

FINAL

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 Downtown Butler Historic District
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Roughly 100 & 200 blocks of South Broadway N/A not for publication
city or town Butler N/A vicinity
state Indiana code IN county DeKalb code 033 zip code 46721

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

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

J.C. St 10-25-01
Indiana D-SHPO

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:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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:)

Downtown Butler Historic District
Name of Property

DeKalb IN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
30	5	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
30	5	Total

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

0

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store
RECREATION/CULTURE: Music Facility
DOMESTIC: Hotel
COMMERCE/TRADE: Financial Institution
COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling
GOVERNMENT: Government Office
COMMERCE/TRADE: Financial Institution
COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store
COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant
VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

19th & 20th c. AMER.: Commercial Style
19th & 20th c. AMER.: Arts & Crafts
LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: STONE
walls: BRICK
METAL: Iron
roof: SYNTHETICS: Rubber
other: GLASS

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)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1863-1951

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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:

City of Butler

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 5.3 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	6
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6	7	7	8	0	0
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4	5	8	7	4	2	0
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3

1	6
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6	7	7	0	2	0
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4	5	8	7	2	4	0
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2

1	6
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6	7	8	0	0	0
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4	5	8	7	4	7	0
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4

1	6
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6	7	7	7	8	0
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4	5	8	7	2	3	0
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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 Amy Schweitzer/City Planner
organization City of Butler date 03-30-2001
street & number 201 South Broadway telephone (219) 868-5200
city or town Butler state IN zip code 46721

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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Downtown Butler Historic District

The Downtown Butler Historic District is located in Butler, Indiana in northeast DeKalb County, Wilmington Township. Like much of Indiana, Butler has little change in topography. The 2000 Census population for Butler is 2,725. State Road 1 runs north/south through Butler and the Historic District as Broadway. US Highway 6 runs east/west through the northern part of the Historic District as Main Street. Two railroads run through Butler and cross just east of the district.

The Downtown Butler Historic District comprises most of the historic commercial area of the town. It is physically in the center of the community and surrounded by grid pattern streets of residential uses. The district runs along Broadway (State Road 1) roughly between Main Street (US 6) and Depot Street. There are a total of 35 buildings in the district. Generally, the structures are late 19th and early 20th century Commercial Style and Arts and Crafts influenced architecture. Most of the buildings are brick with flat roofs and are two or three stories high. Five of the buildings have been modified to the point they no longer contribute to the historical significance of the district. These buildings are the Knisely National Bank at the corner of Oak and Broadway; the Horseshoe Bar on West Main Street; Collin's Tavern at 232-230 South Broadway (photo 6); Movies 'N Munchies at 225 South Broadway (photo 4).

The district encompasses two full blocks (both sides of the street) of commercial buildings. There are three lots in the district that once had buildings, which have been removed. These empty lots provide space for parking and landscaped areas to help soften the built environment. Downtown Butler was built during an age where there was little dependence on the automobile; therefore, it was very pedestrian friendly. Some of the characteristics that made the commercial area pedestrian friendly, still exist: street level storefronts, sidewalks, large display windows, and the use of small scale building materials like brick. Other important pedestrian scale characteristics have been removed: pedestrian scale lighting, trees, and awnings.

The Downtown Butler Historic District continues to be the commercial center for the community. All but two of the buildings were originally constructed for commercial uses. The exceptions are the Butler Carnegie Library (photo 7) built in 1916 and the Marshall Clothing Company (photo 8) building, which was built as an industrial textile facility. There were two bank buildings, two opera houses, a number of dry goods stores, drug stores, hardware stores, a printing company, saloons, restaurants, a hotel, grocery stores, and a number of different services that changed as demands changed. Second stories served as meeting lodges for area organizations and office space.

The old commercial downtown has been preserved and remains a cohesive, contiguous set of historic buildings. While some alterations have been made to most buildings since they were first constructed, the majority of the buildings still retain their original historic character. Even those structures built after 1930 are made of brick and compliment the historic buildings of the late 1800s. As a whole, the district has a high degree of integrity.

Following are descriptions of representative and outstanding buildings.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Downtown Butler Historic District

Early Buildings (constructed between 1863-1890)

The first brick buildings built in downtown have consistent features. The structures were built between 1863 and 1890 along the 100 block of South Broadway. The buildings are consistent with late 19th and early 20th century Commercial Style. Early photos of some of the buildings show the original storefronts had large, arched windows or openings lending to the Italianate style of the late 1800's (page 9 of this section old photo E). These buildings include:

- 137 South Broadway built in 1863 (photo 2) This building is known as the Old Dimestore and is the oldest brick building in Butler.
- 135 South Broadway built about 1868 (photo 2)
- 123, 127, 129 and 133 South Broadway (photos 3, 13)
- 114 South Broadway built in 1872 (photo 11)
- 108, 110, 118, and 120 South Broadway (photos 11, 12)

The buildings are two-story, red brick buildings with flat roofs that slope away from the street. They have simple brick cornices. Some of the cornices have zigzag details, corbel tables, or arches. The second stories have double hung windows with an arched brick hood mould and a limestone keystone. There are limestone windowsills. (118-120 South Broadway [photo 11] has replaced double hung windows with a multi-panel style window.) The first floor storefronts have all had some alterations. Most have been covered with wood and painted, significantly reducing window space. Transoms have been covered. Doors to upper stories are available at the sidewalk.

The building at 129-133 South Broadway was originally constructed before 1890. However, a completely new façade was installed sometime around 1950. (Compare photo 2 with old photo E.) This façade, although different architecturally than others in downtown Butler, is still considered contributing because it illustrates Modern style architecture. The style is characterized as plain, simple, and unadorned. The building is a two bay, two-story, red brick structure. There are no decorative cornices, brick patterns, or window elements. The second floor window openings correspond with the window openings of the original structure. The openings are designed for double hung windows, but some of these openings are boarded up because of a recent fire in the building. A permanent awning has been installed atop the storefronts. The storefronts have large display windows and recessed doors. There is a second story access door at the sidewalk level.

Butler Carnegie Library

The Butler Carnegie Library (photo 7), built in 1916 at 201 East Main Street, is most closely related to the Arts and Crafts style of the Early 20th Century. It is a 1-½ story rectangular brick building with a clay tile hip roof with a deck and limestone trim. The lower level, which is half below grade and half above grade, has double hung windows. The entrance faces Main Street and has double doors accompanied by non-intrusive limestone

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Downtown Butler Historic District

pilasters and an ornate stained glass window. The brackets for the entrance overhang are of limestone, as well, and match the simplistic style of the library. Each window in the upper level has a stained glass portion.

In 1913, the Library Board sought \$10,000 from the Carnegie Corporation. The City incorporated area townships in the project to offset the local cost share of the project to City residents and to share the benefits of the library. Mr. A. H. Elwood of Elkhart, IN was the architect, and Mr. J. C. Bontrager of Elkhart was awarded the general contract. The Carnegie building was constructed in 1916 and housed the Butler Public Library until the year 2000. The DeKalb County Historical Society now owns the building and intends to organize and open a public museum of DeKalb County History.

First National Bank Building

As identified on the cornerstone of this two-story building (photo 9), it was constructed in 1913 as the First National Bank of Butler. The building has addresses on both Broadway and Main: 100-104 North Broadway and 105 West Main Street. The building is brick with limestone trim and a flat roof. It has some elements of Arts and Crafts commercial architecture. One of the most prominent features of the building is the original entrance that is at a 45° angle from the building's main walls. This entrance fronts the City's busiest intersection. A window above that entrance is on the same angle and is crowned by a blind round arch. In addition to this main entrance, the building has two other storefronts with separate entrances into different parts of the building. All of the entrances have modern replacement doors.

Original double hung windows have been replaced with simple rectangular windows. Horizontal string cornices, made of limestone, line the tops and bottoms of the windows. A similar horizontal string cornice tops the building. The most eye-catching feature of the top string cornice is the supporting limestone brackets. Each has a rectangular piece of limestone atop a limestone wedge. This structure has a significant degree of integrity looking almost identical to how it looked eighty-five years ago. (Compare photo 9 and old photo A on page 7).

The First National Bank of Butler occupied the building after it was constructed, and Butler Lodge No. 282 I.O.O.F. owned the second floor. Maxton Motors now owns the building. Although Maxton's offices were in the building at one time, it is now leased to various service-oriented businesses.

Butler Hotel

The Butler Hotel was constructed in 1914 at 117 South Broadway (photo 14). The building is primarily brick with limestone accents and has some simple Arts and Crafts features. This building is three stories with a flat roof. The building has plain double hung windows and limestone windowsills. Two major alterations have occurred to the building over time. First, three open front porch archways at the sidewalk level once welcomed visitors to the Hotel Butler. Those archways have been removed and the openings have been blocked up. This

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Downtown Butler Historic District

occurred sometime before 1930. Secondly, sometime after 1966 a brick gabled parapet wall was removed from the top of the façade (old photo C). The Hotel Butler nameplate still exists.

The Hotel Butler was used as a hotel until approximately 1955. Since that time, the hotel has been vacant for periods of time and has been used as a facility to house different groups of people (including the elderly and the mentally handicapped). The old Hotel is currently Broadway Efficiencies, one and two-room efficiency apartments.

Oberlin Building

The Oberlin Building at 130 South Broadway was built about 1907. It is a two-bay, two-story brick building with a flat roof. The first floor storefronts of the building have been completely altered. The windows of the second story appear to be original. Each has a limestone sill; some of those sills are damaged. Each window also has a small flat cornice hood. A paneled brick pattern adds simple detail between the second story windows and the metal cornice at the top of the building. The center of the metal cornice bears a crest with the name "OBERLIN."

The Oberlin Family built the structure and was involved in a variety of different businesses. This particular building was primarily a grocery store. The building is now part of Towne Hardware.

Towne Hardware/Broadway Cafe Buildings

The Towne Hardware Building at 132 South Broadway and the Broadway Café Building at 136 South Broadway were constructed in the early 1880s. These buildings are consistent in their late 19th century Commercial Style. Each structure is one-bay, brick building with a flat roof. The storefronts have been completely altered with the use of wood and stone-stucco. Each building had three second-story windows. Some of the openings have been covered, but the window hood moldings with keystones and supporting brick brackets retain the buildings' original historic character. Brick brackets also support a panel design and brick cornice atop each building. The cornice is the only visible difference in the second stories of the two buildings: 136 South Broadway has a completely horizontal cornice, and the cornice on 132 South Broadway is arched. The arch is reflected in the paneled brick pattern and the brick brackets.

The Towne Hardware building was built as a hardware store with a lodge on the second floor. This building housed Knisely's Menswear for many years. The Broadway Café housed Geddes Drug Store for the majority of its existence with clubs and lodges using the second floor as meeting place.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

Downtown Butler Historic District

225 South Broadway

225 South Broadway (photo 4 – corner building) no longer contributes to the historical nature of the district. This structure was originally three stories, but now is only two (see old photo D). It is believed that this building was the northern extent of a fire that destroyed all buildings south of it. It may have lost its third story at that time. The brick façade has been covered with stucco. A picture window element is a harsh replacement of what used to be three separate double hung windows. The only evidence of this building being “historic” is the south red brick wall.

Thompson Block/Mutzfeld Building

Electa and Walter Thomson constructed the Thompson Block building at 211 and 215 South Broadway in 1903 (photo 16). The building is a magnificent example of early 20th century Commercial Style architecture, both inside and out. Unlike most buildings in the Downtown Butler Historic District, this structure is three stories: a first floor for commercial businesses, a second floor auditorium with a stage, and a third floor balcony.

The red brick façade boasts two storefronts. Access to the second story theater from the sidewalk existed between the current entrances to the building, but has since been “bricked” over (old photo F – building at far right). The cornice and supporting brackets are made of zinc. The words “THOMPSON BLOCK” crown the top of the cornice. The structure has a flat roof, sloping slightly towards the back. Two protruding oriels (bay windows) add uniqueness to the structure. The bay windows protrusions are of zinc, as well. In addition, like neighboring buildings, the Thompson Block has a distinctive basketweave brick pattern between the cornice and the bay windows (photos 15, 16, 17). The storefronts have retained important historic characteristics including the original Luxfer glass transoms and cast iron pilasters.

The first floor of the Thompson Block Building was rented for various commercial uses until 1930 when the post office signed a lease for half of the first floor. The second and third stories of the building included a stage and balcony that served as a public auditorium for many years. Not only were plays, skits, and high school graduations held in the opera house, the high school basketball team held games in the theater (players had to dodge the columns holding the balcony).

William Mutzfeld constructed the neighboring Mutzfeld Building in 1912 (photo 17 – building in middle). The Mutzfeld Building is a two-story, red brick building with a flat roof that has skylights. A simple metal cornice atop the building reads “WM MUTZFELD 1912”. The cornice is supported by a brick corbel table. Three double hung windows give light to the second story, the openings are segmental arched. The storefront retains its original appearance with glass block transoms.

Mr. Mutzfeld made and repaired horse harnesses and had a strong business before constructing the building at 215 South Broadway. About 1930, Mutzfeld and Sons purchased the Thompson Block building to expand and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

Downtown Butler Historic District

add additional services. (The Post Office occupied the northern bay of the first floor.) Residents have recollections of horse harnesses hanging from the very elaborate balcony.

In 1970, the buildings (the Thompson Block and the Mutzfeld Building) were sold to a furniture and interiors business. The properties were used for that purpose until approximately 1980. Both buildings have been empty since that time. The owner of the buildings recently donated them to the local Eastside Area Community Foundation. The Foundation is working with the City of Butler to restore the old opera house/theater to serve as a community gathering space. A National Register designation, critical to obtaining State and Federal grants, is the first step in this process.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

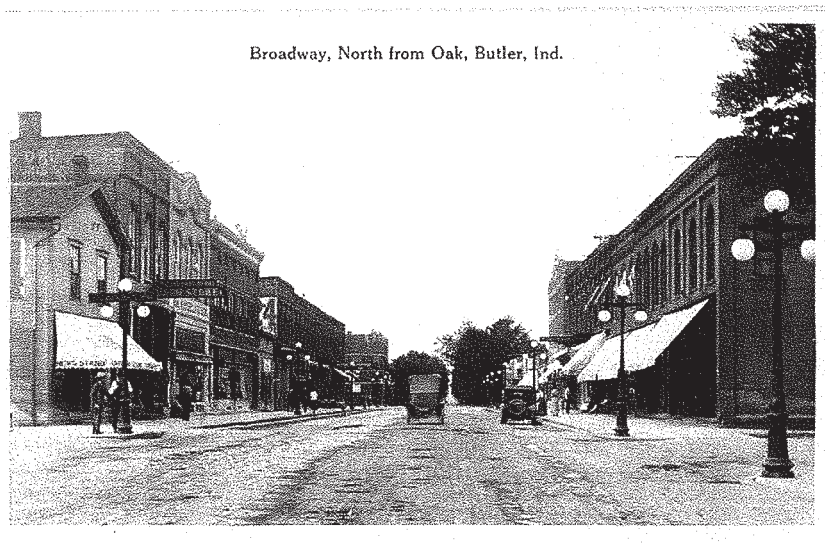
Section number 7 Page 7

Downtown Butler Historic District



Old Photo A - First National Bank of Butler

This photo looks north from the intersection of Broadway and Main.
It is not dated, but believed to be taken between 1913 and 1920.



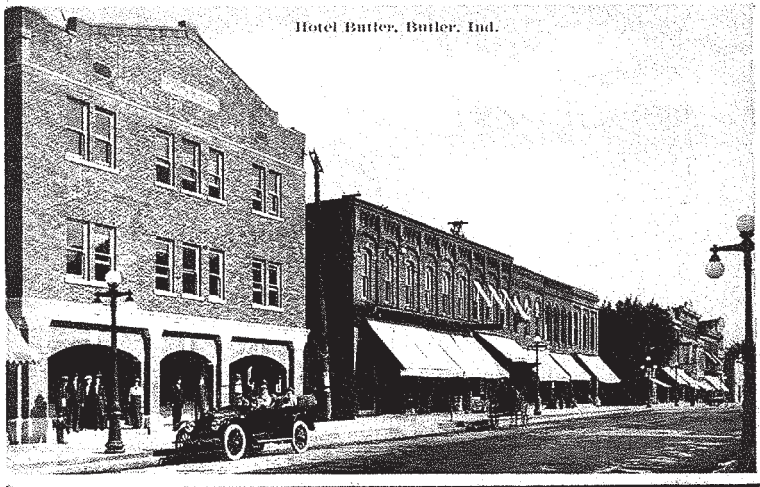
Old Photo B: 100 block of South Broadway

This photo looks north from the intersection of Oak Street and South Broadway.
The Old Dimestore is on the right. 136 South Broadway (Broadway Café) and 132 South Broadway (Towne Hardware) are on the left. No date is available, but it is believed that this was taken around 1920.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 8

Downtown Butler Historic District



Hotel Butler, Butler, Ind.

Old Photo C: Butler Hotel and east side of the 100 block of South Broadway

This photo looks south east from a point just south of the intersection of Main and Broadway.



Broadway, North from R. R., Butler, Ind.

Old Photo D: 200 block of South Broadway

This photo looks north along Broadway from the Depot Street/Railroad Street intersections. The three-story building on the right is 225 South Broadway. The building to the left has "K of P" posted on it. This structure is 240 South Broadway. The bay window on the left side was on 232 South Broadway (Collin's Tavern) and has been removed.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 9

Downtown Butler Historic District



Old Photo E: Northeast Corner of Broadway and Oak Street

This photo shows the Old Dimestore, the oldest brick building in Butler. This photo was taken around 1880.



Old Photo F: Downtown Butler – The Market and Gathering Place

The building in the background is 209 South Broadway (currently has a “furniture” sign on it - photo 5). There is an open staircase between the two storefronts to the second floor. The building to the right is the Thompson Block Building at 211-215 South Broadway. This building also has an open staircase to the second floor opera house.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 10

Downtown Butler Historic District



Old Photo G: The Tomato Festival in 1896

This photo was taken at the intersection of Oak and Broadway, looking north to Main Street. The young boy in the dog cart (bottom right) has his head turned to the side so his father, who is in the forefront of the photo with a pony, will not notice that the boy has a chew of tobacco in this cheek. (Etta Souder made this photo available in 1991. The man and the boy are her grandfather and father, respectively.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Downtown Butler Historic District

The Downtown Butler Historic District is significant under Criterion A in the area of commerce and under Criterion C in the area of architecture. The district represents commercial development in small towns across Midwestern America that resulted from prosperity initiated by the construction and proliferation of railroads. Major railroads intersected in Butler making it a major railroad center from the 1860s to the present. The Downtown Butler Historic District is comprised of buildings constructed as a result of prosperity brought to Butler by the presence of railroads. These buildings have consistent late 19th century and early 20th century architectural styles, possess a high degree of integrity, and are contiguously located. This makes the Downtown Butler Historic District an excellent and cohesive representation of small town commercial development within this context.

The City of Butler was founded in 1841 with the Norris Addition Plat. By 1856, the community had a population of about 40, a dozen stores, and one line of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad. The railroad was an east/west line that led to Toledo, Ohio. In 1855, Danforth's Addition and Egnew's First Addition were platted, which allowed for the development and sale of land. Growth continued with a stave mill, a sawmill, brick factories, groceries, blacksmiths, tanning factories, and other vital enterprises. This time period relates to the construction of the Old Dimestore, the oldest remaining brick buildings in Butler. In 1863, John Isherwood hired Henry Lindorfer (who owned a brick factory) to construct that building which housed a dry goods and grocery store at 137 South Broadway (photo 2 – corner building). Five years later, George Hensler built a hardware store at 135 South Broadway (photo 2 – second building from corner; also see old photo E).

Even though the Eel River Railroad Company began surveying for a railroad from Butler to Logansport, Indiana in the late 1850s, the project was not completed until 1873. This would complete the second set of railroad tracks in Butler. About 1880 the Eel River Railroad Company leased the line to the Wabash Railroad Company, which extended the line to Detroit. Shortly thereafter, the Wabash established its division point in Butler. Many trains originated in Butler and their crews lived in the community. Butler's population grew from 1,200 to 2,800 in less than 10 years. The Wabash Railroad Company's monthly payroll in Butler was about \$100,000.

Numerous other brick buildings were constructed in downtown between 1870 and 1890; many are still standing. In 1872, Joseph Beck replaced a frame building with the present brick building at 114 South Broadway (photo 12 – first building from left). The building housed a grocery store. In 1873 T. J. Knisely began a business career that would lead to the creation of Knisely Bros. dry goods, clothing, and bankers. The Knisely Brothers welcomed George Boots about 1883 and formed the Knisely Boots and Co. Bank that was located in their dry goods store at 132 South Broadway (photo 2 – second building from corner). A bank building for the Knisely Boots and Company was built at 200 South Broadway sometime later. The original structure exists at 200

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Downtown Butler Historic District

South Broadway, but has been significantly altered and no longer contributes to the historical significance of the district. Knisely National Bank remains a cornerstone in the Butler Community today.

In 1875, S. G. Stone had a drug store built at 127 South Broadway (photo 13 – building with Dr. Pepper sign). In 1878 Adolph May built the building at 240 South Broadway (photo 6 – corner building; also see old photo D). The second floor of the building first served the community as a theater/opera house and later became home to the Knights of Pythias (K of P) Lodge. The first floor housed a saloon and a grocery before 1900.

Approximately 13 buildings that exist today were built before 1890. Those on the east side of Broadway include 123, 127, 129, 133, 135, and 137 South Broadway; those on the west side of Broadway include 108, 110, 114, 120, 132, 136, and 240 South Broadway. A fire in 1890 destroyed numerous buildings in downtown Butler. The fire was on the east side of the 200 block of South Broadway.

By the 1890s the local business directory listed over 40 businesses including hotels, carriage shops, restaurants, clothing stores, furniture stores, jewelry, drug stores, groceries, saloons, and two newspapers. The community flourished, as did the commercial downtown.

Butler also experienced an influx of manufacturing businesses between 1885 and 1900. Jonas Aldrich and T. H. Shaub first promoted the Butler Windmill Company in 1888. The business later became known as The Butler Company and produced a variety of products including buggies, bikes, airplanes, plumbing supplies, and more. The Butler Company closed in the 1990s, and the complex still stands just south of the Downtown Butler Historic District. The Marshall Clothing Company (photo 8) and the Higley Publishing Company both began investing in the Butler community around 1900. The original publishing facility no longer exists, but the Higley Bookstore is still located in downtown Butler. Other factories of the 1890s included the Fur Products Company, the Butler Basket Factory, the Butler Produce and Canning Company, the Remark Manufacturing Company, and the United Milk Products Company.

In 1893, the Wabash Railroad Company divided the Butler division point between two other communities. Butler's population diminished as rapidly as it had grown, but the presence of the railroads and the prosperity of the commercial district are still present today with the stately brick commercial buildings that align Broadway. The Wabash Railroad Company completed a third line connecting Butler and New Haven, Indiana in 1902. Even without a division point, the three railroads provided an incentive for commercial and industrial development. At one time, as many as sixty trains passed through Butler per day.

The 1900s saw the development of the civil city and city services: sewers, streets, and sidewalks. The downtown commercial district continued to grow with most of the buildings on the 200 block of South Broadway (east side) being constructed after 1900.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

Downtown Butler Historic District

The commercial core that resulted from the railroad boom was (and still is) located physically in the geographic center of the community. Not only was the downtown the physical center, it was the activity center as well. All shopping needs, service needs, and social needs of citizens, residents of Wilmington Township, and visitors to eastern DeKalb County were met in downtown Butler. A series of street fairs were held between 1896-1900. A popular photo from the "Tomato Festival" in 1896 shows booths, a straw canopy over the street, bands, decorations, and patrons (old photo G).

The Downtown Butler Historic District was and continued to be the center for commerce for Butler and surrounding Wilmington Township through the 1940s and 1950s. The railroads, downtown commercial core, and industrial development complimented one another providing stability, diversity, and attraction that resulted in a healthy pattern of development. Butler continues to be a railroad center today. Numerous industrial facilities have and continue to locate in or very near Butler because of the superior rail access. Most recently, in the 1990s, Steel Dynamics located a 1,000 acre steel mini-mill just outside Butler along the railroad. The entire steel complex employs over 600 people.

The period of significance, 1863-1951, begins when the Old Dimestore (137 South Broadway), the oldest existing brick building, was erected. The period of significance is over 80 years; downtown Butler was the commerce center for the community, Wilmington Township, and eastern DeKalb County, during these 80 years.

The Downtown Butler Historic District is a fine collection of architecture that is consistent in its late 19th century and early 20th century architectural styles. Commercial Style and Arts and Crafts commercial style are the most prevalent in the buildings that exist today. The original storefronts added some Italianate "flavor" to the district. Storefronts are less distinctive today than they were one hundred years ago (old photo E).

Although there have been some alterations, the historic character of the district is evident with just a glance. Red brick buildings, single bay storefronts, tall double hung windows, window hood moldings, cornices, and sidewalk level storefronts give the district details that contribute to the historic feel. These features make the environment "pedestrian friendly" which also adds to the historic character.

The late 19th century and early 20th century Commercial Style reflected lots of styles and tastes. In general, one predominant feature of the architecture of that period was greater ornamentation and attention to details. Small communities nationwide dealt with this detail by using ornate brick patterns and cornices atop the buildings. The Downtown Butler Historic District is a great example of this trend.

The Downtown Butler Historic District is the largest collective group of historical commercial structures in Butler and Wilmington Township. Other buildings in Butler that appear to be historically significant (but are not listed on the National or State Register) include The Butler Company complex, the old milk condensery, the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 14

Downtown Butler Historic District

Old Gym, and a variety of churches. Numerous other historic structures have been destroyed or demolished over the years.

There are two other designated historic districts in DeKalb County, Indiana. The Downtown Auburn Historic District, designated in 1986, is comprised of the DeKalb County Courthouse and several blocks of historic commercial buildings. Auburn is the DeKalb County Seat and is significantly larger than Butler. The Garrett Historic District is more comparable to Butler. Garrett's downtown developed along a railroad and likely occurred as a result of the prosperity from railroad. Since its designation in 1983, Garrett has seen numerous downtown building destroyed leaving it less cohesive than the Downtown Butler Historic District. In addition, both of the Auburn and Garrett downtowns are currently suffering from the "big box" commercial development that is occurring along Interstate 69 (which is less than a 5 minute drive from each downtown). Corunna, St. Joe, and Waterloo are communities in DeKalb County, Indiana that were graced with the presence of a railroad. Each community has at least one existing commercial building with historic character that likely resulted from railroad prosperity.

A downtown merchants group was organized in the 1990s. Since that time, the group has organized downtown events and given merchants a forum for discussion. In 1998, the City of Butler, with assistance from the Community Development Division of the Indiana Department of Commerce, completed a revitalization study of the downtown commercial district. In 2000, the local community foundation acquired the Thompson Block building and the Mutzfeld building. The City agreed to work with the foundation to renovate the buildings, including restoring the opera house portion of the Thompson Block as a community-gathering place.

It is obvious that the nature of new commercial development is drawing people away from the historic downtown into automobile-oriented strip development. Butler is no different in that respect and is experiencing the development of new commercial businesses along US Highway 6. The City's completion of this nomination will publicly illustrate our commitment to preservation and revitalization. The listing of Downtown Butler on the National and State Registers of Historic Places will help generate the community pride necessary to successfully preserve the community's heritage.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 15

Downtown Butler Historic District

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 16

Downtown Butler Historic District

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the southwest corner of Lot 4 of Danforth's Addition to the Town (now City) of Butler; thence east 132 feet along south edge of Lot 4 Danforth's Addition to the west side of the north-south alley; thence north 198 feet to the south side of the East Oak Street right-of-way; thence north 60 feet across said right-of-way; thence north 132 feet along the eastern property lines of Lots 7 and 8 of Danforth's Addition; thence north 12 feet across the east-west alley that is parallel to and south of East Main Street; thence north 66 feet to the northeast corner of Lot 9 of Danforth's addition to the Town (now City) of Butler. Thence west 132 feet to the east side of the South Broadway right-of-way; thence north 126 feet along said right-of-way to the northern side of the East Main Street right-of-way; thence east 254 feet along East Main Street right-of-way to the western side of the north Pearl Street right-of-way; thence east 60 feet across the North Pearl Street right-of-way; thence east 66 feet to the southeast corner of Lot 71 of Geo. Egnew's Addition to the Town (now City) of Butler; thence north 76 feet along said lot line; thence west 66 feet; thence south 10 feet along the western side of Lot 71 of Geo. Egnew's addition; thence west 60 feet across the North Pearl Street right-of-way; thence west 66 feet; thence north 66 feet to the northeast corner of Lot 69 of Geo. Egnew's Addition and the southern edge of an east/west alley that is north of and parallel to East Main Street; thence west 188 feet to the east side of the North Broadway right-of-way; thence west 60 feet across said right-of-way; thence west 66 feet to the northwest corner of Lot 1 of Block 1 of Tomlinson's Addition; thence south 132 feet to the southwest corner of said lot and the northern edge of the West Main Street right-of-way. thence south 60 feet across said right-of-way; thence west approximately 56 feet to the eastern edge of a non-platted (but existing) alley; thence south along said alley to the northern edge of the West Oak Street right-of-way; thence south 70 feet across the west Oak Street right-of-way; thence east 36 feet to the east side of a platted alley and to the northwest corner of Lot 273 of the Original Plat to the Town (now City) of Butler; thence south along said alley 264 feet to the northern edge of the Depot Street right-of-way; thence 100 feet east along said right-of-way; thence northeast across South Broadway right-of-way to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The commercial area of Butler has historically included the three and a half blocks north of the northern most set of railroad tracks in Butler. The boundaries for the Butler Historic District have been drawn to include the buildings in these blocks that are still intact, as well as the Butler Carnegie Library. The boundaries also attempt to exclude non-contributing properties.

Downtown Butler Historic District DeKalb County, Indiana

