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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name: Elkhart Downtown Commercial Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number: Roughly: 100-700 S. Main; 100 block of W. Jackson; 100 block S. 2nd; 100W-100E Lexington N/A not for publication

city or town: Elkhart N/A vicinity

state: Indiana code: IN county: Elkhart code: 039 zip code: 46516

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official/Title: *Roy S. ...*

Date: 4-23-97

Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title: _____

Date: _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

- building, district, site, structure, object

Table with columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total. Values: 59, 21, 0, 0, 0, 3, 59, 24.

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

3

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business, Financial Institution, Specialty Store, Department Store, SOCIAL: Civic, GOVERNMENT: Post Office, RECREATION/CULTURE: Theater

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business, Financial Institution, Specialty Store, Restaurant, RECREATION/CULTURE: Theater, Museum, DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate, Queen Anne, 19th & 20th c. REVIVALS: Classical Revival

foundation: STONE: Limestone, walls: BRICK, STONE, roof: ASPHALT, other

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1868-1930

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Turnock, Enoch Hill

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 24.1

UTM References:

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1: 16 585560 4615480
Zone Easting Northing

3: 16 585610 4614600
Zone Easting Northing

2: 16 585940 4614670

4: 16 585240 4615360

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By:

name/title Glory-June Greiff, Consulting Historian

organization date 12-31-96

street & number 1753 S. Talbott St. telephone 317/637-6163

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46225

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name

street & number telephone

city or town state zip code

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

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

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Section number 7 Page 1

Elkhart Downtown Commercial District

Elkhart County, Indiana

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Surrounded by the rivers and railroads that shaped it, downtown Elkhart lies on a grid skewed toward the northwest. The Elkhart Downtown Commercial District contains a fine collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings strung along approximately eight blocks of Main Street, which roughly parallels the general direction of the meandering Elkhart River to the east as it flows into the St. Joseph. The south side of the 100 block of East Franklin Street is also part of the district. Near its north end, the district also includes two blocks of Lexington Street flanking Main, and the east side of Second Street between Lexington and Jackson.

North of the commercial district across the St. Joseph River lie the impressive historic homes along Beardsley Avenue. Across the Elkhart River to the east was a once-thriving industrial area, of which few remnants survive. South of the district are the railroad tracks, and to the west is an area of some substantial but mostly more modest dwellings through which the St. Joseph River twists and turns.

Immediately north of the district is the original (1832) plat of Elkhart; a fragment of its southernmost block is included within the historic district. (Nothing remains from the earliest period.) The Elkhart Downtown Commercial District represents the boom years of the downtown area from the 1870s through the 1920s, as it developed southward from the original town, then toward and from the railroad, which arrived in 1851. Development remained gradual, however, with steady growth, until after 1870, when the construction of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway repair shops just south of the downtown area stimulated a sudden tide of population and economic expansion. Nevertheless, through the nineteenth century and somewhat beyond, a number of early residences lingered on Main Street, particularly at the north end.

As early as the late 1880s, Elkhart's downtown was anchored north and south by two large and ornate buildings, the Bucklen Hotel on the north and the Bucklen Opera House on the south. Both were demolished in the post-World War II years, the latter only about ten years ago despite a valiant effort by preservationists to save it. The spaces remain essentially empty today. A larger gap (photo 1) splits the district in half: the east side of the 300 block of South Main until the early 1970s had been a fairly intact row of mostly two-story commercial

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buildings dominated by the three-story stone-faced Elks Hall. The retail block was gradually demolished and today it is the Civic Plaza. The west side of the block, which had included the Ziesel building (often attributed to E. Hill Turnock, but unconfirmed) was also demolished, giving way to the huge brick-and-glass Key Bank building (which actually hides one older building beneath its facade) and its surrounding parking lot. The construction of the present post office in 1968 resulted in the loss of the west side of the 600 block of South Main, which once featured turn-of-the-century commercial blocks of two stories. The open space immediately to the north of the post office (see photo 2) was where the Bucklen Opera House had stood. There are numerous vacant lots scattered throughout the district, especially in the southern half, but also around the northern edges. And there are a number of modern structures, a few especially large and intrusive, in the midst of the district's historic buildings. Still, enough of the historic fabric remains to represent the full length of downtown Elkhart's heyday.

From the earliest post-railroad era a number of mostly Italianate buildings survive (see, for example, photo 3), with the two-story building at 112 West Jackson (see photo 4) likely the oldest, dating to 1868. Although altered on the first story and with a modern one-story extension to the west, the building still exhibits its characteristic bracketed cornice and hooded arched windows. Perhaps the most notable of the surviving Italianate structures stands near the opposite end of the district at 614-616 South Main (see photo 5). Built in the mid-1870s scarcely a block from the railroad tracks, the two-story building features a bracketed cornice with two hooded rounded pediments and round-arched windows with decorative keystones. The building's street level is intact, with cast iron pilasters and medallions. Some other remaining Italianate examples, each three stories in height, include the early structure at 200 South Main (photo 6), another at 125 East Lexington, and a later example of this style, built in 1888, at 600 South Main. One built the same year at 121 South Main exhibits the characteristic bracketed cornice but shows more Victorian Renaissance influence (photo 7). Another building similarly influenced, probably built about ten years earlier still stands at 507 South Main (see photo 8).

Somewhat of an exception to the many Italianate buildings of this early period is the three-story Cornish Block at 201 South Main (see photo 9 for view of north elevation), built in the 1870s, which is brick but faced with stone--now painted--on its second and third stories.

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Elkhart Downtown Commercial District

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Simplified but not without decorative elements, it features a prominent dentilled cornice with a corner pediment, and its street level east facade once boasted abundant plate glass and cast iron ornamentation.

High style revivals and eclectic Queen Anne derivatives (sometimes mixed) typify most of the commercial buildings built during the years before the turn of the century. At 214 South Main (see extreme left of photo 10) is a particularly eye-catching building of three and a half stories, built in 1892. Only 22 feet wide and faced with rough sandstone, the Chateausque building is topped with a gabled, copper-clad roof over the main facade. Built in 1895, the substantial former fire and police building at 133-135 East Franklin (photo 11) appears a fairly typical Romanesque Revival building of the era with its round-arched windows and rock-faced limestone facade, but with the variant of its tiled hipped roof. Originally it had a central bell tower and third-floor dormer windows. The Franklin Street Station, as it is called, presently houses a bank. The restored Green Block at 109-115 East Lexington (see left of photo 6), designed by A. H. Ellwood and listed individually in the National Register), is an especially fine example of the Queen Anne mode built in 1895. The ornate building features multi-sided corner bays topped with turrets at each end of the main facade; centered below the restored "Green Block" parapet are two three-sided bays flanked by two recessed arched openings. The cornice exhibits a broad entablature with modillions--all in all an exuberant architectural display typical of the era. A somewhat similar but far less ostentatious commercial block stands only a block away at 106-112 West Lexington, built some years earlier than the Green Block. It sports three curved bays along its second-story facade, plus a corner bay. Across the street and built around the same time are two adjacent and architecturally related buildings, 109 and 111-113 West Lexington (see photo 9), in a similar mode (modest projecting bays above retail storefronts) but faced with roughcut limestone. Both display dentilled cornices, and 109 West Lexington has a Roman-arched doorway. The eclectic three-story former Oddfellows Building at 514 South Main (photo 12) has lost some of its features through alteration, but still boasts its corner tower, pediment, and rock-faced limestone facade. Some other Queen Anne derivatives in the district are 520, 530 (see photo 13), 610, and 612 South Main, all small two-story buildings with projecting bays above their single storefronts. A late Queen Anne example built in 1908 is the multi-gabled Menges Building at 124-128 West Lexington (photo 14).

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Elkhart Downtown Commercial District

Elkhart County, Indiana

The district boasts some especially fine Neoclassical Revival buildings from the early twentieth century. Outstanding is the former post office, since rehabilitated into a bank, completed in 1905 on the northwest corner of Main and Jackson (see photos 3,15), the northernmost point of the district. Solid and substantial, of limestone with a granite foundation, its restrained exterior exhibits a dentilled cornice and pediment over the main entrance, which is flanked by Ionic columns. Four blocks to the south stands the former St. Joseph Valley Bank, now the Midwest Museum of American Art (photo 16). Built in 1922 also of limestone, this building displays considerably more Classical detailing than its companion to the north, with a row of two-story Corinthian columns on its main east facade and Corinthian pilasters interspersed with garlands on the south. On both facades are pedimented entrances.

With the return of architect E. Hill Turnock to Elkhart in 1907, elements of the Prairie Style and the Arts and Crafts movement were introduced to downtown, usually mixed with other prevailing designs of the time. Turnock seemed particularly fond of dark brick, as seen in his YWCA building (photo 17) and the Elkhart Water Company (see photo 18 on right), as well as the Borneman Building at 230 South Main (see photo 10) that is often attributed to him, although unverified. Both the YWCA and Water Company buildings have tile-covered roofs (the former actually a pent roof supported with paired brackets) evoking some Mission, but mostly Arts and Crafts, influences. The former YWCA at 120 West Lexington, listed individually in the National Register, is a three-story building with round-arched entrance and windows on the first floor and casements opening onto a balcony with a wrought iron railing on the second. The Water Company Building at 130 South Main is two stories. Its roof is supported with pairs of knee braces positioned between round-arched windows on the second story. The main entrance on Main is surmounted with a tiled pent roof also supported with knee braces. The first story windows, essentially unadorned but for the limestone beltcourse serving as their sills, are presently filled in with glass block. In a different vein, Turnock created the Masonic Temple (photo 19) of primarily Classical derivation. Three stories in height, its segmental arched entrance is surmounted with a balustrade fronting a recessed center bay framed within by two Doric columns. The third-story limestone ornamentation on the main west facade and around the corners, however, owes something to Frank Lloyd Wright.

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Elkhart Downtown Commercial District

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Besides the afore-mentioned former St. Joseph Valley Bank, two other buildings constructed in the 1920s particularly dominate the the south end of the district: the former Hotel Elkhart, now the Greencroft/Cornerstone Tower, and the Elco Theatre. The eight-story Hotel Elkhart at 500 South Main (see photo 12) opened in 1923 and is currently undergoing sensitive rehabilitation. (The street level facades were altered in the 1970s when the building was remodeled into senior housing.) Of brown brick trimmed with limestone, the building displays some understated Tudor influence, particularly in its two-story arched openings along the the west and north facades (at present completely hidden on the west).

Built in 1924, the terra cotta-faced Elco (photo 20), which began life as the Lerner Theatre, has been listed individually in the National Register since 1980. A rather late and somewhat exuberant interpretation of Beaux Art Classicism, the facade displays four Ionic columns recessed above the marquee (a 1950s replacement), window openings topped with broken pediments, parapet, dentilled cornice, frieze, and numerous other decorative elements, such as pilasters and medallions. It graces the east side of the 400 block of South Main.

Of the remaining early twentieth-century buildings, most adhered to the more simplified and functional designs that emerged during that time, but few have survived unscathed. One relatively intact example is the two-story trapezoidal Rowe Block, built in 1900 at the southeast corner of State and Main (photo 21). Its main decorative feature is a large Roman-arched recessed entrance. The Dreves Building (see photo 19) on Second Street, dating to probably the mid-1910s, has a stone-trimmed stepped parapet and three round-arched entrances, but is otherwise essentially unadorned.

The district contains 62 contributing buildings, 21 non-contributing buildings, and three non-contributing objects, these last being a modern clock tower and a small fountain on the western side of the Civic Plaza (east side of the 300 block of South Main) and a modern sculpture in the lot north of the Midwest Museum of American Art.

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Elkhart Downtown Commercial District

Elkhart County, Indiana

List of Resources

CONTRIBUTING

116 W Jackson
117-119 W Jackson

112 S 2nd (Masonic Temple)
116 S 2nd (Dreves Bldg)

124-128 W Lexington (Menges Bldg)
120 W Lexington
106-112 W Lexington
109 W Lexington
111-113 W Lexington
109-115 E Lexington (Green Block)
125 E Lexington

131 E Franklin

101 N Main (former P.O.)
121 S Main
127 S Main
129 S Main
116 S Main
118 S Main
120 S Main
124-126 S Main
128 S Main
130 S Main (Water Co)

201 S Main (Cornish Block)
203 S Main (Dalton Bldg)
209 S Main
211 S Main
213-215 S Main
200 S Main
202-204 S Main (Frye Bldg)
206 S Main
208 S Main
214 S Main (Securities Bldg)
224-226 S Main
230 S Main (Borneman Bldg)

NONCONTRIBUTING

118 W Jackson

109-115 E Franklin
121 E Franklin

131 S Main

205-207 S Main
221 S Main
223 S Main
227 S Main

210 S Main
220 S Main

301-319 S Main
clock tower, 300 S Main
fountain, 300 S Main.

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Elkhart Downtown Commercial District

Elkhart County, Indiana

409-411 S Main
429 S Main

401 S Main
419 S Main
sculpture, 425 N Main
400 S Main
404 S Main

* 410-414 S Main (Elco)
418 S Main

512 S Main

500 S Main (Hotel Elkhart)
514 S Main
516 S Main (Odd Fellows Bldg)
520 S Main
526 S Main
528 S Main
530 S Main
532 S Main
534 S Main
505 S Main
507 S Main
511 S Main
515 S Main
519 S Main
521 S Main (Doll Bldg)
523 S Main

522-524 S Main

501 S Main
503 S Main
509 S Main

600 S Main (Central Block)
606 S Main
610 S Main
612 S Main
614-616 S Main
618-622 S Main (Weiler Bldg)
700 S Main (Rowe Bldg)
706-708 S Main

62 contributing buildings

21 non-contributing buildings
3 non-contributing objects

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Elkhart Downtown Commercial District

Elkhart County, Indiana

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Elkhart Downtown Commercial District is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A in the area of commerce, as a visual representation of over sixty years of continuing commercial prosperity, the result of Elkhart's becoming an important railroad city and its subsequent population and economic boom. This followed the railroad's establishment of the town as a division point and district headquarters and the construction of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern (later, New York Central) repair shops in 1870. The closing of the main repair shops at the beginning of the Great Depression in 1930 marked the end of the period, and the decline of the downtown area in the decades after World War II followed the pattern typical of commercial centers nationwide.

Although marred by numerous vacant lots, sprinkled throughout the district are a number of significant buildings representative of the architectural styles most favored during the period of downtown Elkhart's prosperity. In addition, among the buildings in the district are several examples of the work of noted Elkhart architect E. Hill Turnock, representing the bulk of his surviving commercial and institutional buildings. Thus the district is eligible under Criterion C for its commercial architecture and for its small collection of significant buildings designed by Turnock.

Taken as a whole, the Elkhart Downtown Commercial District embodies the visual identity of the city of Elkhart that developed over some sixty years, from before 1870 to 1930.

The origins of the city of Elkhart lie in a settlement called Pulaski that appeared just prior to 1830 on the north side of the St. Joseph River at its confluence with the Elkhart River. South of the St. Joseph, Dr. Havilah Beardsley purchased land from Potawatomie chief Pierre Moran and in 1832 platted a town he called Elkhart, after the county (established 1830). The name originated with the river, allegedly so called because the island at its mouth (the present Island Park) is shaped, it was said, like an elk's heart. The northern edge of the historic district includes a tiny part of this original plat, although nothing remains from that early period. The village's first stores appeared around the intersection of Main and Jackson, the north edge of the present district. Most of Elkhart's earliest settlers arrived by way of the Fort Wayne Road, which ultimately evolved into US33 some one hundred years later.

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Elkhart Downtown Commercial District

Elkhart County, Indiana

Elkhart's location along the rivers, sources of both transportation and power, boded well for its future. The village grew gradually southward, with the railroad (the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana, later the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway) arriving in 1851. The tracks, several blocks south of the original plat, drew commercial development in that direction, and the population grew sufficiently for Elkhart to incorporate as a town in 1858. A rivalry flourished for a time between the north and south ends of downtown, with most civic development tending to remain toward the north. Development otherwise seems to have been fairly well distributed.

Two developments in 1870 initiated a building boom in Elkhart's downtown that lasted for decades and still remains sufficiently intact to define the heart of the city. The railroad located its extensive repair shops immediately southwest of downtown on the opposite side of the tracks. (About three years earlier the railroad had constructed one roundhouse and a foundry between Fourth and Sixth streets south of the tracks, establishing a division terminal.) The same year the hydraulic works were completed on the Elkhart River, and numerous heavy industries sprang up along the banks opposite downtown. Early store buildings of wood, as well as many dwellings along Main Street, soon gave way to new commercial blocks of brick and stone, and vacant lots filled quickly. (However, even as late as the turn of the century early residences lingered on Main Street, particularly at the north end.) Several of these buildings from the 1870s and 1880s--and a few earlier--remain and are mostly of the Italianate style. Two three-story examples from the 1870s stand today at 200 South Main (photo 6) and at 125 East Lexington; another, built in 1888 and probably the latest example of this style, is at 600 South Main. An exceptionally fine example is the two-story building at 614-616 South Main (see photo 5), constructed probably in the mid-1870s. No doubt owing to its convenient proximity to the railroad, the building housed several saloons over the years.

Variations on the Queen Anne style gained popularity in the 1880s. Commercial blocks were usually two stories with one or several storefronts. Pressed metal ornamentation was used extensively and several examples remain of this. Perhaps the best is the Green Block at 109-115 East Lexington (see photo 6) designed by Bristol architect A. H. Ellwood in 1895 for Cullen W. Green as an investment property. The ornate building is listed individually in the National Register. Ellwood designed at least one other building in the district, the trapezoidal Rowe Block at 700 South Main (photo 21). Though

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essentially functional in its lines, the building boasts a handsome arched recessed entrance, showing some Romanesque Revival influence. Close to the railroad, it housed a series of saloons and the Great Northern Buffet. Other notable examples of Queen Anne-influenced commercial blocks are the one at 106-112 West Lexington, which housed the Indiana and Michigan Electric Company, and the Menges Building at 124-128 West Lexington (see photo 14). A late example of the style with Free Classic elements, it was erected in 1908.

The city of Elkhart has ever been well served with banks, although today's versions, with the notable exception of the Valley American Bank in the historic post office building (photo 15), tend to be housed in large and amorphous structures of blank brick walls and glass (see photo 1). But some historic bank buildings still stand. When it was built in 1892, the Security Building at 214 South Main housed the Indiana National Bank, which soon gave way to the Farmers and Merchants Bank, followed by the St. Joseph Valley Bank in 1900. With its narrow three-story facade and copper roof, the Chateausque building remains imposing today, despite the loss of its original windows and doors. "The bank with the friendly service," as the St. Joseph Valley Bank called itself, opened in 1877 in the Cornish Block at 201 South Main. (Its origins lie in the banking house established by Edmund R. Kerstetter five years earlier.) After moving about into several downtown locations, the bank built its own edifice of stately Neoclassical design in 1922 at the northwest corner of Main and Marion (photo 16). The building today houses the Midwest Museum of American Art.

Commercial establishments lined Main Street, many with lodge halls on their upper floors. The Elks built a fine stone-faced three-story building, since demolished, in the 300 block south, and the Oddfellows in 1899 combined three of their lodges into one new building at 515 South Main (photo 12), still standing, although part of its corner tower is gone. In 1910 the Masons had E. Hill Turnock design their new lodge on Second Street (photo 19), where the majority of Elkhart's civic buildings were by then or soon to be located. One exception was the magnificent new post office on the northwest corner of Main and Jackson completed in 1905, which replaced leased space in a small Italianate retail building constructed in 1868, still standing a half block to the west (see photo 4). The city hall on Second Street was replaced in 1895 by a large Romanesque building on East Franklin Street (photo 11) that also contained the police and fire departments. (The city's offices returned to Second Street in 1916 upon completion of the

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Elkhart Downtown Commercial District

Elkhart County, Indiana

Municipal Building, designed by E. Hill Turnock.) The building on Franklin Street continued to house both the police and fire stations, and finally, only the latter, until the early 1980s. Today the Franklin Street Station, as it is called, contains a bank and other offices.

Hotels, often boasting fine eating establishments, and theaters dotted the downtown area amidst the many shops. Near the railroad were several small hotels and boarding houses, most of which have disappeared. At the opposite end of Main, the Bucklen Hotel at Main and Jackson was the largest and most elegant, opening in 1889. To create this fashionable hostelry, entrepreneur Herbert Bucklen had purchased and remodeled the old Clifton House, creating a landmark that stood for many decades near the north end of downtown. (Its space is now partly occupied by a small bank branch.) But the Bucklen lay many blocks from the railroad and potential guests arriving by train. Mr. Bucklen had certainly not neglected the south end, however, for in 1875 he had built the opulent Bucklen Opera House. Neither of the Bucklen buildings survives.

But their second-generation counterparts have fared somewhat better. In 1923 the modern eight-story Hotel Elkhart opened in the 500 block of South Main (photo 12). Its success assured owing to the proximity of the railroad depot, the hotel added a nine-story section on the east five years later. In its heyday it boasted 225 rooms, a supper club, the Redwood Room, touted as "Indiana's finest" and the Athenian Ballroom. Remodeled and rechristened Greencroft Tower in the 1970s for senior housing, the building is presently undergoing rehabilitation that will restore most of the original appearance of its exterior.

In 1924 regional theatrical impresario Harry Lerner opened his magnificent terra cotta-faced theater (photo 20), designed by Chicago architect K.V. Vitthum, for vaudeville and the movies. Warner Brothers bought Lerner out in the early 1930s, but the Hollywood studio's ownership was short-lived: Warners went bankrupt. Renamed the Elco, the theater was then taken over by the Indiana-Illinois Theatre Company and remained in business for several decades; Miller Theaters acquired it in 1961 and continued to show movies through the 1980s. The Elco, now a performing arts theater, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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Elkhart Downtown Commercial District

Elkhart County, Indiana

In 1907, at the age of 50, architect E. [variously Enoch or Enock] Hill Turnock returned to Elkhart. The city's most noted architect was born in 1857 in England; his father, a dealer in china, glassware, and other hard goods, moved the family to Elkhart in 1872. After completing his high school education, Turnock studied in Chicago at the Art Institute and apprenticed in the office of William LeBaron Jenney. Among his contemporaries was Frank Lloyd Wright. Turnock worked in Chicago for several years, where his most renowned building was the Lincoln Park Palace apartments, today a designated Chicago Landmark known as the Brewster Apartments. Diverse in his architectural skills, Turnock designed several large residences in Elkhart, most notably Ruthmere, as well as more modest dwellings and numerous factory buildings. While Turnock's commercial and institutional buildings are far from a pure Prairie style, the influence of Wright appears visible in most. Turnock died in 1926, by which time downtown was thick with his buildings. (One intersection, just outside the district boundaries, boasted Turnock's work on three of its corners. Today, only one, the Municipal Building built in 1916, remains.)

Turnock seemed particularly fond of dark brick, as seen in his YWCA building and the Elkhart Water Company, as well as the Borneman Building, unconfirmed as his work, at 230 South Main. Both the YWCA and Water Company buildings display Craftsman influences. The two-story Water Company Building at 130 South Main (photo 18) was built about 1910. The former YWCA at 120 West Lexington (photo 17), listed individually in the National Register, is a three-story building completed in 1919. It was the YWCA's first permanent home in Elkhart after twelve years of occupying rented spaces downtown to serve the needs of the city's unmarried young working women, who usually were new to the area. The new YWCA headquarters offered ample room for classes and meeting rooms, office space, a library, a cafeteria, a gymnasium, and sleeping rooms. The building, today rehabilitated into offices, is listed individually in the National Register. Although not verified, Turnock may have designed the Borneman building on the northeast corner of High and Main (photo 10), which is otherwise fairly plain but for its oversized ornament seemingly influenced by Wright. In a different vein, Turnock created the Masonic Temple of primarily Classical derivation (photo 19), but with some whimsical Wrightian ornamentation.

The Elkhart Downtown Commercial District offers a hefty sampling of late nineteenth and early twentieth century architectural styles, while representing the full length of downtown Elkhart's heyday. The proliferation of ornate and fashionable commercial blocks represent several decades of the prosperity of a city well supported by not only the railroads but a healthy variety of manufacturing concerns.

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Elkhart Downtown Commercial District

Elkhart County, Indiana

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Elkhart Downtown Commercial District

Elkhart County, Indiana

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Starting at the intersection of South Main and Middlebury Streets, bounded on the east by the east lot lines of the buildings along the east side of Main Street, starting from the rear of 706-708 South Main, northward to the north side of Marion Street, then east to the second alley east of Main, north to the alley between Marion and Franklin streets, east to a point due south of the southeast corner of 131 East Franklin, then north to the center of Franklin Street, west to the first alley east of Main, then northward in a straight line, crossing High Street and then following the alley east of Main one-half block, to the alley between High and Lexington. Proceed east to the southeast corner of 125 East Lexington, then north to the center of Lexington Street, then westward to a point south of the east lot lines of the buildings on the east side of the 100 block of South Main, then north to the northeast corner of 116 South Main, then due west to the alley west of Main Street. Proceed north up the alley to the center of Jackson Street, then east to the center of Main, north to a point due east of the northeast corner of 101 North Main, then due west to the center of Second Street, then south to the center of Lexington Street, then east to the alley west of Main, then straight south to the center of Harrison Street, east to the center of Main, then south down Main to the starting point at Main and Middlebury.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Encompasses the bulk of the remaining historic resources of the downtown commercial district along Main Street.



ELKHART DOWNTOWN
HISTORIC DISTRICT
ELKHART CO. IN

ZONE 16

- ① E 585560
N 4615480
- ② E 585940
N 4614670
- ③ E 585610
N 4614600
- ④ E 585240
N 4615360

SOUTH BEND (VIA U.S. 33) 1.3 MI.
 OSCEOLA (VIA U.S. 83) 4 MI.
 SOUTH BEND (VIA U.S. 20) 1.8 MI. TO U.S. 20
 T. 38 N.
 T. 37 N.
 3767 II NE (OSCEOLA)
 4615
 40'

Biblical Seminary

Prairie St Cem.