view information from this data base on the Wisconsin Historical Society's web site: www.wisconsinhistory.org, select Historic Buildings and Preservation, then select AHI.

Preparation of the Survey Report

The survey report is meant to provide architectural and historical context for surveyed resources, along with survey results and recommendations. The goal is to provide important and easily accessible information for the Whitewater Landmarks Commission, the City of Whitewater staff and local officials, local and regional planners, the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society and other interested parties so that they can make informed planning decisions regarding the city's architecturally or historically significant resources. The report is designed to be a working document that can become the basis for further research and can be updated and changed over time, as new information is revealed or historic resources altered.

The results chapter includes lists of local landmarks, properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places, individual properties potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and potential historic districts.

CHAPTER TWO

Historical Background

Native Americans

Prior to white settlement, Native Americans were active in southern Wisconsin. One of the most fascinating of these groups were the mound-builders, three different cultures that inhabited the state between 800 B.C. to around 1200 A.D. Evidence of one of these groups can be seen in Whitewater's Indian Mound Park. The park encloses most of a large mound group that includes effigy mounds; that is, mounds depicting animal forms. This important archeological resource, listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Maples Mound Group, links current-day Whitewater back to the time of the European "dark ages."

The earliest of the Native American mound-builders in Wisconsin can be dated back to around 800 B.C. to 100 A.D. This period was known as the Early Woodland Stage of Native American culture. This culture is known to have built individual conical and linear mounds. Mound-building increased during the Middle Woodland Stage of Native American culture, between about 100 B.C. to 500 A.D. During this period, the mound builders began to construct mounds in groups.¹

The effigy mound era occurred during the Late Woodland Stage of Native American culture, between 700 A.D. and 1200 A.D. During this period, the Late Woodland people began building large numbers of mound clusters, including effigy mounds in the shapes of birds, other animals, and even humans, along with traditional conical and linear mounds. By the end of the period, the mound-builders in Wisconsin had constructed thousands of mounds, about 20 percent being effigy mounds. The effigies have strong relationships to images on pottery and other artwork made by Late Woodland people.²

After 1200 A.D., Wisconsin's Native Americans are thought to have been influenced by a new culture, the Middle Mississippian, which developed along the fertile flood plains of the Mississippi River in southern Illinois. Middle Mississippian people rapidly branched out, trading with the Late Woodland people in Wisconsin. The Middle Mississippian people did not settle in Wisconsin, but they did build an outpost near present-day Lake Mills; an earthen works complex with similarities to their main settlement in southern Illinois, Cahokia. White settlers named the site Aztalan, because they thought the stepped platform of the complex was related to the Mexican Aztecs. After the influx of trade with the Middle Mississippian people, the Late Woodland people's culture disappeared, with a different culture, the Oneota, taking its place. The Oneota continued to build mounds in their early period, but eventually ended this practice along with significant lifestyle changes. The Oneota people concentrated in village clusters in

¹ Robert A. Birmingham and Leslie E. Eisenberg, *Indian Mounds of Wisconsin*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000, pp. 82-99.

² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

various parts of Wisconsin rather than being more widely dispersed as the Late Woodland people were. They also became more dependent on corn agriculture, like the Middle Mississippians.³

There have been several theories about how the Oneota emerged from the Late Woodland people. Some suggest they were a new people who replaced the Late Woodland people, while another point of view suggests they were actually descendants of the Middle Mississippian people. The current theory is that they were probably descendants of the Late Woodland people, who changed their culture after contact with the Middle Mississippians. Who emerged from the Oneota people has been another subject of archeological research. It is now thought that the Ho-Chunk (aka Winnebago) likely developed from part of the eastern Oneota people, while another culture, centered in Iowa, developed from the western Oneota.⁴

The above discussion places the Whitewater Indian mounds, officially known as the Maples Mound Group, into the context of the prehistoric Native American history of the area. Historians have also documented the Native American activity just prior to white settlement. It is known that during the time of the early explorers in the 1600s to the mid-nineteenth century, when white settlement moved into the state's interior, a number of different Native American groups came in and out of the state. Of these groups, only the Ho-Chunk and the Menominee were permanent residents. Other groups moved in and out from different areas, most significantly, the Potawatomi.⁵

By the 1820s, most of southern and southeastern Wisconsin were under the control of the Ho-Chunk and the Potawatomi tribes. Between 1829 and 1832, pressured by Americans who wanted to move into new territory, the tribes in the southern part of the state ceded their land to the government, and most moved out of the state. In 1832, a small band of the Illinois Sauk and Fox, who had once occupied hunting and fishing lands in Wisconsin, decided to reclaim these hunting rights, leading to what is known as the Black Hawk War. Largely a chase of Sauk and Fox people across southern Wisconsin, the "war" ended with a massacre of the Native Americans and their permanent removal across the Mississippi River. The Black Hawk War was the last obstacle to white settlement. After 1832, government surveyors entered southern Wisconsin, and by 1836, the land was opened up for white claims. It was at this time that Whitewater was officially "discovered."⁶

Pioneer White Settlement

When the federal surveyors platted land to be offered for sale to white settlers, they used a number of land features as markers. One of these natural markers is Whitewater's Territorial Oak, located at the northwest corner of West Main Street and North Franklin Street. In 1836, it was a sixteen-inch Burr Oak and by 1962, it had grown to 11 feet in circumference. Unfortunately, the tree split into two leaders, and just recently, one of the leaders had to be

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-162.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-168.

⁵ Barbara Wyatt, ed., *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, Vol. I*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, Historic Indians, pp. 1-1—1-7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-1—1-11, 13-4.

removed due to instability. The tree remains massive at the base and the extant leader is the larger of the two. The tree is an important natural landmark in Whitewater.⁷

Evidence of the removal of the Native Americans from the area was present when the first Americans arrived at the Whitewater site in 1837. The early settlers recorded what they called an old “Indian Village” of circular pole structures without their coverings. They thought the structures were related to the Potawatomi. They also discovered the mounds described earlier.⁸

Alvah Foster is credited with being the first white man to travel extensively in the area in the fall of 1836 or early in 1837. He made an informal claim, but he never settled at the Whitewater site. In April of 1837, a settlement party of about 20 people came to the area, but moved on to nearby Fort Atkinson. The man credited with being the first permanent white settler in Whitewater is Samuel Prince. In July of 1837, he erected the first log cabin (not extant). Other settlers arrived in both 1837 and 1838, not only settling at the Whitewater site, but on land nearby. Like other early settlers in southern Wisconsin, the early pioneer settlers in Whitewater are historically referred to as “Yankees,” because they came primarily from New York State or New England. In fact, they often came in groups from a single location. For example, the well-known pioneer Cravath and Salisbury families were from Cortland County, New York, and were part of the group of people known as the “Cortland Colony.” The Yankees were largely middle-class and came to Wisconsin looking for new economic opportunities, such as fertile, virgin, land to farm; or a water power site that would attract industry; or an attractive town site at which to acquire land that could be sold to other pioneers at a profit.⁹

One of the most important projects needed to get a new town going was a business. Crossroads villages were often founded after a pioneer built a general store and/or blacksmith shop. Settlements located on a water power needed someone to build a mill, either a grist mill to harvest grain from nearby farmers or a saw mill to provide building materials to settlers, or both. Since Whitewater was founded on a water power, bringing a mill to town was an early consideration for the first settlers.

By the fall of 1838, owners of the two water power sites had failed to build a mill, and other pioneers were anxious that Whitewater would lose out to another location if a mill was not forthcoming. So, a meeting was held and a committee of pioneers were charged with finding someone with the capital to buy the water power and build a mill. After meeting with financiers in Milwaukee, the group met with Dr. James Trippe, who had already built a saw mill in East Troy. Trippe saw the Whitewater mill project as a good investment and in November of 1838, he made an agreement with the Whitewater committee to acquire the water power claims and build a dam and grist (flour) mill in the spring.¹⁰

⁷ *One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary 1837-1962*, Whitewater, WI: Whitewater Historical Society Committee, 1962, p. 7.

⁸ *Early Annals of Whitewater*, Albert Salisbury, ed., Whitewater: Whitewater Federation of Women’s Clubs, 1906, pp. 3-5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-41.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-28.

In April of 1839, Trippe made good on his promise. He built a dam on one of the water power sites known as the lower dam (East Main Street), and by the end of June, the mill's frame was raised by a group of men from the area. A "barn raising" party accompanied the event. By September, the mill had one run of stone operating and milling commenced. Around the same time, the federal government officially opened a land sale office and the settlers began purchasing their claims. Joseph and David Powers wanted to build a hotel near the grist mill, but felt that a village should be platted first. They convinced James Trippe to hire Prosper Cravath, who had recently arrived and settled in nearby Lima, to create a village plat.¹¹

Most early plats in settlements founded by Yankees were reminiscent of New England town plats. They were often laid out in square blocks around a town square, an open block of land meant for green space. Whitewater's plat, though, was unusual because it did not follow this pattern. Rather, the plat's main streets, Main, Center and Whitewater, radiated west and southwest from the site of the grist mill. This unusual plat may have been an artistic decision on surveyor Prosper Cravath's part. But, more likely, it was James Trippe who had an influence on the plat. He was the builder and owner of the grist mill, and he was the one who hired Cravath. He may have wanted his mill to be the most important site on the plat. Since the plat did not have a town square, Prosper Cravath suggested that Block 13 (bounded by Center, Whitewater and Second Streets) be left as informal open space. But, he never actually designated Block 13 as a park or public space, and by the 1850s, there were commercial buildings constructed there (along Center Street). The block was eventually filled in with commercial buildings.¹²

Along with the previously described events, the decade of the 1840s was filled with "firsts" in Whitewater. The first industries started, along with the first commercial businesses. The first frame houses were built, along with the establishment of the first school and the first churches. By 1850, a genuine community had arisen and was poised to enter a decade of growth. But first, a few of the "firsts."

Technically, the first store in Whitewater was founded in a log cabin in 1839, but in 1840, that store was moved into a frame building more representative of commercial activity of that era. In 1841, another store was established and during the 1840s, many frame buildings sprang up along Main Street. They housed a variety of general stores and other retailers. Along Whitewater Street, small shops, such as blacksmith, carpenter and cooper shops were built. Since these businesses were more industrial in nature, they were often separated from the retail stores.

Other "firsts" in Whitewater occurred in 1840, including the first hotel, the first post office in the community, and the establishment of the first official government, the Town of Whitewater. Another first was a log school house, also built in 1840 by the settlers, themselves. It was soon replaced by a brick school house known fondly as the "little brick." A few years after he developed the "lower" dam for a grist mill, James Trippe built the second or "upper" dam and a saw mill. By 1844, there were about 200 people living in Whitewater's 29 houses and the small downtown had six general stores, a grocery store, two hotels, a lawyer's office, three blacksmith

¹¹ *History of Walworth County, Wisconsin*, Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1882, pp. 581-582.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 582; Plat Map of Whitewater, 1858, copy on file in the manuscript collections of the Whitewater Historical Society; Tax Roll information for downtown buildings indicate that Block 13 was almost entirely filled with buildings by the early 1870s.

shops, a tailor shop, two cabinet (furniture) makers, a wagon shop, a gunsmith's shop, a harness and leather shop, and a cooper shop.¹³

Religious organizations also blossomed in the 1840s. The new community was primarily Yankee in ethnicity, so the first organizations were Protestant Yankee churches. In 1838, a traveling Methodist minister came to Whitewater once a month to hold services. In 1840, the Cortland Colony of nearby Lima established a Presbyterian Church (at that time affiliated with the Congregational Church), which later became Whitewater's Congregational Church. In 1843, a Congregational Church was built in town. In 1842, a Baptist congregation began meeting, as well. In 1847, the Episcopal church was founded, and in 1850-51, the Methodists constructed their own church building.¹⁴

In 1849, perhaps the most important business decision made in Whitewater capped the decade of "firsts." In the fall, citizens met to discuss purchasing stock in the newly-formed Milwaukee & Mississippi Railroad company in order to convince the owners to build through Whitewater. The area around Whitewater was a thriving wheat-growing region and the rail line was seen as a better way for farmers to get their wheat crops to the Milwaukee market. But, purchasing stock in early railroads was a risky business. Often, the railroad lines went bankrupt before even laying track. Some communities pledged money to the railroad, but when it came time to pay, the money was not available, and communities defaulted on their railroad bonds. Fortunately for Whitewater, the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad was successfully capitalized and by 1851, the line was built from Milwaukee to Waukesha. In September of 1852, the line came to Whitewater and Milton, then in 1853, to Stoughton, in 1854, to Madison, and in 1856, to the Mississippi River at Prairie du Chien. This line was one of the few success stories of rail building in the 1850s and gave Whitewater access to both Milwaukee and the Mississippi River.¹⁵

The Maturing Village

The coming of the railroad ushered in a decade of tremendous growth in Whitewater despite problems in the national financial picture. In the 1850s, local and regional farmers were making money growing wheat on virgin soils, and they were spending it in Whitewater's businesses and small shops. Commercial businesses boomed and fostered the construction of several two-story brick buildings in the downtown. In the mid-1850s, two important nineteenth century industries were founded and began to dominate the community's industrial base. The growth of both commerce and industry resulted in money for new and larger houses and for church and school buildings. The city physically expanded with additions to the original plat, and many of the new houses were constructed of locally manufactured brick.

The growth of the 1850s can be seen in the local school system. Constructed in 1844, the "little brick" schoolhouse quickly became inadequate, and just like today, the building of a new school or adding to the old one was hotly debated. Some favored building a new school that would include a "high school" academy and "college," as was popular in many communities during that

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45, 65-66, 68.

¹⁴ *Early Annals of Whitewater*, pp. 28-29, 41, 64, 81-82.

¹⁵ *History of Walworth County*, pp. 173-174; *Early Annals of Whitewater*, pp. 84-86.

time. Others stated an elementary school was sufficient for taxpayers and higher education could be privately funded. Even the site was debated. But, in the fall of 1853, the public voted on a new “Union” school building for elementary grades, and it was completed in 1854 (corner of Prairie and Center, not extant).¹⁶

The growth of Whitewater’s east side resulted in a need for a school on that side of the community. In the summer of 1857, Union School No. 2, better known as the East Side School, was completed. It was a brick structure of two stories in height and as families moved to this area near the growing Esterly Manufacturing Company factory, the school was soon filled.¹⁷

The churches also made gains in the 1850s. Serving the mostly New England immigrant population of the city, the Methodist, Congregational, and Episcopal churches had the largest congregations. The Methodists, organized in the 1840s, built their first frame church in 1852. Congregational Church members also organized in the 1840s and built a rudimentary frame church, which they replaced in 1850. St. Luke’s Episcopal Church was founded in the 1840s and a small frame church was built in 1852. Even the small Baptist congregation built a church in 1850.¹⁸

During the 1850s, Whitewater’s small, often one-story, frame-constructed, commercial buildings were becoming obsolete. The growth in the commercial economy in the 1850s brought several important brick blocks to downtown. The first of these blocks was the “Emporium Block,” constructed on the south side of Main Street in 1853 by Warren Cole. This three-story building was considered a showpiece in the community. In 1855, Smith and Curtice built another three-story building, the Commonwealth Block, next to the Emporium Block. During the mid-1850s, Marsh and Hall built brick buildings on the south side of Main Street, and Joseph Bower constructed the first of his many downtown brick buildings. The large Central Block (still extant) was constructed in 1856, joining the other large brick buildings on the south side of Main Street. Finally, in 1857, C. E. Curtice erected a brick building on the north side of Main Street. Rare sketches of Whitewater’s downtown between 1856 and 1862 show one block of the south side of Main Street almost fully developed with brick buildings (several are three stories in height). Two blocks on the north side of Main Street are almost all filled with frame buildings, including two large hotels. According to the sketches, Center Street is less dense with several frame buildings, but most noticeably, the Bower’s Metropolitan Block. The sketches show small frame shops located in the first block of Whitewater Street.¹⁹

Adding to the growth of the commercial economy during the 1850s was the development of two major industries. These industries made Whitewater an industrial town for most of the nineteenth century. One of these industries was created out of the small shops in downtown Whitewater, while the other was a response to the wheat boom on the farms around the village.

¹⁶ *Early Annals of Whitewater*, pp. 44, 68-69, 94-95.

¹⁷ *History of Walworth County*, p. 599.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 602-605.

¹⁹ *Early Annals of Whitewater*, pp. 96, 101, 105, 108; Whitewater Historical Society, *The Rile Collection*, Whitewater: Whitewater Historical Society, 1987, pp. 4, 12, 19,21, 22.

In 1844, L. A. Winchester established a small blacksmith shop in the pioneer settlement. In 1852, William DeWolf joined Winchester, and the partners expanded into plow-making in a larger shop. The virgin soil being turned into wheat fields demanded better plows and the business grew rapidly. In 1857, J. S. Partridge became a partner in the business and around 1864, the company began manufacturing wagons. After DeWolf left the firm in 1867, the now Winchester and Partridge Manufacturing Company rapidly expanded its wagon production and the “Whitewater Wagon” became known for its high quality. Both the United States and English governments purchased “Whitewater Wagons.” At its peak in the 1880s, the firm was employing over 160 men.²⁰

Around the same time as the Winchester and Partridge Company was expanding their plow-making operation, George Esterly was developing his innovative wheat “reaper” or harvester on his large wheat farm in the nearby Town of LaGrange. Esterly was one of the early (1837) pioneer farmers of Walworth County and the task of harvesting wheat on his large acreage triggered his inventive mind to produce a better reaper. By 1844, he had a patent for an improved harvester and he built them on this farm until 1855. When the new product became popular, Esterly moved production of the reapers to Whitewater, Elkhorn, and Racine. In 1857, Esterly consolidated production in a new factory in Whitewater. He chose Whitewater because there was the potential for an additional rail line to the city.²¹

Esterly’s reaper won awards, and for a time, was a significant competitor with the McCormick Reaper, the better known product manufactured in Illinois. Esterly continued to improve his harvesters and added the production of other agricultural equipment at his factory. The company branched into furniture manufacturing and together, all of Esterly’s product lines employed an average of 200 and 300 people during the 1880s, when the factory was at peak production.²²

The growth of these industries, along with intensive growth in the downtown, spurred population growth in Whitewater. In 1858, Whitewater’s citizens received a village charter from the state legislature, and in May the new village held its first elections. The village charter was a culmination of the booming activities during the 1850s that changed Whitewater into an important community in northeastern Walworth County. The 1860s, despite the Civil War, saw Whitewater continue to prosper both economically, socially, and culturally.

Whitewater’s citizens were enthusiastic supporters of the Civil War and volunteer companies from the area were raised. At the same time, the farmers in southern Wisconsin were growing record crops of wheat. This “wheat boom” continued the prosperity for Whitewater’s businesses, especially for the Esterly Company, which expanded the production of their innovative harvesters. In the downtown, more brick buildings were constructed and a full complement of retail businesses filled the storefronts. These businesses ranged from simple general and grocery stores that provided essential goods, all the way to jewelers providing luxury items.

²⁰ *History of Walworth County*, pp. 608-609; *Early Annals of Whitewater*, pp. 233-234.

²¹ *History of Walworth County*, p. 609.

²² *Ibid.*

The Industrial Era

After the Civil War, Whitewater entered a period of economic prosperity that would last until the mid-1890s. This economic prosperity was based primarily on industry, with commercial growth coming in a close second. The Esterly Company flourished, making reapers and other agricultural equipment, along with a furniture line. The Winchester and Partridge Manufacturing Company was turning out hundreds of wagons during the 1870s and 1880s, along with plows and other agricultural equipment. Other industries included a paper mill making straw paper, several large brick yards, and many other small shops. This industrial boom led Whitewater's citizens to think that there was no reason why Whitewater could not turn into a large factory town like Milwaukee, Racine, or Kenosha.

Between 1865 and 1894, the growth and stability of Whitewater's industries brought growth to other areas of the community. The downtown commercial business district thrived during this period. Most brick blocks in Whitewater's current downtown were built between 1870 and 1890, and included several double storefront blocks, such as the Stewart Block (155-159 W. Main St.), built in 1885. This building housed a large dry goods and hardware store, one of the most successful ever seen in Whitewater. Several other dry goods stores were operated in the downtown during this period, and Whitewater had a full complement of clothing, shoe, grocery, drug, and hardware stores. Several hotels operated during this era, capped off by the construction of Whitewater's "luxury" hotel, the Walworth, that was built in 1890.

In other areas of the community, the industrial era brought significant progress. Whitewater grew in population and its neighborhoods included thriving working, middle, and upper middle class residents. There was even a wealthy elite. The growth of these classes is seen in the physical growth of the residential areas of the community. This growth was split into two distinct areas, the area west of the downtown, and the area east of the downtown, particularly near the Esterly factory.

Most of the middle, upper middle, and wealthy classes built on the west side of the downtown. Between 1860 and 1890, many large and fashionable houses were built, the most fashionable along West Main Street. Most of these houses were built in the Italianate style, popular during this period. Some of these houses are still extant in the Main Street Historic District, while others were demolished when the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater's Andersen Library was built in 1953 and when the Center of the Arts Building was constructed around 1970.

During this period, much of the community's middle-class housing was built south of Main Street, between Franklin and Prince Streets. These houses were built as less elaborate examples of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles. Another area of fine houses grew up along North Fremont Street in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Probably the most prominent citizen in Whitewater, George Esterly of the Esterly Manufacturing Company, acquired an Italianate mansion on a square block of land bounded by Summit, Conger, Highland and Whiton Streets. It set the tone for fashionable living in the nineteenth century, but, unfortunately, it is not extant.

Between 1860 and 1890, most of the large and architecturally distinctive churches were built on Whitewater's west side, as well as the city's most prominent school building. At the corner of Prairie Street and Center Street, the large Universalist Church was built around 1868 (not extant), the Methodist Church was built in 1872-73, and the large Union School was built in 1852, then replaced in 1867, and replaced again in 1883. One block to the east, along Church Street, two distinctive churches were built during the industrial era. The Episcopal Church was built in 1869 and the Congregational Church was built in 1882. One block east along Main Street, the Baptist community would build their large church in 1886 (now First English Lutheran Church).

The east side of Whitewater was considerably different. The residential housing there consisted of several neighborhoods of primarily worker's cottages and houses. A neighborhood of small houses were built along Jefferson Street and along parallel streets to the east until reaching the old Oak Grove Cemetery. Another neighborhood included an area north of the cemetery all the way to Newcomb Street. This neighborhood was probably the home for many Norwegian immigrant families, as it was near the site of the first Norwegian Lutheran Church, now the location of the modern water tower. Some of this housing was, perhaps, built for workers at the Esterly factory about four blocks away. However, the houses might also have been erected for workers at the Winchester and Partridge factory and the other small shops along Whitewater Street in the downtown.

A distinct residential community, located primarily north of the Esterly factory east of Newcomb Street and north of Milwaukee Street, was known as "Reaperville." This community consisted of very small worker's houses. The *Early Annals of Whitewater* records that the first of these houses was built in 1858, shortly after the factory was built. Many of these houses were probably built by the workers, themselves. The *Early Annals* reports that in 1863, many new homes were built in the neighborhood and that "Some of the men who worked in the reaper factory all day worked part of the night on their own houses. . . ." ²³

The exact boundaries of "Reaperville" cannot be determined, but the core area appears to be between East Milwaukee Street on the south, Cravath Street on the north, Newcomb Street on the west, and East Street on the east. However, working-class housing exists in a much wider area of the east side, including a third neighborhood located between East Milwaukee Street and East Clay Street, west of South Wisconsin Street and east of Esterly Street. Esterly's workers may have lived in this wider area of the east side, as well. Although the Esterly factory closed in 1893, this area of the city was known as "Reaperville" for much of the 20th century. Today, it is still a neighborhood of modest, affordable housing.

The industrial era in Whitewater also brought better and larger schools. Union School (not extant) at Prairie and Center, was the city's largest school, and after the new building was constructed in 1883, the school administration began a high school program. This building, known fondly as the "big brick," was, by 1894, filled with high school students, as that program became more and more popular with middle class families in the city. Since George Esterly had moved out of his large mansion a few blocks west, the school administration moved the

²³ *Early Annals*, p. 151.

elementary school pupils to the Esterly house. From 1894 until 1927, west side grade school pupils attended school in this large home known as the Esterly School (not extant).²⁴

City residents provided the east side children with a school house as early as 1857, but the growth of the Esterly company after 1858 meant more and more children resided on the east side of the city. In 1872, a new and much larger two-story brick school house was built. This school was used well into the 1960s, with an addition in the 1950s. The historic school was demolished in the later twentieth century for a new school building renamed the Washington School.²⁵

But, perhaps, the most important event related to education during the industrial era was the founding and development of the Whitewater Normal School, one of several state teachers' colleges founded in the nineteenth century. As early as 1860, prominent Whitewater citizens lobbied the recently-formed Board of Regents for academies and normal schools for a state normal school or teachers' college to be located at Whitewater. Other communities were lobbying as well. Formal proposals were accepted in the fall of 1865 and in February of 1866, Platteville was selected as the first location for a state normal school, beating out Whitewater by only three months.²⁶

The community raised considerable funds and land along West Main Street was donated. Work on the normal school building began in the fall of 1866, but fund-raising and other concerns made for a long building process. A strong push to complete the building started in July of 1867 and by April of 1868, the building was completed and a president and faculty was appointed. The school officially opened on April 21, 1868.²⁷

Between 1868 and the end of Whitewater's industrial era in the 1890s, the Whitewater Normal School grew steadily and the school building, soon named "Old Main," grew as well. The first addition to the building was constructed in 1876 and doubled the space. It burned in 1891, but was quickly rebuilt. In 1897, a new addition on the front of the building was completed. This large addition, with a prominent Classical front, made an impressive statement about the growth and development that the school underwent during the late nineteenth century. As the industrial economy faded, the Whitewater Normal School would take on more importance in the community and would grow to define Whitewater throughout the twentieth century.²⁸

The economic prosperity of the industrial era reached its peak in the mid- to late 1880s, at the height of the output of both the Esterly and Winchester and Partridge companies. The downtown developed to its widest points during the 1880s, as stores expanded to meet the growing demand for goods from the workers, middle-class families, farmers, and upper-class business families of the city. Population reached 4,158 in 1885 (only 1890's population of 4,359 was higher, before dropping 1,000 people between 1895 and 1910). The success of Whitewater's business economy

²⁴ *Whitewater Centennial Homecoming*, Whitewater, 1937, on file in the Whitewater Historical Society Depot Museum, Whitewater, Wisconsin, p. 13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Early Annals of Whitewater*, p. 218; *History of Walworth County*, pp. 599-600.

²⁷ *Early Annals of Whitewater*, pp. 218-224.

²⁸ *Whitewater Centennial Homecoming*, p. 19.

encouraged its civic-minded citizens to petition the state legislature for incorporation as a city, and it was approved.

One of the most important projects completed by the new “city” government was funding a water system. Most communities desired water systems to improve fire fighting, and this was certainly a concern in Whitewater, especially with the large Old Main Building that was located on what was then the far west side of town. A fire there would tax the pumping capabilities of the rudimentary engines of the fire department. But, the decision to fund a water system was also lobbied by the normal school, whose professors engaged in a campaign to promote the idea that the water system would improve public hygiene. The normal school science professors studied the contamination of back-yard well water and linked it to disease (which was true, but largely unknown in most communities). This threat to public health quickly convinced a majority of Whitewater’s citizens to support a referendum to build a water works. In 1888, the city government contracted with a private company to construct a deep well, reservoir, water pressure tower, and water mains. This company provided the water service until 1912, when the city made it a municipal system.²⁹

The 1880s also brought the first generation of electric power and a rudimentary telephone service to the city. And, in 1888, the first city park was established on eight acres of land given by Duane Starin, a large land owner in the northern part of the community. Expanded, the park was later named Starin Park, and it remains the largest park in the city today.³⁰

The 1890s ended Whitewater’s most significant boom period, the industrial era. The two large industries in town closed within a couple of years of each other, putting hundreds of men out of work. In 1890 and 1892, both of the owners of the Winchester and Partridge Company died and the business closed due to lack of family interest and growing competition from large wagon and agricultural equipment factories in southeastern Wisconsin. In 1893, George Esterly felt his factory could do better in Minnesota, now the center of wheat growing in the United States. In a move that stunned the community, he quickly closed the Esterly Manufacturing Company and moved to Minneapolis. Ironically, Esterly’s business in Minneapolis became mired in patent issues, and the economic depression that began in 1893 hit industry particularly hard. The Minnesota factory never opened.³¹

According to one source, in the years 1889 and 1890, over 500 men worked at the Esterly factory, and during the 1880s, between 200-300 men were commonly employed there each year. In 1882, the Winchester and Partridge factory employed 160 men, a figure that was probably consistent until 1888, when they ceased producing wagons. The loss of these jobs in a two-year span (1892-1893) was devastating to Whitewater’s economy and is reflected in the population statistics. In 1890, Whitewater had a peak nineteenth century population of 4,359. In 1895, after the two factories closed, the population dipped over 500 people to 3,799. In 1900, after no new businesses took over the closed factories, the population was down about another 500, to 3,405, a

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

³⁰ Albert C. Beckwith, *History of Walworth County Wisconsin*, Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen & Company, 1912, p. 476.

³¹ *Whitewater Centennial Homecoming*, p. 13.

loss of almost 1,000 people in 10 years. Between 1900 and 1905, the population dropped another 300 to 3,108. In 1910, the population had stabilized at around the 3,200 figure.³²

The Commercial-Agricultural Era

The loss of the two large industries in Whitewater during the 1890s stunted its growth for several decades, but the city retained enough of an economic base to carry on as an important community in the region. One of the important areas of the economy was retail trade. Whitewater retained its status as a trading center for the area, especially in agricultural commerce. The commercial-agricultural era in Whitewater, from around 1895 to 1940, was much more diversified than the industrial era and included the commercial businesses in the downtown, a few smaller factories, the growing Normal School, and, most importantly, the still successful farming community of the area.

The depression of 1893-1897 had a significant effect on industry in Wisconsin, as it did throughout the nation. And, no one came forward with the capital to open new industries in Whitewater's closed factories. But, the farm economy was strong, primarily due to a change from cash grain crops to cash dairying. Prior to 1870, wheat farming was the cash crop of the state. But, wheat depleted nutrients from the soil and farmers did not practice good soil management. By the 1870s, farmers were looking for a new cash crop. Many farmers tried stock raising and diversified farming, from growing hops to hogs, but it was dairying that won out in the end.

In the 1870s, a progressive group of farmers, primarily from the Jefferson and Dodge County areas, who were familiar with successful dairying in New England, began establishing cooperative creameries and cheese factories where farmers could sell their milk. At the time, many farmers moving into dairying were doing so by producing products on the farm. But, producing milk, then selling it to a cheese factory or creamery as a cash crop, was a way to provide a steady income for farmers without the additional labor of making cheese and butter themselves. Cash dairying was also heavily promoted by the University of Wisconsin Agricultural Extension, a force for "modern" farming in Wisconsin during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By 1890, almost all farmers in the state, if they were not raising stock for sale, were participating in cash dairying. And, once farmers in the Whitewater area started growing feed crops, like corn and oats, in larger numbers and began practicing crop rotation and fertilization, the land recovered and area dairy farmers reaped the financial rewards.

Just as wheat farming pressed inventors like George Esterly to come up with new equipment, so did dairying. The growth of dairy farmers and the cheese factories and creameries that purchased their milk fostered the development of related businesses. One such business in Whitewater was the Wisconsin Dairy Supply, founded to provide specialized equipment to dairy farmers. It eventually became the largest independent dairy supplier in the state. Another company founded to assist farmers in providing high-quality feed for stock-raising and dairying was the Dadmun Brothers Mill, started as Zuill & Shephard and taken over by the Dadmun family in 1906. Dadmun Brothers built a large mill and warehouse (not extant) near the railroad depot and the site was the center of much agricultural activity in Whitewater. The Union

³² *Early Annals of Whitewater*, pp. 333-334, 237; Beckwith, p. 480.

Produce Company, built near the grist mill on East Main Street (not extant), was incorporated in 1890, and was a small processor of dairy products for many years.³³

As dairying grew in Wisconsin, small cheese factories and creameries were joined by large condensaries, businesses that purchased milk on a large scale, then condensed it into cans so it could be shipped anywhere. In 1913, Libby, McNeill & Libby built a large condensary on the site of the old paper mill off of Wisconsin Street (not extant). During the years prior to World War II, the plant had the capacity to handle over 36 million pounds of milk per year.³⁴

In the same year as the condensary was built, a group of investors established the Whitewater Canning Company. During the first half of the twentieth century, growing vegetables for canning was another way for farmers to raise cash crops, and many of Wisconsin's communities had canning factories. The Whitewater Canning Company started by canning peas, but it soon added sweet corn to its production. In 1930, the factory began canning tomatoes.³⁵

These new businesses and factories added jobs to Whitewater, particularly after 1900, but they never replaced the type and numbers of employment of the old Esterly and Winchester and Partridge factories. Nevertheless, they helped stabilize the economy in Whitewater when it was sorely needed. Likewise, the downtown commercial district benefited from the agricultural-commercial era. The downtown did not grow as it had during the 1870s and 1880s, but it did not significantly shrink, either. Farmers, who had cash from dairying, stock raising, or growing vegetables, patronized Whitewater's downtown merchants, who, for the most part, continued to thrive.

One retail area that grew during the 1910s and 1920s was the automobile business. Livery stables and shops catering to horses and wagons declined during these years, but they were eventually replaced with services related to the automobile. Auto garages replaced blacksmiths and harness makers, and automobile showrooms replaced wagon shops. A new type of building, the gasoline filling station, began to appear, especially on corners where there was easy access into and out of the business.

Buildings that housed automobile goods and services were one of the few alterations to the physical appearance of downtown Whitewater during the first part of the twentieth century. These new buildings were often different than the old two-story commercial buildings of the nineteenth century. They were often only one story in height and utilitarian in style. Filling stations started out as very simple frame buildings, but as brand identification became important to oil companies, filling stations were built as larger, more decorative buildings, sometimes with a repair area and large overhangs that protected the customer as he/she was filling their cars. Unfortunately, oil companies were very competitive and modernization every few decades took away Whitewater's historic filling stations.

The growth of the Whitewater Normal School, a state teachers' college, also helped keep the city's commercial businesses successful. Both faculty and student populations increased during

³³ *Whitewater Centennial Homecoming*, p. 23.

³⁴ *One Hundred Twenty-Fifth Anniversary*, p. 73.

³⁵ *Whitewater Centennial Homecoming*, p. 64.

the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as reflected in the growth of Old Main. A large west wing, which included a new library and training school, was added to Old Main in 1911. A separate gymnasium and athletic field was completed in 1917. A large east wing was added to Old Main in 1924. Even during the years of the Great Depression of the 1930s, enrollment at the Normal School remained steady. Until the 1950s there were no dormitories on campus, so students lived in the community and patronized the shops and restaurants in the downtown. Some merchants marketed books and supplies directly to students. Especially during the Great Depression, the students in the community helped Whitewater's merchants weather the economic hard times.³⁶

The smaller economy of Whitewater during the first half of the twentieth century might have stifled civic growth, but the city benefited from a political-social movement that swept Wisconsin during the 1890s and continued into the next two decades of the twentieth century. This was the "Progressive" movement, led primarily by middle-class citizens who wanted "clean" government with non-partisan civil servants, and improved public services. Because the normal school was located in Whitewater, there was a larger number of middle class families than other communities of its size. This led to the support of important civic improvements, despite the economic situation in town.

One of the most "progressive" of all Whitewater citizens was Albert Salisbury, president of the Normal School from 1885 until 1911. Salisbury had deep roots in Whitewater and was not just the head of the Normal School, but a community leader as well. The university had already taken a leading role in helping the city convince its residents of the need for a water system, and Albert Salisbury would take the leading role in the greatest festival in Whitewater's history, the Home Coming of 1907. The Home Coming proved that despite the economic downturn in the city, Whitewater was a place to be proud of and that the community could continue to improve its civic life.

The "Progressive Era" in Whitewater probably began with the support for the water works, but the first significant government improvement came with the construction of a new city hall in 1899. Located at the corner of Whitewater and Center Streets (not extant), the new, modern, building had plenty of room for the city administration and its growing and improving fire and police departments.

Whitewater's middle class women were also entering a progressive era. In the 1880s, many of these women formed literary clubs that, in 1899, became the Whitewater Federation of Women's Clubs. In an era when women had no voting rights, the women of the federated clubs were able to work together to push for civic improvements they could not achieve separately. One of the first improvements that the women worked for was a public library building. At the time, library buildings were being constructed throughout the state, funded either from a grant from the Carnegie Foundation or a wealthy local donor. Whitewater was fortunate to have the latter, Mary Flavia White, who, in 1903, provided the funds for the White Memorial Library. But in accepting the donation, the city would have to make a commitment to fund and support the library operations, which when pressured by the federation, it agreed to do. The federation also helped raise funds for the library and one club donated a classical style frieze to enhance the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

building's interior. The federation went on to promote sanitation efforts in the city, supported the pure food movement, did charity work, held baby and TB clinics and promoted other civic improvements.³⁷

City government expanded its services during the Progressive Era, particularly in the area of utilities and streets. In 1912, the city's contract with the private water works company came to an end, and the city government converted it to a city service. In 1915, the city began building sanitary sewers. Shortly after, the city paved Main and Whitewater Streets with brick pavers, improving the appearance of the downtown.

One of the most significant improvements in city services during this era was in equipping the fire department. The fire department had been slow to emerge in the city. Only after several devastating fires in the downtown during the late 1860s and early 1870s, did citizens form a volunteer fire department. But, even after that time, fires were fought with horse-drawn hose carts and a crude pumping system that brought water from Cravath Lake to downtown fires. After the water system was in place, the hose carts could be hooked up to the water mains, but horses still provided the power to pull the carts. Modernization of the fire department came in 1915, when the department mechanized with the first motorized fire trucks.³⁸

Education benefited from the Progressive Era in Whitewater. In 1900, the city had three schools, an east side and west side elementary school, and a high school. By the 1910s, these buildings were becoming obsolete. A revolution in education had taken place during the early years of the twentieth century. It called for new and improved facilities and programs, including gymnasiums, school libraries, strictly graded classes, and high school programs that ranged from pre-college to technical and business education.

By the 1920s, Whitewater's east side school was still considered adequate to meet the needs of elementary students, but the west side school, in George Esterly's converted mansion, was not. The high school, built as a combination elementary and high school, was also not sufficient for the growing high school program. Some felt that the demonstration schools at the Normal School, which included an elementary school and high school program, were sufficient for students seeking specialty education. But, as Wisconsin called for stricter public school standards, Whitewater had to modernize.

In 1927, the city passed a bond to build a modern updated high school on the site of the Esterly School. The new high school building would be large enough for elementary students from the west side, as well. This building was almost completed when the old high school burned, and after a few months, the new high school building opened. Typical of "modern" high schools of the era, it had a two-story plan and was classical in design. It had all the amenities that we now expect in a high school, including a large gymnasium and classrooms with science labs and technical equipment. It served as a high school until 1960, then as a junior high school until 1998.³⁹

³⁷ *One Hundred Twenty-Fifth Anniversary*, p. 21.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³⁹ *Whitewater Centennial Homecoming*, pp. 14-15.

With a still-thriving downtown commercial district, a modern high school, a growing State Normal School, a few small industries, a water and sewer system, a mechanized fire department and professional police department in a still modern city hall, and modern electric power and telephone service, Whitewater weathered the transition from industrial town to diversified community. Then, the Great Depression of the 1930s hit. A community that had already “suffered” from the loss of industry in the last big economic depression, and had kept its momentum and economy moving forward, would have to continue the fight another 10 years.

During the 1930s, hard times hit most residents in one way or another. Downtown businesses lost income, but most held on. Banking, which took one of the strongest economic blows at the start of the Depression, was sound in Whitewater. Until 1931, Whitewater had three banking institutions. The First National Bank, founded in 1863, was an old institution in Whitewater. The Citizens State Bank, founded in 1883, had a strong history, as well. In 1931, when banking was in an economic crisis, the two banks merged into the First Citizens National Bank. This merger was, perhaps, a move that saved these institutions and their customers from the later banking crisis that led to the Bank Holiday of 1933 and the closure of many small-town banks.⁴⁰

The third financial institution was the Commercial and Savings Bank, established in 1913. It, too, weathered the financial storm of the 1930s. These solid banks helped the community survive financially and brought some stability to Whitewater’s economy in the 1930s. They both remain independent banks today, in an era of bank consolidation, and provide economic stability in today’s economy.⁴¹

The farm economy was, during the depression of the 1930s, shaky, at best, and many Wisconsin farmers lost their land to creditors. But, in the Whitewater area, many of the farms were long held by families who were able to survive the economic hard times. So, in Whitewater, businesses and industries related to agriculture survived as well. The Wisconsin Dairy Supply continued to sell equipment and supplies to dairy farmers, creameries, cheese factories, and milk plants. The condensary remained in business and, in 1939, it was purchased by Fort Atkinson’s Hoard’s Creamery. In 1944, it was sold to the Hawthorn-Mellody corporation and became largely a fluid milk supplier to the Chicago market. The canning factory also remained in operation, providing much needed jobs during the growing season and much-needed income for farmers growing vegetables.⁴²

One enterprising man in rural Whitewater took advantage of one of the Great Depression’s many economic development programs, rural electrification. Prior to the 1930s, most rural areas had no electric service. Some farmers installed complicated and expensive battery systems to operate lights in the house and barn, but most farmers and their wives still did their work with nineteenth century technology. Many farmers had automobiles long before they had electric lights. During the 1930s, rural electrification swept through farming areas at the same time that one Whitewater farmer, Orrie Coburn, became interested in using electricity to fence in animals.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 64; *One Hundred Twenty Fifth Anniversary*, p. 73.

In 1934, Coburn determined that a small electrical charge on a single wire could hold in animals just as well as several strands of barb or woven wire fence. So, he developed a “controller” that worked with a farmer’s battery system or the electric lines being brought to farms. His controller converted higher-voltage electricity into low voltage charges that could run along a wire. Animals who came into contact with the wire got a slight shock. Many farmers were initially skeptical about one small wire keeping in their stock, but once shocked, the animals would no longer try to get out.⁴³

Orrie Coburn’s sons, Dean and Ronald, began operating the One-Wire Electric Fence Company in 1935, and advertised their system in over 40 state and national farm papers. The electric fence was a hit, and orders came in from around the world, as well as the entire United States. In the depths of the Depression, the Coburn family had found a way to create a successful business that would cut time and costs for farmers at a time when they needed it most.⁴⁴

Member-owned cooperatives were developed in the Depression of the 1930s to assist people in cutting costs while earning profits. Cooperatives were especially favored by farmers who wanted a way to get cheaper goods. In 1934, many Whitewater citizens purchased shares that started the Whitewater Consumers Cooperative Association. On the site of the old Esterly factory on the east side of town, the cooperative erected bulk oil and gas storage tanks, a warehouse, and a modern automobile filling station. By 1937, the cooperative had over 900 members and in 1936, they did \$70,000 worth of business. The cooperative, later called the Badgerland Co-op, remained in business until the later twentieth century.⁴⁵

During the 1930s, the Whitewater Normal School was a stable institution in the city. In some ways, it helped keep the Whitewater economy alive. The hundreds of students at the Normal School (814 in 1937) were probably not wealthy, but they needed to buy supplies from merchants and they needed places to live in town. The education of teachers did not stall during the Depression due to significant turnover. In an era when married women with children were often not allowed to remain teachers, there remained a need for new graduates from the state’s normal schools.

When World War II began, the economy picked up significantly. Whitewater had few factories that were in a position to become providers of war materiél, but there were other factories in the area who were, and there was soon full employment. The war brought the farm economy up, as well, and Whitewater’s agricultural businesses and industries profited.

One factory was able to profit directly from the war effort. The Whitewater Raincoat Company was founded in 1925 and work was first carried out in an old roller skating rink (not extant), then on the second floor of a large downtown building. In 1940, after the National Guard moved to its new Armory on North Street, the factory moved into the second floor of 200-210 Whitewater Street. The old Armory space was ideal for a factory and employment there peaked during World War II. The raincoat factory had 450 people working two shifts during the war, all

⁴³ *Whitewater Centennial Homecoming*, p. 65.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Whitewater Centennial Homecoming*, p. 62; *One Hundred Twenty Fifth Anniversary*, p. 70.

producing clothing for the Army and Navy. The old raincoat factory is still remembered fondly by many older residents of the community.⁴⁶

Although goods were rationed during World War II, people now had money to spend. Downtown commercial business picked up, ushering in the era when downtowns were at their height of activity. Local businesses flourished along with modern “chain”, like the A & P and the Gambles variety store. Whitewater’s stores offered a wide variety of goods and there were many competitors in the area of drugs, groceries, hardware, clothing, and shoes. Restaurants and taverns had large patronage, both from busy workers and college students. This downtown era lasted through the 1950s, and it is the source of much nostalgia today.

The University Era

After World War II, Whitewater became known almost exclusively as a “college town.” There was still a lack of strong industrial development in town, and commercial development did not grow much beyond its boundaries in the existing downtown. But, the Whitewater Normal School was transformed between 1950 and 1975. During this period, student enrollment went from under 1,000 students to over 10,000 students, and the normal school became a university.

The Whitewater Normal School began its meteoric rise when, in 1913, the school developed a program for training business teachers. The program soon became nationally recognized and with the addition of a four-year education degree, the normal school became the Whitewater Teachers College in 1927. After World War II, two national trends resulted in major expansion at the college. One was the GI Bill, which brought thousands of World War II veterans to colleges between 1945 and the early 1950s. The second trend was the “baby boom,” a skyrocketing birth rate between 1946 to 1964 that, beginning in the mid-1960s, brought thousands of students to colleges. The good economy of the 1950s and 1960s, and the general support for college education from the state government, also helped expand enrollments.⁴⁷

In 1951, the Board of Regents approved a plan to allow the Whitewater Teacher’s College (and most of the other state teacher’s colleges) to grant liberal arts degrees along with education degrees. At that point, Whitewater became part of the Wisconsin State Collage system and was then renamed the Wisconsin State College-Whitewater. In the 1960s, recognizing the expansion beyond liberal arts and education in the state college system, the Board of Regents changed the system to the Wisconsin State Universities. In 1972, the Wisconsin State University system merged with the University of Wisconsin system, and all state universities became affiliated with the University of Wisconsin. Since 1972, Whitewater’s campus has been known as the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.⁴⁸

The influx of more students at the university meant that the classrooms and facilities in Old Main were not sufficient. The first official dormitory was built in 1953 and between 1953 and 1962, four more dorms were built. A new demonstration school was built in 1961. Between 1962 and 1970, additional dormitory complexes were built that included food service buildings. Other

⁴⁶ *One Hundred Twenty Fifth Anniversary*, p. 74.

⁴⁷ *One Hundred Twenty Fifth Anniversary*, p. 31.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

classroom buildings and a new library and administration building were completed during this period. But, much of the classroom space on campus was still in Old Main. In 1970, a devastating arson fire destroyed 80 percent of Old Main. Only a portion of that building (Hyer Hall) could be salvaged. The important result of that fire was that a number of new classroom buildings were erected in the 1970s, including a center for the arts.⁴⁹

This rapid expansion of the university took a toll on the residential neighborhood around Old Main, an area of large historic houses. Houses along the north side of West Main Street were removed for the Center of the Arts and for the Andersen Library. Classroom buildings and parking lots took all of the houses along the west side of North Prairie Street. Only the Bassett House, on the corner of Main and Prairie Streets, was saved from this mass destruction due to its ownership by the Federation of Women's Clubs. Many of the other houses were equally historic and were fine examples of the Italianate and Queen Anne architectural styles.

At the same time, as the university grew, the need for off-campus housing increased. Many building owners converted the older homes near the university to student housing, a conversion that was not always favorable to the older houses. Some were also demolished for apartment buildings. Only the area along Main Street, east of Prairie Street, retained a concentration of old houses that represented the historic Main Street residential neighborhood. In 1989, this area, which also included a few buildings along North and Church Streets, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Main Street Historic District.

In the 1980s, the city council approved a landmarks ordinance that established the Whitewater Landmarks Commission. This progressive ordinance not only gave the landmarks commission the authority to establish local landmarks, but also construction approval over exterior alterations of landmarked buildings. Many of the city's local landmarks are in the Main Street Historic District, but others are located in different areas of the city. The local landmarks ordinance and the designation of the Main Street Historic District has helped retain at least a portion of the prestigious historic neighborhood along West Main Street.

By the later 1970s, the baby-boom generation had largely passed through the university and enrollments dropped somewhat. However, during the late 1980s and 1990s, the school's business program attracted more and more students, as business degrees were seen as a valuable commodity in a national economy that had become more white-collar. The School of Business, along with a new emphasis on computer science for business applications, made UW-Whitewater a popular choice for business students. National publications also touted the "value" of a business education at Whitewater. For the last 20 years, UW-Whitewater has been at maximum enrollment and this trend does not seem to be abating. Currently, a new School of Business building has claimed three of the oldest dormitories on the campus and will be the most prominent building of the university campus.

During the immediate post-World War II era, Whitewater's downtown commercial district housed almost all retail businesses and services in the city. Few people in the community needed to shop outside of town as there were stores to meet every need. During the 1960s, though, things began to change. Shopping malls and the emergence of large discount stores began to

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

appear in larger communities nearby. At the same time, good roads made it easy for consumers to travel out of town for their goods.

Most people still did their grocery shopping in town, but consumers left the small downtown grocery stores in favor of new supermarkets located on the edge of town. The new supermarkets had plenty of room for parking and a much larger food selection, sometimes with cheaper prices. The new chain supermarkets in Whitewater were almost all located on the east and west edges of town, along U.S. Highway 12, a road that had become a thoroughfare through the city. The west side won the battle of retailing, however, as small strip malls made their appearance and businesses located further west. A 1950s attempt to build a “modern” shopping center (Hawk Bowl Building) on the west side of town was not successful, but this area of Whitewater has increasingly grown with individual retail businesses and car dealerships.

By the mid-1980s, Whitewater’s downtown had lost almost all of its traditional businesses. Many merchants even had to close their stores despite having no competition from retailers on the edge of town. The merchants simply could not compete with the wider variety and discounted merchandise that people found in shopping malls and “big box” stores. Students, who helped keep merchants successful in the past, had increasing access to private automobiles and spent more of their weekends away from Whitewater. Also, many students were now commuters and did not live in Whitewater, at all. These students chose to spend their money elsewhere.

The decline of Whitewater’s downtown in the late twentieth century forced a new marketing strategy. With the loss of traditional businesses in downtown Whitewater, buildings began to decline as storefronts had increasingly higher vacancy rates and owners did not or could not keep up with proper maintenance. In 2005, a group of business and community leaders, with the urging of a new city manager, promoted the idea for Whitewater’s downtown to participate in the national “Main Street” program. This program combines economic development with historic preservation to revitalize small town downtowns and has been very successful in Wisconsin.

After an unprecedented fund-raising effort, the Main Street program began in 2006. These programs usually take up to 10 years to see significant results, but in Whitewater, some developers began to revitalize downtown commercial buildings right away. During the last three years, there has been a considerable amount of investment in the downtown with new storefronts and upper level apartments. Downtown Whitewater, Inc., the official organization of the Main Street program, continues to work to attract business and activities in the downtown.

Industrial growth still lagged behind commercial growth in the mid-twentieth century, but not for lack of citizen action. In 1954, business people tried to attract new business to Whitewater through a Chamber of Commerce program called the Industrial Development Corporation. The first, and perhaps, only, success was the location of the Newport Business Forms company, which came in Whitewater in 1957. By 1962, the company was employing 54 people producing carbon business forms.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ League of Women Voters, *A Study of Whitewater*, 1967, pamphlet on file in the collections of the Whitewater Historical Society, Whitewater, Wisconsin; *One Hundred Twenty-Fifth Anniversary*, p. 61.

The most important growth in industry during the mid and late twentieth century occurred in already existing companies, such as the Coburn Company and the Moksnes Manufacturing Company. These ventures, over time, became substantial light industries in Whitewater. The Coburn Company, once manufacturing only their electric fence controllers, expanded into a large catalog supplier of specialty agricultural products. The Moksnes company, established in 1945, produced lawn rakes at first, then expanded into dairy equipment. These businesses provided good jobs and were the forerunners of the type of “clean” industries that boosted Whitewater’s industrial base in the late twentieth century.

During the last 25 years, Whitewater has had a small boom in the growth of small, clean industries. The Moksnes Manufacturing Company has steadily grown and now develops and manufactures a line of agricultural feeders and controls. The Coburn Company has also expanded and is a leader in catalog retailing of specialty products for farmers and other agriculture-related businesses. The Weiler Company, begun as a small shop making large meat grinders in Palmyra, grew in Whitewater’s downtown, then erected a large office and plant on the east side, manufacturing giant grinders and other equipment for food processors.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Whitewater Community Development Authority heavily marketed an industrial park on the north east side of the city, and it has been largely successful. Filled with, again, relatively clean industries, the industrial park has helped diversify the economy in the city. Businesses in the industrial park range from a Trek bicycle assembly plant to a large distribution center for McDonald’s restaurants.

The last traditional industry in Whitewater, the Hawthorn-Mellody milk plant (the old condensary) was closed in the 1980s and its buildings were later demolished. In the economy of the twenty-first century, traditional industries have been replaced with smaller, cleaner, industries like the ones that Whitewater has successfully lured to its industrial park.

The mid-twentieth century saw some development in other areas of city life, including government services. One of the most important developments in the area of government was the selection of the City Manager/Council form of government in 1955. Although challenged several times, this form of government has endured. Along with the new form of government came modernization of services, such as the growth of the police force and fire departments. In 1968, a new fire and police station (with city offices in the basement) was completed.⁵¹

In the area of recreation, the city developed Starin Park, with picnic facilities, baseball diamonds, a playground, and a community center (housing the Whitewater Senior Center). A playground was developed on the site of the old high school at Center and Prairie Streets, and a beach with facilities was developed at Trippe Lake, near the old “upper dam.”⁵²

In the late twentieth century, a large addition was made to the old police and fire station for city offices, and the city developed the old industrial area along Whitewater Street into Cravath Lakefront Park. Picnic facilities and a recreation building were constructed and today, this park

⁵¹ League of Women Voters.

⁵² *Ibid.*

is the center of many city-wide activities. A broad recreation program has also been developed by city staff in conjunction with the local school system.

Educational facilities saw upgrades during the mid and late twentieth century. By the 1950s, the high school needed the space that elementary pupils were occupying. In 1953, a new west side school was built on Prince Street. By 1960, new ranch home subdivisions had sprung up west of Elizabeth Street and the Baby Boom students were raising the enrollment rates throughout the community. It was decided that a new high school building would be needed and that the old high school would need to be converted into a junior high school. The new high school building on Elizabeth Street was completed in 1960, then quickly expanded in 1962.⁵³

An increase in the school population during the 1990s resulted in more new school building. Additions and alterations were made to the east and west side schools, now known as the Washington and Lincoln Schools. A new high school was completed in 1994 at the end of Elizabeth Street, and the old high school was converted into a “middle” school with grades 6-8.

Today (2008)

At the present time, Whitewater is in the midst of re-inventing itself. Because the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater is the largest employer, Whitewater will always be known as a “college town.” But, there is a much more diversified industrial economy today than 30 years ago, and the revival of the downtown is on-going. In the past 10 years, several new housing developments have been built on the city’s edges as families find that Whitewater’s cost of living and quality of life are desirable, even if the residents do not work in the city.

One of the important trends effecting Whitewater today is in the area of retirement living. In the 1950s, the Fairhaven retirement home was built on land between Franklin and Fremont Streets. Since that time, it has continued to expand. Today, Fairhaven provides apartments, assisted living, a nursing home, and Alzheimer’s care to retirees, many who come from outside the Whitewater area. With the baby boom at or near retirement age, Fairhaven is building a new condominium complex on the far north side of town. It will provide more independent living for retirees with access to all the traditional Fairhaven services. The continued growth of Fairhaven, and providing services to their residents, may have a significant future impact on the city and its economy.

In 2008, Whitewater is both a historic and modern community. It is the small town of nostalgia, with older residential neighborhoods and a downtown community that is working to become a new center of commercial activity. It has a wide range of historic buildings and a strong historic preservation interest. Appreciation and preservation of the city’s historic resources will keep the small town charm of Whitewater, even as continues to modernize and change.

⁵³ *One Hundred Twenty Fifth Anniversary*, p. 29.

CHAPTER THREE

Architecture

Introduction

Whitewater has a large and impressive group of historic buildings that represent many of the popular architectural styles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The National Register of Historic Places-listed Main Street Historic District includes most of the city's best examples of the Italianate, Second Empire, and Queen Anne architectural styles, as well as most of the city's architecturally impressive historic churches. What this survey has discovered, though, is that Whitewater has several other groups of architecturally-significant buildings; including the proposed Downtown Historic District, with its abundance of Italianate-influenced commercial buildings; the proposed Fremont Street Historic District, with its fine, later, examples of the Queen Anne and early twentieth century styles; and the Franklin-Esterly Street Historic District, an area of well-preserved bungalows and small period revival residences.

The fact that much of Whitewater's historic architecture is found in historic districts makes an interesting statement about the community's historic built environment. Despite a considerable amount of inappropriate remodeling, much of it for student housing, there is still a good amount of significant historic architecture that is still extant. This chapter will discuss the architectural styles of the community both in individual buildings and in historic districts and will be divided into several sections. Houses will be discussed under Residential Architecture, commercial buildings under Commercial Architecture. There will also be sections discussing Church Architecture, Public Architecture, Brick Construction, Stone Construction, and Architects and Builders. These discussions will provide a context in which to place individual buildings and historic districts into the historic architectural fabric of the city.

Residential Architecture

Greek Revival

The Greek Revival style was the first national style commonly seen in Wisconsin. It was popular between 1830 and 1870. Greek Revival buildings are formal, orderly, and symmetrical. Although most Greek Revival style buildings are of frame construction, the style also adorned brick, fieldstone, and quarried stone buildings. Wisconsin has a number of high-style Greek Revival buildings, but the style is more commonly seen on simple houses in the form of symmetrical massing, regular fenestration, simple cornices, friezes, and returned eaves, corner pilasters, and entrances decorated with a transom and/or sidelights.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Barbara Wyatt, ed., *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin Vol. II*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, Architecture, p. 2-3.

The Greek Revival style was popular in the eastern United States when the earliest settlers came to Whitewater. Most of these settlers were from New England and New York State and brought this style with them. During the 1840s and 1850s, many Greek Revival buildings were constructed in Whitewater, but most were small, frame, buildings with few details. Early downtown Whitewater, as seen in pre-Civil War drawings in the possession of the Whitewater Historical Society, was almost entirely made up of small Greek Revival style commercial buildings. The most common details of both the residential and commercial buildings constructed in Whitewater during the Greek Revival style era were symmetrical fenestration, returned eaves, and entrances with sidelights and transoms.

Even though the style was quite popular in Whitewater, there are no Greek Revival houses that are potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. This is because the houses that were built with these style elements are the oldest in Whitewater, and because they were built in very simple versions of the style, they have suffered the most from alterations. So, unfortunately, the few houses in Whitewater that have some extant Greek Revival details are not distinctive enough to be eligible for the National Register.

However, it is important to point out some of the buildings in the community that have good, extant, elements of this style, and while not eligible for the National Register, are of architectural interest. Probably the most interesting and well-preserved example of the style is the house at 220 North Jefferson Street. The pre-Civil War house is not elaborate and has a simple gabled ell form. But, it has the symmetrical fenestration and returned eaves, along with a Greek Revival style entrance, that are distinctive details of the style. Its high-quality cream brick construction also adds architectural interest.

Another brick house is a side gable variation of the Greek Revival style. Located at 511 Janesville Street, the house is also of brick (painted) construction and features symmetrical fenestration, returned eaves, and a Greek Revival style entrance. The cream brick cottage at 683 West Harper Street has a simple front gable form with the symmetrical fenestration and the returned eaves of the style. A similar house, but of frame construction, sits at 278 North Fremont Street. A quintessential frame constructed version of the style sits at 229 South Cottage Street. A gabled ell form house, it has the symmetrical fenestration and returned eaves of the style. There were dozens of frame houses built in Whitewater with similar Greek Revival style elements. However, most are either hidden under layers of remodeling, or their style characteristics have been removed.

Italianate

The Italianate style was widely popular in Wisconsin between 1850 and the early 1880s. Since many Wisconsin communities went through an economic boom during this era, Italianate houses are common in most communities. Italianate houses are generally square or rectangular, are two-stories in height topped with hip roofs, and are decorated with wide, overhanging eaves with brackets, arched openings, and picturesque porches with thin posts and decorative brackets. Italianate houses built during the early period of the style's popularity are usually more "boxy," with a low, square plan, a hip roof, and picturesque details. Later Italianate houses are generally taller and more rectangular in plan, with more classical details. During the entire period,

Italianate style elements were also very popular on gabled ell form houses. Formal, decorative Italianate houses with towers are often classified as a sub-style known as the Italian Villa, usually seen in larger cities in Wisconsin.⁵⁵

This description of the style is particularly true for Whitewater. During the 1850s to the mid-1880s, Whitewater experienced its greatest economic growth. Anchoring that growth were the Esterly Manufacturing Company and the Winchester and Partridge Manufacturing Company. Both companies made agricultural implements and the Winchester and Partridge company made wagons. At the same time, the surrounding farms were productive, primarily at growing wheat, a cash crop that helped many farmers become successful. Later, diversified farming and the beginning of the dairy era fueled an agricultural economy that had a positive economic impact on Whitewater.

During this time period, Whitewater's downtown business district grew and developed with brick blocks replacing small frame stores. By 1885, Whitewater's downtown had grown to its largest size in the community's history. The economic growth of this period boosted residential construction, and especially, residential construction for upper class industrialists, merchants, and professionals. The prevailing style of the era was Italianate, so Whitewater is filled with many fine examples of this style, and many lesser examples, as well. Most of the best examples of this style are located in the already-listed Main Street Historic District and in the proposed Fremont Street Historic District. Several of the buildings are designated Whitewater Landmarks.

The finest Italianate house in the city is both a Whitewater Landmark and located in the Main Street Historic District. The Smith-Allen House (445 W. Center St.) is an example of the Italian Villa Style, a more formal and decorative version of the Italianate style that usually includes a tower. The square form, wide eaves with brackets, cornice with dentils, round-arched openings and tall, narrow windows make this house an outstanding example of the style. It can, arguably, be stated that this is the finest nineteenth century house in the city.

Other fine examples of the Italianate style are also located in the Main Street Historic District. Some reflect the early years of the popularity of the style, around 1850-1870, when the square form, low-pitched hip roof, and overhanging eaves with brackets were characteristics that dominated the style. Good examples of this type of Italianate house include the Bassett House (708 W. Main St.), built in 1857, the Sanger Marsh House (522 W. Main St.) built in 1861, and the Lucius Winchester House (532 W. Main St.), built in 1867.

Outside of the historic district, there is a similar Italianate style house that is individually potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. It is the John S. Partridge House (745 W. Center St.), built around 1855. This house is similar to the Lucius Winchester House, which is interesting because they were partners in the Winchester and Partridge Manufacturing Company. Although the houses were built about 10 years apart, the Partridge House has similar details, such as cream brick walls, a low-pitched hip roof with wide eaves and brackets, tall multi-light windows, and a main entrance with sidelights and a transom. Because the Partridge house is a good example of the Italianate style, and because it has retained a high level of integrity, it is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

⁵⁵ Wyatt, p. 2-6.

The square form of the Italianate style is also seen in the James & Ella Rockefeller House (837 S. Janesville Rd.), built in 1867. Like the houses mentioned above, it has cream brick walls and a low-pitched hip roof with wide eaves and brackets, style elements typical of this era of the Italianate style in Whitewater. It is one of the larger of the more vernacular Italianate style houses of the early era, and it is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

While the square form of the Italianate style was the most dominant during the 1855-1870 period, some Italianate houses in Whitewater were built in a more vertical style as early as 1860. A good example of this variation of the style is the J. J. Starin House (507 W. Main St.) built in 1860, and found in the Main Street Historic District. It has a cross gable form with a broad, low-pitched, cross gable roof that extends on all four sides into full pediments that are decorated with wide eaves and brackets. A porch from the 1920s, as well as a large addition, detracts somewhat from the building's original appearance. But, it remains an important landmark in the city.

Before its remodeling in the 1920s, the J. J. Starin House probably looked a lot like the Tuttle house at 401-405 W. Center St., also of brick construction with almost an identical roofline and tall, narrow windows. The house on Center Street, though, has not been altered like the J. J. Starin House, and it retains an abundance of metal cresting and a typical Italianate style bay window. Its integrity makes it potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

A third example of a tall, cross gable Italianate style house is the Newton M. Littlejohn House (429 W. Main St.), built in 1861. Sitting in the Main Street Historic District, its cross gable roof has wide eaves with brackets and its tall, narrow, windows are decorated with pedimented stone lintels, a detail seen on other examples of the style in the district. Its decoration is a bit more light and picturesque than the two examples described above, making it another distinctive variation of the style in the city.

Another interesting example of an Italianate style house outside of the Main Street Historic District, but with a more vertical emphasis is the Starin House (161 N. Fremont St.), built around 1869. The house has a shallow cross gable form with a medium pitched hip roof and wide overhanging eaves. The cream brick walls are punctuated with symmetrically-arched openings, some filled with original six-light windows. It is one of the few examples of the Italianate style in Whitewater with arched openings. A later-added porch does not detract from this fine example of the style that is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

During the 1870s and early 1880s, the more vertical and heavily classically detailed variation of the Italianate style became popular. Again, in the Main Street Historic District, two houses are good examples of this variation of the style. The most notable example is the George W. Esterly House (604 W. Main St.), built in 1876. It has a rectangular form, a hip roof with wide eaves with brackets, elegant round-arched windows, and a round-arched entrance. Giving the house a more vertical emphasis is its steep hip roof and tall and narrow entry pavilion on the main elevation. Similar details and decoration are found on the Nelson Salisbury House (404 W. North St.), built in 1874, and also located in the district.

The square or rectangular form dominated the Italianate Style, but it was regularly used with the gabled ell form. The gabled ell was a form that remained popular through most of the nineteenth

century, and was used primarily for vernacular houses. But, in a larger form, and with elaborate decoration, it could also express the Italianate style quite well, especially in Whitewater.

There are two fine examples of Italianate style houses with the gabled ell form along West Main Street. The first, the William DeWolf House (707 W. Main St.), was built in 1873, and it sits in the Main Street Historic District. The house is elaborately decorated with Italianate details, including wide eaves that return at the gable ends and are decorated with heavy paired brackets. There are arched windows with elaborate window hoods, a bay with round-arched windows, and an ell porch with columns and brackets.

Almost identical is the Tratt House (1014 W. Main St.), built around the same period and no doubt, by the same builder. Its details, including the eaves that return at the gable ends, the heavy paired brackets, and the decorative bay and porch, are very much like the details of the DeWolf house. Because of its high level of integrity and quality of details that make it a fine example of the Italianate style, the Tratt House is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

A group of Whitewater's Italianate style houses were given mansard roofs from the Second Empire style during the late 1870s. One of these houses is a prominent and designated Whitewater Landmark, the Starin Mansion (131 N. Fremont St.). The Starin Mansion was built in 1856, and originally fronted North Street. An 1870 bird's eye view of Whitewater shows that the house appeared to be a variation of the Italian Villa, with a central, recessed, tower section flanked by projecting ells. In 1878, the house was significantly remodeled. The central recessed tower was enlarged to project beyond the ells, as shown in the 1870 view, and the entire building was topped with a very tall mansard roof with dormers. This appearance is shown on the 1885 bird's eye view, but with the orientation of the house still facing North Street. Other details of the house were typically Whitewater Italianate, including tall windows with flat lintels.

Sometime after 1885, probably at the turn of the twentieth century, the orientation of the house was changed to face Fremont Street, and the land in front of the old main entrance facing North Street was sold for housing lots. This resulted in only minor adjustments to the house and did not diminish its quality and its impressive architectural details. Because of this, the Starin Mansion, already a local landmark, is potentially individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The placement of mansard roofs on older houses in Whitewater can be seen in two other notable examples, both in the Main Street Historic District. These are the T. D. Weeks House (452 W. Main St.) and the Kinney-Coxe House (504 W. Main St.), both originally built around 1850, but "modernized" with the addition of a mansard roof in 1879 and 1878, respectively. These houses are not fully developed Second Empire houses, but show how fashion, and perhaps practicality, dictated remodeling in the later nineteenth century in Whitewater.

Second Empire

In some respects, Second Empire houses are Italianate houses with mansard roofs, as their architectural details are very similar. However, the best examples of the Second Empire style,

have mansard roofs that house true upper stories, rather than just attic stories. According to Wisconsin's *Cultural Resource Management Plan*, the Second Empire style of architecture was popular in Wisconsin between 1870 and 1890. The most identifiable characteristic of the style is the mansard roof, almost always punctuated with dormer windows. Most examples are elaborately decorated with Italianate style details. Good examples of the style are rare, due to the fact that the popularity of the style was no where near the popularity of the Italianate style during this period.⁵⁶

As noted above, several houses in Whitewater were given mansard style roofs through remodeling efforts during the period the Second Empire style was popular. But, one house is a more true example of the style. The Hamilton House (328 W. Main St.), originally built in 1868, was remodeled in 1881 and 1887. Ironically, the Hamilton House may have originally been built as a simple gabled ell house with Italianate details. It was the 1881 remodeling that enlarged the house and made it a true version of the Second Empire style. The elaborate mansard roof that was probably added at the time was not so much a roof replacement as it was a total style makeover.

The mansard roof dominates the Hamilton House, and with its inset dormers, the second story is truly a full living story, a detail that is a more accurate interpretation of the style. The Italianate details abound, including a fine Italianate bay on the main elevation and a tall, mansard tower, on the west elevation. The house was again remodeled in 1887 with the addition of an early Queen Anne style bay on the west elevation and a Queen Anne style porch on the east elevation. However, these details do not overwhelm the Second Empire style and only add attractiveness to the overall building. It is a Whitewater Landmark, both literally and figuratively, and its restoration in the late 1980s has given the home a new life that will extend well into the twenty-first century. It is located in the Main Street Historic District.

Octagon

Few communities have as unusual a resource as an octagon house. This rare style was built between 1845 and 1860 in Wisconsin, and Wisconsin is one of the few states to have a concentration of, or even any, octagon houses. The style was developed by Orson Squire Fowler, who promoted this unusually-shaped house as a beautiful and functional building. He felt that this type of house would be cheaper to build and its exterior walls would enclose more space than a rectangle. Around 1850, Fowler came west into Wisconsin and met Joseph Goodrich of Milton, who had built a hexagonal shaped hotel out of grout, an early poured concrete mix. Fowler quickly saw the economy of building with grout and began to promote it with his octagon shaped house.⁵⁷

The octagon house form was not a success and was mainly built by people who were progressive in their thinking. Its pie-shaped rooms were not conducive to furniture arranging, and many people did not want to have a house that stood out as being so different. Fowler was from New York State, and he extensively promoted his octagon house there. Since many early residents in Wisconsin were also from New York State, some brought this idea with them. The result is that

⁵⁶ Wyatt, p. 2-11.

⁵⁷ Wyatt, p. 2-7.

only Wisconsin, New York State, and Massachusetts have concentrations of Octagon houses, and those concentrations are not large. In the 1980s, it was thought that only about 20 Octagon houses were extant in Wisconsin. Some were large, with innovations like running water from cisterns on the roof. Others were smaller, and several were built of grout.⁵⁸

In Whitewater, Lyman Wight, a designer/inventor at the Esterly Manufacturing Company, built a small Octagon house in 1862 (127 Newcomb Street), near his place of work. As a designer, he was one of the progressive thinkers the Octagon house appealed to. Like most Octagon houses, Wight's is decorated with a carved frieze, wide eaves, brackets, and label moldings, all details form the Italianate style. Vinyl siding has been applied to the house, but the decorative details are still extant. The Lyman Wight house has been a Whitewater Landmark for many years, but has never been listed in the National Register. Even though the vinyl siding detracts from the historic integrity of the house, its shape and details are extant, making it potentially eligible for the National Register.

Queen Anne

The economy in Whitewater was strongest in the nineteenth century during the period from 1860 to 1895. This period coincided with the mass popularity of the Italianate style (1850-1885), as mentioned earlier. But, the later years of economic growth in Whitewater coincided with the early popularity of the Queen Anne style (1880-1895), a style that rivaled the Italianate both in popularity and longevity. There are a number of good examples of the Queen Anne style in Whitewater, some in the National Register-listed Main Street Historic District, and others in the proposed Fremont Street Historic District, and still others outside of these districts.

According to Wisconsin's *Cultural Resources Management Plan*, the Queen Anne style was popular in Wisconsin between 1880 and 1910. The style is characterized by asymmetry and irregularity of plan and massing. Queen Anne houses often express their asymmetry with a variety of surface materials such as wood shingles, stone veneer, or stucco. Common details of the style include steeply-pitched multiple gable or combination hip and gable roofs, gable projections, bays with elaborate hoodmoldings or cornices, round or polygonal turrets or oriels, classical details, and large, wrap-around porches.⁵⁹

Arguably the best example of the style in Whitewater is in the Main Street Historic District. It is the Engebretsen-Dorr House (622 W. Main St.), built in 1895. A lavish example of the style, it has an asymmetrical form with projecting gables, an octagonal corner tower, and a wrap-around veranda. The house is clad with a variety of wood materials, including clapboards, wood shingles of various types, and wood decoration. The house has a very high level of integrity, down to the roof replacement that was done a few years ago. The original standing seam metal roof lasted almost 100 years, and the owners replaced it with a modern metal replica.

Another good example of the Queen Anne style sits next door to the Engebretsen-Dorr House in the Main Street Historic District. It is the C. W. Waite House (614 W. Main St.), built in 1896. A bit more symmetrical than the Engebretsen-Dorr House, the Waite House features heavy

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Wyatt, p. 2.15.

classical details, projecting gables, and a fine classically detailed front porch. Like the Waite House, the L. J. Stephens House (430 W. Center St.), built in 1901, is less asymmetrical than the Engebretsen-Dorr House. But, its overall massive plan, large front gable, and classical details make it a fine and well-preserved example of the style. It, too, is in the Main Street Historic District.

These houses in the Main Street Historic District have an architectural style and high level of integrity that all other Queen Anne houses can be compared to in Whitewater. But, there are several examples outside of the district that meet that comparison. The best is the Howard Salisbury House (258 S. Church St.), built in 1887. This design came from architect D. S. Hopkin's plan book. The house has many fine Queen Anne style details, including projecting gables and bays and a wrap-around veranda. The house is clad with wood clapboards and an abundance of other wood details, including large modillions, brackets, dentils, and elaborate wheel-type wood decoration that appears to be a theme of this particular house design.

The house has a high level of integrity with most of its details intact. Because it is a fine example of the Queen Anne style, and because it is the work of a well known plan-book architect, D. S. Hopkins, it is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

A house that relies primarily on its irregular form and massing and its imposing plan to reflect the Queen Anne style is the Spooner-Ambrose House (724 W. Center St.), built in 1892. It has a variety of surface materials, most prominently, clapboard siding and wood shingles. Its bays, projecting gable, unusual dormer, and pedimented front porch are details that reflect the irregularity of the style. This house may have as much historical significance (as the home of noted writer Stephen Ambrose's family, in particular, 20th century civic leader Rosepha Ambrose) as architectural significance, but its imposing form and details make it stand out in the city and make it potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Another interesting example of the Queen Anne style in Whitewater is the Dahlen House (166 N. Fremont St.), built around 1890. This house is picturesque in its interpretation of the Queen Anne style. It does not depend so much on massing and asymmetry, although these elements are present in the design, but interesting wood details, such as bull's eye blocks, wood shingles, and clapboards. Instead of a wrap-around veranda, the house has a simple entry porch with turned posts and a decorated gable. Its most prominent detail is a three-story square tower, a feature that makes it unique in the community. Because it is a fine and unusual interpretation of the Queen Anne style in Whitewater, the Dahlen House is architecturally significant and potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

A more typical interpretation of the Queen Anne style is the McLane House (136 S. Whiton St.), built in 1888. In fact, the basic size and details of this house were probably repeated on many other houses in Whitewater. The main difference is that this house has retained its integrity with original clapboards, porch, wood details, and an irregular form and massing. It is a fine example of a house that is more modest in size than the ones described above, yet, due to its high level of integrity, is significant as an example of the typical middle-class Queen Anne style house in the city. For these reasons, it is potentially eligible for the National Register.

One of the most interesting of the Queen Anne style houses in Whitewater, and one of the most interesting of all houses in Whitewater, is the J. E. Burton Double House (404-406 W. Center St.), built in 1902. Unlike many old homes in Whitewater that were remodeled into duplexes or apartments, this house was originally built as a duplex with details that reflect the Queen Anne style. The building has a basic rectangular form, but is designed to appear irregular and asymmetrical by the use of a large projecting gable on the main elevation and projecting bays. The large, classically-detailed front porch is typical of those seen on Queen Anne houses. What is really interesting about the building is its duplex construction, construction that made the house stand out so much that the local newspaper published an article and a photograph about it. Because of its high level of integrity and interesting Queen Anne style elements, it is architecturally significant and is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

These individual houses represent the best of the Queen Anne style in the city. But, the proposed Fremont Street Historic District also has a concentration of Queen Anne architecture, including the above-mentioned Dahlen House. In fact, the dominant architecture in the proposed Fremont Street Historic District is Queen Anne. In this proposed district, most of the Queen Anne houses are less elaborate than the Dahlen House, but they have a similarity of size, scale, and architectural details that make them, as a group, significant for the style. The Queen Anne style houses in the proposed Fremont Street Historic District are a large part of the reason that the proposed district is architecturally significant and potentially eligible for the National Register.

Period Revival Styles

Between 1900 and 1940, a number of architectural styles known as the period revival styles were popular in Wisconsin. These styles were based on historic architectural styles and included the Colonial Revival, Georgian Revival, Tudor Revival, and Spanish Colonial/Mediterranean Revival styles. These styles revived details from the historic styles upon which they were based. For example, the Colonial Revival style featured simple symmetrical forms and simple classical details.⁶⁰

The period revival styles were popular during an era when Whitewater's growth was stagnant or declining (see historical background). Therefore, home construction was also slow and there were not enough people with enough money in Whitewater to build large period revival houses. Rather, most period revival houses in Whitewater are small and simple. In fact, there were no houses identified in the survey that were architecturally significant for any of the period revival styles. So, no individual houses were identified as potentially eligible for the National Register.

But, an area just northwest of the city's downtown, platted in the early twentieth century, contains a concentration of simple period revival houses that reflect the residential growth of Whitewater during this era. This area, along North Franklin Street and North Esterly Avenue, has good examples of Bungalow and Craftsman style houses, but also the best concentration of period revival houses in the city. These examples include the Colonial Revival style, the Dutch Colonial Revival style, the Tudor Revival style, and even the Mediterranean Revival style. The area has been proposed as the Franklin-Esterly Historic District and it is potentially eligible for the National Register.

⁶⁰ Wyatt, pp. 2-28—2-33.

Prairie, Craftsman, and Bungalow Styles

As indicated above, Whitewater's slow economy in the first half of the twentieth century, prohibited the growth of large, elaborate, houses with then fashionable architectural styles. But, one of the most popular styles that was perfect for modest houses was the Bungalow style. Bungalows were developed as functional homes that also reflected the period's emphasis on craftsmanship, a trend that emerged from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Arts and Crafts movement. The Arts and Crafts movement also influenced the development of the Prairie and Craftsman styles. Prairie and Craftsman style houses were largely built for upper middle class and wealthy families in larger cities. But, the Bungalow style was commonly built for middle and working class families throughout the state between 1910 and 1940. The hallmarks of the Bungalow style are wide, often sloping roofs; large porches; and Arts and Crafts details like knee-brace brackets, exposed rafters, and natural materials. The interior of most Bungalows were designed with an abundance of plain, but high quality, woodwork and amenities like built in cabinets and bookshelves.⁶¹

The best examples of the Bungalow style in Whitewater are found in the proposed Fremont Street Historic District and the proposed Franklin-Esterly Historic District. The bungalows in the proposed Fremont Street Historic District range from a one-story cube with a low-pitched hip roof with inset dormer and a wide front porch at 216 North Fremont Street, to the two-story, sloping gable-roofed example right across the street at 217 North Fremont Street, with its massive front porch, large dormer, and decorative Arts and Crafts style brackets. On Park Street (149), there is a quintessential Bungalow, a one-and one-half story house with a very low-pitched intersecting gable roof and knee-brace brackets.

In the proposed Franklin-Esterly Historic District, there are many good variations of the Bungalow style. Typical are the Bungalows at 143 and 212 North Franklin Street. Both are two-story houses with low-pitched sloping roofs, large dormers, front porches and square, shallow, bays. Their "natural" materials include wood shingles, brick, and wood clapboards. Another natural material popular for bungalows was stucco, and this district has a good example of a stucco-covered bungalow (184 N. Franklin St.). It is similar in design to the two bungalows described above, except for a stucco covering and very large knee-brace brackets. Fieldstone, another natural material, accents the porch posts.

Having good examples of the Bungalow style adds to the architectural significance of both the proposed Fremont Street and Franklin-Esterly Street Historic Districts and helps make them both potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The Craftsman style is similar to the Bungalow style in its use of natural materials and high-quality craftsmanship. The main difference is that the Bungalow style has a low, horizontal, form and massing and a roof that usually projects or slopes beyond the main elevation to form a porch roof. Craftsman style houses are generally more vertical in their form and massing. Many Craftsman style houses have wood shingled second stories and brick first stories, while others are totally covered with wood shingles.⁶²

⁶¹ Wyatt, p. 2-26.

⁶² Wyatt, p. 2-24.

The Craftsman style is unusual in Whitewater. There are some small houses that have the Craftsman style's form and massing, along with exposed rafters or knee-brace brackets, but there are no good examples of this style. Probably the best example is at 136 N. Park St. in the proposed Fremont Street Historic District. In the proposed Franklin-Esterly Street Historic District, there are a few houses with details that suggest this style, but nothing that would be potentially eligible for the National Register.

The Prairie Style was developed in the architectural firms of Chicago. Young architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, began to develop a radical new style of architecture at the turn of the twentieth century. The new style was called "Prairie" because its long and low form seemingly echoed the prairie landscape of the Midwest. The Prairie Style was unlike anything developed in American architecture and, like the Craftsman and Bungalow styles, it was related to the Arts and Crafts movement. But, Prairie Style buildings are much more radical in their horizontal emphasis, low rooflines, wide overhanging eaves, and windows grouped in horizontal bands. Due to Frank Lloyd Wright's affiliation with Wisconsin, and his influence on Midwest architects, this state has many good examples of the style. Style elements were also used in simple houses, like the houses built in Whitewater in the first part of the twentieth century.⁶³

There are no buildings in Whitewater that are fully developed versions of the Prairie Style. But, there are several buildings that appear to be influenced by this style. The first is the house at 318 West Center Street. Its low-pitched hip roof with wide eaves and bands of regular sash windows suggest the Prairie Style. The stucco covering of this house was a popular natural material used for many Prairie Style houses.

Three almost identical houses in Whitewater express elements of the Prairie Style. They are located at 119 North Fremont Street, 227 Boone Court, and 122 South Whiton Street. The house at 119 North Fremont Street is larger, but they all have almost identical details, including hip roofs with wide eaves, stucco coverings, wide front porches, and grouped windows with belt courses. All of these details suggest the horizontal emphasis typical of the Prairie Style.

These Prairie-influenced houses are not architecturally significant and not potentially eligible for the National Register. But, they are of interest because they show similar details that strongly suggest the possibility that they were constructed by the same builder, who may have used a plan book as a guide. The house on North Fremont Street is located in the proposed Fremont Street Historic District and does contribute to the architectural significance of that district.

Modern and Ranch Houses

The Great Depression of the 1930s, and World War II and its shortages in the 1940s, stunted the growth of residential construction at a time when architecture was making a transition between historic styles and modern influences. During the 1950s, though, the economy improved and built-up housing shortages forced an abundance of new construction. In the 1950s, much of this new construction reflected the popular Cape Cod and Ranch styles. During the 1960s, the Cape Cod style fell out of favor, and the Ranch style became even more popular. Ranch houses were particularly popular in the new subdivisions growing up on the edges of both large and small

⁶³ Wyatt, p. 2-21

cities alike. Sometimes constructed by a single builder, these new subdivisions were filled with similar variations of the Ranch house, some even with identical plans.

A few architects and builders, though, offered progressive designs, and as the later twentieth progressed, some houses were built in a style that would be called Contemporary. These houses rejected the rigid Ranch form in favor of steeply-pitched roofs, multiple stories, vertical siding, and large amounts of glazing, even glass walls. Some modern designs continued to emphasize the design elements of the Prairie Style, and until his death in the late 1950s, Frank Lloyd Wright was still active in pushing the envelope of modern design.

In Whitewater, most of the post-World War II era residential construction reflected the Ranch style. And, while most of these houses are non-descript, some reflect interesting local building details. For example, a group of early Ranch style houses along North Park Street have simple Ranch style plans, but are clad with a distinctive stone veneer in soft brown and tan colors. Throughout the rest of the community, there are a few other interesting Ranch style houses that were added to this survey. But, overall, except for the group of Ranch style houses along North Park Street, there are no distinctive areas, as yet, that stand out because of their modern styles. In the future, a more thorough investigation of the Ranch style in Whitewater, and the building practices of Whitewater builders during this era, should be undertaken.

There are two distinctive houses in Whitewater that are individually potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for their modern styles. One is significant as the work of a notable modern architect. It is the house at 336 North Prairie Street, built in 1942, and designed by William Kaeser. The house has a long, low form that sits on a raised basement or lower level. It has a flat roof with wide eaves and bands of large windows.

The design of this house is progressive for 1942, and it is related to the International Style. The International Style was popular in the 1930s and 1940s, but the lack of construction during that era makes the style rare in most communities. The International Style emphasized flat roofs and window bands of large windows. The design of this house is so progressive, it could easily be confused with a Contemporary home from the 1970s. Because of its fine design and its association with William Kaeser, a notable modern designer, it is architecturally significant and potentially eligible for the National Register.

One of the most fascinating modern houses built in Whitewater is the Moksnes House (938 Highland St.) constructed in 1971 for Stephen and Billie Moksnes. Fritz Dreger, a Wisconsin architect, designed this Contemporary house, which stands out among houses built in Whitewater during that era. The house has a horizontal emphasis with flared walls, a low-pitched roof, and window bands under the wide roof eaves. It is a fine modern design that is architecturally significant and potentially eligible for the National Register even though it is not yet 50 years old. It is the best example of late twentieth century modern residential design.

Commercial Architecture

Italianate

The best examples of commercial architectural styles from the nineteenth century are found in the proposed Downtown Historic District. This is because downtown Whitewater's buildings date primarily from the 1850s to 1890. And, most of these examples are from the Italianate style, a style that was most popular in small communities at this time. In fact, the Italianate style remained popular for commercial buildings in small communities until 1900, long after it was no longer popular for residential architecture.

The development of Whitewater's downtown into a compact area of almost all Italianate-influenced buildings happened during a 40 year period. The first buildings in downtown Whitewater were constructed primarily in the early 1840s and were small frame buildings, some that resembled houses. If they had a style at all, it was the Greek Revival style, with symmetrical fenestration and returned eaves. Show windows were small and multi-paned, due to the expense of glass at the time. A few larger buildings were constructed during the 1840s, most notably two hotels on Main Street, and they, too, reflected the Greek Revival style.

The 1850s was an economically prosperous era in Wisconsin, and in Whitewater, larger commercial businesses were established. Local builders began to use Whitewater-made bricks to construct larger buildings. By 1860, one block on one side of Main Street was almost totally filled with brick blocks. But, the development of the downtown buildings we see today took several more decades.

In the late 1860s and throughout the 1870s, most of the buildings constructed in Whitewater's downtown were brick blocks, built of locally produced bricks. This building boom continued into the early 1880s. Large fires in the late 1860s and early 1870s facilitated this reconstruction by destroying many of the frame buildings and some early brick buildings, as well. Between 1870 and 1885, builders constructed almost all of the buildings that now make up downtown Whitewater. Because that was also the period of the popularity of the Italianate Style, most of these buildings feature Italianate details. These Italianate details, added to the fact that most buildings were constructed cream colored Whitewater Brick, gave the downtown an architectural cohesiveness that can still be seen today.

Because of the nature of downtown Whitewater, as described above, a Downtown Historic District was identified as a result of this survey effort, and it is both historically and architecturally significant. The historic significance of the proposed district is covered in the Commerce chapter. The architectural significance of this proposed district is covered here and can be stated as follows; the proposed Downtown Historic District is architecturally significant and potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places because of its concentration of good and distinctive examples of nineteenth century Italianate commercial architecture.

In commercial buildings, the Italianate style is usually seen in window and cornice decoration. Windows are commonly round or segmentally arched, and cornices are often made up of brick corbelling that almost always suggests round arches or brackets. An applied cast iron cornice is

also typical and generally features brackets and rectangular panels. The bulk of the Italianate details of the buildings are, today, most often seen on the upper stories. But, many Italianate blocks were built with round-arched storefronts. During the late nineteenth century, most of these original storefronts were replaced with rectangular cast-iron storefronts with large plate glass windows, a form that most people think of as an “historic” storefront.

In Whitewater, much of the Italianate style of the downtown buildings can be seen in their round or segmentally arched upper story openings and in brick corbelled cornices. Historic photographs show that there were some fine cast iron cornices that sat above the brick corbelling on many downtown buildings. But, even without these cornices, buildings in downtown Whitewater reflect the Italianate commercial style almost exclusively.

One of the earliest extant examples of the Italianate style in the downtown is the Central Block (147-151 W. Main St.), constructed in 1856. Although suffering from some inappropriate alterations, the building, with its large triple storefront, is impressive. It has a course of round arched brick corbelling at the cornice level. Delicate round brick arches accent the original round-arched openings. An historic photograph shows an applied cornice with brackets and dentils, but it is not extant. The building’s best features are the round-arched tripartite openings. The Central Block was one of the largest commercial buildings ever constructed in Whitewater. With a restoration effort, it could, again, dominate the architecture of Main Street.

One of the best examples of the Italianate commercial style is the Chamberlin-Hall Block (161 W. Main St.), built in two sections in 1856 and 1873. The rear section of the building was constructed first, during the first wave of brick block construction in Whitewater. It has typical 1850s Italianate style elements, including tall window openings decorated with pediment window hoods, one of the common motifs found on Italianate style commercial buildings in Whitewater. The front section of the building, constructed in 1873, has more elaborately decorated windows. They are round-arched and topped with heavy round arches with brackets and keystones sitting on pilasters that end, on the third story, in stone sills with corbels. The first floor of the building has been remodeled several times, and it exists today with simple Classical Revival details from the twentieth century.

A building with similar window detail is the Hahn Block (112 S. First St.), built in 1878. This building has retained a cornice with brackets that sits on a line of brick corbelling that also suggests brackets. Windows are round-arched and decorated with the same kind of moldings seen in the Chamberlin-Hall Block. These windows are repeated on the first floor south elevation, and the main entrance also features a round arch. A large show window with plate glass sits on the east elevation. Pilasters accent the entrances and windows.

The earlier-constructed Clark Block (179 W. Main St.), built in 1863 has the most elaborate second story decoration in the district. The heavy brick corbelled cornice suggests brackets and is raised at the center to form a round arch. A round brick arch with large keystone also decorates the central window group of the second story. A first floor cararra glass storefront is done in the Art Deco style and adds to the architectural distinction of this building.

Two buildings that have recently been renovated also have round-arched openings and interesting cornices. They are the Post Office Block (137 W. Main St.), built in 1870 and the *Whitewater Register* building (135 W. Main St.), built around 1887. The Post Office Block's Italianate style details include tall, round-arched, windows and a brick corbelled cornice with dentils and brackets. The *Whitewater Register* building was constructed about 17 years later, yet continues the Italianate style with its cornice with brackets and rectangular panels and round-arched and segmentally-arched openings. These buildings had heavily remodeled storefronts that have recently been replaced with modern storefronts of large show windows and transoms, details that harmonize much better with the original architecture of the buildings.

Around 1870, three connecting Italianate style brick buildings were constructed on Whitewater Street (156-160 Whitewater St.), and two have retained much of their historic appearance. A recent renovation opened up the enclosed windows of these buildings, bringing back more of their historic character. The original storefronts are extant in both of these buildings, and illustrate the use of round-arched windows and doors common to pre-1880 Italianate style buildings. The use of round-arched openings, along with multi-pane storefronts, fell out of favor after 1880, when large plate glass became affordable and available. After that time, most round-arched or multi-paned Italianate style storefronts were replaced with plate glass storefronts and Whitewater was no exception. These buildings add to the architectural significance of the proposed Downtown Historic District because not only do they have important Italianate style elements, but they have their original Italianate-style storefronts.

The Italianate style continued to be popular in commercial buildings well into the 1880s, at a time when it was beginning to wane in residential construction. Two downtown buildings are examples of the later use of the Italianate style. The Cox-Hewitt Block (175-177 W. Main St.) and the Miller-Scherer Block (174-176 W. Main St.) were both built in 1883 and have similar characteristics. They have similar arched openings on their second stories that are decorated with window hoods featuring brackets and geometric keystones. The Miller-Scherer Block still has its Italianate style cornice with brackets and dentils. They illustrate how the style maintained its popularity in the later nineteenth century.

The individual buildings mentioned above are the best examples of the style in Whitewater. But, they are not the only reason that the proposed Downtown Historic District is architecturally significant. Perhaps even more importantly, there are groups of buildings in the proposed district that are similar in size, scale, and details that, while not distinctive individually, stand out as a group for their Italianate-influenced details. These buildings have simple brick corbelled cornices and round-arched openings that are decorated with simple arches. Many are located along Main Street, but a distinctive group of these buildings sit on the south side of Center Street.

In particular, the south side of the 100 block of West Center Street, has a group of almost identical two-story buildings with second story round arched windows with simple round arches that run together in an almost continuous pattern. This detail is called an "arcaded" effect, and when viewed from across the street, presents a cohesive streetscape of buildings. This unusual effect is distinctive and adds to the architectural significance of the proposed Downtown Historic District.

Other Styles

There is no question that the Italianate style dominates the commercial buildings of downtown Whitewater. But there are a few additional buildings that add to the overall architectural significance of the proposed Downtown Historic District. One of these buildings is the Stewart Block (155-159 W. Main St.), a large double-storefront block that has details that suggest the Victorian Gothic style. The three story building has tall and narrow windows, compared to most commercial buildings in Whitewater. They are decorated with tall, jack arches and tall and narrow keystones. The cornice forms a gable at the center and a line of brick corbelling features pointed arches, rather than round arches. Pilasters are long and streamlined. The result is a building that appears much “lighter” than its heavily accented neighbors. The building is prominent for its size and its double storefronts on both Main and Center Streets. The storefronts on Center Street are mostly original, with cast iron pillars and large show windows. A recent renovation gave the heavily remodeled storefronts on the Main Street elevation a more attractive appearance and also restored the storefronts of the Center Street elevation.

Another individually distinctive building is the Van Voorhes Armory Block (200-206 Whitewater St.), built in 1887. With the attached Van Voorhes Addition (210-212 Whitewater St.), built in 1888, and the attached Julius Johnson building (214 Whitewater St.), added in 1890, this building group takes up almost an entire block and presents a distinctive appearance in the downtown. The Armory Block is the largest in the group, and it features simple classical details with an unusual mansard roof. This tall roof was specifically built for the old Whitewater Armory between 1887 and 1940.

The two additions to the Armory block, one done by the original owner, add to the architectural significance of the entire building group and reflect a style that was not used extensively in downtown Whitewater. The Van Voorhes Addition has details that reflect the Queen Anne style. In 1888, when it was built, it would not have been unusual for the building to continue the Italianate style. But, Van Voorhes had already used classical elements to the Armory Block, elements that are often seen on commercial Queen Anne style buildings. The bracketed cornice and bay windows of the addition make a break from the dominance of the Italianate style in the downtown.

A thorough break from the Italianate style is seen in the attached Julius Johnson building. Its tall bay with pent roof is a more stylistic interpretation of the Queen Anne style, and its cornice has more prominent classical elements. This group of buildings had extensively remodeled storefronts until recently. Fortunately, though, cast iron columns were extant, and using them as a guide, all of the storefronts were renovated in a modern, but much more attractive manner, with the cast iron columns left extant.

Due to the economic decline in Whitewater after the mid-1890s, few additional buildings were constructed in the downtown after that period. Rather, the existing nineteenth century buildings were used throughout the twentieth century with some remodeling and updating. One notable exception is the Commercial and Savings Bank (171 W. Main St.), constructed in 1914. It either replaced or greatly renovated an older building on its site. The bank used the popular

architectural firm of Van Ryn & DeGelleke to design a fine and “modern” example of the Classical Revival style.

In 1914, most architects designed bank buildings with heavy cut limestone pillars, cornices, and frontispieces. These details were even used on small bank buildings because they suggested prominence and stability. But, in the Commercial and Savings Bank, Van Ryn & DeGelleke designed a much lighter and streamlined version of the style. Instead of heavy pillars, the architects used shallow brick pilasters to support a modest stone frieze. The only elaborate classical detail is a cornice with modillions. The design appears to be a result of the architects vision of modern classical design and resulted in a distinctive building that still stands up today as attractive and modern.

Like the modern Classical Revival bank building they constructed in 1914, the Commercial Bank constructed another modern and unusual building for their new bank facility 60 years later. The new building (200 S. Fremont St.) was constructed in 1975 in the Wrightian style. That means that the design continued the ideas that Frank Lloyd Wright was promoting in the mid-twentieth century. What is interesting is that the bank’s ownership and board of directors specifically requested a “Wrightian” look for their building and contracted local Fort Atkinson architect, Gene LaMuro to execute the design.

The bank building is circular, with an almost “space ship” appearance. Banded and arched clerestory windows sit under the wide curved concrete eaves of the round roof. The exterior is clad with high-quality stone veneer. It is reflective of Wright’s round Greek Orthodox Church design that is located near Milwaukee, but it is not a copy of that building, but LaMuro’s own interpretation of a modern, round, design. The building has a high level of integrity, including an intact interior. Although the building is not 50 years old, it is so distinctive and important in the architectural fabric of Whitewater, that it meets the criteria for architectural significance and is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Church Architecture

Gothic Revival

The Gothic Revival style is the most important style that was used in churches during the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth century. The style was only briefly popular in Wisconsin for houses during the mid-nineteenth century, but was popular for churches from the 1850s well into the 1950s. Even today, some modern churches are decorated with the steeply-pitched roof and gothic arches of the style.

The hallmarks of the Gothic Revival style in churches are steeply-pitched rooflines, gothic or pointed arched openings, towers with battlements, and wall buttresses. Three fine Gothic Revival style churches are located in Whitewater’s Main Street Historic District. The oldest is St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, a fine stone-constructed building completed in 1869 (150 Church St.). The building has all the notable elements of the style, including a steeply-pitched roof, corner tower with battlements, pointed arch openings and wall buttresses. It is a beautiful example of the style and a distinctive architectural resource of the district.

The second Gothic Revival church in the Main Street Historic District was built over 50 years later, yet it has very similar gothic details. It is a good example of the endurance of the style in church building. St. John's Lutheran Church (116 Church St.), built in 1924, is a red brick structure of about the same size as St. Luke's. And like St. Luke's it features a steeply-pitched roof, two towers with battlements, pointed arch openings, and wall buttresses. The main difference in St. John's design is its polychromatic exterior of red brick accented with smooth grey limestone.

Perhaps the most interesting church in the Main Street Historic District is the primarily Gothic Revival church design of the First English Lutheran Church (401 W. Main St.), built in 1886 as the Baptist Church. The stone construction, steeply-pitched gable roof and corner tower with battlements are all from the Gothic Revival style. However, the openings are a combination of pointed arches and round arches, giving the church a distinctive appearance that sets it apart from the other Gothic Revival churches in town.

There are two architecturally significant churches that were built in the Gothic Revival style that are outside of the Main Street Historic District. They are both potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The First United Methodist Church (145 S. Prairie St.), built in 1873, is a massive cream brick structure with highly distinctive gothic details. The church is very tall with an extreme steeply-pitched gable roof that is accented with other steeply-pitched gables. Very tall pointed arch windows decorate the building, and there is a very large gothic-arched opening on the main elevation. A tall corner tower with an elongated spire accents the southwest corner of the main block, and it is decorated with unusual tall, flared, buttresses. The distinctive details of this church resulted in a designation as a Whitewater Landmark, and are what makes it architecturally significant and potentially eligible for the National Register.

A post-World War II version of the Gothic Revival style is also architecturally distinctive in Whitewater. In the 1950s, some churches were still being designed in the traditional Gothic Revival style. St. Patrick's Catholic Church (1235 W. Main St.) was built in 1958, and although still gothic, it is a modern variation of the style that is well designed and distinctive. The brick veneered church has a long main block with a steeply-pitched gable roof that slopes down on the sides over half of the side walls. The main elevation has a very large pointed arched opening decorating the main entrance, and there are pointed arches in entry pavilions located elsewhere on the church building. A pointed-arched walkway extends east from the church to the parsonage.

St. Patrick's Catholic Church is a fine modern variation of a Gothic Revival style church. It is streamlined and indicative of modern post-World War II architecture. Yet, the gothic arch remains as a major motif, illustrating the hold this style had on twentieth century religious architecture. The church building has a high level of integrity, that, along with its distinctive style elements, makes it potentially eligible for the National Register.

Romanesque Revival

The Romanesque Revival style was also an important religious architectural style, although not used as often as the Gothic Revival style. Romanesque Revival style churches usually share

some details with the Gothic Revival style, including steeply-pitched roofs, towers, and buttresses. But, the main difference is in the openings. In the Romanesque Revival style, the openings are all round-arched and there is an emphasis, in brick buildings, on round-arched brick corbel tables. Although also seen in Gothic Revival church buildings, the use of the rose or wheel-shaped window is common in Romanesque style churches.

The First Congregational Church (130 S. Church St.), built in 1881, is a fine example of the Romanesque Revival style, and it is an important architectural resource in the Main Street Historic District. The church has beautiful cream brick walls and a tall, intersecting, steeply-pitched gable roof. The very tall, square tower is accented with buttresses, and all of the openings are round-arched. One of the outstanding artistic features of the church is a large rose window in the main elevation. About the size of the Methodist Church, the Congregational Church is also a physical landmark in the community.

Public Architecture

High Victorian Gothic

The High Victorian Gothic style is an unusual style in Wisconsin, particularly in small towns. Popular between about 1865 and 1900, this style is normally much heavier in its use of materials and details than its related Gothic Revival style. The hallmark of the style is the use of polychromatic effects that are executed with building materials of different colors and textures. Some buildings have pointed arches and spires with pinnacles.

A fine example of this style is seen in architect J. T. W. Jennings' design for the Whitewater Passenger Depot (310 Whitewater St.), built in 1890. The smooth vermilion colored brick walls are heavily accented with a light grey rusticated limestone foundation, tabbed surrounds, and pilasters. Projecting gables on the front and rear elevations of the building have this same polychromatic effect; with curved smooth brick pilasters topped with triangular stone caps, limestone belt courses, and a steep gable parapet of carved limestone. These gables are not only polychromatic, but they also give the building a distinctive gothic effect. The building is a local landmark and is also potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Classical Revival

The Classical Revival style was one of the first of the period revival styles to emerge in the late nineteenth century. Later, other historical styles would come to dominate residential architecture. The Classical Revival style became popular after the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, which featured a "white city" of formal, classical buildings painted white. Many architects of the style were graduates of the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, and were greatly influenced by the classicism they saw in that city. Details of the style include symmetrical form and massing and, often, large-scale classical details. The style was interpreted in a "heavy," almost ponderous manner, so it became popular primarily for public and institutional buildings. The style was most popular between 1895 and 1930, but it lingered on well into the 1930s.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Wyatt, p. 2-18.

Several public buildings in Whitewater are distinctive examples of the Classical Revival style. One is individually listed in the National Register, and one is in the Main Street Historic District. The third is in downtown Whitewater and is potentially eligible for the National Register.

In the Main Street Historic District, the White Memorial Library (402 W. Main St.), built in 1903-04, is a good example of simple classicism with its hip roof, wide frieze, entrance decorated with colossal Ionic columns and a full pediment, and windows with glazing in an x pattern. The building also has architectural interest as one of the standard library designs by the noted architectural firm of Claude and Starck of Madison. Known for their Prairie style houses, the firm designed many libraries, a number using this stock design.

Probably the best example of the Classical Revival style in Whitewater is the Masonic Temple (226 W. Main Street), built in 1904. The tall red brick building is dominated by a large portico supported by colossal columns under a full pediment. Windows of the first story are decorated with heavy jack arches, and most windows feature single panes topped with multi-light transoms. Brick corbelling at the corners suggests quoins. The building is a fine example of the style and is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The Classical Revival style remained popular in institutional buildings into the 1930s, although due to modern influences and funding shortages, these buildings were often more streamlined examples of the style. A good example of this trend is the Whitewater Post Office (213 W. Center St.), built in 1936, and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Although it is a stripped-down version of the style, it is elegant, with delicate classical details.

Construction Materials

Stone Construction

According to Wisconsin's *Cultural Resource Management Plan*, stone construction is found throughout Wisconsin and stone was used for the construction of buildings with high architectural styles and simple vernacular forms. In constructing stone buildings, local masons used quarried stone and laid it in walls with a sand and lime mortar. When the stone weathered, the buildings took on distinct visual qualities and colors that reflected the type of stone used and the place it was quarried from. There are concentrations of stone buildings from the early years of the Wisconsin territory in the lead mining region of southwestern Wisconsin, as well as important pockets of stone construction in areas just north of Milwaukee, in Dane and Sauk counties, near Waukesha, and in far northern Wisconsin. In other areas of the state, there are many examples, some clustered, of local quarried stone construction and individual stone buildings can be found in almost all areas of the state.⁶⁵

There is a limestone quarry just south of Whitewater, but cut stone was never used extensively in the city as a building material, except for foundations, and in the downtown, for rear and party walls. The best example of stone construction in the city is the water tower in Starin Park, built in 1889. The regularly coursed rusticated limestone walls are laid up in stepped sections that expand from larger to smaller as the structure rises. The walls are accented with belt courses and

⁶⁵ Wyatt, pp. 4-6—4-7.

round arches. Also historically significant, the water tower is distinctive for its stone construction and potentially eligible for the National Register.

A second example of stone construction in Whitewater is also distinctive. It is the recently reconstructed stone stable (Whitewater St.), dating to c.1845 and reconstructed in 2007. Originally located in an ally behind the First English Lutheran Church, the building was de-constructed and moved in order to preserve it as a unique resource in the community. The small building originally featured randomly coursed stone rubble construction, and this technique was used by master masons to reconstruct the building. Although the stone rubble could not be reconstructed in exactly the same positions as in the original building, all major stones, including a large arch over the main entrance, were replaced in their exact positions. The wooden wall and roof structure, and the wood floor, were marked when deconstructed, and were put back into the building exactly as they were found. The original wood shingle roof was replicated. The stone stable is a fine example of a reconstructed pioneer-era stone building. It was moved and uniquely reconstructed to retain its original character and is, today, a Whitewater landmark.

Brick Construction

According to Wisconsin's *Cultural Resource Management Plan*, the earliest brick making in Wisconsin was done in small kilns throughout the state. Because early brick makers used local surface clays, the bricks from this era took on a variety of colors. Later bricks took on a consistent hue. In south central and southeastern Wisconsin, there were significant concentrations of light clays that produced cream colored bricks. The Milwaukee area is famous for its bricks of this color, but the entire region produced cream bricks. In central and western Wisconsin, there were significant concentrations of clays that produced red bricks and communities in these areas of the state have large numbers of red brick buildings. Eventually, large brick making firms took over the business from local kilns. The centralization of brick making and changing architectural tastes in the twentieth century resulted in the use of generic tan and red bricks for buildings throughout the state.⁶⁶

Whitewater had brick makers almost from the beginning of its founding. The area had fine light colored clay that produced not only good bricks, but fostered a thriving pottery industry during the mid-nineteenth century. The first brickyard in Whitewater was founded in 1841 by William Wood on the south side of town. Like many early brickyards that used only surface clays, the bricks produced in this early yard were of a reddish hue.⁶⁷

A more important brickyard was started by George Dann on the northeast side of Whitewater in 1847. This brickyard was still operating into the late nineteenth century. Albert Kendall started a brickyard on the west side of Fremont Street in 1852. A. Y. Chamberlin started a brick and drain tile yard nearby in 1866 and operated the yard until 1875. In 1879, Joseph Dann and Edward Roethe started a brickyard near George Dann's old yard. Roethe dropped out of the firm, but Dann operated it until 1891, then sold it to Charles Martin, who only operated it for two

⁶⁶ Wyatt, pp. 4-10—4-11.

⁶⁷ Prosper Cravath and Spencer Steele, *Early Annals of Whitewater, 1837-1867*, Whitewater: Whitewater Federation of Women's Clubs, 1906, p. 230.

years before closing. In 1903, the Whitewater Brick and Tile Company was established and produced brick and tile until the 1940s.⁶⁸

Whitewater's local bricks became an important building material for both residential and commercial buildings during the nineteenth century. In fact, the use of Whitewater brick gave the community a distinctive appearance. Most of the prominent houses in Whitewater built during the Italianate style era were constructed with Whitewater brick. For example, in the Main Street Historic District, 13 houses are constructed of Whitewater brick. Outside of the district, the potentially eligible Tuttle, Partridge, and Rockefeller houses, and the Starin Mansion and Starin House are all constructed of Whitewater brick. In the proposed Downtown Historic District, the majority of the brick blocks are constructed of Whitewater brick.

The use of Whitewater brick gives these areas a distinctive appearance and this appearance carries into other areas of the city's built environment. For example, there are a series of small brick houses along Janesville Street that were built during the Italianate era. If these small, square houses were clad with clapboards, they would probably be remodeled with artificial siding materials like other small houses along the street. But, because they are constructed of Whitewater brick, they not only have fewer alterations, but have a cohesive appearance that enhances that neighborhood. Other vernacular houses in the city are also enhanced and have retained their integrity because they were constructed of Whitewater brick.

The use of Whitewater brick is not a definitive factor in the eligibility of any particular building in the city, but it was an important component of the architectural significance of the Main Street Historic District, which has a concentration of brick houses. It is also an important component of the architectural significance of the proposed Downtown Historic District, where its use is pervasive. It is also an important component of the architectural significance of the individually eligible Tuttle, Partridge, Rockefeller, and Starin houses, and the Starin Mansion.

Architects and Builders

The following architects were identified with the following buildings in Whitewater.

George Bradley & Son

Engebretsen-Dorr House, 622 W. Main St. (Main Street Historic District)

Bray Architects

Whitewater High School, 534 S. Elizabeth St.

Claude and Starck

White Memorial Library, 402 W. Main St. (Main Street Historic District)

Fritz Dreger

Stephen and Billie Moksnes House, 938 Highland St.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*; Liz Wright, "Brick Industry Started Early in Whitewater," *Whitewater Register*, 6 February 1975, on file in the local history files of the Whitewater Historical Society, Whitewater, Wisconsin.

D. S. Hopkins

Howard Salisbury House, 258 S. Church St.

J. T. W. Jennings

Whitewater Passenger Depot, 310 Whitewater St.

William Kaeser

House, 336 North Prairie St.

H. C. Koch

G. W. Esterly House, 604 W. Main St. (Main Street Historic District)

Gene LaMuro

Commercial Bank, 200 S. Fremont St.

Van Ryn & DeGelleke

Commercial and Savings Bank, 171 W. Main St.

The following local builders were identified with the following buildings in Whitewater.

John Bonnett (mason)

Commercial and Savings Bank, 171 W. Main St.

Bonnett Brothers (masons)

Miller-Scherer Block, 174-176 W. Main St.

Cox-Hewitt Block, 175-177 W. Main St.

Joseph Bower (mason, builder, developer)

Bower Block, 139 W. Main St.

Bower Block, 143 W. Main St.

Bower's Hotel, 183-187 W. Main St.

Bower's New Metropolitan block, 123-133 W. Center St.

Bower-Thorpe Finance Building, 144 W. Main St.

Christianson Block, 146 W. Main St.

Patrick Connors Block, 150-154 W. Main St.

Clark Block, 179 W. Main St.

Cox-Hewitt Block, 175-177 W. Main St.

Fose Block, 140 W. Center St.

Littlejohn Blocks, 182-186 W. Main St.

Post Office Block, 137 W. Main St.

Rothe Block, 140 W. Main St.

Salisbury Double Block, 130 W. Center St. & 110 S. 1st St.

Nelson Salisbury (builder)

Sanger Marsh House, 522 W. Main St. (Main Street Historic District)

Lucius Winchester House, 532 W. Main St. (Main Street Historic District)

Nelson Salisbury House, 404 W. North St. (Main Street Historic District)

C. M. Sykes (carpenter)

Starin Mansion, 131 N. Fremont St. (1878 remodeling)

Hamilton House, 328 W. Main St. (1887 remodeling; Main Street Historic District)

Newton Wells (carpenter)

Commercial and Savings Bank, 171 W. Main St.

There were many other carpenters and masons working in Whitewater during its historic period and in the twentieth century, businesses like the Home Lumber Company, were responsible for the construction of many homes. Home Lumber Company is still active today and participates in new home construction.

Surveyed Resources Mentioned in the Text

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>National Register Status</i>
<i>Residential Architecture</i>		
<i>Italianate</i>		
Main Street Historic District		Listed
Tuttle House	401-405 W. Center St.	Potentially eligible
John S. Partridge House	745 W. Center St.	Potentially eligible
Starin Mansion	131 N. Fremont St.	Potentially eligible***#
Starin House	161 N. Fremont St.	Potentially eligible**
James & Ella Rockefeller House	837 S. Janesville Rd.	Potentially eligible
Tratt House	1014 W. Main St.	Potentially eligible
<i>Second Empire</i>		
Hamilton House	328 W. Main St.	Listed*#
<i>Octagon</i>		
Lyman Wight Octagon House	127 Newcomb St.	Potentially eligible#
<i>Queen Anne</i>		
Main Street Historic District		Listed
J. E. Burton Double House	404-406 W. Center St.	Potentially eligible
Spooner-Ambrose House	724 W. Center St.	Potentially eligible
Howard Salisbury House	258 S. Church St.	Potentially eligible.
Dahlen House	166 N. Fremont St.	Potentially eligible**
McLane House	136 S. Whiton St.	Potentially eligible
Proposed Fremont Street Historic District:		Potentially eligible
<i>Period Revival</i>		
Proposed Franklin-Esterly Historic District		Potentially eligible

Modern Styles

Kaeser-designed House	336 N. Prairie St.	Potentially eligible
Moknes House	938 Highland St.	Potentially eligible

Commercial Architecture

Italianate

Proposed Downtown Historic District		Potentially eligible
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Modern

Commercial Bank	200 S. Fremont St.	Potentially eligible
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Church Architecture

Gothic Revival

St. Luke's Episcopal Church	150 S. Church St.	Listed*
St. John's Lutheran Church	116 S. Church St.	Listed*
First United Methodist Church	145 S. Prairie	Potentially eligible#
St. Patrick's Catholic Church	1235 W. Main St.	Potentially eligible

Romanesque Revival

First Congregational Church		Listed*
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Public Architecture

High Victorian Gothic

Whitewater Passenger Depot	310 Whitewater St.	Potentially eligible#
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Classical Revival

Main Street Historic District		Listed
Masonic Temple	226 W. Main St.	Potentially eligible
Post Office	213 W. Center St.	Listed

Construction Materials

Stone Construction

Water Tower	Starin Park	Potentially eligible
Stone Stable	Whitewater St.	Potentially eligible

Brick Construction

Main Street Historic District		Listed
Proposed Downtown Historic District		Potentially eligible

*Contributing resource in the Main Street Historic District

**Contributing resource in the proposed Fremont Street Historic District

#Local Landmark

CHAPTER FOUR

Commerce

Introduction

In 1839, Benjamin Bosworth, who came up from Illinois, opened the first retail store in the small settlement of Whitewater. Bosworth's general store was located in a log cabin built by David J. Powers, one of Whitewater's foremost pioneers. Bosworth was not a permanent resident, though, and had a clerk operate the business. About a year later, Joseph and Benjamin Stanton purchased the business and moved it into a frame building. Thomas Le Barron acquired this business in 1841, and in that same year, Philander Peck opened another general store. Others soon followed and by the late 1850s, Whitewater had a thriving commercial district located in the 100 and 200 blocks of West Main Street and along West Center Street, parallel with Main Street.⁶⁹

Business reviews printed in the *Whitewater Register* in 1860 and 1870, showed this thriving downtown commercial district. In 1860, there were several dry goods or general stores, several groceries, two hardware stores, two drug stores, and several men's tailoring or furnishing stores. The most significant change between 1860 and 1870 was the rise in the number of dry goods stores, along with fewer general stores. There were seven dry goods stores in 1870 compared to three in 1860, illustrating the change from small general stores to larger dry goods stores, a change that would end in the development of large department stores.⁷⁰

The decade of the 1880s was the culmination of nineteenth century commercial growth in Whitewater, including the growth of professional services. The city's two major factories were running at capacity, and there were several smaller factories and shops employing many other workers. The downtown businesses were supported by the influx of factory workers to Whitewater, as well as from area farmers, where the agricultural economy was good. And, the growth of the Whitewater Normal School (UW-Whitewater's early form) also provided customers for the goods and services of the community.

In 1882, the downtown commercial district in Whitewater had a wide variety of retail businesses; including 10 grocery stores, three meat markets, two druggists, three jewelers, two furniture dealers, three hardware stores, three boot and shoe stores, two harness shops, seven dry goods stores, 16 doctors and lawyers, and two photographers. In 1892, just before Whitewater's two large factories closed, and a national economic depression hit, the downtown commercial district was at its apex, with 11 food-related stores, four shoe stores, two furniture stores, three men's stores, three hardware stores, three jewelers, three drug stores, and three hotels, including the recently-built Walworth. Most of the retail businesses in the downtown commercial district were

⁶⁹ *History of Walworth County Wisconsin*, Chicago: Western Historical Publishing Company, 1883, pp. 581, 607; Whitewater Historical Society, *The Rile Collection*, Whitewater: Whitewater Historical Society, pp. .

⁷⁰ "Our Business Men," *Whitewater Register*, 21 September 1860, p. 3., 28 September 1860, p. 3, 5 October 1860, p. 3; "Businesses of Whitewater," *Whitewater Register*, 22 June, 1870, p. 1, 6 July 1870, p. 1, 13 July 1870, p. 1.

located in single-storefronts. But, there were now several large businesses located in double storefronts, including the Stewart dry goods and hardware store, one of the largest businesses in the city. And, what is particularly striking about Whitewater's downtown was its competitive appearance. Often, stores with similar goods were located adjacent to each other. On the south side of the 100 block of Main Street, three men's stores were located right next to each other for decades.⁷¹

During the early twentieth century, commercial activity in Whitewater was stable, but did not grow. Most of the stores of the late nineteenth century remained popular during the early twentieth century, but some new retailing trends also came to Whitewater. These included the popularity of national chain department and grocery stores, like Gambles and the A & P grocery chain. Also expanding in downtown Whitewater were businesses related to the automobile, including garages and filling stations. Some businesses began to decline, such as the number of grocery stores due to the new and larger chain stores.

In 1924, a lot of downtown Whitewater looked the same as it had in 1900. There were three department stores, three banks, a half-dozen grocery stores and meat markets, a couple of clothing stores, three drug stores, and three hardware stores located in downtown Whitewater. But, the largest change was in the area of automobile dealers and/or garages. There were now five of these businesses located in downtown Whitewater in 1924. Three of these businesses were housed in new buildings constructed after 1900, while two were located in older buildings.⁷²

The Great Depression of the 1930s, and the World War II era of the 1940s resulted in almost no new construction in Whitewater's downtown commercial district. But, most of Whitewater's traditional retailers hung on. Then, the booming economy of the 1950s lifted the fortunes of the businesses located in the downtown. During the 1950s and into the 1960s, Whitewater's downtown retailers experienced their final heyday, followed by a dramatic change in American retailing that would have a negative effect on Whitewater's commercial base in general, and the downtown, in particular.

This change in retailing was the result of several factors that had been developing since the early twentieth century. National retailers, such as Woolworths, J. C. Penny, and Sears, Roebuck and Company expanded their department and variety store concepts into smaller communities, often displacing locally-owned department, variety, clothing, and shoe stores. Chain stores like Gambles did the same for local hardware stores. And, the small independent grocer was fading in favor of national chains like A & P and Kroger. At first, these new businesses located in the downtown, and were an important part of the last successful era of downtown retailing in the 1950s and 1960s. But, consumers grew to like these chain stores, and when they left for the edge of town or for shopping malls in larger cities, shoppers followed.

⁷¹ *History of Walworth County*, p. 611; Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Map, 1892, on file in the Archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.

⁷² Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Map, 1924, on file in the Archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

The first businesses that usually left downtowns were grocery stores that constructed larger buildings, often away from downtown. Consumers changed their behavior from almost daily trips to grocery stores to shopping one or two times a week in “supermarkets.” Since consumers were almost all coming by automobile, the new supermarkets wanted large parking lots not available in the downtown. In Whitewater, this trend began with a large supermarket that located near the downtown. But, downtown space was limited, and new supermarkets opened on both the east and west sides of Whitewater where there was plenty of land for a large building and supermarket.

Whitewater’s consumers remained loyal to other downtown businesses until the 1960s and 1970s, when shopping malls and the first of the “big box” discount stores opened in nearby communities. The large shopping malls had bigger stores, often under one roof, a concept that appealed to consumers. And, the discount stores offered a much wider variety of goods and better prices than the local “five & dime.” By the 1980s, consumers were not spending enough money in Whitewater’s traditional downtown businesses to sustain them, and these stores began to close. Even the chain stores could not compete with their own larger stores in shopping malls, or larger discount stores and supermarkets elsewhere. Since that time, the downtown has struggled to remain a viable commercial district and to attract new businesses.

Two years ago, Whitewater applied for and received designation as a national Main Street community. A private group, Downtown Whitewater, Inc., was formed to promote the downtown commercial district to new businesses, and to aid in the renovation of buildings that would enhance development while maintaining the downtown’s unique historical appearance. This effort is on-going, but the hope is that it will result in a new mix of businesses that will help maintain the downtown as an important center of commercial activity.

Ironically, only one of the supermarkets that located to either the east or west sides of Whitewater survived. Even these businesses were subject to competition from other communities with larger stores or better prices. And, Whitewater’s permanent population did not significantly grow during the post-World War II era. Even the location of a large Wal-Mart store in Whitewater during the 1990s, usually a catalyst for the demise of local retailers, did not have a significant effect on the city. By that time, almost all competing businesses had already closed in the downtown, and Whitewater’s long-time role as a center of retailing for the area had come to an end.

Commercial Themes

Whitewater’s center for the trading of goods and services was historically centered in the downtown. The historic area of the downtown has been identified in this survey as the proposed Downtown Historic District. But, some of the buildings in the proposed district are also individually significant for historic commercial activities. The historical significance of individual buildings is based on the following.

An individual building can be significant for local commercial history for two reasons. Either the business or businesses that were housed in an individual building were significant (important to the development of the local commercial economy), or the building, itself, because of its size

or the range of commercial businesses located there, is significant. For a business to be significant, it needs to have made a unique and/or very important contribution to the commercial economy in the city. Some businesses become significant for their longevity; that is, over time, they have made an important contribution to the commercial economy of the city through the retailing of high quality commercial goods and services.

In the area of financial services, hotels, and utilities, significance is relatively easy to determine. In the area of retailing, though, it is a bit more difficult. That is because most historic retail businesses were short-lived, and even long-term businesses had a high ownership turnover rate. Merchants came and went with rapidity, so a significant retail business is often one that had a long stay in the community and its significance is derived from its good business practices and services to the public that resulted in successful patronage for many years.

The following discussion divides the commercial businesses in Whitewater into several themes. Each theme will include a review of applicable businesses and their locations, and whether these locations have historical significance based on the discussion in the previous paragraphs.

Financial Services

Whitewater's financial services have historically been provided by banking institutions. Prior to the Civil War, a few banks were opened in Whitewater, but the city's successful banks were a product of the post-Civil War conservative financial policies of bankers who provided stability after relative chaos in the banking industry, as detailed below.

When Whitewater was settled in 1837, there was an economic depression in the United States that was closely tied to national problems with banking and currency policy. During the 1830s, President Andrew Jackson was enmeshed in a long-term struggle with the powerful Bank of the United States, a struggle that resulted in the national bank tightening its credit policies. At the same time, state-chartered banks issued their own paper currency, a move that drove inflation. The combination of tight credit and almost worthless paper money being used for rampant land speculation in new territories like Wisconsin, along with a general over-expansion of the economy, resulted in this economic depression.⁷³

In 1837, when Wisconsin was still a territory, four banks had territorial charters. They were located in Green Bay, Milwaukee, Dubuque, and Mineral Point. They were given the ability to loan money, and to issue their own currency. After the national depression began, each of these banks fell under suspicion as to their solvency, and three banks closed, primarily because they had over-extended their cash flow in proportion to their hard currency reserves. But, in Mineral Point, the bank had engaged in outright fraud before it closed. The result of these bank failures and the general failure of banks throughout the country was a scarcity of hard currency and reliable bank notes that did not fluctuate wildly in their value. This situation left the earliest pioneers with little financial backing and a strong distrust for banks.⁷⁴

⁷³ Alice E. Smith, *The History of Wisconsin Vol. I: From Exploration to Statehood*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1985, pp. 273-278.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 278-294.

During the early 1840s, attempts were made to re-establish banking facilities in the Wisconsin territory, but the uncertain economy and territorial political wrangling doomed these attempts, and the continued disagreement over a national bank in Washington did not help the economic growth of the territory. The uncertain and disjointed banking system in the country extended the tight money supply into the territories, and distrust for banks remained.⁷⁵

Things did not change in Wisconsin during its early years of statehood. In fact, there were no commercial banks in the new state between 1848 and 1853, since the new state constitution prohibited banks unless approved by referendum. The lack of banking facilities resulted in a shortage of currency and few opportunities for both businessmen and the general public to engage in important banking functions such as receiving loans, establishing savings deposits, transferring funds, or exchanging currencies. Individual citizens with means sometimes engaged in the loan business, but even these private “banks” could not extend enough credit or currency to meet the needs of the people in the new state. So, in 1851 and 1852, voters overwhelmingly approved banking referendums, and the state established regulations for this industry. By 1859, the state had 108 state chartered banks.⁷⁶

But, just at the banking industry was getting underway in Wisconsin, the financial panic and economic depression of 1857 hit. During the three years of the economic depression in Wisconsin, some banks had to suspend business, and the ones that remained in business cut back on their loans and issuance of bank notes. Again, there was tight credit and a scarce supply of hard currency and reliable bank notes. Just as the nation was recovering from this depression, the secession of the southern states caused another brief depression. In Wisconsin, though, its effects were short-lived. As the largest wheat producer in the country at the time, the state’s economy boomed. This lucrative cash crop drove commercial and industrial (related to wheat) development in many small communities in southern Wisconsin, Whitewater included.⁷⁷

The booming economy of the Civil War years, though, did not immediately bring better financial services. At the start of the Civil War, money and credit were still tight in the state despite the wheat boom. In 1862, the situation was somewhat alleviated when the federal government began to issue its “greenbacks,” a national bank note. And, in 1863 and 1864, Congress passed national banking legislation, although few Wisconsin banks could meet the national criteria. So, just as it had been during the 1840s, 1850s, and early 1860s, during the later 1860s, Wisconsin still suffered from tight credit and a shortage of both hard and reliable currency.⁷⁸

State banks experienced a revival after 1870, expanding loans and establishing checking accounts to help businesses. Yet, the need for bank credit far exceeded the supply and state businessmen complained loudly about the inadequate money reserves. Even during the early industrial boom years in Wisconsin of the late 1870s, banking in the state was conservative and banks remained tight with credit. Banks were seen as having a limited role in business,

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 294-306.

⁷⁶ Richard N. Current, *The History of Wisconsin Vol. II: The Civil War Era, 1848-1873*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976, pp. 104-106.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238; 374.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 375-376; 452-453.

providing day-to-day commercial services and small, short-term, loans. Most industrialists received their initial capital from their own pockets or the pockets of investors.⁷⁹

Despite the banking problems of the nineteenth century, Whitewater's economy would not feel much of the effects of a lack of adequate banking facilities during the mid nineteenth century. The most important reason for this is that the city was surrounded by fertile farmland and successful farmers. The wheat boom near Whitewater began with the first settlers, and the establishment and success of two large factories in the mid-1850s, factories that took advantage of the growing farm economy, helped create an era of local economic growth. Also, the permanent banks that came out of the community in the mid to late nineteenth century were well-managed and did not hamper the community's economy. But, the national banking problems do explain why Whitewater did not have a successful bank until 1864, and why that bank had no competitors until 1883.

According to most sources, the first formal banking house established in Whitewater was the private bank of Alexander Graham and Augustus H. Scoville, opened in 1855. In 1857, they organized under a state charter as the Merchants and Mechanics Bank, but were probably victims of the 1857 depression, because they closed in 1858 or 1859. Sheldon C. and Eli C. Hall also started a private banking business in 1855, then organized under a state charter as the Bank of Whitewater somewhere around 1856 or 1857. The Halls ran a successful bank until 1865, when they made a bad investment in pork commodities that wiped out the bank's assets.⁸⁰

Other short-lived banks included the Wheat Growers Bank and the much-hyped Kokomo Bank, both lasting less than a year around 1857 and 1858. John Wilson opened the Exchange Bank, probably a private bank, that only operated in 1862 and 1863. In November of 1863, one of two of the most important historic banks in Whitewater organized under a national charter. Under the direction of Sanger Marsh, President, the First National Bank opened on January 1, 1864 with the backing of industrialists L. A. Winchester, J. S. Partridge, and William DeWolf, among others. The bank opened with a capital of \$25,000, but during 1864, more capital was raised to a level of \$75,000. By 1881, the bank had a capital of \$100,000 and had been operated successfully for almost 20 years. In 1911, the bank had \$350,000 in assets.⁸¹

The earliest bank in Whitewater, the short-lived Graham and Scoville or Merchants and Mechanics Bank, was located in the original Bower's Block (Center Street, not extant). In 1856, shortly after they established the Bank of Whitewater (1855), the Halls, under the name S. C. Hall & Company, built a three story brick block along First Street behind a smaller two-story frame building. In one-third of the first story of this new building the Halls located their bank; the other two storefronts housed John T. Smith's jewelry store and the Wheeler and Ferris grocery store. The upper floors were to be used as offices and meeting space.⁸²

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 452-453; Robert C. Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin Vol. III: Urbanization and Industrialization, 1873-1893*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1985, p. 160.

⁸⁰ Albert Clayton Beckwith, *History of Walworth County Wisconsin*, Indianapolis, IN: B. F. Bowen & Company, 1912, p. 466; *History of Walworth County*, p. 610; Prosper Cravath and Spencer Steele, *Early Annals of Whitewater 1837-1867*, Albert Salisbury, ed., Whitewater: Whitewater Federation of Women's Clubs, 1906, p. 128; "Banks," *Whitewater Register*, 6 January 1876, p. 3.

⁸¹ Beckwith, p. 466; *History of Walworth County*, p. 610; Cravath and Steele, pp. 128, 153; "Banks."

⁸² "Hall and Co's New Block," *Whitewater Gazette*, 14 February 1856.

The First National Bank opened in 1864 in an office in the small frame building in front of Hall's Block. In 1872, this building was demolished and A. Y. Chamberlin built a new three-story brick block that was attached to the old Hall's Block. The new Chamberlin Block was completed in late 1873, and in March of 1874, the First National Bank moved into the first floor of this new block. At that point, the two buildings became associated as one building (Chamberlin-Hall Block, 161 West Main Street).⁸³

For 20 years, the First National Bank had a monopoly on banking in Whitewater. Then, in 1883, the Citizens Bank was organized with a national charter. The new bank was located in the recently (1878) completed Hahn Block (112 South First Street), opening in the spring of 1883. Soon, it was as successful as the First National Bank, and in 1890, the bank moved to the Clark Block (179 West Main Street). In that 20-year old building, the bank created a "state-of-the-art" office with fine wood and brass décor.⁸⁴

In 1894, the Citizens National Bank reorganized under a state charter, possibly a reaction to the national financial panic and economic depression that began in 1893. The bank remained in the Clark Block until 1931, when it merged with the First National Bank. At that time, the office in the Clark Block closed, and operations were consolidated in the First National Bank location in the Chamberlin-Hall Block (161 West Main Street).⁸⁵

In 1913, a new type of bank opened in Whitewater. Known as a commercial and savings bank, these financial institutions were specialists in providing services to depositors and small businesses. In its first year of operation, the Commercial and Savings Bank accumulated resources of over a quarter of a million dollars and in April of 1914, began construction on a bank building. The new bank building (171 West Main Street) was completed in September of 1914. The bank building committee hired the noted Milwaukee architectural firm of Van Ryn & De Gelleke to design a very modern building for its time. Interestingly, when the bank moved to new quarters in 1975, they built a very modern building for its time--influenced by the mid-twentieth century designs of Frank Lloyd Wright.⁸⁶

There are several buildings associated with the historically significant financial institutions that are either potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or contribute to the historic significance of the proposed Downtown Historic District. The most notable of these resources is the Chamberlin-Hall Block (161 West Main Street), the location of the early Bank of Whitewater and the historically significant First National Bank and First Citizens State Bank. The First National Bank and the First Citizens State Bank are the most historically significant financial institutions in Whitewater and had an important impact on the economic development of the city. Therefore, the Chamberlin-Hall Block is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A, as the most important building related to historic financial

⁸³ "Removal of the Bank," *Whitewater Register*, 5 March 1874, p. 3.

⁸⁴ *One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary 1837-1962*, Whitewater, WI: Whitewater Historical Society Committee, 1962, p. 60; "An Important Change," *Whitewater Register*, 29 May 1890, p. 5; "In New Quarters," *Whitewater Register*, 28 August 1890, p. 4.

⁸⁵ Beckwith, p. 466; *Whitewater Centennial Homecoming 1837-1937*, Whitewater: Whitewater Press Print, 1937, p. 53.

⁸⁶ "Whitewater Savings Bank," *Whitewater Register*, 3 April 1914, p. 1; "Monday was Opening Day," *Whitewater Register*, 25 September 1914, p. 1.

services in Whitewater. It is also a contributing resource in the proposed Downtown Historic District.

Two buildings are associated with the historically significant growth and development of the Citizens National and/or State Banks. The Hahn Block is a contributing resource in the proposed Downtown Historic District, in part, because it was the first location of the Citizens National Bank. But, since the bank was only located in the Hahn Block for seven years, the building is not individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for financial services, but is a contributing resource that adds to the historical significance of the Downtown Historic District.

On the other hand, the Clark Block is historically significant and potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A as an important resource related to historic financial services in Whitewater. It was the most important location of the Citizens National/State Bank prior to its merger with the First National Bank in 1931. It is also a contributing resource in the proposed Downtown Historic District. The Citizens National Bank, later the Citizens State Bank had an important impact on the economic development of the city. It is still operating today First Citizens State Bank.

The Whitewater Commercial and Savings Bank (171 West Main Street) is historically significant and potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A as an important resource related to historic financial services in Whitewater. It is also a contributing resource in the proposed Downtown Historic District. Between 1914 and 1975, the Whitewater Commercial and Savings Bank, later known as the Commercial Bank, operated in their Main Street building and had an impact on the economic development of the city. It is one of the two major banks operating in the community today.

During the late twentieth century, other financial institutions established themselves in Whitewater. One of the most important was the Watertown Savings and Loan Association, which constructed the building at 219 West Center Street in 1969. It is still operating today as a branch of the Associated Bank chain. A more recent financial institution that has grown in Whitewater is the local credit union. Beginning in the later twentieth century as a community credit union, this small institution merged with the Fort Community Credit Union of nearby Fort Atkinson in the late 1990s. The Fort Community Credit Union constructed their new Whitewater branch in 2000 at 203 E. Milwaukee Street (not surveyed). These institutions are not yet historically significant due to their more recent history.⁸⁷

Hotels

One of the earliest buildings erected after Whitewater's founding in 1837 was a hotel, built in 1840. Early pioneers David and Joseph Powers built this frame hotel at the east end of Main Street near the grist mill (just east of 130 West Main Street), but soon sold it to Freeman L. Pratt, who enlarged it and named it the Whitewater Hotel. In 1842, Squire Parsons built another hotel about a block west and named it the Exchange Hotel. It was later known as the Kinney House and operated until around 1890 (not extant, on site of 162 West Main Street).⁸⁸

⁸⁷ *Whitewater Register*, 7 August 1969, p. 1.

⁸⁸ Cravath and Steele, pp. 5-57; *History of Walworth County*, p. 611.

Between the 1850s and the 1890s, Whitewater experienced an economic boom. The commercial district grew as the population of the village and its surrounding area grew. The growth of Whitewater resulted in the growth of hotels during this period. In 1855, Luther Cadman built the main block of the hotel that stood at 226 Whitewater Street, and called it the American House. Around the same time, another hotel, the Badger State, located on Whitewater Street just south of the American House, also began operating. In 1858, Septer Wintermute, who acquired the old Whitewater Hotel on Main Street in 1850, remodeled and greatly expanded that building into the elegant Montour House, the most important hotel in the city in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1863, Giles Kinney purchased the Badger State hotel on Whitewater Street; improved it, and reopened as the Cortland (Courtland) House.⁸⁹

In 1867, the Montour House burned and was not rebuilt, leaving the American House, the Exchange Hotel, and the Cortland House as the city's only hotels. But, during the peak of the city's nineteenth century economic prosperity, two new hotels were built in the downtown. In 1879-1880, Joseph Bower, Whitewater most successful downtown developer, erected a new three-story double-storefront block at the southeast corner of Main and North Second Streets. It had commercial space on the first floor, but its upper two floors were used for the Bower's House, later known as the Hotel Duquesne (183-187 West Main Street). In 1890, the Walworth Hotel was built on the northwest corner of the same intersection. The Walworth Hotel (204 West Main Street) was advertised as a first-class luxury hotel and became the leading hotel in the city. The growth of these two Main Street hotels probably put the old Exchange Hotel out of business, as it was a vacant building in 1892, and used as a commercial building in 1898.⁹⁰

While the Bower's House and the Walworth Hotel took care of the upscale trade, the Cortland House and the American House, now known as the Whitewater Hotel, catered to traveling salesmen and other, less well-off, patrons. Their location along Whitewater Street, a street full of industrial shops, warehouses, and the railroad depot, helped them attract business travelers and/or other short-term travelers who wanted easy access to the railroad. Both hotels were still relatively small, with facilities that dated to the Civil War era.

The Cortland House would remain the same for many more years, eventually becoming a rooming house. In the late 1960s, it was demolished for the construction of the public safety building, now part of the municipal building. But, the old Whitewater Hotel would have a major change. In May of 1892, a fire broke out in the hotel and destroyed the old main block of the building. A day later, a suspected arson fire burned the wing of the hotel that had not been destroyed in the original fire. The result was a complete loss. Fortunately, the owner had insurance, and in June, he cleared the entire site and made plans to rebuild. The current building, larger and better equipped than the old hotel, rose up on the site by 1894.⁹¹

The new Whitewater Hotel was rebuilt as a more upscale commercial hotel, with a fancy lobby and bar. It was built on the optimism of the Whitewater economy, even as the nation was entering into an economic depression that was the worst in history until the Great Depression of

⁸⁹ Cravath and Steele, pp. 83-84, 110, 146.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 167; Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1892, 1898, on file in the Archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

⁹¹ "Fire," *Whitewater Register*, 19 May 1892, p. 5; *Whitewater Register*, 9 June 1892, p. 5.

the 1930s. In 1892, when the decision was made to rebuild the Whitewater Hotel, the city's two major factories were still in operation. But, during completion of the hotel, both of these industries closed, leaving anywhere from 300-500 men out of work. And, the industrial depression of the 1890s meant that new industries did not come to the city.⁹²

But, the continued stability in the downtown during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the fact that railroad travel was reaching its peak at that time, helped Whitewater's hotels from declining for a while. Around 1900 there were still four hotels in the downtown; the Hotel Duquesne (Bower's House), the Walworth Hotel, the Cortland House, and the Whitewater Hotel. An historic photograph of the Whitewater Hotel, probably taken around this time, has a sign reading, "Commercial Hotel," a method of advertising itself as the best location for businessmen to stay while in town.⁹³

The flagging industrial economy in Whitewater during the first two decades of the twentieth century, along with the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II in the 1940s, changed the nature of the hotels in the city. By 1924, the Hotel Duquesne was closed, its hotel rooms replaced with a fraternal hall. Maintaining and updating existing hotels lagged during the 1930s and 1940s, and the hotels were becoming more rooming houses than hotels during this period.

During the 1950s, the traveling public changed their preferences to modern motel chains, campgrounds, and tourist cabins, all easily accessible for automobiles. After the Cortland House was demolished, only the Whitewater and the Walworth Hotel were still operating, but largely as rooming houses. The Walworth Hotel became an apartment building in the later twentieth century, and the Whitewater Hotel was vacant for many years. It suffered a fire and was threatened with demolition several times. In 2006, it was renovated using the federal tax credits for historic preservation. It reopened as an apartment building with office and commercial space.⁹⁴

Hotels, as historically known, no longer exist in Whitewater. The community had a group of "tourist cabins," and a motel in the mid to late twentieth century, but both have been demolished. In the late twentieth century, two modern chain motels were built; one of the east side and one on the west side of town. Of historic preservation interest is the fact that two large historic houses are being used as bed and breakfast inns at the current time, as well.

There are three extant buildings that are associated with historic hotels in Whitewater. The Walworth Hotel (204 West Main Street) is listed as a Whitewater Landmark under the city's landmarks ordinance. It is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A because of its long use as a downtown hotel. It is also a contributing resource in the proposed Downtown Historic District. This hotel was Whitewater's "modern" downtown hotel, built for an upscale clientele, and with a dining room that, during the early years, served multi-course gourmet-like meals. The Walworth Hotel was built during the last "heyday" of the small town downtown hotel. Soon, tastes and the economy would change, bringing an end to these

⁹² Whitewater Historical Society information.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Sanborn-Perris map, 1924, Whitewater Historical Society information.

establishments in small communities. Because of its long use as an important Whitewater hotel, this building is a significant historic resource in the city.

The Whitewater Hotel (226 Whitewater Street) is the second historic hotel still extant in Whitewater. It has already been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a part of the recent renovation, which was a tax credit project. It is historically significant under criterion A because of its long use as an important business and commercial type hotel. It is also a contributing resource in the proposed Downtown Historic District.

Also of historical interest related to Whitewater hotels is the Bower's House, 183-187 West Main Street. This hotel was built as a prominent downtown hotel in 1880, but was soon overshadowed by the Walworth Hotel, built in 1890. As such, it is not as notable as the two extant hotels mentioned above. And, unfortunately, in the late twentieth century, the building was given a heavy coat of stucco, covering its historic appearance. Because of this alteration, the building is not eligible for the National Register and does not contribute to the proposed Downtown Historic District. If the stucco was removed and the appearance of the building renovated, it would become a contributing resource in the district.

Newspapers

Whitewater had a long and lively newspaper trade. The current newspaper, the *Whitewater Register*, has been in print since 1857, and was operated by the Coe family from 1873 to 2001. But this did not mean that the *Register* had no competition. Two years before 1857, the *Whitewater Gazette* began publishing, but it went out of business in the same year the *Register* started up. The *Register* had some competition in the late nineteenth century with the formation of the *Puddingstick* in 1879, a name that was soon changed to the *Whitewater Chronicle*. It had a short run between 1879 and 1885. The locations of these newspapers were, undoubtedly, in the downtown commercial district, but no specific links have been made as part of this survey.⁹⁵

More long-lasting competition was the *Whitewater Weekly Gazette*, established in 1892 and running until 1918. This newspaper was located on the second floor of the Inman Block, 119 West Center Street. The building is not historically significant for the *Weekly Gazette*, but is a contributing resource and adds to the overall historical significance of the proposed Downtown Historic District.

In the twentieth century, the *Whitewater Press* operated between 1924 and 1939. Its location has not been determined at this time. The old *Gazette* and the *Puddingstick/Chronicle* probably failed due to insufficient support in the community. But, the later papers may have failed primarily because they were unable to get a city contract to be the "newspaper of record." That is, they were unable to get the lucrative stipend from the city to print public notices.⁹⁶

The *Whitewater Register*, as stated above, began its run in 1857 and like many early newspapers, could have failed in the later nineteenth century. It was the Coe family, specifically, Edwin D.

⁹⁵ Fred Kraege, Information compiled on Whitewater newspapers located in the Fred Kraege local history notebooks, on file in the Irvin Young Memorial Library, Whitewater, Wisconsin.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Coe, and his son, Robert K. Coe, who made the newspaper *Whitewater's* most influential for almost 130 years. Edwin D. Coe was a well-educated native of Jefferson County. He served in the Civil War, studied law, and was in the lumber business with his father. After briefly publishing the *Watertown Republican* and the *Beloit Journal and Free Press*, Coe purchased the *Register*. He served as editor and publisher until 1902, then his son, Robert K., served in the same capacity from 1902 to 1952. This continuity of publishing was able to ward off all competitors.⁹⁷

After a short run as editor, E. S. Coe turned over the reins to another long-time editor, Charles B. Coe, who served from 1958 to 1982. From 1982 to 2001, Charles "Tom" Coe was editor and publisher of the *Register*. During the late twentieth century, local newspapers were finding it difficult to be profitable, and most were purchased by publishing companies that could be successful by publishing many local papers. In 2001, this is what happened to the *Register*. It was purchased by Southern Lakes Newspapers, Inc., a company out of Burlington, Wisconsin that publishes a number of local papers in the area.⁹⁸

The two most important buildings related to the *Whitewater Register* that are still extant, are the Post Office Block, 137 West Main Street, and the *Whitewater Register* Block, 135 West Main Street. In 1873, Edwin Coe moved the paper to the upper floors of the Post Office Block. Around 1887, he had the triangular shaped block added to the Post Office Block (135 West Main Street) as the new location for the newspaper. The *Whitewater Register* remained at this location for about 30 years. Around 1912, Robert Coe had a modern printing plant built on Whitewater Street (not extant), where the register was located for over 80 years. If that plant was still extant, it would be historically significant as the most important location of the newspaper. Because it is not, the two buildings at 135 and 137 West Main Street take on added historical significance for their association with the most important newspaper to be published in Whitewater. As such, they are potentially individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A and are contributing resources that add to the historical significance of the Downtown Historic District.

Retailing

Trading in goods and services began in Wisconsin communities almost from the beginning of their settlement, some businesses starting out in primitive log cabins. Often, pioneer businesses incorporated general store, inn, and post office all under one roof. As communities developed in the late nineteenth century, even the smallest towns had a variety of retail stores, usually located in downtown commercial business districts. Retailers in larger cities, such as Milwaukee, had larger stores with larger selections of goods, but consumers, in general, either shopped locally or by catalog until modern automobiles and roads made shopping in larger cities practical. Retailing changed rapidly throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Pioneer-era general stores developed into dry goods and specialty stores, which developed into even larger department stores and a wider variety of specialty stores. But, the common thread winding

⁹⁷ *History of Walworth County*, p. 620; "Sale of *Whitewater Register* Ends 128 Years of Family-Owned Business," *Whitewater Register*, 23 August, 2001, p. 1.

⁹⁸ "Sale of *Whitewater Register*."

throughout the history of retailing in Wisconsin is the high turnover of businesses; short-term retailers being the rule, and not the exception.⁹⁹

The history of retailing in Whitewater is similar to that of the entire state and has been discussed earlier. It has also been elaborated more than once that historic retailing was centered in Whitewater's downtown, primarily in the area that has been defined as the proposed Downtown Historic District. There are only a few buildings in Whitewater's downtown that are individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for their retailing history, but almost all of them have historical interest and, therefore, contribute to the proposed Downtown Historic District. A review of the buildings that are individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and contribute to the proposed Downtown Historic District, will illustrate how the downtown was the center of retailing in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century.

Wintermute-Leffingwell Livery, 136 West Main Street, contributing in district

As indicated in the hotel section of this chapter, Septer Wintermute purchased the old Whitewater Hotel on Main Street in 1850, then in 1858, expanded the hotel into Whitewater's first premier hotel, the Montour House. Wintermute operated the Montour House until 1865, then the building was destroyed by fire in 1867. As part of his hotel operation, Wintermute built and operated a large livery stable. After the Montour House burned, Wintermute decided to build a new brick livery stable on the hotel site in 1870. The new building was unusual because most livery stables were frame buildings. It was also one of the earliest brick buildings constructed in this part of the north side of Main Street. Around 1888, Wintermute died and H. C. Leffingwell acquired the building. He operated it as a livery until into the 1910s. In the 1920s, the building was used briefly as a garage, then became a general commercial building.¹⁰⁰

Dahlen Block, 146 West Main Street, contributing in district

Built in 1868, this building housed a number of stores, then in the twentieth century, it was the location of the "Busy Bee" restaurant and pool hall. A favorite men's "hang-out," the business was one of the most notable in the downtown in the mid-twentieth century.

Christenson Block, 148 West Main Street, contributing in district

This building had a long-time boot and shoe business related to Norwegian-American citizens of Whitewater. It was built for Nels Christenson's boot and shoe store, which became the Harvey Arveson boot and shoe store. In 1879, A. K. Alrick became a partner with Arveson, then from 1895 into the 1920s, Alrick ran the business as the Alrick Shoe Store.¹⁰¹

Miller-Scherer Block, 174-176 West Main Street, contributing in district

Noted physician C. J. Miller, whose son and grandson were also long-time physicians in Whitewater, had a half interest in this building. His office was above 176 West Main until around 1900. The first floor housed a drug store. The storefront at 174 West Main was filled with several businesses until around 1900, when it became the location of the Boston Variety

⁹⁹ Richard N. Current, pp. 107-108; Nesbit, pp. 211-213.

¹⁰⁰ *History of Walworth County*, p. 655; Tax Rolls for the City of Whitewater, on file in the Area Research Center of the Anderson Library of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Whitewater, Wisconsin.

¹⁰¹ *Whitewater Register*, 5 June 1868; Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1892, 1898, 1904, 1912; City Directories, 1895, 1903, 1912, 1922; Beckwith, p. 1280.

Store dry goods businesses. In 1916, a new owner renamed the business the White House Dry Goods store and it operated under that name until 1949.¹⁰²

Williams Block, 178-180 West Main Street, contributing in district

A long-time hardware store and photo studio occupied this double storefront block, among other businesses. After it was built in 1892, the building storefronts housed a grocery store and the Whitewater Hardware Company; a photo studio was located on the second floor. The hardware business filled both storefronts, for a time, when it was known as the L. C. Baker Hardware Store; operated from 1894 until the 1920s. In 1912, the photography studio was operated by H. C. Goodman, then in the 1920s, it was operated by Rella Moss, both noted photographers in Whitewater.¹⁰³

Littlejohn Block, 182-186 West Main Street, contributing in district

Built in two sections in 1883 (west half) and 1887 (east half), this double storefront block has had a history of long-time businesses. In the 182 West Main storefront, J. C. Cox's grocery store operated from the 1890s until at least 1930. Later, the national chain hardware and variety store, Coast to Coast, was located here. In the 186 West Main storefront, there was a long-time hardware store. Operated from 1883 until well into the 1920s, it was last known as the Corner Hardware Store. In the twentieth century, Rossing's Department Store was located here.¹⁰⁴

Kyle Block, 141 West Main Street, contributing in district

Thomas Kyle replaced half of a double storefront block on this location after a fire in 1870. Its most notable business is one that operated until the end of 2008. The Halverson Brothers Men's Clothing store began operating here around 1895, when M. G. and H. L. Halverson took over the business from their father, Gullick Halverson, who had been operating a men's store at 139 West Main Street. The Halverson Brothers had a successful store at this location for many years, after which it was owned by the Leffingwell family, most recently, Harry Leffingwell.¹⁰⁵

McLaughlin & McBeath Block, 145 West Main Street, contributing in district

One of the oldest commercial buildings still extant in the downtown, this was the location of pioneer merchant Robert McBeath, who operated a tailor and men's wear shop here until the 1880s. Another noted Whitewater citizen, Edward Engebretsen, acquired the building in 1888, put in a new plate glass window and made other renovations, and opened a dry goods store, which he operated here until 1903. In 1909, he reopened his store with his son, Lee, in the next storefront east (143 West Main Street), which remained open for several more years. Engebretsen also made money on timber lands in northern Wisconsin, and was a popular businessman who served two terms as mayor of the city.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Tax Rolls; *Whitewater Register*, 26 July 1883, p. 3; Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1884, 1892, 1898, 1904; City Directories, 1903, 1922, 1927; "White House Store to Close After 33 Years," *Whitewater Register*, 4 August 1949, p. 1.

¹⁰³ Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1892, 1898, 1904, 1912; City Directories; 1895, 1903, 1912; Beckwith, pp. 973-974.

¹⁰⁴ Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1884, 1892, 1989, 1904, 1912; City Directories, 1895, 1903, 1922, 1968, 1976, 1986.

¹⁰⁵ Beckwith, pp. 1240-1241; Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1898, 1904, 1912; City Directories, 1895, 1903, 1912.

¹⁰⁶ City Directories, 1895, 1903, 1912; Tax Rolls; Beckwith, pp. 1224-1225; *Whitewater Register*, 8 May 1888, p. 5.

Trippe-Conger Block, 147-151 West Main Street, potentially eligible,

Another old building in Whitewater, this triple storefront block was originally built to house three stores. With the exception of a dry goods store that operated in two storefronts in the early twentieth century, it has retained its three retail spaces. One of the longest-lived businesses in the building (151 West Main storefront) was the O'Connor Drug Store. Started by Richard O'Connor, the store operated as Day and O'Connor into the 1870s. Then, with son, Frederick, O'Connor practiced under the name of O'Connor and Son. A drug store at this location remained in operation under different owners into the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰⁷

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the storefronts at 147-149 West Main were occupied by a large dry goods store. The store operated under various names, including Creighton Brothers, Henry Baade, Vette, and The Fair, between 1895 and 1930. This was the heyday of local dry goods and department stores, and this business was one of several serving Whitewater at that time.¹⁰⁸

Because of its size and prominence in the community, this building is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A because it is related to important growth of commerce in Whitewater during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is also a contributing resource that adds to the historical significance of the proposed Downtown Historic District.

Stewart Block, 155-159 West Main Street, potentially eligible

The Stewart Block was built in 1885 for W. L. R. Stewart's Dry Goods and Hardware Store. It was a long-lived business that had its roots in the pioneer-era general store of Sheldon C. Hall and Henry C. Leffingwell.

In 1843, Hall and Leffingwell opened an early grocery store in downtown Whitewater under the name of Hall, Leffingwell & Co. In 1846, they built a two-story brick store on the location of the present Stewart Block. In 1848, Hall and Leffingwell parted ways, and Rufus Cheney became a partner with Hall. Hall and Cheney doubled the size of the brick store built in 1846. In 1850, Cheney left Hall and opened his own businesses. In 1858, three employees of S. C. Hall purchased the business and opened it as Cushing, Sweetland, and Stewart.¹⁰⁹

The above discussion illustrates how retailing fluctuated and how ownership of businesses typically turned over in the mid-nineteenth century. By the time Cushing, Sweetland, and Stewart took over Hall's business, it was a large general-type store with dry goods, hardware, boots and shoes, and, even, groceries. This partnership, atypically, remained together until 1877, when John Sweetland left the business. And, by 1882, W. L. R. Stewart was operating the business on his own. He erected the new Stewart Block, which housed hardware in one half of the building and dry goods in the other half. Stewart remained in business into the 1910s. Later

¹⁰⁷ City Directories, 1895, 1903, 1912, 1927; *History of Walworth County*, p. 637.

¹⁰⁸ City Directories, 1895, 1903, 1912, 1922, 1927; Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1892, 1898, 1904, 1912.

¹⁰⁹ Cravath and Steele, pp. 63, 75, 81-82, 87, 116.

businesses in the building included the Hickey-Kent Furniture Store, the Sears catalog store, and since the 1980s, Dale's Bootery, which remains there today.¹¹⁰

The Stewart Block (155-159 West Main Street) is historically significant and potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A, for local history. It housed one of the most long-lived and prominent businesses in Whitewater's history, a business that had its roots in a pioneer grocery store. In the twentieth century, the building continued to house important businesses in the city's downtown. Due to its historical significance, the Stewart Block is also a contributing resource in the proposed Downtown Historic District.

Jewelry Block, 173 West Main Street, contributing in district

This building has been home to a jewelry store as early as 1884 and continues as a jewelry store today. One of the most notable jewelers of the twentieth century that was located here was Henry Bayer. Since the 1970s, though, another long-lived jewelry store has occupied this location—Bergey Jewelry, possibly one of the longest jewelers to be located here.¹¹¹

Cox & Hewitt Block, 175-177 West Main Street, contributing in district

When the Cox and Hewitt Block was completed in 1883, it was announced that the dry goods firm of Bulkley, Crandall and Company would locate in the 177 West Main storefront, and A. V. Burk and Son, druggists, would locate in the 175 West Main Storefront. Bulkley, Crandall and Company dated back to the pioneer general store of Orlando Gallt, established in 1855. This business became Gallt, Birge & Company, then with the addition of Brownell Bulkley in 1876, the business was known as Gallt, Bulkley & Company. Finally in 1882, Bulkley took on a new partner and remained in business as Bulkley, Crandall and Company until around 1900. The storefront was filled in the twentieth century by other businesses, including the well known Armin's women's clothing store in the mid to late twentieth century.¹¹²

The A. V. Burk Drug Store was the beginning of a long-time drug store that operated in the 175 West Main storefront until only a few years ago. In 1895, well-known druggist L. A. Duffin was operating the drug store, and he did so until the mid-twentieth century. Then, the store was known for a long period as the Underwood Drug Store. In the mid-1980s, pharmacist Dan Reynolds took over the business and operated it in this building until 2007, when he moved to the west side of town in order to take advantage of a "drive-through" location.¹¹³

Hahn Block, 112 South First Street, contributing in district

The Hahn Block has been discussed earlier as the first location of the Citizens National (State) Bank. But after the bank moved out in 1890, the building became a long-time place of business for several jewelry stores. The first jeweler was B. F. Wood, who had established his business in 1880. He operated in the Hahn Block until 1922, then sold the business to Ernest Chady, who

¹¹⁰ "Our Business Men;" "Business of Whitewater;" *History of Walworth County*, pp. 611, 645; City Directories for Whitewater, 1895, 1903, 1912, 1922, 1964, 1976, 1986, on file in the Whitewater Historical Society Depot Museum, Whitewater, Wisconsin.

¹¹¹ Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1884, 1892, 1898, 1904, 1912; City Directories, 1895, 1902, 1912, 1927, 1976.

¹¹² *History of Walworth County*, p. 618; City Directories, 1895, 1964, 1976; *Whitewater Register*, 4 October, 1883, p. 3.

¹¹³ City Directories, 1895, 1912, 1976, 1986.

operated the store into the mid-twentieth century. In the late twentieth century, the business was operated as Joseph's Jewelry, then, Munson Jewelry (1960s and 1970s).¹¹⁴

Cutler Block, 136-138 West Center Street, contributing in district

This double storefront block housed businesses that are typical of ones on Center Street, which tended to be related to more to food retailing and service providers than prestigious retail goods like dry goods and clothing. One of the original businesses in this building was the Express office, taking care of shipping needs for businesses and residents. Another businesses was a barber shop that lasted into the 1980s. The long-time Bayer jewelry store was another occupant of this building in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹¹⁵

Bower's New Metropolitan Block, 123-133 West Center Street, contributing in district

In 1852, Joseph Bower, the most important downtown developer in nineteenth century Whitewater, built the first Metropolitan Block, a brick, multi-storefront, building that he enlarged in 1860. Metropolitan Hall, on the upper floor, was the premier meeting and social gathering place in Whitewater in the mid-nineteenth century. The building burned, along with several other buildings in 1870, but Bower quickly rebuilt. The New Metropolitan Block was constructed of three stories with a large skylight on the north elevation. Sometime in the twentieth century, the building was reduced in size to two stories, as it is seen today.¹¹⁶

Although the building was altered, it is still one of the most important commercial buildings in downtown Whitewater. It is important not for any one business, but for the number of businesses that were located in the building's five storefronts over the years. These businesses ranged from saloons to grocery stores, barber shops and photo studios.

Walker-Smith and Webb Blocks, 135-139 West Center Street, contributing in district

These three buildings, all built around 1870, extended the West Center Street commercial area to Second Street. Like the Bower Block mentioned above, they were buildings that housed a variety of businesses, most related to food retailing. Each building had grocery stores at one time or another, and the 135 West Center storefront had a long time meat market in the late nineteenth century. Confectionaries and bakeries were located in the other two storefronts.¹¹⁷

Saloons, 156, 158, 160 Whitewater Street, 158 and 160 contributing in district

These three buildings were all constructed around 1870 and once sat among a large group of industrial, commercial, and shop buildings along Whitewater Street. When they were built, the large Winchester and Partridge Manufacturing Company operated right across the street. Nearby, were the shops of blacksmiths, wagon makers, and harness makers; along with warehouses near the railroad depot. Although there were saloons located along Main and Center Streets, Whitewater Street was the most prominent location for these businesses, possibly because the street attracted a larger number of "working men" than the rest of downtown. What is interesting about these buildings is that they have housed saloons or taverns for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with a break for prohibition between 1919 and 1933. The

¹¹⁴ City Directories, 1895, 1912, 1927, 1968, 1976; Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1892, 1898, 1904, 1912.

¹¹⁵ Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1884, 1892, 1898, 1904, 1912; City Directories, 1895, 1903, 1912, 1968, 1976, 1986.

¹¹⁶ *Whitewater Register*, 18 May 1870, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1884, 1892, 1898, 1904, 1912.

exteriors of 158 and 160 Whitewater Street have recently been renovated and illustrate the simple type of buildings constructed for saloons along this street in the nineteenth century.¹¹⁸

Van Voorhees Armory Block, Van Voorhees Addition, and Johnson Block, 200-214 Whitewater Street, potentially eligible

The Van Voorhees Armory Block is discussed in the Government chapter as being potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as the location of the local National Guard unit from 1887-1942. But, the building is also significant, along with the two storefront Van Voorhees Addition, and the Johnson Block, as a commercial building. Together, the three components of this building group had six storefronts with a wide variety of businesses located there in the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth centuries. Like the rest of the street, these businesses included saloons and harness makers along with other stores. There was a high turnover in the storefronts, which was typical of Whitewater Street, where retailing was particularly volatile.

The building is significant and eligible under criterion A of the National Register not for any one business located there, for the wide variety of businesses there that reflected nineteenth and twentieth century retailing. A 2007 renovation removed the boarded-up storefronts and re-introduced large show windows and transoms between extant cast iron columns.

Utilities

Electric and Gas Service

Electricity was one of the earliest utilities introduced to Wisconsin, and the service quickly became popular in communities because its clean and quiet energy could be transmitted relatively cheaply. By the 1890s, electricity was being used extensively in factories and was becoming popular for household use. Electric power was easy to generate from central power stations, often located in old mills at first, using water power. By 1907, there were 193 electric power plants in the state, 31 that used water power, 96 that used coal-generated steam power, and 24 that used a combination of both.¹¹⁹

Like many communities, Whitewater had entrepreneurs willing to develop electrical power to the community, and the development of electric power in Whitewater was typical of many small Wisconsin towns. In early 1886, O. P. Posey, local businessman and owner of the Red Mill (just outside the south city limits, not extant), entered into discussions with the Whitewater City Council about providing electricity from the Red Mill to power new “Edison system” street lights. In order for Posey to install electric generating equipment at the mill, he needed to have a commitment from the city to purchase electricity for street lighting, as generating for consumer use alone would not be profitable. Members of the council and Posey traveled to Rockford to see the system in operation.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1884, 1892, 1898, 1904, 1912.

¹¹⁹ John D. Buenker, *The History of Wisconsin Volume IV The Progressive Era, 1893-1914*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1998, p. 98.

¹²⁰ “Electric Light,” *Whitewater Register*, 11 February 1886, p. 3.

Talks were successful and Posey installed his generating equipment in the mill. In November of 1886, Whitewater's city council approved an ordinance giving Posey's company the rights to "wire" the public areas in the city for electric street lighting. In January of 1887, work on installing the electric system and streetlights was completed, and ten arc lights were turned on. The mill also had a generator to produce electricity for incandescent lights that would be put into use a bit later. The early arc lights were located in the following areas: Main and Whitewater Streets, in front of the Clark Block on Main Street and the Bower House at Main and Second Streets; by the Episcopal Church on Church Street and the Baptist Church on the corner of Main and Fourth Street, and five other places in the residential areas of the city.¹²¹

Power generation at the old mill lasted less than two years because the mill could not generate enough effective power. In 1888, a coal-fired electric power plant was built along Whitewater Street, just south of the Depot (not extant) to generate electricity. Around the same time, several Whitewater businessmen formed the Whitewater Electric Light Company. Its purpose was to provide the electric service to both residential and business customers.¹²²

The electric service provided by the power plant was spotty in the early years, and users only had access to electric power for a couple of hours a day. But, eventually, the service improved. At the same time, entrepreneurs began to purchase smaller power companies and consolidate them, using the larger customer base to fund bigger power plants and better transmission lines that provided more reliable service. One of these companies in southeastern Wisconsin was the Wisconsin Electric Power Company (now known as WE Energies), part of the Wisconsin Gas and Electric Company. In 1916, the Wisconsin Electric Power Company purchased a controlling interest in the Whitewater Electric Light Company. By 1923, Whitewater's electric power was largely provided by a widespread transmission system attached to a large power plant in Milwaukee.¹²³

In 1928, the Wisconsin Gas and Electric Company brought modern gas service to Whitewater. They installed mains that, at first, brought manufactured gas from a large plant in Racine. In 1950, the company began using natural gas, brought to the area in pipelines from other parts of the country. The Whitewater Electric Power Company had an office by the power generating plant on Whitewater Street (not extant). The Wisconsin Gas and Electric Company offices were located on Main Street, at first at Bower Block (B) (139 West Main Street). In 1941, a company office was built at 212 West Main Street, and it was used into the later twentieth century.¹²⁴

At this time, power companies built offices in almost all communities. They provided a convenient place for consumers to pay their bills, facilities to promote electric and/or gas service, showrooms to sell appliances, and, in some cases, garages for utility trucks. For example, at the opening of the new office in Whitewater in 1941, the public was invited to see the appliance

¹²¹ "City Ordinance No. 15," 22 November 1886, copy on file in the manuscript collections of the Whitewater Historical Society Depot Museum, Whitewater, Wisconsin; "The Electric Light," *Whitewater Register*, 27 Jan 1887, p. 3.1

¹²² Ruth Engebretsen Dorr, information about and documents of the Whitewater Electric Light Company, on file in the manuscript collections of the Whitewater Historical Society, Whitewater, Wisconsin.

¹²³ *Ibid.*; *Whitewater Centennial Homecoming*, p. 60.

¹²⁴ Ruth Engebretsen Dorr; "Handsome New Office Building is Center of Public Interest," *Whitewater Register*, 18 December 1941, p. 1.

displays, the electric consumer goods demonstrations, modern wiring systems, and cooking demonstrations. By the later twentieth century, few households did not have electric power or an array of electric appliances, and they could buy these appliances at other retailers. The power companies stopped offering appliances and cooking demonstrations, and eventually consolidated their bill-paying operations. This resulted in the closure of local offices.¹²⁵

The 1941-built office of the Wisconsin Gas and Electric Company (212 West Main Street) is of historic interest as the “modern” home of the electric and gas utility in Whitewater. This building represents the era when the electric and gas utilities personally served the consumer and promoted the use of electric and gas appliances. The building is typical of utility company buildings in other communities built during this era. It was a multi-purpose building, with an office area, a garage for maintenance vehicles, and most interesting, a demonstration room that could be used for demonstrations to homemakers on how to use the latest in home appliances. Rather than today’s effort at conservation of energy, this was an era of consumption, with the utility companies promoting gas and electric usage. Because this office represents a unique era in the history of electric and gas power, it is of historic interest and contributes to the historic significance of the Downtown Historic District.

Telephone Service

In November of 1884, the Whitewater Register announced that a telephones line would soon be extended to Whitewater. The line was being constructed from Milwaukee to Madison, connecting with Whitewater. In August of 1884, the first telephone was installed in the city. The service was provided by the Wisconsin Telephone Company, which was the most important telephone company in the state. The first telephone exchange was located in the old Fose Block (140 West Center Street). During the 1890s, the exchange was located in a building that was demolished in 1899 for the construction of old city hall on Center Street.¹²⁶

In 1898, the telephone exchange moved into the second floor of part of the Richardson Block (201 West Center Street). The exchange remained at this location until 1962, when a modern switching station and office was constructed at 306 West Center Street. This coincided with the change from operated-assisted dialing to a direct-dial system. Like the electric and gas utility, it was important for the telephone company to have a local office in its switching station, but, also like the electric and gas utility, the local telephone office became obsolete, and eventually closed.¹²⁷

The Richardson Block (the east third of the block, 201 West Center Street) is of historic interest as the long-time home of the city’s telephone exchange, the forerunner of the modern direct dial service. From 1898 to 1962, a very long era, this building housed one of the important communication services in the community. The historic location of the telephone exchange in this building makes it a contributing resource as part of the overall historic significance of the proposed Downtown Historic District.

¹²⁵ “Handsone New Office Building.”

¹²⁶ *Whitewater Register*, 28 November 1884, p. 3; *One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary*, p. 62.

¹²⁷ *One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary*, p. 62.

The 1962 Wisconsin Telephone Company building (306 West Center Street) also has some historic interest as the modern home of the telephone company. However, the modern construction date of the building prohibits its eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. It does have an interesting modern design (see Architecture chapter) and was included in the survey. After a 50-year period has elapsed, the building may have significance for its architectural style.

Surveyed Resources Mentioned in the Text

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>National Register Status</i>
Financial Services		
Chamberlin-Hall Block	161 West Main Street	Eligible*
Hahn Block	112 South First Street	Not Eligible*
Clark Block	179 West Main Street	Eligible*
Whitewater Commercial and Savings Bank Building	171 West Main Street	Eligible*
Hotels		
Walworth Hotel	204 West Main Street	Eligible*#
Whitewater Hotel	226 Whitewater Street	Determined Eligible*
Bowers House	183-187 West Main Street	Not Eligible
Newspapers		
Inman Block	119 West Center Street	Not Eligible*
Whitewater Register Block	135 West Main Street	Eligible*
Post Office Block	137 West Main Street	Not Eligible*
Retailing		
Proposed Downtown Historic District (see district form in results chapter)		
Utilities		
Wisconsin Gas and Electric Company Office Building	212 West Main Street	Not Eligible*
Richardson Block	201 West Center Street	Not Eligible*
Wisconsin Telephone Company	306 West Center Street	Not Eligible
*Contributing resource in the Proposed Downtown Historic District		
#Whitewater Landmark		

CHAPTER FIVE

Government

Introduction

Formal government came to Whitewater during the earliest years of its settlement. Pioneers in the area formed Walworth County in 1838-39. The Town of Whitewater was formed in September of 1841, when local pioneers in the Whitewater area met in the home of Freeman Pratt and adopted town organizational rules recently passed by the Territorial Legislature. In early 1842, Dr. James Trippe was elected as the first chairman of the town board. Whitewater, the settlement, would remain under town government until the State Legislature approved its village charter in 1858. In 1885, at the height of the village's prosperity, residents petitioned the State Legislature for a city charter. Since that time, Whitewater has operated under a city government.¹²⁸

During the early years of the Whitewater's growth, county and town government dominated the community and village services were rudimentary, at best. But, after Whitewater became a city in 1885, the community paid much more attention to municipal government, establishing better fire and police departments, building a water and sewer system, supporting a public library, improving streets, and developing a city park. County government was still important, but during the twentieth century, city government came to dominate the political life of the community.

Federal and state government has also had a presence in Whitewater, but on a much less significant level until after World War II. The federal government was largely represented by the post office, a service that touched all of Whitewater's citizens. The state government was represented in the community by the local state militia unit, or as it is known today, the National Guard. Whitewater's state militia (National Guard) unit was originally known as the Custer Rifles and the unit had a long and illustrious history, serving in the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II.

Federal Government

Post Office

The post office was the most common agency of the federal government in Wisconsin communities. And although it is now, technically, a private enterprise, the post office still remains closely tied to the national government. Among the most important communications resources in the country, local post officers often have long and interesting histories. They

¹²⁸ Prosper Cravath and Spencer S. Steele, *Early Annals of Whitewater 1837-1867*, Albert Salisbury, ed., Whitewater, WI: Whitewater Federation of Women's Clubs, 1906, p. 116; *History of Walworth County, Wisconsin*, Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1882, pp. 315, 572-73; Albert Clayton Beckwith, *The History of Walworth County Wisconsin*, Indianapolis, IN: B. F. Bowen & Company, 1912, p. 478.

provided a service that connected people and businesses around the world. During Wisconsin's early years, they were an essential link to more remote areas of the state. For this reason, post offices were one of the first governmental services to be established in pioneer communities, and the position of postmaster was considered a prestigious appointment, usually given to prominent businessmen.

The federal government granted Whitewater a post office in April of 1840, and appointed David J. Powers the first postmaster. Prior to this time, residents had to get their mail from Milwaukee. Like most early communities, the post office in Whitewater was located at the postmaster's place of business, or, sometimes, his home. After a few years, most post offices moved to commercial buildings, and during the later nineteenth century, post offices were often located in the same building for decades. This was the case in Whitewater. Around 1870, the post office was installed in a new building on Whitewater's Main Street (137 W. Main Street). This building remained the location of the post office until 1936, when the federal government paid for and completed the current post office at 213 West Center Street.¹²⁹

The Whitewater Post Office on Center Street has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, in part, for its historical significance as the long-time location of the federal mail service in the city during the twentieth century. Until the post-World War II era, the post office was one of the few federal government services that directly touched almost every citizen. Whitewater's Post Office was listed in the National Register as part of a state-wide effort to recognize local post offices.

The Post Office Block (137 W. Main Street) is also historically significant because it was the location of the post office for 65 years, a long period that only the current post office matches. The construction and use of this building was typical in the history of post offices in small towns, and many significant events in the growth and development of the postal service, such as the beginning of rural free delivery in the area, took place at that location. It would be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for its use as a historic post office, but it is also contributing to the historical significance of the proposed Downtown Historic District.

State Government

National Guard

The federal government authorized state militias as early as 1792 to provide a defensive force in each state in lieu of maintaining a large standing federal army. Often poorly organized, trained, and equipped, the early militias were weak, and many voluntary militias in the nineteenth century were little more than social clubs. Lead miners in southwestern Wisconsin organized to protect their mining claims from Native Americans, and militias were formed in 1832 to drive Black Hawk and his followers out of the state during the Black Hawk War. During the Civil War, men formed militias to serve together during the war, but afterwards, the interest in militias declined. Between 1879 and 1882, the state government reorganized militias into the Wisconsin National Guard, which adopted regular army standards. In the late nineteenth century, the guard

¹²⁹ "Ground Broken for Federal Building," *Whitewater Register*, 18 July, 1935, p. 1; "New Post Office Building Is Admired by Thousands from Home and Abroad," *Whitewater Register*, 23 April 1936, p. 1.

had two main functions, helping suppress labor strikes and service in the Spanish-American War.¹³⁰

During the twentieth century, the Wisconsin National Guard expanded, and guard units saw active service in both World Wars I and II. In particular, the guard units of the 32nd Division fought heroically in the South Pacific during World War II. During the Cold War era, guard units across the country were staffed at twice their pre-World War II size, and air guard units were established. State government controversially used guard units in the 1960s to help quell student protests at the University of Wisconsin and race riots in Milwaukee, but guard units have primarily been used for natural disasters and to back up the regular army. Since the formation of an all-volunteer army in the United States, guard units have become an important component in the nation's military arsenal. In particular, guard units were heavily relied on during the Gulf War and military activities in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo in the 1990s. Since 2003, Wisconsin guard units have consistently rotated in and out of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹³¹

The National Guard unit in Whitewater has a long and storied history. It was formed in 1875 as the Custer Rifles, named for the infamous George Armstrong Custer, who was considered a hero of the nation's "Indian Wars" at the time. Mrs. Custer reportedly sent a photograph of her husband to the group. In 1877, the state Asst. Adj. General reviewed the Custer rifles at Bower's Hall (123-133 Center St., hall not extant) and mustered them into state service. The 80-member Custer Rifles were then entitled to receive equipment from the State armory and get an annual stipend for the unit.¹³²

Officially known as Company C, First Regiment of Infantry of the Wisconsin National Guard, the group locally remained the Custer Rifles until around World War I. One of their first deployments was controversial. On May 4, 1886, Governor Jeremiah Rusk sent the entire First Regiment, including units from Whitewater, Madison, Janesville, Beloit, Monroe, Darlington, Delavan, and Racine, to Milwaukee to help quell labor disturbances in the industrial area of Bay View. The Custer Rifles and a unit from Delevan were stationed at the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad car shops, an area where strikers had earlier disrupted work. They were at this location when, on May 5, strikers headed toward the Allis Reliance Works and did not heed an order to stop. When a guard unit was ordered to fire on the strikers, five people were killed and eight or ten were wounded. This ended the labor demonstrations and a few days later, all guard units were sent home.¹³³

The Custer Rifles returned home to a friendly celebration in Whitewater, although it was apparent in the remarks made that day that the events in Milwaukee made some people uncomfortable. While speakers justified the deployment of the guard as necessary to keep the peace of the "commonwealth," and praised them for not being just "holiday soldiers," a point

¹³⁰ Barbara Wyatt, ed., *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, Vol. 1*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, Government, pp. 4-1—4-4.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Albert Clayton Beckwith, *History of Walworth County Wisconsin*, Indianapolis, IN: B. F. Bowen & Company, 1912, p. 475; "Mustered In," *Whitewater Register*, 27 December 1877, p. 3.

¹³³ Robert C. Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin Volume III Urbanization & Industrialization, 1873-1893*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1985, pp. 394-404; "Home Again," *Whitewater Register*, 13 May, 1886, p. 3.

was made that the Whitewater unit was stationed at the car shops the day of the shootings, where no trouble had taken place.¹³⁴

On a more positive note, the Custer Rifles got a new third floor armory in the Van Voorhes Block (200 W. Whitewater St.) when it was completed in 1887. The guard unit had been located in several downtown Whitewater buildings between 1875 and 1887, and had lobbied for a permanent armory location. The Van Voorhes Block was constructed with three storefronts on the first floor and an unusual second floor built just for the guard. The building has an unusual mansard-like roof that was built with a separate truss. The result was a very spacious second floor drill hall that had no interior structural posts. At the grand opening of the hall in November of 1887, the public were informed that the drill hall had 14-foot ceilings, wainscoting on all the walls, an oak floor, a small stage, and an office and storage room for the guard unit.¹³⁵

Whitewater's guard unit remained in the Van Voorhes Block until the new armory at 146 West North Street was completed in 1942. While in the Van Voorhes Block, the guard unit was called up for active duty several more times. The first was for the Spanish-American War in 1898. In April of that year, the Custer Rifles were sent to Milwaukee to join the rest of the First Regiment. The regiment went south, but due to the brevity of the war, they were held up at Jacksonville and never received orders to go to Cuba before being sent home.¹³⁶

A brief stint of Mexican border duty in 1916 preceded the unit being called up for World War I. At this point, the Custer Rifles name had faded away in favor of Company C. But, during World War I, the unit was given a new designation as Company K, 128th Infantry. After World War I, the Wisconsin National Guard was reorganized, and the Whitewater unit was renamed as Headquarters Company, Third Battalion, 127th Infantry. When the unit was called up for federal service in October of 1940, just prior to World War II, it had received the designation of Company F, 107th Quartermaster Regiment. The company was part of the famed 32nd "Red Arrow" Division of guardsmen from Wisconsin and Michigan, who were in the earliest fighting, and were in action for the longest time period, in the South Pacific in World War II.¹³⁷

The new armory on North Street was dedicated on April 12, 1942, after the Whitewater guard unit had already been activated for World War II, although it was started in 1940, as indicated by the cornerstone. The new, much larger building was available for the unit when it completed World War II duty. Since the "cold war" kept guard units at maximum strength, the building saw considerable activity. The Berlin crisis of 1961, when the old Soviet Union erected a wall between East and West Berlin, at that time separated into an eastern "Communist" sector and a western "free" sector, resulted in a flare-up of the cold war, and the 32nd Division was once again federalized. Whitewater's guard unit was sent for active duty at Fort Lewis in Washington State and spent about a year there, before the crisis cooled down.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ "Home Again."

¹³⁵ "The New Armory," *Whitewater Register*, 17 November 1887, p. 3.

¹³⁶ Beckwith, p. 476; "Off to War," *Whitewater Register*, 28 April 1898, p. 5.

¹³⁷ *Historical and Pictorial Review, National Guard and Naval Militia State of Wisconsin*, Baton Rouge, LA: Army & Navy Publishing Company, 1939, pp. 83, 235; Edward T. Lauer, *32nd Infantry Division World War II*, Madison, WI: State of Wisconsin, 1955, pp. 297, 356-357.

¹³⁸ *One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary 1837-1962*, Waterloo, WI: Artcraft Press, 1962, p. 5.

The North Street Armory was used as an armory and community building into the late twentieth century, when a new armory for Whitewater's National Guard unit was constructed on the northeast side of the city, in the modern industrial park. Since that time, the old armory has been used as for recreational activities, the city's voting station, and for the community food pantry. But, the building's association with the Whitewater National Guard unit during the twentieth century makes it historically significant.

Both the Van Voorhes-Armory Block and the Armory building are potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A for their associations with the growth and development of Whitewater's National Guard unit, a significant event in local history related to state government. The Van Voorhes-Armory Block has recently been renovated and its current level of integrity is very good. The unique roof that made space for the drill hall is extant and has its historic details intact. The 1940-42 Armory building has a very high level of integrity with almost all of its historic details intact. These buildings, individually, are significant locations of Whitewater's National Guard, from the era of the Custer Rifles, to the World War II and cold war era. The Van Voorhes-Armory Block also adds historical significance to the proposed Downtown Historic District.

Local Government

Wisconsin's cities and villages are incorporated by the state legislature under the provisions of the Wisconsin constitution. Historically, the legislature strictly regulated the activities of cities, but the drive for home rule began in earnest at the turn of the twentieth century and was completed in 1933, when the state constitution was amended. There are two types of city government in Wisconsin's communities: mayor-council and council-manager. The mayor-council system consists of a chief executive (mayor) and a legislative branch (council). Some communities have a dominant mayor, while other communities have a dominant council. In the council-manager system, a council is elected as a legislative branch, then it selects a manager to be administrative head of government. The selection is based on merit and qualifications, and the manager, while giving advice to the council on city matters, theoretically stays out of political affairs. In recent years, city governments have become larger and more complicated, so most cities with the mayor-council form of government have also hired city administrators to manage city offices and provide advice to the mayor and council.¹³⁹

Prior to 1858, Whitewater was under the political administration of the Town of Whitewater. In that year, local citizens formed a village charter that was approved by the state legislature. On May 27, 1858, Newton Littlejohn was elected the first village president. A number of notable pioneer-era businessmen served as village presidents, including Joseph L. Pratt, William DeWolf, Jacob J. Starin, George W. Esterly, and Thomas Bassett. In 1885 the state legislature approved a city charter, and Whitewater has had a city government until the present time. One of the most important early mayors of Whitewater was Edward Engebretsen, who served for four years, from 1887-1891. During that time period, Whitewater had a waterworks system installed, one of the earliest communities in the area to do so.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Wyatt, Government, pp. 9-4—9-9.

¹⁴⁰ Beckwith, pp. 477-479.

Whitewater's city government operated under the mayor-council form for decades. During the Progressive Era of the early twentieth century, some larger communities opted for the council-manager form of government, considered a progressive, "clean," version of government. Nearby Janesville formed a council-manager form of government in the 1920s, and has maintained it to this day. Most communities, though, did not embrace this type of government. But, in 1955, local citizens voted in the council-manager form of government, and despite occasional challenges, it has been retained in the city until the present time.¹⁴¹

The most important building associated with Whitewater's historic local government, including the important period when the community changed to the council-manager form, was the old City Hall (not extant). Built in 1899, city hall was the center for city government, city offices, the local fire department and the police department. The beautiful Romanesque Revival style red brick and limestone building was a center of the community's local government until the 1960s, when it was determined to be in need of significant repairs. This was the beginning of the era when most people did not support historic preservation efforts for such buildings, and thought that it was better to have new, efficient, structures.

In 1968, a new public safety building was completed for the fire and police departments. The future of the old city hall and city offices remained immersed in controversy. It was finally determined to house city offices in the basement of the new public safety building and to demolish city hall. A move to preserve the building could not save it, and to this day, most older residents of the community still express regret at losing old city hall.

In the early 1990s, funds became available to add on to the public safety building to provide more room for the police department and city offices. A two-story post-modern style addition was completed in the 1990s and the entire complex (312 W. Whitewater St.) is known as the Municipal Building today. Because of the modern dates of construction of the public safety building and Municipal Building addition, this building is not potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for local government.

Fire and Police Departments

Aside from local government, the most important historic city service in Whitewater is the local volunteer fire department. After some devastating downtown fires in 1866, 1867, and 1870, which were fought ineffectively by bucket brigades, an organized fire brigade was formed in 1871. It consisted of a hose company (No. 1) and a hook and ladder company. A rudimentary water main with five hydrants was installed in the downtown, and water was supplied via a pump and water wheel from the mill pond (Cravath Lake). The pump and water wheel was installed in a small brick building (not extant), and the alarm system consisted of an iron triangle on top of the Winchester and Partridge Wagon Works (not extant). Later, a bell tower was erected on the site of old city hall (Whitewater and Center Streets).¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ *One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary*, p. 23.

¹⁴² "Our Fire Department," *Whitewater Register*, 29 November 1871, p. 1; *Whitewater Centennial Homecoming 1837-1937*, Whitewater: Whitewater Press Print, 1937, p. 43; "A Salute to the Whitewater Volunteer Fire Department 100 Years of Service to the Whitewater Area 1871-1971", *Whitewater Register*, Supplement, 1 July 1971.

When the city water system was installed in 1889, two more hose companies were formed. Hose Company No. 1 was located in the old East Side Hall (not extant), Company No. 2 was located in the pump house near Cravath Lake (not extant), and Company No. 3 was located in the old “Big Brick” high school building (not extant). The Hook and Ladder Company was located in a small and narrow building across from the old city hall (not extant).¹⁴³

When the old city hall was completed, the fire department moved into the first floor. The department purchased their first motorized fire trucks in 1915 and in 1922. In 1931, the department acquired a pumper truck, and contracted with several neighboring towns to provide fire fighting services. By 1962, the fire department had a full complement of modern equipment, including a 1954 fire truck, two pumper trucks from 1946 and 1953, and a 1956 water tank truck. Part of the reason for the construction of the new safety building in 1968 was the expansion of the fire department and its equipment.¹⁴⁴

Whitewater’s fire department continued to modernize during the late twentieth century, adding a modern rescue unit and sophisticated equipment. Due to the high-rise dormitories on the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater campus, the fire department acquired a high-rise ladder truck, usually only available in large cities. The department also has a tanker for rural fires and accepts calls from several nearby towns. Most importantly, the department is still all-volunteer, a significant achievement in an era of time-consuming, state-mandated, training.

The modernization of the police department took a bit longer. During the nineteenth century, Whitewater was served by constables and personnel from the county sheriff’s department. Justices of the peace handled local law violators. After the turn of the twentieth century, it became increasingly necessary to have a more professional local police force. By 1937, Whitewater was served by four professional policemen and three justices of the peace. The police department continued to expand and professionalize into the late twentieth century, and some of the expansion was due to the increasing number of students at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. The justices of the peace were replaced by a municipal judge.

The buildings associated with the historic growth and development of the fire and police departments are not extant. In particular, the most significant building related to these city services, old city hall, was demolished in the late 1960s. The public safety building, completed in 1968 and now part of the Municipal Building (312 W. Whitewater St.), was a milestone in the development of modern facilities for these departments. However, its 1960s construction date and its attachment to the large Municipal Building addition from the 1990s, is the reason it is not potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Public Works—Water System

Aside from fire and police protection, municipal governments were responsible for public works. These services were minimal until the turn of the twentieth century. In the era of gravel streets,

¹⁴³ “Our Fire Department,” *Whitewater Centennial Homecoming*, “A Salute to the Whitewater Volunteer Fire Department.”

¹⁴⁴ *Whitewater Centennial Homecoming*, p. 43; *One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary*, p. 49; “A Salute to the Whitewater Volunteer Fire Department.”

the city provided some grading and maintenance, but residents complained often about muddy and dusty streets. During the late nineteenth century, some communities macadamized streets in the downtown. But, it was common for communities to have to water downtown streets during dry spells. After 1900, many communities paved downtown streets with heavy brick pavers. Sidewalks were largely put in by building owners, and often were poor in quality and inconsistent in size and shape. The concrete and asphalt streets, curbs, gutters, and sidewalks of today were not universally seen in communities until the mid-twentieth century.

The municipal governments provided little in the way of sanitation during most of the nineteenth century. Individual houses and buildings were serviced by back yard wells and outhouses and later, crude septic systems. Many buildings used cisterns to collect rain water for washing. During this time few people understood the connection between water-borne illnesses and poor drinking water. In urban areas, it was common for wells to be contaminated by nearby outhouses. In fact, it was fire protection that generally fostered the development of a community waterworks.

In Wisconsin, the earliest publicly-owned waterworks system came to the state's largest city, Milwaukee, in 1872. But, the Milwaukee experience was far from the norm. Most communities first contracted with private companies to provide and operate a water system. In Madison, in 1881, a private company offered to build a waterworks in Madison in exchange for a 20-year franchise agreement. City leaders were eager to accept this offer and the private company established the Madison City Waterworks Company. It was only when some citizens balked at the idea of a privately-owned waterworks system, that the city council contracted for their own public waterworks system.¹⁴⁵

Most other communities in Wisconsin had longer relationships with private companies than the Madison example, because in the 1880s and 1890s, most people thought, like electric and telephone services, water service should be under the control of a private enterprise. Soon, though, people changed their minds. Water service was quickly seen as essential, unlike electricity and telephones, and there were often conflicts between consumers and the companies over poor service and high rates. Also, the water companies, themselves, did not make the profits they had anticipated, and pressured local governments to buy or take over the service. In any event, by 1900, most waterworks systems were being built and operated by municipalities.¹⁴⁶

The establishment of a waterworks system in Whitewater opened for public discussion in June of 1887, when the *Whitewater Register* printed a lengthy article on the subject. It was prompted by a proposition from a private company to build such a system in the community. The *Register* article stated that it was not pushing such a system, but in its presentation of information, it clearly advocated for it.

The *Register* article promoted an interesting view on the establishment of a water system, citing sanitary reasons for a waterworks instead of enhanced fire protection. The article stated that the

¹⁴⁵ John D. Buenker, *The History of Wisconsin Volume IV The Progressive Era, 1893-1914*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1998, p. 153; David V. Mollenhoff, *Madison A History of the Formative Years*, Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1982, pp. 208-211.

¹⁴⁶ Buenker, pp. 152-156.

city's soil did not drain well and that it was evident that much of the east side of the city had impure water. The article even stated that micro-organisms were readily found in water samples. Another reason to establish the waterworks, the article continued, was the need for a sewer system, and without a water system, there could be no sewer system. Later in the article, it was also stated that a water system would be more efficient in fighting fires and would result in a reduction of insurance rates; that it would be easier to sprinkle streets and the city could avoid installing expensive macadamized (pressed gravel) streets; and finally, that this improvement would aid in attracting industry and "desirable" residents.¹⁴⁷

The information in the article is similar to information given in newspapers in other communities about the advantages of a water system, with one exception. The discussion of impure water, stating that there were micro-organisms tainting the water, was not a common argument seen in other communities. In fact, some early water systems in Wisconsin used polluted water from lakes and rivers. The answer to this unusual argument can be found in an article in the *Register* two months later. In this article, an even stronger argument for pure water is made.

In the second article, the newspaper noted that there was a common attitude in town that wells that were dug a bit deeper would be free of contamination. The newspaper stated that this was false, and that private wells were the source of much "enfeebled health and shortened life." Only a very deep artesian well assured pure water, and that "a careful examination of the subject has convinced the city officials that an artesian well is the best source of supply." More importantly, the article implied that the source of this information was President T. C. Chamberlin, of the Whitewater Normal School (UW-Whitewater). At this time, the Normal School was beginning to have a strong influence in the community. Their argument about pure water was certainly accurate, but the normal school had another reason to support a waterworks. A fire in its large building could be devastating if there were no pressurized water mains in that part of the city.¹⁴⁸

In the spring of 1889, construction on the waterworks system was started. Gray Brothers, of Milwaukee, began to work on the well at the corner of Fremont Street and what is now Starin Road. The site was located using the geological information provided by President Chamberlin of the Normal School. During the drilling, Edward Engebretsen, Whitewater's mayor and one of the chief promoters of the waterworks system, kept samples of material taken at various depths. The Whitewater Historical Society's Depot Museum is in possession of the samples taken by Engebretsen.¹⁴⁹

At about 1000 feet, the workers hit a water supply with enough volume to fill a reservoir and to serve a city twice the size of Whitewater. The supply was submitted for testing at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and pronounced pure. The next step was to build the rest of the waterworks system. A contract was let to C. E. Gray and C. E. Gray, Jr. and Company of Chicago to build a pumping works, a reservoir, a tower with elevated tank, eight miles of water mains, 96 hydrants, and several fountains. Upon completion, the city would provide a fee to the

¹⁴⁷ "Shall Whitewater Have Waterworks?," *Whitewater Register*, 9 June 1887, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ "Water," *Whitewater Register*, 11 August 1887, p. 3.

¹⁴⁹ "Whitewater's Waterworks," *Whitewater Register*, 10 October 1889, p. 5.

company to operate the system. The contract was for 25 years, but the city could purchase the waterworks after 10 years.¹⁵⁰

On October 1, 1889, the waterworks components were completed and tested and found to be acceptable. One aspect of the test was to make sure that a stream of water could be thrown over the roof of the Normal School, at that time on a hill and the highest building in the city. The test showed that there was enough pressure to send water through 500 feet of hose onto the roof of the building. The normal school was an immediate customer of the waterworks, installing drinking fountains and lavatories in the building.¹⁵¹

Structures related to the waterworks included an engine and pump house, the stone water tower and metal tank, and the water mains. The pump house (308 N. Fremont St.) was constructed of brick right next to a boiler house and coal house (both not extant). The pump house contained engines capable of pumping 100,000 gallons of water per hour. The basement housed massive pipes that connect to the well, reservoir, pumps, and mains. The boiler house contained two steel boilers. Also nearby was an office, a frame building that also included storage for plumbing fixtures and supplies (not extant). The round reservoir was constructed of stone with a 110 foot diameter and 13 foot depth. It was almost entirely covered with earthen¹⁵² berms.

The pump house was an attractive building and the reservoir and associated buildings created a significant complex, but perhaps the most impressive structure that was built was the water tower (504 N. Starin Rd.). The eight-sided or octagonal tower was built with limestone walls eight feet thick to a height of 80 feet. A steel tank, 30 feet in diameter and 32 feet tall, was built on top of the tower. The tank was built to hold 200,000 gallons of water, and with the 800,000 gallon capacity of the reservoir, the total supply on hand would equal 1,000,000 gallons, enough to provide excellent water pressure for both everyday usage and for emergency fire-fighting. Local masons Bonnett & Son and carpenter Frank Knox worked on the waterworks structures.¹⁵³

The waterworks system was well-built and both the pump house and water tower are extant. The water tower and tank are still in operation today, even though a modern metal water tower was built in the mid-twentieth century. And, only recently, has a second pump house been erected for the city. Even with some local complaints about service, the private contract was upheld for the 25-year period, much longer than many communities. After the contract expired, Whitewater citizens voted to purchase and operate the system, which has been part of local government services since that time.

The two historic resources associated with the waterworks system in Whitewater that are still extant include the pump house and the water tower. The pump house has important historic associations with the development of the waterworks system, but it has had some significant alterations that detract from its historic integrity. In particular, a large addition has been added to the building and openings have been altered. With this loss of integrity, the pump house is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

The water tower, though, is a fine example of this type of structure and has a high level of historic integrity. It is architecturally significant, but it is also historically significant as the most intact resource related to the development of Whitewater's waterworks, one of the most important city services ever developed in the community. It is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A, association with an important event in local history. It is one of the most important non-residential historic landmarks in the community and every effort should be made to maintain and preserve it.

Surveyed Resources Mentioned in the Text

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>National Register Status</i>
Federal Government		
Post Office Block	137 West Main St.	Eligible*
Whitewater Post Office	213 W. Center St.	Listed
State Government		
Van Voorhes-Armory Block	200 Whitewater St.	Eligible*
Armory	146 W. North St.	Eligible
Local Government		
Public Safety/Municipal Bldg.	312 W. Whitewater St.	Not Eligible
Waterworks Pump House	308 N. Fremont St.	Not Eligible
Water Tower	504 N. Starin Rd.	Eligible

*Contributing resource in the proposed Downtown Historic District

CHAPTER SIX

Results

Results Summary

The intensive architectural and historical survey of the City of Whitewater identified a small list of individual properties that are potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. More significantly, though, the survey identified three areas that enclose potentially eligible National Register historic districts. These districts are the proposed Downtown Historic District, the Fremont Street Historic District, and the Franklin-Esterly Historic District. The properties included in these potential districts are discussed later in this chapter. Suffice it to say here that Whitewater has a downtown and two residential neighborhoods that have retained enough historic character to be recognized as historic districts.

Several products were generated as part of this survey effort; reconnaissance survey cards for each of the surveyed resources with a corresponding survey map; completion of the Historic Preservation Division's Wisconsin Historic and Architectural data base (on-line information), and this survey report. All of these products should be helpful to the City of Whitewater's Landmarks Commission and other officials, local planners, the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society, and other interested citizens, as they make important planning decisions that have an effect on the historic resources of the survey area.

This chapter contains several lists. The first list includes properties that have been designated as local landmarks by the Whitewater Landmarks Commission. The second list includes the properties previously listed in the National Register of Historic Places, including the Main Street Historic District. The third list includes properties that are potentially individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The fourth list includes the properties of the three proposed historic districts.

These lists are based on conditions as they are in 2008, and may not reflect conditions in the future. As historic properties change, either by remodeling, demolition, rehabilitation, or renovation, the lists could grow or shrink as the years go by. And, new historical research may uncover the significance of other properties that was not evident at the present time. Periodically, the Whitewater Landmarks Commission should review these lists, updating them with additional information. In this way, this report can become a working tool for all historic preservation planning activities in the survey area.

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List 1: Local Landmarks in the City of Whitewater

<i>Address</i>	<i>Name</i>
445 West Center Street	Smith-Allen House
122 North Esterly Avenue	Esterly Carriage House
133 North Fremont Street	F. J. Starin Mansion
204 West Main Street	Walworth Hotel
328 West Main Street	Hamilton House
402 West Main Street	White Memorial Library
402 West Main Street	Birge Fountain
429 West Main Street	Newton M. Littlejohn House
507 West Main Street	J. J. Starin House – “Green Shutters”
522 West Main Street	Sanger Marsh House
604 West Main Street	G. W. Esterly House
622 West Main Street	Engebretsen-Dorr House
708 West Main Street	Bassett House
127 Newcomb Street	Lyman Wight Octagon House
404 West North Street	Nelson Salisbury House
145 South Prairie Street	First United Methodist Church of Whitewater
523 "Y guv"Y j kgy cvgt "U0"Y j kgy cvgt "Rcuugpi gt 'F gr qv"	
4: : "U0kpf kcp"O qwpf "Rny { 0"Y j kgy cvgt "Ghki { 'O qwpf u"Rt gugt xg"	
358 "Uqwj "Y j kqp"Ut gg v"Mt gpcp/[cunq"J qwug"	

List 2: Properties Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

Cf f tguu".....P co g"	
435"Y guv"Y j kgy cvgt "Ut gg v"Y j kgy cvgt "Rquv"Qhkeg"	
4: : "U0kpf kcp"O qwpf "Rny { 0"O cr ngu"O qwpf "I tqwr "Y j kgy cvgt "Ghki { 'O qwpf u"Rt gugt xg+" Y guv"O clp"Ut gg v".....Gcuv"Y kpi "qh"Qnf "O clp"J { gt "J cm "Wpkxgtukv{ "qh"Y kueqpukp/"Y j kgy cvgt "+"	
Y guv"O clp"Ut gg v".....J crxgtuqp"Nqi "Ecdlp"J tqwpf u."Wpkxgtukv{ "qh"Y kueqpukp/"Y j kgy cvgt "+"	
448"Y guv"Y j kgy cvgt "U0"Y j kgy cvgt "J qvgn"	
523"Y guv"Y j kgy cvgt "U0"Y j kgy cvgt "Rcuugpi gt 'F gr qv"	
"	
O C K P "UVTGGV"J KUVQTKE" F KUVTKEV"	
Cf f tguu".....P co g"	
652"Y guv"Y j kgy cvgt "Ut gg v".....N0L0Ugr j gpu"J qwug"	
667"Y guv"Y j kgy cvgt "Ut gg v".....Uo kj /Cmrgp"J qwug"	
338"Uqwj "Ej wtej "Ut gg v".....U0Lqj p ai"Nwj gtcp"Ej wtej ""	
342"Uqwj "Ej wtej "Ut gg v".....U0Lqj p ai"T gevqt { ""	
345"Uqwj "Ej wtej "Ut gg v".....Vj tkm"Uj qr ""	
34: /55"Uqwj "Ej wtej "Ut gg v".....T gul f gpeg"	
352"Uqwj "Ej wtej "Ut gg v".....Eqpi tgi cvkqpcn"Ej wtej /Wpkgf "Ej wtej "qh"Ej tkuv"	
35: "Uqwj "Ej wtej "Ut gg v".....T gul f gpeg"	
372"Uqwj "Ej wtej "Ut gg v".....U0Nwng ai"Gr kueqr cn"Ej wtej ""	
344"Uqwj "Ej wtej "Ut gg v".....Gugtn{ "Ut gg v".....Gugtn{ "Ecttkci g"J qwug"	

526	Y guv'O clp'Utggv0*****Uk qp'Ney 'Qhleg'"
532	Y guv'O clp'Utggv0*****Dqy gt'u'J qwug'"
536	Y guv'O clp'Utggv0*****Twhu'Ej cpg{'J qwug'"
54:	Y guv'O clp'Utggv0*****J co knqp'J qwug'"
624	West Main Street*****First English Lutheran Church (Old Baptist Church)
402	West Main Street White Memorial Library
402	West Main Street Birge Fountain
413	West Main Street Skindingsrude Funeral Home *F go qrkuj gf '4233+
417	West Main Street First English Lutheran Parish House
429	West Main Street Newton M. Littlejohn House
451	West Main Street Griffith House Apartments
452	West Main Street T. D. Weeks House
504	West Main Street Kinney-Coxe House
507	West Main Street J. J. Starin House
514	West Main Street DeBauffer Residence
519	West Main Street Leon Pescheret House
522	West Main Street Sanger Marsh House
527	West Main Street Everhardt Residence
532	West Main Street Lucius Winchester House
531-33	West Main Street Whaley Residence
603	West Main Street Residence
604	West Main Street George W. Esterly House
611	West Main Street Ferris House
614	West Main Street C. W. Waite House
619	West Main Street Hanford Congar House
622	West Main Street Engebretsen-Dorr House
707-709	West Main Street William DeWolf House
708	West Main Street Bassett House
404	North Street Nelson Salisbury House
416	North Street L. L. Clark House

List 3: Individual Properties Potentially Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places

<i>Address</i>	<i>Name</i>
401-405 West Center Street	Tuttle House
404-406 West Center Street	J. E. Burton Double House
724 West Center Street	Spooner-Ambrose House
745 West Center Street	John S. Partridge House
258 South Church Street	Howard Salisbury House
133 North Fremont Street	Starin Mansion
166 North Fremont Street	Dahlen House
200 South Fremont Street	Commercial Bank (1975)
938 West Highland Street	Moksnes House
837 South Janesville Road	James & Ella Rockefeller House *F go qrkuj gf '4233+
240 North Jefferson Street	Grout constructed house
135 West Main Street	Whitewater Register Block
137 West Main Street	Post Office Block

161 West Main Street	Chamberlin-Hall Block
171 West Main Street	Commercial Bank (1914)
179 West Main Street	Clark Block
204 West Main Street	Walworth Hotel
226 West Main Street	Masonic Temple
1014 West Main Street	Tratt House
1235 West Main Street	St. Patrick's Catholic Church
127 Newcomb Street	Lyman Wight Octagon House
North Street	Whitewater Armory
336 North Prairie Street	Kaeser Designed House
145 South Prairie Street	First United Methodist Church
Starin Park	Old Water Tower
Whitewater Street	Stone Stable
136 Whiton Street	McLane House

List 4: Properties in the Proposed Historic Districts

PROPOSED DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

<i>Address</i>	<i>Name</i>
104 West Center Street	Commercial Building
106 West Center Street	Cox Block
108 West Center Street	Commercial Building
110 West Center Street	Commercial Building
112 West Center Street	DeWolf Building
119 West Center Street	Inman Block
121 West Center Street	Kostanzer Block
123-33 West Center Street	Bower's New Metropolitan Block
130 West Center Street	Salisbury Double Block (Part 2)
132 West Center Street	Salisbury 1881 Block
134 West Center Street	Salisbury 1873 Block
135 West Center Street	Walker-Smith Block
136-38 West Center Street	Cutler Block
137 West Center Street	Webb A Block
139 West Center Street	Webb B Block
140 West Center Street	Fose Building
201-05 West Center Street	Richardson Block
110 North First Street	Insurance Office
108 South First Street	Commercial Building
110 South First Street	Salisbury Double Block (Part 1)
112 South First Street	Hahn Block
130 West Main Street	Commercial Building
132 West Main Street	Commercial Building
135 West Main Street	Whitewater Register Building

136 West Main Street	Wintermute-Leffingwell Livery
137 West Main Street	Post Office Block
138 West Main Street	Strand-Towne Theater
139 West Main Street	Anderson & Halverson Building
140 West Main Street	Rothe Block
141 West Main Street	Kyle Block
143 West Main Street	Bower-Engbretsen Block
144 West Main Street	Bower-Thorpe Finance Block
145 West Main Street	McLaughlin & McBeath Block
146 West Main Street	Dahlen Block
147-51 West Main Street	Central Block
148 West Main Street	Christenson Block
150-54 West Main Street	Connors Block
153 West Main Street	Marsh-DeWolf Block
155-59 West Main Street	Stewart Block
161 West Main Street	Chamberlin-Hall Block
162 West Main Street	Old Schultz Brothers Store
162A West Main Street	Haubert Block
171 West Main Street	Whitewater Commercial & Savings Bank
172 West Main Street	Hahn Block
173 West Main Street	Jewelry Block
174-76 West Main Street	Miller-Scherer Block
175-77 West Main Street	Cox & Hewitt Block
178-80 West Main Street	O. B. Williams Block
179 West Main Street	Clark Block
182-86 West Main Street	Littlejohn Block
183-87 West Main Street	Bower's Hotel
204 West Main Street	Walworth Hotel
207 West Main Street	First Citizens State Bank
212 West Main Street	Wisconsin Electric Company Building
226 West Main Street	Masonic Temple
205-09 South Second Street	Commercial Building
212 South Second Street	Commercial Building
224 South Second Street	Whitewater Garage
148 Whitewater Street	Commercial Building
156 Whitewater Street	Saloon
158 Whitewater Street	Kelzer Block
560 Whitewater Street	Thiele Block
200-06 Whitewater Street	Van Voorhes Armory Block
210-12 Whitewater Street	Van Voorhes Addition
214 Whitewater Street	Whitewater Hotel

PROPOSED FREMONT STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

<i>Address</i>	<i>Style</i>
126 North Fremont Street	Tudor Revival

130 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
131 North Fremont Street (Starin Mansion)	Italianate/Second Empire
134-36 North Fremont Street	Originally Italianate
142 North Fremont Street	Bungalow
144-46 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
145 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
153 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
156 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
161 North Fremont Street	Italianate
166 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
169 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
175-77 North Fremont Street	Greek Revival
176 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
182 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
187 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
188 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
205 North Fremont Street	Two Story Cube
206 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
212 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
213 North Fremont Street	Greek Revival
216 North Fremont Street	Bungalow
217 North Fremont Street	Bungalow
221 North Fremont Street	Gabled Ell
224 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
232 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
233 North Fremont Street	Ranch
243 North Fremont Street	Other
258 North Fremont Street	Bungalow
259 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
263 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
278 North Fremont Street	Greek Revival
283 North Fremont Street	Queen Anne
293 North Fremont Street	Ranch
314 West North Street	Front Gable
318 West North Street	Queen Anne
326 West North Street	American Foursquare
330 West North Street	Craftsman
105 North Park Street	Two Story Cube
115 North Park Street	American Foursquare
120 North Park Street	Ranch
121 North Park Street	American Foursquare
129 North Park Street	Craftsman
130 North Park Street	Bungalow
135 North Park Street	Bungalow
136 North Park Street	Craftsman
142 North Park Street	American Foursquare

143 North Park Street	Bungalow
148 North Park Street	Queen Anne
149 North Park Street	Bungalow
154 North Park Street	Queen Anne
160 North Park Street	Dutch Colonial Revival
161-63 North Park Street	Colonial Revival
166 North Park Street	Queen Anne
167 North Park Street	Cross Gable
170 North Park Street	Bungalow
175 North Park Street	Tudor Revival
178 North Park Street	American Foursquare
180 North Park Street	Dutch Colonial Revival
206 North Park Street	Craftsman
210 North Park Street	Cape Cod
216 North Park Street	Cape Cod
228 North Park Street	Bungalow

PROPOSED FRANKLIN-ESTERLY HISTORIC DISTRICT

123 North Esterly Avenue	Colonial Revival
129 North Esterly Avenue	Mediterranean Revival
132 North Esterly Avenue	Cape Cod
135 North Esterly Avenue	Tudor Revival
140 North Esterly Avenue	Dutch Colonial Revival
141 North Esterly Avenue	Cape Cod
149 North Esterly Avenue	Cape Cod
154 North Esterly Avenue	Dutch Colonial Revival
159 North Esterly Avenue	Colonial Revival
162 North Esterly Avenue	Bungalow
115 North Franklin Street	Bungalow
124 North Franklin Street	Bungalow
125 North Franklin Street	Craftsman
131 North Franklin Street	American Foursquare
132 North Franklin Street	Bungalow
137 North Franklin Street	Tudor Revival
138 North Franklin Street	Bungalow
143 North Franklin Street	Bungalow
144 North Franklin Street	American Foursquare
149 North Franklin Street	Colonial Revival
150 North Franklin Street	Bungalow (non-contributing)
155 North Franklin Street	Dutch Colonial Revival
156 North Franklin Street	Bungalow
163 North Franklin Street	American Foursquare
164 North Franklin Street	Bungalow
170 North Franklin Street	Cape Cod

175 North Franklin Street
178 North Franklin Street
184 North Franklin Street
185 North Franklin Street
204 North Franklin Street
205 North Franklin Street
211 North Franklin Street
212 North Franklin Street

Cape Cod
American Foursquare
Bungalow
Colonial Revival
Cape Cod
Ranch
Front Gable
Bungalow

CHAPTER SEVEN

Recommendations

Introduction

The following paragraph, taken from a brochure published by the Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society, entitled, “Wisconsin Historic Preservation Program,” sums up the importance of historic preservation in Wisconsin.

“In Wisconsin, the presence of prehistoric and historic properties offers state residents and visitors a special sense of place and a feeling of continuity and association with the past. Such a contribution is invaluable at a time when shopping malls, superhighways, suburban tract housing, and other influences are leading to the increasing homogenization and standardization of American life. Wisconsin’s cultural resources provide a wide and welcome variety of esthetic, education, and economic benefits that improve the quality of life in the state.”

During the survey of the historic resources of the city of Whitewater, one thing became clear; the city has several relatively intact historic neighborhoods that meet the eligibility requirements of the National Register of Historic Places as historic districts. In fact, most of the historic properties of the community are in these historic districts; there are only a few located outside of them.

Social and Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation

Social Benefits

The preservation of the historic resources in Whitewater is important for a number of tangible and intangible, yet significant, reasons. Historic resources provide a community with a sense of its history, an awareness of its origins, and a distinct image of itself. They provide an important mental and physical continuity, familiarity, and orientation in a rapidly changing world. Older buildings and sites contribute to a visual diversity, a human scale, a richness of craftsmanship, and pleasant associations that can enrich our daily lives.

The preservation of local historic resources can strengthen community pride. Every community has something that makes it historically unique. Protecting the physical evidence of a community’s historic character increases citizens’ pride in and identification with their area.

Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation in Wisconsin

During the past several decades, the historic preservation movement has been active in Wisconsin, and several observations about the economic benefits of historic preservation have

become apparent. Historic preservation has been successful in stimulating private and public investment throughout the state. On a local level, preservation enhances a community's image that helps stabilize property values and attracts new business investment. More directly, historic preservation is an important element in Wisconsin's tourism industry. Many polls show that people do not travel just for recreation, but to see and appreciate the unique history of areas where they do not live.

Historic preservation has a positive economic impact on an area. The rehabilitation and restoration of historic buildings improves the economic base by adaptively reusing vacant buildings, stimulating property investment, attracting new businesses, adding jobs, and increasing the local tax base. Whitewater is a part of the "Main Street" program, one of the most helpful for revitalizing downtowns and improving the local economy. Historic preservation can also help stabilize older neighborhoods via economic incentives for rehabilitation, neighborhood pride, and increased property values. Also, local rehabilitation of historic buildings generally utilize local labor and construction companies, helping create jobs and provide income for the local economy.

One of the most common misconceptions about historic preservation is that it is more expensive than new construction. Statistics show that this is not always the case. Rehabilitation of old buildings often is a cost-effective investment, less risky than new construction, and less affected by changing economic cycles. Rehabilitation projects usually cost about one-half to one-third less than similar new construction. For example, there is less expense for foundation and structural work, less expense for interior details that are reused rather than newly constructed, less expense for high-quality construction and design, and potential financial incentives for the rehabilitation of older buildings. Reuse of historic materials is also much "greener" than purchasing newly-made building materials.

The impact of historic preservation on tourism is one of the largest economic incentives for maintaining and restoring historic buildings. Tourism is important not only in Wisconsin, but throughout the nation. Historic properties, historic districts, and communities that have historic downtowns are popular tourist attractions. Studies have shown that there has been a growth in tourism nationally that is based on people traveling to architecturally, historically, and/or culturally important sites. Historic resources enhance the state's appeal to visitors, and many local communities are making concerted attempts to attract tourists by developing local historic resources.

Incentives for Historic Preservation

There are a number of direct and indirect economic incentives for historic preservation of resources in Wisconsin. These incentives are primarily in the form of direct tax credits, as explained below.

Rehabilitation Income Tax Credits

State and federal income tax credits are available to owners of historic properties for the rehabilitation of both residential and income-producing buildings. A 20 percent federal and five

percent state tax credit exists for the costs incurred in rehabilitating income-producing buildings. A 25 percent state income tax credit is available for the costs incurred in rehabilitating historic owner-occupied residential buildings. The buildings must be eligible for or listed in the National and State Registers of Historic Places.

Eligibility for Local Grants or Loans

Many communities have local grant programs or no-interest or low-interest loan programs to assist owners of historic buildings with rehabilitation projects. Most common are facade improvement programs for downtown historic buildings, but other programs give or loan money to rehabilitate buildings in certain neighborhoods or historic districts.

Property Tax Exemption for Archeological Sites and Certain Historic Buildings

Archeological sites and some public historic buildings owned or leased by non-profit organizations may be exempt from general property taxes if they are listed in the National or State Registers of Historic Places, are subject to protective easements, and/or meet other requirements.

Charitable Tax Deductions for Easement Donations

Owners of historic properties that donate preservation easements to qualified organizations may be eligible for federal and state income tax deductions or deductions on estate and gift taxes. Eligible properties are those listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

High Resale Value

An incentive for some owners is the fact that many historic properties gain added value from this designation and add to the resale value of a property. In particular, these values can be raised when a property is part of a historic district.

Protection of Property Investment

Most people want to protect their property investment and their quality of life by ensuring that their neighborhood or surrounding area is protected from inappropriate or negative changes. Historic designation, particularly on the local level can add protection from inappropriate new construction, inappropriate uses, or roadway changes. Properties listed in the National or State Registers of Historic Places have some limited protection from the negative effects of federal or state funded projects, particularly in the area of road construction. Historic designation may also have an effect on the way people perceive an area, and this perception may limit the inappropriate development of that area.

Eligibility for Technical Assistance

Owners of officially designated historic properties are generally eligible for special technical advice and assistance from the Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society.

Many pamphlets are available on technical topics regarding the maintenance and rehabilitation of historic buildings, and trained preservation architects are on staff in the Division of Historic Preservation to handle specific issues regarding historic restoration.

Recognition and Prestige

For many people, the best incentive is the prestige that having a historic property conveys. This recognition and prestige can translate into profits for businesses that are located in historic buildings and/or historic districts. In particular, many bed and breakfast operations rely on the historic quality of their buildings to attract clients, and businesses in historic buildings or historic districts often use this designation to promote their businesses.

Recommendations for Future Action

Nominations to the National and State Registers of Historic Places

It is recommended that the Landmarks Commission move forward with a program to place the proposed historic districts into the National and State Registers of Historic Places. In particular, listing these districts would provide owners of both commercial and residential properties with access to historic tax credits. This may help private homeowners in rehabilitating an older building without resorting to student housing, therefore maintaining more private single-family homes. It would also be of assistance for downtown property owners, who could use the tax credits to rehabilitate buildings at a higher level than has been seen in the past. Student landlords, because they have income-producing property, would be eligible for the tax credits for rehabbing their older buildings, perhaps resulting in more attractive and preserved homes in the city.

Another reason to move forward with nominations is that these neighborhoods would have an official historic “identity” that the city and other organizations can use in promoting tourism and economic development in the community. A historic designation gives a neighborhood a “special” identity that promotes stability. These neighborhoods are close to the university and historic designation may help preserve more single-family homes or lead to more appropriate apartment renovations.

Local Landmarking

It is recommended that the Whitewater Landmarks Commission continue to designate the important architectural and historic resources indicated in this survey report as local landmarks. Local landmarking helps preserve a community’s historic resources by identifying those properties worthy of preservation and opening up a community debate on the merits of preservation if these properties are threatened. While State and National Register listing brings some economic incentives and prestige with it, local landmarking involves the entire community in preserving important local resources.

In Whitewater, with the pressure from student landlords and some property owners, landmarking historic districts may be problematic, but a continuation of landmarking individual buildings should continue.

Educational Materials

The Whitewater Landmarks Commission can further promote historic preservation in the city by the production of educational materials. Working with the Whitewater Historical Society and other entities like Downtown Whitewater, Inc. and the Tourism Office in the Chamber of Commerce, the Commission can publish additional written materials about local historic resources; provide more information on local history and historic preservation to the local school system, and help the community promote historic preservation as an integral part of community and economic development in the city. Producing more educational materials raises the community's consciousness about historic preservation and helps preserve important historic resources if they are threatened.

Review the Report

It is important that this report be reviewed and updated periodically as historic resources change (it is hoped for the better) in the city. The Whitewater Landmarks Commission should review the lists in the Results chapter and make revisions when appropriate. Changes to buildings and new information may change properties' positions on the lists and in order to serve local officials' historic preservation needs in their planning activities, it is important that they are aware of current evaluations of the properties included in this report. Like any planning report, it is hoped that this document can provide a guide and catalyst for discussion of historic preservation activities in Whitewater in the future.

Note: Information in this chapter is taken from "Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation in Wisconsin" and "Incentives for Historic Preservation." Both pamphlets are on file in the Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

APPENDIX

Summary of Survey Results With Photographic Examples

Residential Architecture

- Greek Revival

- 1840-1870

- Symmetrical form
- Regular fenestration
- Simple classical details

- Above: 220 N. Jefferson St.
- Below: 229 N. Cottage St.



Residential Architecture

- Italianate Style

- 1850-1885

- Popular in Whitewater
- Built during economic boom
- Round or segmental arches; eaves with brackets
- **Left: Smith-Allen House, 445 W. Center St., 1856**
- Italian Villa form



Residential Architecture



■ Italianate

- Many variations
 - Square form
 - Wide eaves
 - Window arches/hoods
-
- Above: Sanger Marsh House
522 W. Main St.
 - Below: 161 N. Fremont St., built for Starin family

Residential Architecture



- Unusual Styles
- Above: Lyman Wight House, 127 Newcomb St., 1862
- Octagon
 - Eight-sided, unusual for its shape
 - Seen only in Wisconsin and New York State



- Below: Hamilton House, 328 W. Main St., 1868, 1881, 1887
- Second Empire
 - Mansard roof
 - Italianate details
 - Added Queen Anne style bay and porch

Residential Architecture

- Queen Anne Style
- 1885-1910
 - Asymmetrical Form
 - Abundance of wood trim
 - Tower, veranda
 - Right: Engebretsen-Dorr House, 622 W. Main St.
 - Built in 1895, height of style's popularity



Residential Architecture

■ Queen Anne Style

- Above:
Picturesque
 - Dahlen House, 166 N. Fremont St. c.1890



- Below:
Classical
 - Waite/Leland House, 614 W. Main St., 1896



Residential Architecture

■ 20th Century Styles



- Prairie, Craftsman and Bungalow
- Came from the Arts and Crafts movement
- 318 W. Center St.
- Craftsman Style with Prairie Style influence
- Window bands
- Low-pitched hip roof
- Exposed rafters

Residential Architecture



■ Three Craftsman Houses

- L-R: 119 N. Fremont Street, 227 Boone Ct., 122 Whiton
- Variations of a single plan using similar style elements and construction materials
- Suggests similar builder or plan book.

Residential Architecture



- Bungalow Style
- 1910-1930
 - Low Pitched roofs
 - Knee-brace brackets
 - Exposed rafters

 - Bungalows on Fremont Street
216-217 N.
Fremont Street

Residential Architecture

- Modern Design
- International Style
- Popular during 1930s and 1940s
- Few built due to Depression and World War II



- 336 N. Prairie St., 1942
- Architect: William Kaeser

Residential Architecture

- “Cape Cod”
 - 1930’s-1950s
- Early Ranch
 - 1950’s
- Above: Cape Cod
 - 970 Conger St.
 - Extension of the Colonial Revival and English Tudor cottage
- Below: Early Ranch
 - 293 Fremont St.
 - Two-three bedroom; form promoted by VA for their popular post-World War II loan program



Residential Architecture

- Modern Design:
Wrightian
- Window bands
under roof
eaves
- Horizontal form
- Wide eaves



- Moknes House,
c.1972
- 938 Highland St.
- Architect: Fritz Dreger

Residential Architecture



- **Contemporary, 1960s--present**
 - Very low or very steep rooflines, natural materials, horizontal form
 - Glazed walls and clerestory windows popular
- 1259 Satinwood: Contemporary Ranch

Commercial Architecture



- Italianate Style
- Most popular style of the mid-late 19th century

- Above: Clark Block, 179 W. Main St., 1863, high-style example



- Below: Miller-Scherer Block, 174-176 W. Main St., 1883; typical window hoods of the style

Commercial Architecture

- Queen Anne
- Only a few buildings in downtown
- Bay windows are the main feature
- Above: Williams Block, 178-180 W. Main St., 1891
- Below: Johnson Block (left end), 214 Whitewater St., 1890



Commercial Architecture

- **20th Century**
- **Mostly through remodeling**
- Above: Bower-Engebretsen Block, 143 W. Main St., 1868
 - New Front c.1920
 - Craftsman influence
- Below: Whitewater Commercial and Savings Bank, 171 W. Main St., 1914
 - Classical Revival
 - Architects: Van Ryn & DeGelleke



Commercial Architecture

- Modern Architecture
- After World War II
- Above: Commercial Bank, 200 S. Fremont St., 1975
 - Wrightian
 - Architect: Gene LaMuro of Ft. Atkinson
- Below: First Citizens State Bank, 207 W. Main St., 1967, 2004
 - 1967 portion was “modern” in style; 2004 addition is called “Post-Modern”



Church Architecture



- Dominant Style: Gothic Revival
- Pointed Arches, Towers, Buttresses
- Style still being used today
- Above: St. Luke's Church, 150 S. Church St., 1869
- Below: St. John's Church, 116 S. Church St., 1925

Construction Materials

Whitewater Brick



- Left: 532 W. Center St. c. 1865, Gabled Ell form
- Right: 158-160 Whitewater St., 1870 Italianate Style Commercial Buildings

Construction Materials

Stone



- Left: Water Tower, Starin Park, 1889, cut limestone
- Right: Stone Stable, Whitewater Street near depot, c.1845, stone rubble

Construction Materials

Early Concrete Block



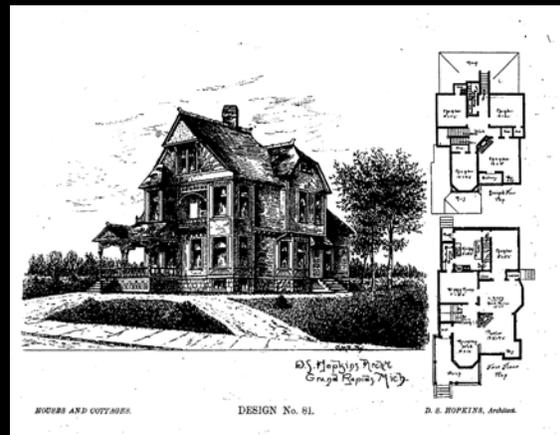
- Used more often in foundations; entire concrete block buildings are unusual
- Left: 148 Park St., late Queen Anne style, c. 1910
- Right: 212 S. Second St., c.1915

Architects and Builders

- Architect
Designed
Queen Anne
Style
- From plan book



- Howard Salisbury
House, 1887
- 258 Church St.
- D. S. Hopkins *Houses
and Cottages Book No.
5 Plan Book*



Architects and Builders

- White Library
- 402 W. Main St.
- Now known as the Arts Alliance building
- Architects:
Claude & Starck
- Madison architects who worked in Prairie Style
- Claude & Starck's standard library design with Classical Revival exterior, Craftsman style interior



Architects and Builders



- Joseph Bower:
- most important 19th century builder/developer of downtown



- Above: Bower's New Metropolitan Block, 123-133 W. Center St., 1870
- Below: Connors Block, 150-154 W. Main St., 1886, Joseph Bower, builder

Architects and Builders



- Bonnett Brothers, 19th century brick masons

- Above: Miller-Scherer Block, 174-176 W. Main St., 1883



- Below: Cox & Hewitt Block, 175-177 W. Main St., 1883

Historical Themes

- Commerce
- Financial Institutions

- Above: Chamberlin Block, 161 W. Main St., 1873
 - Location of First National Bank, 1874
 - First location of First Citizens State Bank, 1931
- Below: Hahn Block, 112 S. First St., 1878
 - First location of Citizens National (State) Bank



Historical Themes

- Commerce

- Hotels

- Above: Walworth Hotel, 204 W. Main St., 1890

- Up-scale downtown hotel



- Below: (New) Whitewater Hotel, 226 Whitewater St., 1894

- Railroad/commercial hotel



Historical Themes

- Retailing
- Proposed Downtown Historic District

- Above: Trippe-Conger Block, 147-151 W. Main St., 1856

- Dry Goods, O'Connor Drug Store

- Below: Stewart Block, 155-159 W. Main St., 1885

- Stewart's Dry Goods & Hardware Store



Historical Themes

- Government
- Federal
- Post Office Block
- 137 W. Main St.
- Built by Joseph Bower in 1870
- Became location of Post Office 1875
- Remained there until 1936



Historical Themes

- Government
- State
- State Militia:
Wisconsin
National Guard



- Above: Van Voorhees-Armory Block, 200 Whitewater St., 1887
- Below: Whitewater Armory, 146 W. North St., 1940-42



Report Findings



■ Results Include:

- National Register Sites
 - Local Landmarks
 - Buildings potentially eligible for the National Register
 - Proposed Historic Districts
-
- Above: Main Street Historic District (National Register)
 - Below: George W. Esterly House, 604 W. Main St., Local Landmark

Results



- Potentially Eligible for the National Register
- Individual Properties
- Above: John S. Partridge House, 745 W. Center St.
 - Significant for Italianate Style and industrial history.



- Below: J. E. Burton Double House, 404-406 W. Center St.
 - Significant for Queen Anne style and as a type of building, an unusual duplex

Results



- Potentially Eligible Historic District
 - Proposed Downtown Historic District
- Main Street between Whitewater & Fremont
- Center Street between Whitewater & Second
- West side Whitewater Street between Main and Fremont

Results



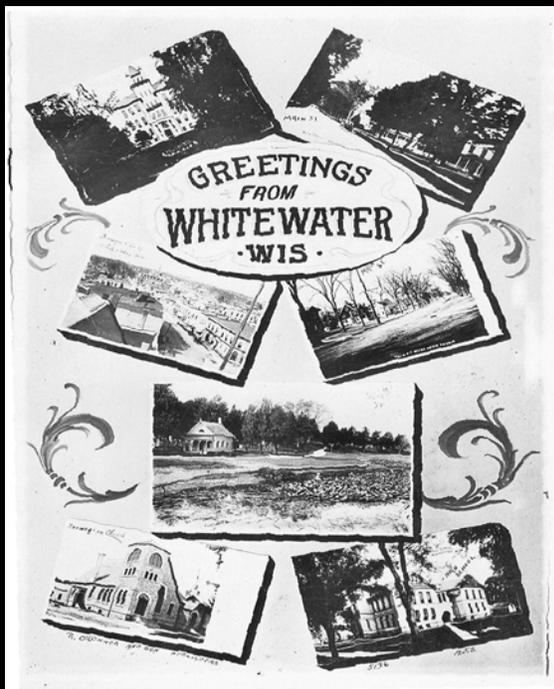
- **Potentially Eligible Historic District**
 - Proposed Fremont Street Historic District
- Fremont Street beginning at North St. and ending at 278 and 293.
- Park Street from North Street to 175 and 180.

Results



- Potentially Eligible Historic District
 - Proposed Franklin-Esterly Historic District
- Franklin Street: From 115 and 124 to 211 and 212.
- Esterly Street: From 123 and 132 to 159 and 162.

Architectural and Historical Survey of Whitewater, Wisconsin 2008



- Left: Postcard, c. 1910
- Right: Postcard, c. 1950
- Both from the collections of the Whitewater Historical Society. Used with permission.