



The North Main Street Historic District represents the historic commercial and retail center of the City. It is an intact and visually distinct grouping of nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings, with a high concentration on architect-designed, eclectic Italianate and Queen Anne-style masonry structures. Of these, many were created by noted Oshkosh architect, William Waters (1843-1917).

Visually stimulating and satisfying, the buildings show a pleasing variety of decorative brickwork, contrasting stonework, metalwork and terra cotta. Round segmental and pointed arches, along with the occasional turret and gable contribute to the architectural interest of the District.

The North Main Street Historic District Walking Tour encompasses three blocks of the downtown area. This Guide features eleven buildings selected to reflect the variety of styles and the rich history associated



with this District. The City of Oshkosh Landmarks Commission hopes that these examples will stimulate a sense of discovery, appreciation, and imagination as the viewer strolls through this historic area.



Grand Opera House – 1883

NORTH MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT WALKING TOUR

Prepared by the City of Oshkosh Planning Services Division for the Landmarks Commission. Published with support from the Downtown Oshkosh Business Improvement District.

1



579 North Main Street

The Dimpsey Building

Year Built: 1895 Style: Queen Anne

This building housed a variety of stores over the years: hardware, meat market, and confectionary, among others.

This building features a turreted, canted corner entrance, substantial decorative brickwork, limestone courses, pressed egg and dart decorative metalwork, second store bays, and a gabled façade.

2



537 North Main Street

Gibson Tire Company

Year Built: 1925 Style: Modern Broadfront

This building was one of two Main Street buildings built by Alenor Gibson, the other is 570 North Main Street. Initially, it housed Gibson Tire Company and from 1961 until 1982 it was Gibson Auto Exchange.

This building features a glazed terra cotta veneer enriched with urns, egg and dart, and bead and reel moldings, volutes and a cartouche

3



522 North Main Street

Raulf Hotel/Strand Theatre

Year Built: 1927 Style: Neo-Gothic

The Strand Theatre, the City's leading movie palace, opened in 1928 as part of the Raulf Hotel complex. After closing in 1981, the theater space was converted to housing units as part of a complete rehabilitation of the hotel. This building features glazed terra cotta tracery and Jacobean and Tudor elements.

4



501 North Main Street

Webster Block

Year Built: 1895 Architect: E. E. Stevens

Style: Queen Anne

This building features a turreted canted corner entrance, decorative brick work and pressed metal. The third story conical-roofed corner turret, removed in the 1950s, was rebuilt in 2003 during a full restoration of the building.

6



465 North Main Street

Rudd G Holden Block

Year Built: 1874 Style: Italianate/Gothic Revival

This building once housed the Oshkosh Business College before it took up permanent residence in the Bent Block directly opposite of Rudd G Holden Block. This building features brick corbelling, recessed crosses at the cornice, and segmental-arched second story windows on the Church Avenue façade. The use of contrasting brick colors in the second story façade is a signature feature of the High Victorian Gothic, which is rare in Wisconsin.

9



401 North Main

Beckwith House Hotel

Year Built: 1874 Architect: William Waters

Style: Italianate

Originally a four story hotel designed by William Waters, the upper stories were destroyed by fire in 1880. The owner, Samuel Beckwith, restored the first two floors. This building features decorative brickwork, including recessed crosses at the cornice, rounded and segmental-arched second story windows with ornate metal-shouldered hood moldings.

10



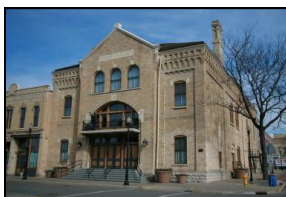
101 Algoma Boulevard

Year Built: 1875 Architect: William Waters

Style: Italianate, with Gothic Revival elements

Harvey B. Dale, influential physician, surgeon and Superintendent of Schools, was an early occupant of this building. Some of the building's features include Italianate and Gothic Revival windows and hood moldings, pilasters with shouldered triangular pediments, trefoil arch tracery, and keystones embellished with Latin crosses.

11



100 High Avenue

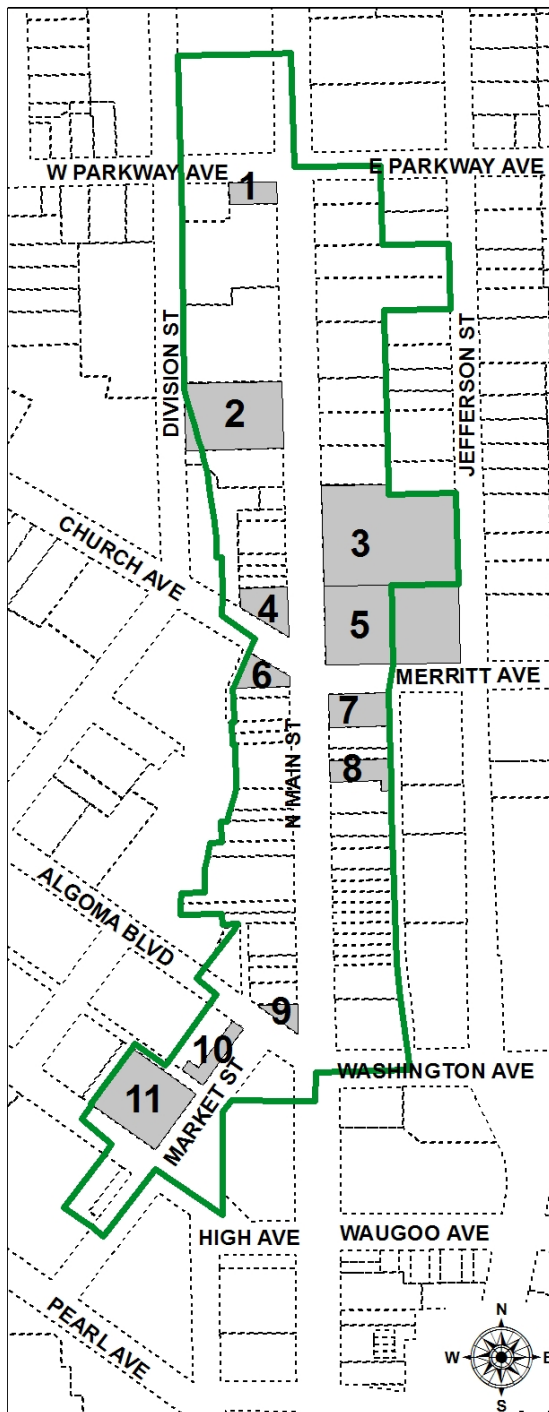
Grand Opera House

Year Built: 1883 Architect: William Waters

Style: Queen Anne, with Italianate elements

This Victorian building served as the City's Opera House until 1936 and as a movie house from 1942 to 1983. The City restored it in 1986. Try to attend a performance or arrange a tour of the authentically ornate interior. This building features gabled shouldered parapet inset with brick and stone in a lattice pattern, decorative corbelling at the roofline, and a patterned brick chimney.

NORTH MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT



5



502 North Main Street

Wagner Opera House/Methodist Church

Year Built: 1874 Architect: William Waters

Originally built for William Wagner as an Opera House, it was damaged twice by fire before it could be opened. Wagner sold the property to the First Methodist Congregation, who occupied the building until 1970. This building was initially designed by William Waters in the Italianate style with a bracketed cornice and Mansard-roofed central tower. A major remodeling in 1925 re-styled it as a Neo Classical Revival building by altering storefront, creating tall, round-arched windows on the south façade, and removing the bracketed cornice and central tower. The main Street entrance was altered in 1955

7



460 North Main Street

Bent Block

Year Built: 1886

The final home of the Oshkosh Business College, this building offers a clean-lined contrast with its Italianate and Neo-Classical Revival neighbors. A May 15, 1886 account in the Oshkosh Times states, "In appearance it will be imposing, the design being drawn in accordance with the most modern and approved style of architecture." Restored in 2003, the upper floors have been converted into apartment units. This building features decorative brickwork, patterned stone courses, and stone window moldings.

8



448 North Main Street

Year Built: Circa 1855

Style: Commercial Vernacular

The Commercial Vernacular style of architecture was one of the most common commercial designs in the United States during the mid-eighteen hundreds through the 1940's. As you can see from the façade, limited ornamentation was integrated using brick work and cast concrete around the windows. For years the building was home to Wilson Music and has been recently renovated to its original form housing commercial on the main floor and residential units on the second floor.