

FINAL

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Geneva Downtown Commercial Historic District
other name/site number: _____

2. Location

street & number: 144-455 East Line Street not for publication: N/A
city/town: Geneva vicinity: N/A
state: Indiana code: IN county: Adams code: 001 zip code: 46740

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

J. C. St 1-29-02
Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau Date

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 Date

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property:
 (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
 (Check only one box)

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

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
22	2	buildings
0	2	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
22	4	TOTAL

Name of related multiple property listing N/A
 (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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions	Current Functions
<u>COMMERCE/TRADE-BUSINESS;</u>	<u>COMMERCE/TRADE-BUSINESS;</u>
<u>PROFESSIONAL; ORGANIZATIONAL;</u>	<u>PROFESSIONAL; SPECIALTY STORE;</u>
<u>FINANCIAL INSTITUTION; SPECIALTY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT STORE; RESTAURANT</u>
<u>STORE; DEPARTMENT STORE;</u>	<u>EDUCATION-LIBRARY</u>
<u>RESTAURANT</u>	<u>DOMESTIC-MULTIPLE DWELLING</u>
<u>SOCIAL-MEETING HALL</u>	<u>GOVERNMENT-POST OFFICE</u>
<u>DOMESTIC-HOTEL; MULTIPLE</u>	<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE-THEATER</u>
<u>DWELLING</u>	<u>WORK IN PROGRESS</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT-POST OFFICE</u>	<u>LANDSCAPE-PARK</u>
<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE-THEATER</u>	<u>LANDSCAPE-PARKING LOT</u>
<u>LANDSCAPE-PARK</u>	

7. Description

Architectural Classification:	Materials
<u>LATE VICTORIAN- ROMANESQUE</u>	<u>Foundation Stone, Concrete, Brick</u>
<u>LATE VICTORIAN- ITALIANATE</u>	<u>Walls Brick, Wood, Stone, Vinyl, Brick Tile, Metal</u>
<u>LATE VICTORIAN- SECOND EMPIRE</u>	<u>Stucco, Aluminum, Stone Facing, Asphalt Shingle</u>
<u>OTHER- COMMERCIAL VERNACULAR</u>	<u>Roof Rubber, Asphalt Shingle, Slate</u>
	<u>Other N/A</u>

Narrative Description

(See continuation on 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.

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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	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
COMMERCE	1882-1951	1882, 1885, 1898
ARCHITECTURE	1882-1951	1882, 1885, 1898, 1906, circa 1930
	Cultural Affiliation	
	N/A	

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

 N/A

Architect/Builder

 N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

(See continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical 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: Geneva Public Library

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property: 4.99

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Quad Map Name: Geneva, IN.

A <u>16</u>	<u>672708</u>	<u>4495300</u>	B <u>16</u>	<u>672879</u>	<u>4495304</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
C <u>16</u>	<u>672870</u>	<u>4495201</u>	D <u>16</u>	<u>672666</u>	<u>4495201</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
E <u>16</u>	<u>672665</u>	<u>4495255</u>	F <u>16</u>	<u>672707</u>	<u>4495254</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description
(See continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(See continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Jared N. Tuk/Architectural Historian

Organization: GAI Consultants, Inc. Date: 13 September 2001

Street & Number: 312 Dupont Road Telephone: (219) 489-2900

City or Town: Ft. Wayne State: IN Zip: 46825-2048

Property Owner

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

Name: _____

Street & Number: _____ Telephone: _____

City or Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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Location:

The Town of Geneva is located in southern Adams County in northeastern Indiana. The town of approximately 1,280 people is situated just west of the point where the Loblolly Creek drains into the Wabash River. Geneva is platted on level terrain, and is organized along a grid system. The two major routes into Geneva are US Route 27, which runs north-south through the town, and Indiana Route 116, which runs east-west through the town. The Geneva Commercial Historic District is located along Line Street (Indiana Route 116) east of its intersection with US Route 27, in the heart of the town.

Architectural Description:

The Geneva Downtown Commercial District is composed primarily of brick two- and three-story commercial buildings dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The buildings along the south side of Line Street abut each other and form a uniform street wall with no trees or landscaping. The buildings on the north side of Line Street are broken only by the intersection with High Street and an unnamed alley.

The architectural styles represented in the historic district include Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Second Empire, and commercial Italianate vernacular. The concentration of historic buildings is most dense between Decatur Street on the west and Railroad Street on the east (photographs 1 and 2), with one contributing resource (M.E. Hutton's Carriage Shop)(photograph 3) located west of Decatur Street. Red brick is the most prevalent facade material in the district. However, many of the buildings also have stone decoration, wood, rusticated stone and brick, vinyl, brick facing, wood shingle, metal, aluminum, stucco, and painted brick included on their facades. The district remains architecturally cohesive in massing, style, and ornamentation.

The Geneva Downtown Commercial Historic District contains 22 contributing buildings, two non-contributing buildings, and two non-contributing sites. The contributing buildings, reflecting their commercial character, have been modified throughout the years to accommodate changing occupants. Most of the modifications are found on the first stories, and include new windows and signage, brick infill, and post-1970 shed roofs with wood or asphalt shingles. Even with these modifications, the buildings retain much original fabric. Three of the non-contributing resources clearly fall outside the period of significance for the district. These are the Limberlost Clinic, built circa 1990, located at the intersection of Line Street and High Street; the Geneva Town Hall and Volunteer Fire Department, built circa 1970, located at the intersection of Line Street and Decatur Street; and an unnamed public park, situated in a lot at the southeast corner of Line Street and Decatur Street. In addition, a memorial public park at the corner of High and Line Streets dates from circa 1950, but the majority of its components date from post-1950. Therefore, this site is non-contributing to the historic district.

The two most frequently encountered architectural styles in the Geneva Downtown Commercial Historic District are variants of the Romanesque Revival and commercial Italianate. Some of the

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hallmarks of these styles are round arched window openings with corbel tables or arcaded attic levels, window hoods, and bracketed cornices. Other architectural styles encountered in the Geneva Commercial Historic District include the Second Empire, easily identified by the characteristic mansard roof, and commercial vernacular, which combines elements from several architectural styles of the late nineteenth century.

On the west end of the Geneva Commercial Historic District is the M.E. Hutton Carriage Shop (photograph 3), located at 144 East Line Street. This 2-story, 3-bay, brick commercial Italianate building with zig zag brick corbeling has segmental arched window openings and a metal cornice. The building, which was built in 1895-1896, housed a theater between 1899 and 1925, and a washing machine manufacturing company through the 1930s. On the west side of the building is an original 1-story, 2-bay brick wing with segmental arch window openings, a picture window with wood tracery, and a door.

Immediately to the east of the M.E. Hutton Carriage Shop building is the non-contributing circa 1970 Geneva Town Hall and Volunteer Fire Department, located at 200 East Line Street. Across Decatur Street is a modern park with a parking lot and pavilion, which is also non-contributing to the historic district.

The next contributing building follows at 304 East Line Street. This 2-story brick commercial Italianate building, constructed circa 1898, has segmental arched window openings and a central shed-roofed projecting bay on the second story, which is not original to the building. The building also has a molded metal cornice, brick corbeling, and metal and vinyl siding on the west side wall. The building, which throughout its history served as a market, currently houses the M&M Market (photograph 4).

Adjacent to 304 East Line Street on the east is the building at 310 East Line Street. It currently houses the east half of the M&M Market as well as the Geneva Variety Store. This 2-story brick commercial Italianate building has segmental arched window openings, and an arcaded attic story. This building, circa 1898, has a metal cornice, and has been altered by stuccoing and other modifications on the storefront to accommodate the current businesses (photograph 5).

The next building to the east is the Aspy & Miller/Rayn building, at 332-334 East Line Street (photograph 6). Built circa 1890, it is a 2-story, 6-bay building in the commercial Italianate and Romanesque Revival styles. It is marked by a heavy cornice with brackets and nameplates. Its round arched window openings are topped by corbeled brick relieving arches. A textured brick stringcourse passes near the bottom of the window openings. A wood shingle-covered shed roof has been added to cover the storefront on the first story, and the storefront has brick with paired windows and a picture window.

The next adjacent building to the east is the 1882 commercial Italianate-style Briggs Hardware building, at 340 East Line Street (photograph 7). This building also currently houses The Hub, a variety store, but Briggs Hardware has been located in this building since its construction in 1882. This 2-story, 5-bay brick building shares a cornice with the neighboring building to the east. The cornice is very ornate, with dentils and brackets, and the west 2/5 have been painted. There is a

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centered pedimented projection with an urn finial that matches the finial on the west corner of the building. The sash windows have ornately carved lintels and ashlar sills. Also a significant feature is the decorative Luxfer prism and stained glass on the storefront of The Hub.

The building at 406 East Line Street currently houses the Highline Restaurant. This commercial Italianate building is constructed on the same scale as the Briggs Hardware building to the west. Its ornate cornice has dentils and brackets, and an urn finial on the east corner of the front of the building. This 3-story, 3-bay building has segmental arched windows with brick relieving arches and ashlar sills. The windows of the attic story are one-half the size of the second-story windows. The updated storefront retains the original cast iron posts (photograph 8).

The next building, known as the Shamrock Block, is a circa 1885, 2-story brick Romanesque Revival building with a 3-bay facade (photograph 9). A carved name stone is centered on the central projecting bay, which is capped by a pyramidal-roofed tower with wood brackets. The west portion of this building once housed a bank, and its carved ashlar lancet arched window remains today. While the remainder of the first-story facade retains its carved ashlar, its dimensions have been altered with new storefronts, which are currently mostly glass. The original paired arched windows have been resized, and the original brick arches remain. The replacement windows have cement lintels and sills. Below the wooden cornice is a brick corbel table, which is just above two rusticated brick stringcourses.

The next building to the east is the circa 1885 2-story, 4-bay, brick Charles D. Porter Drugstore Building (photograph 10). Located at 416 East Line Street, it is built in the Romanesque Revival style, and has heavy brick corbeling below the dentil cornice. The round arched windows have wide relieving arches and ashlar sills. The carved ashlar pilasters on the storefront have carved acanthus caps. The storefront on the west half of the building retains its original character, with double doors, show windows, and large transoms. The east storefront is currently used as the Geneva Post Office, and it has been altered with the addition of newer windows and metal siding on the facade.

The building at 426-430 east Line Street, which currently houses Justin's Place, is a 2-story, 4-bay brick building built in the Romanesque Revival style (photograph 11). This circa 1898 building has a molded metal cornice and a corbel table. The segmental arched windows have brick relieving arches and cement sills. The first story storefronts have been altered by brick and wood enclosure, and the addition of a newer large window on the east side.

The building at 432-436 East Line Street represents an example of commercial Second Empire-style architecture in the Geneva Commercial Historic District (photograph 12). This building, built circa 1898, has 2.5 stories, 5-bays, and four gabled dormers at the attic level. The wood shingle-covered mansard roof is topped by a metal cornice. The segmental arched windows have brick relieving arches, and reduced width from the center outward. The brick has been painted white, and a wood shingle-covered shed roof has been built over the storefront, which has three doors with transoms and large windows.

The two 2-story, 4-bay brick commercial vernacular buildings located at 438-448 East Line Street have undergone substantial alterations, but the buildings have not lost their original fabric and

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architectural character (photograph 13). These buildings, now faced with multi-colored brick, have dog-tooth courses just below their dentil cornices with rosettes and ornamental finials. The first building to from the west has two segmental arched window openings with brick relieving arches and cement sills. The first story of this building has been covered with wood siding and has a reduced storefront window and double doors. The west half of the second building has a central craftsman-style picture window on the second story and the storefront has been altered by the addition of wood siding, new doors, and reduced windows. The east half of this building has a wood shingle-sided oriel on the second story, and the first story storefront has been altered by the addition of wood siding, a new door, and a reduced window.

Located at 452-454 East Line Street is the commercial vernacular brick McGriff Building, which is actually comprised of two separate buildings (photographs 14, 15). The first building, at 452 East Line Street, is a 2-story, 3-bay building built circa 1898. The building has elements of Romanesque Revival architecture, with its segmental arched window openings, corbel table, and molded dentil cornice. The windows have brick relieving arches and cement sills. The second building, located at 454 East Line Street, is a 2-story, 5-bay building with the same architectural features as the first, and is distinguished from the first building by the separation on the first story level. The first stories of these buildings have been altered with the addition of aluminum siding, wood siding, stone facing, and window and door resizing. A concrete name stone above the second story windows of the building at 454 East Line Street identifies the buildings. These buildings were damaged by fire in early 2001, and are currently undergoing rehabilitation.

Just to the east of the district boundary, east of Railroad Street, is a building which currently houses Limberlost Construction, Inc. (photograph 16). This commercial vernacular building has a false front facade with a molded wood cornice, and is currently sided with wood siding on the front elevation and stucco on the side elevations. A newer wood shingle-covered shed roof covers the storefront, which has modern 8 over 8 double hung sash windows and a newer door. This building is an example of architecture inconsistent with the historic district and therefore it has been excluded from the district.

When entering the Geneva Commercial Historic District from US Route 27 to the west, the north side of the district begins on Line Street just to the east of its intersection with Washington Street. The first building within this boundary is the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.) building, located at 305 East Line Street (photograph 17). This 2-story, 6-bay brick commercial vernacular building was built in 1906, and has elements of the Romanesque Revival and Classical Revival styles. This building was erected following a fire in 1895 that destroyed the first I.O.O.F. building. The building has ashlar quoins and piers, as well as ornate ashlar window arches with pointed keystones. The voussoirs are smooth and continuous. Corbeled brick buttresses with ashlar finials extend above the roof line, which has a centered namestone with a corbel table below. The first story, which is separated from the second by a wooden band course, has a slightly altered storefront, with wood paneling and window reduction. The building currently houses the Geneva Public Library.

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Immediately to the west of the I.O.O. F. building is the Limberlost Clinic, which was constructed circa 1990. This 1-story brick and stucco building fronts High Street and does not contribute to the Geneva Commercial Historic District.

To the east of the intersection of Line Street and High Street is a non-contributing memorial public park dating from circa 1950 (photograph 18). This park is landscaped with evergreens and shrubs, and contains a sidewalk and two markers. The first marker, which is made of brick with an eagle atop a pediment, is in honor of area veterans. The second marker, mounted on a rock and located at the rear of the park, honors local author Gene Stratton Porter. Since most of the components of the park date from after 1950, this park does not contribute to the historic district.

Immediately to the east of the memorial park is the G.W. Pyle building, at 411-413 East Line Street (photograph 19). Built circa 1898, this 2-story, 6-bay brick commercial vernacular building has elements of the Romanesque Revival and Italianate styles. The cornice is bracketed, and just below it is a namestone identifying the building. The round arch window openings have brick relieving arches and cement sills. A steel beam separates the first and second stories, and ornate metal posts with Corinthian capitals flank the centered entrance below. The storefront has been infilled with wood siding and resized windows. The doors on either end of the front facade have transoms.

Immediately to the east, at 417 East Line Street, is the circa-1900 Masonic building (photograph 20). This 2-story, 5-bay, brick, commercial Italianate style building has segmental arched window openings whose tops are connected by a rusticated brick stringcourse with red mortar. The openings, which are currently boarded shut while the building is undergoing rehabilitation, have cement sills. The cornice is bracketed. A steel beam separates the first and second stories, and metal posts flank the storefront entrance. The transom is boarded shut, and a Masonic symbol has been placed over the door. The window openings of the storefront have also been boarded shut during rehabilitation. At ground level, there are wood panel walls below the window openings.

Separated from the Masonic building by an unnamed alley is a 2-story, 3-bay, brick, commercial Italianate style building currently occupied by Bixler Insurance Company (photograph 21). This building, built circa 1898 and located at 435 East Line Street, has a metal dentil cornice with rosettes and other decorative patterns. Below the cornice is a segmental arched corbel table. Immediately below the corbel table is the first of three rusticated brick stringcourses. The second and third stringcourses pass through the window openings, which are segmental arched with rusticated brick relieving arches and cement sills. A molded architrave separates the first and second stories. The first story is constructed of rough cut ashlar and stone facing, with a wooden sign board built above the resized window opening. The entry is recessed and on the corner of the building.

Adjacent to the Bixler Insurance Company building is a circa 1898, 2-story, 6-bay building constructed in the Romanesque Revival style (photograph 22). This building, located at 441-445 East Line Street, has a bracketed metal cornice with ornamental corner finials. Below the cornice, the inset corbel table is broken by four segmental arched attic windows. The second story has alternating narrow round arched window openings and wide segmental arched window openings with corbeled brick relieving arches. The west half of the building has clearly identifiable rusticated brick stringcourses, while the east half of the building has a painted facade, making the

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stringcourses more difficult to identify. The second story is separated from the first story by a steel beam. The first story has rock-faced ashlar piers. The central entrance has a rock-faced ashlar arch and keystone over the door, which has been replaced. There is replacement brick within the arch. Other alterations to the building include window resizing on the east half of the second story, the addition of vinyl and wood siding in the storefronts, and a brick faced half wall at ground level.

The next building to the east is the Romanesque Revival-style 2-story, 3-bay, brick building located at 447 East Line Street and currently occupied by the Geneva Dental Clinic (photograph 23). The metal cornice of this circa-1898 building is bracketed. There are three narrow round arch windows on the second story of this building. These arches have brick relieving arches, part of which is rusticated brick and connects to a stringcourse. A second rusticated brick stringcourse runs near the bottom of the window openings. The second and first stories are separated by a steel beam, which continues from the buildings to the west in a single piece. A rock-faced ashlar pier marks the west wall of the building. The storefront has been altered by the addition of vinyl, stone facing, resized windows, and new doors.

Adjacent to 447 East Line Street is the building which houses the Star Theater, at 451 East Line Street (photograph 23). This 2-story, brick, Romanesque Revival building was built circa 1898 and has a circa 1930 second-story, flared, asphalt shingle-covered addition which projects from the front of the building to form a canopy over the sidewalk. This building has a metal bracketed cornice. The second story projecting bay reflects elements of the Craftsman style and is supported over the sidewalk by metal posts. The windows in this projection are currently grouped sliding sash and fixed sash. This addition was built when the building began to be used as a theater in the 1930s. This building continues to serve as a theater for the town.

The final building on the east is at 455 East Line Street, at the intersection of Line Street and Railroad Street (photograph 23). This 2-story, 2-bay, brick, Romanesque Revival style building currently houses Care & Share. As with the other buildings on the block, this building has a bracketed metal cornice, which continues from the buildings to the west. The second story has segmental arched windows, but on a smaller scale than others in adjacent buildings. A steel beam with rosettes continues from the buildings to the west to separate the first and second stories. The top of the storefront has been enclosed by vinyl, but the its design remains traditional. The resized windows and replacement door are recent additions.

The Geneva Downtown Commercial Historic District is significant for its collection of buildings which are cohesive in massing, style, and ornamentation. It is also unique for its long continuous block of commercial buildings from Decatur Street to Railroad Street. While the interiors of some of the buildings in the district have changed to accommodate various tenants, including sometimes combining two or more buildings into one building, the exteriors of these buildings are much like they were 100 years ago. The buildings of the district are distinct from the surrounding buildings in Geneva, which are typically early- to mid-twentieth century residential buildings of various styles, materials, and scale. The modifications to the storefronts of the buildings in the district reflect their character as active businesses continuing to serve the Town of Geneva, and continued restoration efforts demonstrate the desire of the town to maintain the Geneva Downtown Commercial Historic District.

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Statement of Significance:

The Geneva Downtown Commercial Historic District is significant under Criterion A in the area of commerce, and under Criterion C in the area of architecture. The district's period of significance begins with the oldest known building in 1882 and continues to the fifty-year cut off point in 1951. The district is significant for its association with the development of commerce in southern Adams County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly its association with industrial development in the area from the 1870s through 1900. The themes of industry, transportation, and commerce are woven together in Geneva's history, and the development of the concentrated area of commercial buildings in the heart of the town was a direct result of serving the needs of industry and transportation. The Geneva Downtown Commercial Historic District contains significant examples of Romanesque Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, and Commercial Vernacular buildings, which are unique among the mix of other buildings in the area, which are typically early 20th century residential.

Historic Background:

Geneva developed from three separate towns. The first was Alexander, laid out by Charles Lindley in July, 1838. The town was named for Alexander Hill, an early settler in the area. Within fifteen years, Alexander had its first brick kiln and steam saw mill operation, begun by Jacob Conkle. In 1853, a plat for the town of Buffalo was recorded, laid out by David Studebaker. The third town to be incorporated into Geneva was Limberlost, which became a town in 1842 (Baumgartner 1972: 1).

The coming of the railroad precipitated the creation of the Town of Geneva. In 1871, regular passenger train service began on the newly-created Grand Rapids & Indiana Railroad. The railroad station, which is no longer standing, was located approximately ½ mile north of Buffalo, and was given the name Geneva. This station was located at the crossing of the railroad by Line Street, in the Geneva Downtown Commercial Historic District. By 1872, the first building in Geneva was completed, a granary and railroad depot. Geneva was officially incorporated as a town in January 1874, and included the three previous towns of Alexander, Buffalo, and Limberlost as a municipal corporation (Baumgartner 1972: 1).

By 1876, several industries began to develop in Geneva, and construction of buildings along Line Street soon followed. The Shackley Wheel Company opened a spoke and heading factory in Geneva, and several saw mills began operations, employing many men in the associated timber industries. None of these buildings are currently standing. Store rooms and supplies stores were built along Line Street to accommodate the growing population, and in 1877, a church was erected at the intersection of Line Street and Main Street. This church is no longer standing. Until 1882, most buildings erected along Line Street were two-story frame buildings. The Briggs Hardware building, completed in 1882, was a two-story brick building. This extant building, along with the town's bank, were the only brick buildings along Line Street in the early 1880s (Baumgartner 1972: 3).

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In 1888, the quest for oil caused an increase in Geneva's population. The first producing well was drilled north of Geneva by the Citizen's Gas Company of Geneva. While this well did not produce quantities necessary for supporting a large market, additional and better producing wells were drilled in the immediate vicinity. The Geneva field was in full operation by 1892 (Heeter: 1972).

With Geneva's oil boom in full swing, land prices doubled almost immediately. This did not deter speculators and laborers alike from coming to the area from Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and New York. The population of Geneva reached its peak of almost 3,000 during the mid 1890s (Heeter: 1972). By 1895, Geneva had many buildings along Line Street serving the burgeoning oil industry in one form or another. However, disaster struck Geneva on June 11, 1895, when a fire which began on the south side of Line Street spread and destroyed nearly every building in the business district of the town. Nearly twenty buildings were lost, including the train depot and the grain warehouse and elevator. On November 21, 1895, a second fire broke out near Decatur Street, destroying many of the buildings being rebuilt on the south side of Line Street. The business owners within the town decided that since buildings such as the Briggs Hardware building, which were constructed of brick, were not destroyed during the fire, they would rebuild modern brick buildings rather than frame buildings (Quinn:1972). The 1901 Sanborn Map of Geneva depicts a rebuilt downtown commercial district, larger in size and scale than that from the 1893 Sanborn Map. While modifications to interior spaces have occurred, the depiction of the downtown commercial district in 1901 is otherwise consistent with the layout of the buildings today (Sanborn Map Company 1893, 1901).

The town of Geneva was rebuilt due to the success of the oil wells in the vicinity. By early 1896, the production of the 650 wells in the area had reached a rate of 1.5 million barrels per year. The continued success of the oil industry attracted other businesses, including heading factories, hoop mills, lumber yards, tank factories, bath houses, barber shops, hotels, and saloons (Heeter: 1972). Most businesses in downtown Geneva had been rebuilt by 1898, and the town was enjoying a period of prosperity. The buildings of this period, including the Rayn and Aspy and Miller building, the G.W. Pyle building, M.E. Hutton's Carriage Shop, the Shamrock Block, and the Charles D. Porter Drugstore building, reflect the importance of commercial enterprises in serving the industries and general population of Geneva from the 1890s to present.

Improvements within the town became a focus in 1900. Drainage, adequate sewage, and building of brick streets were important goals for the town board. High Street, Bradford Street, and Line Street west of the railroad were bricked, which contributed to the cleanliness, aesthetics, and sanitary conditions of the town. Nearly two miles of sawed stone sidewalks were installed in town, making it one of the most improved towns in Adams County (Baumgartner: 1972).

The I.O.O.F. building was the last two story brick building built during the district's period of significance from 1882 to 1906. This building was completed in 1906, and served a number of uses including a skating rink, a hardware store, a furniture store, and an undertaking establishment (Geneva Herald: 1940). However, this would be the last building erected during the industrial boom period, as many of the wells in the Geneva field began to go dry in 1906 and 1907. As production declined, deeper searches and secondary recovery efforts were begun, but few wells were pumped. Most of the lines were pulled from the area in 1933 and 1934 (Heeter: 1972).

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Following the demise of the oil wells, many men went to work building railroads. In 1907, the B.G. and C. Traction Company was incorporated to build a line to transport people and goods in and out of Geneva. As with the oil boom, land prices along the proposed path of the rail line jumped drastically. Following commencement of construction, setbacks and delays (including flooding of the grade) made construction of the line between Geneva and Bluffton slow and arduous. In December 1909, the grade for the line was finally completed and work laying the steel rails was underway. The rails were laid on cement cross ties, which was the first time this technique was used in Indiana. The line, which was completed in 1910, was short-lived, however, and by 1917, the B.G. & C. ceased passenger service. The terminal station for this line was located at the site of the current Bank of Geneva, at the corner of Line Street and Washington Street (Buckley: 1972).

The business buildings of the Geneva Downtown Commercial Historic District have remained a cohesive collection of late nineteenth century commercial architecture. Other commercial historic districts in Indiana, due in part to availability of land and continued twentieth century development, have more modern buildings interspersed with the older commercial buildings. Geneva experienced very little twentieth century development in the commercial district. This is primarily due to the tight arrangement of architecturally similar buildings within a very limited area. The architecture of the district clearly reflects an appearance of a late 1800s commercial center.

The cohesiveness of the district is due largely to the wave of construction that followed the fires in 1895 in the town that destroyed the frame buildings. The buildings were clearly constructed concurrently, which is evidenced in such architectural features as continuous cornice lines and stringcourses in buildings like the Geneva Dental Clinic, the Star Theater, and Care and Share, located on the north side of Line Street on the east end of the district. The popular architectural styles during this wave of construction were variants of Romanesque Revival and commercial Italianate, but other examples such as the Second Empire style building at 434-436 East Line Street, are also represented. Many of the original features of these styles remain today, including round arched windows with corbeled brick relieving arches, metal cornices with brackets, brick stringcourses, arcaded windows, and corbel tables.

Geneva is currently working to preserve and restore its commercial buildings to their original appearance. Local industries such as canning, coupled with increased transportation and the town's proximity to Ft. Wayne, reveal a trend toward economic development in the community. The Town of Geneva, in sponsoring this National Register of Historic Places nomination, hopes to spark renewed interest in its historic resources. Currently, several buildings in the district are being rehabilitated, and plans are underway for further facade rehabilitation throughout the district.

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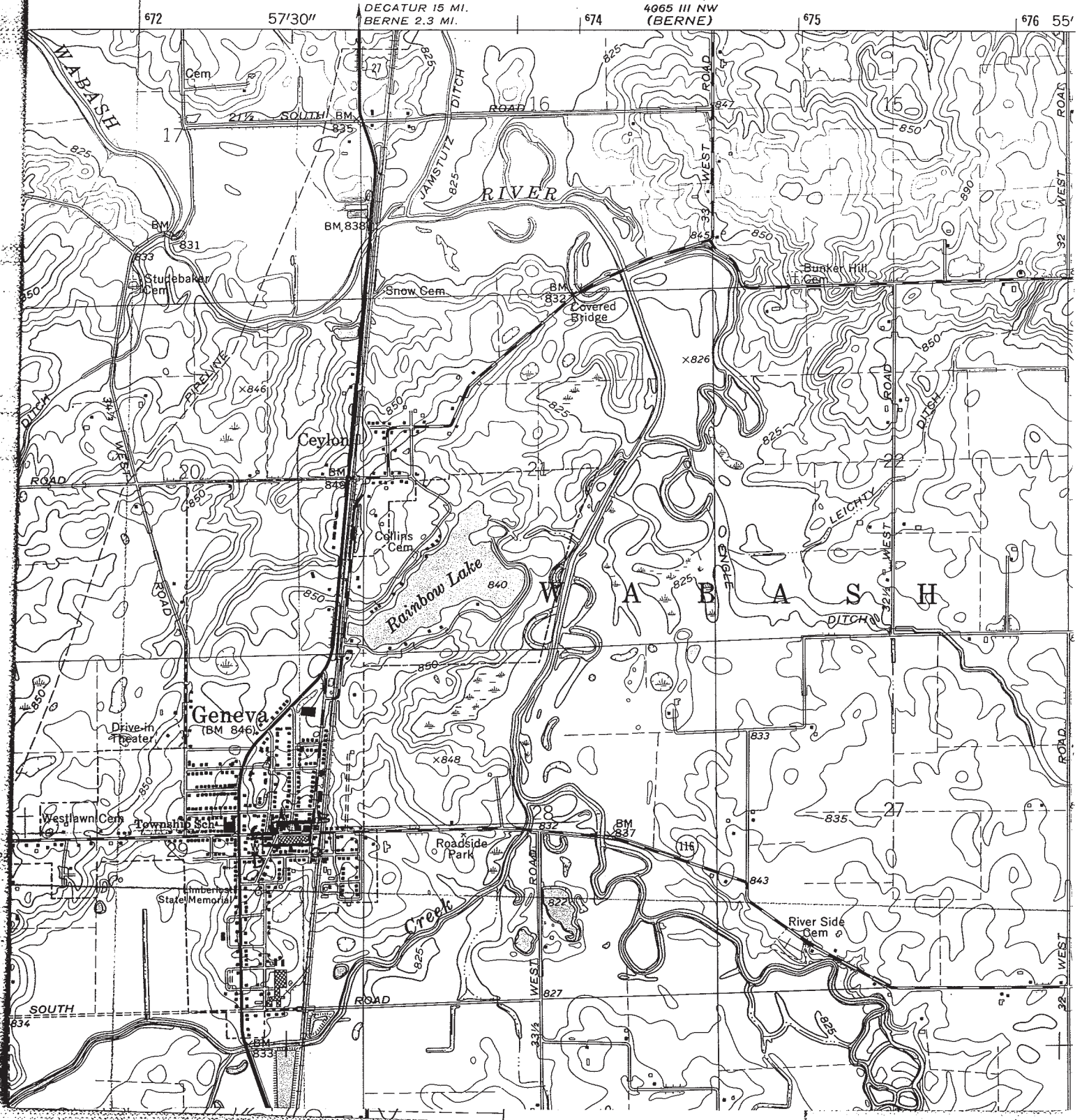
Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point at the northwest corner of the lot currently occupied by the I.O.O.F. building, located on Adams County Tax Map 29-H, parcel 146, proceeding due east along the northern tax parcel boundaries of lots 145, 144, 143, 142, and 141 of Map 29-H, crossing High Street and one unnamed alley, to a point at the northeast corner of lot 141, then proceeding south to a point at the southeast corner of parcel 141, crossing Line Street on a diagonal to a point at the northeast corner of parcel 119 on Adams County Tax Map 29-M, proceeding south to the southeast corner of parcel 119 on Adams County Tax Map 29-M, turning and proceeding due west along the southern boundaries of tax parcels 119, 118, 117, 116, 115, 114, 113, and 112 of Map 29-M, crossing Decatur Street and continuing to follow the southern tax parcel boundaries of parcels 140 and 139 of Adams County Tax Map 29-L, turning north to a point at the northwest corner of parcel 139, proceeding due east to a point at the northern end of Decatur Street, turning north and proceeding along the western boundary of parcel 146 of Adams County Tax Map 29-H to the point of origin.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the Geneva Downtown Commercial Historic District is drawn to include the collection of commercial historic resources built between 1882 and 1906 on either side of the town's central business thoroughfare, East Line Street. These resources represent a cohesive collection of commercial buildings, similar in massing, style, ornamentation, and historic function. The boundary of the district reflects surrounding changes in use and encompasses the tax parcels of the resources.

STATE OF INDIANA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA



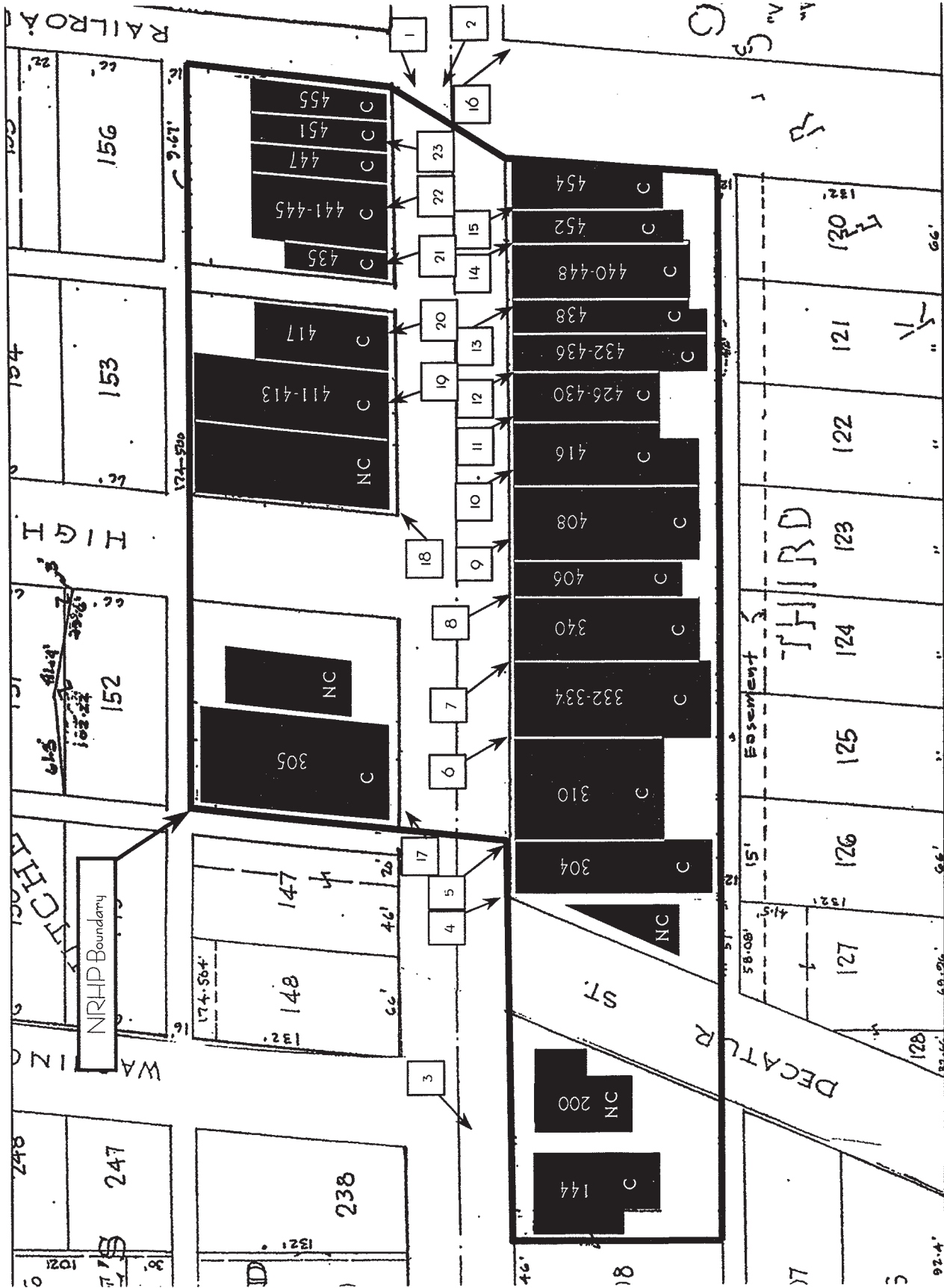


FIGURE
GENEVA DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY DISTRICT

Resource Within Historic District, Address and Contributing Status Noted Within Each Resource

Photo Numbers With Arrow Indicating Direction of Photo

NRHP Boundary