

Court Street and Main looking east –All photos from the Richland County History Room unless noted otherwise.

### **Court Street Commercial Historic District – National Register of Historic Places – 1989.**

The Court Street Commercial Historic District comprises the early commercial area established in the mid-nineteenth Century around the milling industry located on the banks of the Pine River. The commercial district is located several blocks east of the original mill site and settlement area. The dam which created the mill pond has been removed and the Pine River now flows in its natural channel.

Buildings within the district are mostly two-story brick interspersed by several one and three-story brick buildings. The district is characterized further by one building of stone construction and one of concrete construction. Composed mainly of commercial buildings, the Court Street Commercial Historic District also is characterized by several governmental, industrial and social buildings.

The buildings in the commercial district have retained much of their original architectural character such as cornices and window ornament on their upper stories. Although most storefronts and interior spaces have been modified at various times over the years, many buildings in the district maintain a fair degree of integrity on their upper stories. Historic cast-iron storefront posts and lintels remain on the Bailey Store and Opera House at 194 East Court Street, the Barnes and Toms Jewelry Store at 155 East Court Street, and the Union Block at 100-124 North Main Street.

Placed along Court Street, which runs in an east to west direction, the densely packed nineteenth century and early twentieth century buildings create a definite historic environment in the commercial district. Although the commercial district extends variously one or two blocks on either side of Court Street as well as on the parallel Mill and Seminary Streets, Court Street, as the center of the district exerts the greatest visual impact on the area. Few intrusions detract from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century character created by buildings constructed within a period of 70 years.

Although the buildings in the Court Street Historic District exhibit mainly a vernacular or functional emphasis, many show the influence of the architectural styles popular at the time. Italianate, Romanesque, Classical and early twentieth



century historic styles were among the sources shaping the architectural environment of Richland Center's commercial district. Constructed during the period from the late 1860s through the early decades of the twentieth century, as well as in the present period, the historic structures in the district are representative of the development of commercial architecture in Richland Center.

Of the 72 properties located in the Court Street Historic District, 23 individual buildings are especially architecturally or historically significant. These buildings listed according to address are as follows:



**United States Post Office, 213 North Central Avenue, 1935.** Designed by Louis Simon in a simplified Georgian Revival interpretation typical of the late historic era, the one-story, hip-roofed post office exhibits plain brick surfaces ornamented by brick quoins, brick lintels with articulated keystones, dentil trim along the eaves and a wooden frontispiece in a classical design. White stone accents

contrast with the red brick surfaces. This well-preserved post office features original interior tile and wood surfaces as well as a WPA wall mural entitled "The Post Unites America." The mural was executed in 1937 by artist Richard Brooks.



**Richland Center City Hall and Auditorium, 182 North Central, 1911-1912.** Built in a "modernized" classical style, this red brick three-story municipal building features a rectangular plan with shallow projecting pavilions on each corner. The entablature is comprised of a projecting cornice and modillion ornament placed on applied brick pilasters with Ionic capitals. A rusticated basement story and segmental arched windows in the recessed bays of the facade further

characterize the building. Designed by LaCrosse, Wis. architect Percy Dwight Bentley in 1911 and added to the NRHP in 1980, the city auditorium features a cantilevered curving balcony. The building is owned by the Richland County Performing Arts Council who has undertaken the task of restoring the building as a first-rate performance venue. It was the first municipal auditorium constructed in Wisconsin.





**Masonic Temple, 189 North Central Avenue, 1920-1921.** Mainly characterized by a large classical entablature inscribed "Masonic Temple" that is supported by two-story stone Ionic columns flanking the recessed center bay and by capped end piers, this three-story brick building also features an ornamental arched window with moldings and carved keystone and stained glass associated with the Beaux Arts style. Exceptionally well preserved this lodge building has been altered on the exterior by the replacement entrance door. Designed by Edward Tough in 1920, this \$50,000 building was dedicated on July 20, 1922.



**Park Hotel, 213 South Central Avenue, 1873, 1899, 1926, 1930.** Built as a frame building in 1873, which was brick veneered in 1900, this brick three-story building's facade is flanked by a square tower on the north end and an octagonal tower with mansard roof on the south end and features a projecting entrance bay with round arched window.

Placed on an elevated stone foundation, this hotel is further characterized by stone lintels and wooden balustraded veranda that extends almost the full length of the facade. Renovated and restored as residential apartments, the hotel, in its heyday, was known as one of the finest hostelries in Southwestern Wisconsin.





**Edwards Building, 101 South Church Street, 1912-1913.** Displaying the influence of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Commercial style, this brick, three-story building is divided evenly by the vertical piers and horizontal spandrels that rise from a base and are terminated by a projecting cornice. It is further characterized by raised white geometric decorative panels on the window spandrels and raised piers. Built by the Judevine Construction Company, the Edwards Block initially was used as a clothing store and the McNitt Business School. Rescued from a fire, the building is now restored with upper-end apartments above with business space on the first floor.

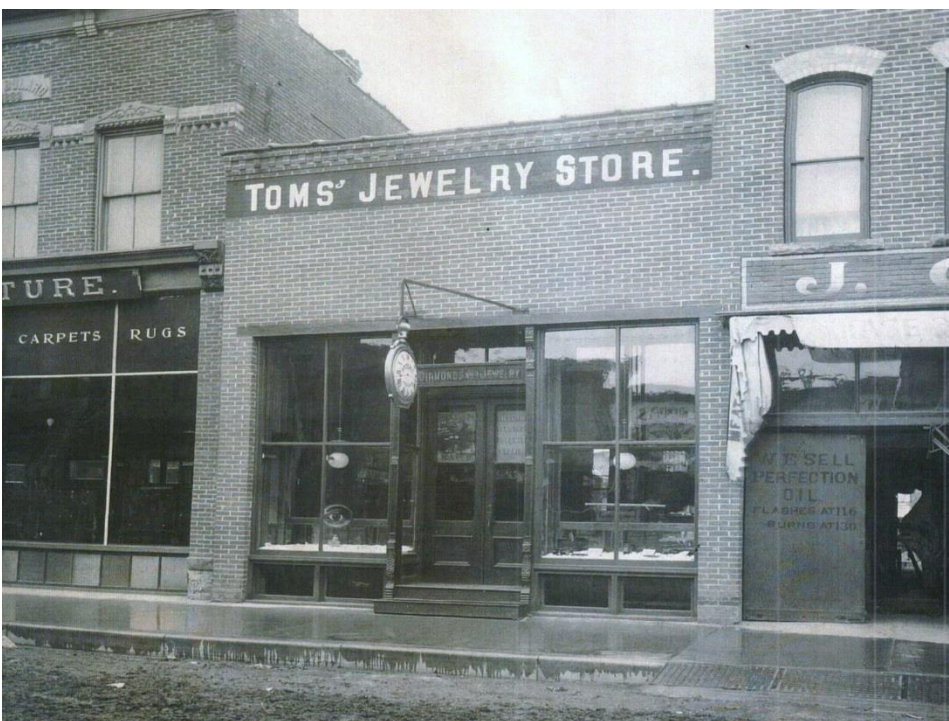


**Toms Funeral Parlor, 172 South Church Street, 1920.** Built as an addition to the south side of the 1860s Toms furniture store and shop, this brick vernacular Commercial styled building exhibits vertical piers and horizontal spandrel construction, as well as historic elements such as a pediment above the roof line and arched entrance. Although part of a historically significant Toms Building, this 1920s building is not architecturally significant because of the alteration of the brick work on the facade.





**First National Bank, 108 East Court Street, 1920, 1976.** Constructed of Bedford stone in the Neo-classical style according to a design by specialist in bank design and construction, A. Moorman and Company, this two-story bank building exhibits a colossal portico featuring two-story Ionic stone columns in antis and end piers or anta with Corinthian capitals. Applied capped pilasters are placed at regular intervals flanking the window bays and on the west elevation. A frontis-piece in a classical design with dentil trim and raised wreath ornament on the frieze are classical architectural details further characterizing the building. Well preserved, this bank building received a stone addition in a simple modern design on the east side in 1976.



**Toms Jewelry Store, 1895, East Court Street, 1895.** Ornamented by a small cornice featuring a row of dentil trim and corbeled brick, this one-story commercial vernacular brick building is further characterized by a wooden store-front with double leafed entrance door and transom window that is flanked by cast iron columns. Known as the Toms Jewelry Store until 1945, this building was used as a jewelry store for three more years, at which time it was incorporated into the space used by the Meadows Furniture Store.





**A.A. Bulard Jewelry Store Right: 155 East Court Street, 1883.** Dominated by a large projecting, bracketed metal cornice with a rectangular shaped pediment, this brick (now painted) two-story Italianate influenced building exhibits flat triangular pediment shaped stone window heads with incised decoration. An addition was built at the rear in 1916 and the interior space was combined with the adjacent building on the east side also in the early twentieth century. Used briefly as a jewelry store, the building was sold to Pratt Brothers to house their furniture store in 1906. The original storefront has been greatly altered.

**A.A. Bulard Building Left: 155 East Court Street, Between 1885 and 1892.** Characterized by a projecting metal cornice with a rectangular pediment, this brick (now painted) two-story Italianate influenced building is further ornamented by ornamental iron pilasters with Corinthian capitals flanking the four long narrow windows in recessed panels on the upper story of the facade. The original store - front has been greatly altered by the addition of a deeply recessed entrance on the west side of the facade. The interior space was combined with the adjacent building on the west in the early twentieth century and used as a furniture store. Both buildings were combined in 1948 as the C. Meadows, Inc. Fine Furniture and Floor Coverings Store.



**Above: D.G. James Building, 172 East Court Street, 1889.** Featuring an ornate projecting metal cornice with ornamental brackets and modillion blocks, this eight bay Italianate influenced two-story building also exhibits raised triangular pediment-shaped stone window heads. The historic appearance of this building has been altered by the replacement windows on the second story and by the completely altered and closed-up storefront. Initially used to house James' harness shop and a bank, the building has been used to house a newspaper office since 1908.



**Left: O.J. Burnham Building, 159 East Court Street, 1889.** Dominated by the large projecting metal cornice ornamented by brackets, modillions, and a rectangular shaped pediment, this brick (now painted) Italianate influenced former produce store is further characterized by ornamented iron pilasters flanking the four long windows in the recessed panel of the upper facade. Although altered by the addition of replacement window sashes, the ornamentation on the upper facade has been well preserved. Used as a produce store until the 1970s, this building featured a creamery at the rear.



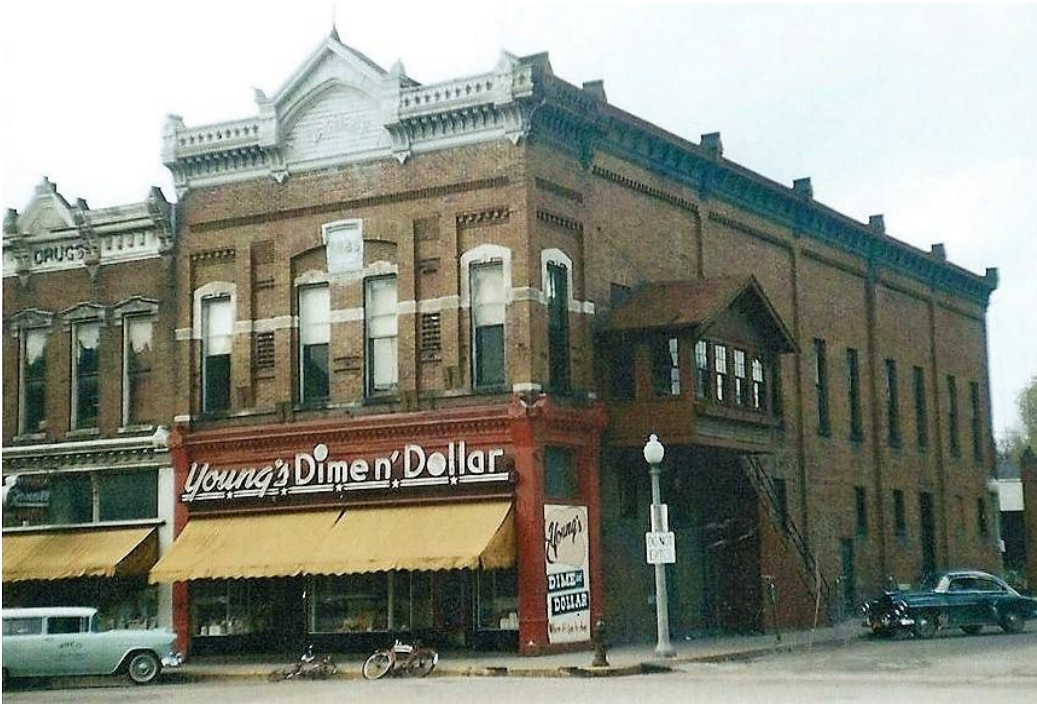


**D.E. Pease Store, 172 West Court Street, 1899.** Featuring Romanesque Revival influenced round arched windows with brick voussoirs and moldings, this brick two-story building is further characterized by a wide projecting brick cornice ornamented by a blind arcade as well as ornamental brick work. Although historically significant, this building is not architecturally significant because of the extensive alteration of the storefront and the removal of the arcaded parapet and leaded windows. Historically significant for its association with the Pease store originally established on the site in the 1850s, the building continues to serve as a general merchandise store.



**Hartz Building-MeHaffey's Saloon, 131 West Court Street, late 1880s.** Exhibiting the cornice and decorative window treatment associated with the Italianate style, this two-story vernacular brick building is ornamented mainly by the contrasting patterns created by the red brick outlined structural parts such as the arched windows, frieze area, and corbelled cornice on the cream brick facade. The storefront has been altered in a contemporary manner. Purchased by George MeHaffey in 1892 to house his "upper class" saloon, this well-preserved building had been a clothing store for many years after the town went "dry."





**H.T. Bailey Store and Opera House, 194 East Court Street, 1883.** Constructed of red brick from the local Hyatt Brick Yard, this two-story highly ornamental Italianate building features a large metal cornice with brackets and triangular shaped pediment, a large segmental brick arch in the second-story center bay with white keystone inscribed "1883" and white stone window lintels incised in abstract floral pattern. White stone belt courses and window hoods, corbeled brick

ornament and dentil trim further articulate the brick surfaces of this well preserved building. Designed by David Jones in 1883, this well-preserved building has housed various mercantile companies continuously since its construction. A gabled wooden enclosed entrance porch and exterior stairway extends from the east facade.



**Burnham and Burnham Drug Store, 182 East Court Street, 1889, 1892.** Ornamented by a large projecting metal cornice characterized by a triangular pediment and bracket trim, this two-story Italianate styled brick building is further ornamented by triangular pediment shaped window heads and a small cornice extending across the storefront. An addition located at the rear was constructed in 1892. Iron columns flank the entrance of the otherwise completely remodeled storefront. Although the architectural character of the building has been compromised by the second story replacement windows, this building used as a drugstore until 1962, continues to exhibit a strong Italianate character.





**W.H. Pier Building (Richland County Bank) 195 West Court Street, 1911.** Built of dark brown brick and reinforced concrete, this two-story Classical Revival influenced building exhibits a denticulated projecting cornice, plain brick parapet, large segmental arched tripartite window openings on the upper story, strap-like ornament, and a rusticated lower story. Although historically significant, this building is not architecturally significant because of significant alteration of its original architectural character, including extensive alteration of the storefront and enclosure of the display windows and the second-story windows. Initially used by the United States Post Office, the building's interior was remodeled as a bank in 1921. A one-story addition on the east side was constructed in 1975.



**Klinzing and Banker Plumbing, 130 South Main Street, 1928.** Constructed of brown brick, this small two-story vernacularized Commercial style building is characterized by a recessed facade. A storefront featuring a full-length transom window with refractive glass, a recessed central entrance, brick apron and plate glass is placed in the recess. Originally built to house a plumbing business, this building later became a restaurant.





**Union Block, 100-124 North Main Street, 1892, 1911.** Exhibiting a rather eclectic manner, this two-story Classical Revival influenced vernacular brick block features a plain projecting brick cornice and parapet resting on applied brick pilasters, which vertically divide the brick surfaces of the upper story. Window cornices, raised brick moldings, a wooden balcony over the corner entrance and a frontispiece in a classical design further characterize the building. Capped brick pilasters and cast iron columns remain on the storefront. An addition built in a style similar to the original building was constructed on the north end in 1911. Built as rental property for W.H. Pier and Laura McCarthy, the Union Block has housed several long-term businesses.



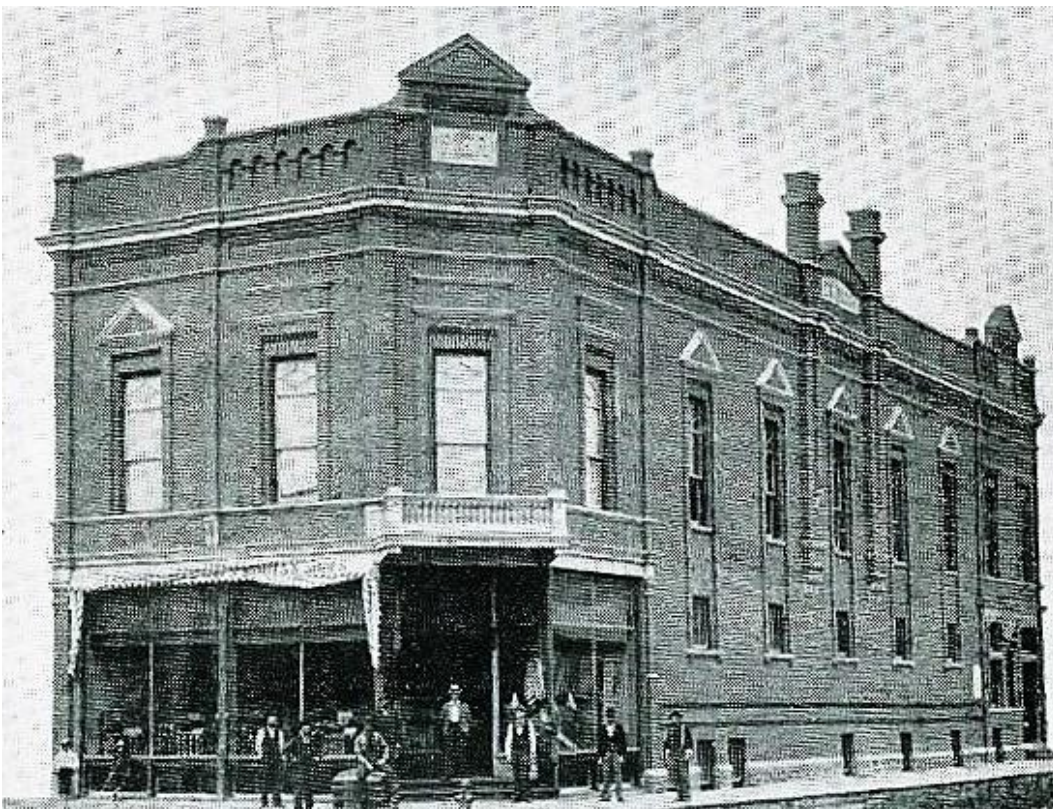
**LeHew Filling Station, 208 South Church Street, 1927.** Characterized by a red tile roof and multiple gables, this (originally) white brick Tudor Revival/Mediterranean styled gas station has examples original multi-paned windows remaining on the building. The large service door and main storefront window have been replaced. The LeHew Filling Station was constructed by Dell Beaty in 1927. The building has been remodeled a number of times, removing much of its original architectural detail.





**Richland County Sheriff's Office and Jail, 179 West Seminary Street, 1904, 1981.** Designed by Andrew Lew Porter in the Romanesque Revival style, this red brick hip roofed rectangular building is characterized by twin round two-story towers with conical roofs, small round frieze windows and Tudor arched windows that flank the facade. Corbeled brick white stone lentils and sills, a white stone elevated foundation, and a triple arched entrance further characterize this well

preserved building. The window panes as well as the original tile roof and entrance door have been replaced. A modern addition designed by Fenton Peters connecting the jail with the courthouse was constructed at the rear in 1981.



**Pier Building and Opera House, (a) 100 South Main Street, 1892.** A rather eclectic vernacular design, this two-story brick building is characterized by Classical influenced details such as a cornice resting on applied pilasters, and triangular pediment-shaped window moldings. A large three-story annex built in the early twentieth century vernacular Commercial style was constructed on the south side at (b) 100 South Main Street in 1921. Although historically significant, this building is not architecturally significant because of the alteration of

second-story windows and the remodeling of the storefront. Used from 1892 to 1928 by the historic Coffland Brothers Mercantile Company, the building was built by W.H. Pier as investment property.





**Richland County Courthouse 179 West Seminary Street, 1889, 1953, 1981, 1983.** Designed by J.D. Allen in the Romanesque Revival style, this red brick, two-story courthouse is ornamented by white stone accents including lintel, courses, massive arched window hoods, recessed open entrance porch with short Romanesque style columns decorated with capitals of carved acanthus leaves and an elevated stone foundation. The main facade is flanked by a square clock tower on the north, and a round tower on the south has a projecting hip roofed entrance bay and second story inset porch (now enclosed). Although historically significant, this building is not architecturally significant because of the removal of the original hip and gable roof and the conical towers roofs in 1953, in an attempt to modernize the building. These elements were partially restored in 1983. A modern addition designed by Fenton Peters was constructed at the rear of the courthouse in 1981.

The city of Richland Center is nestled in a valley carved from the surrounding hills and bluffs by the Pine River. At the time Richland Center was platted in 1851, one of its founders, Ira Haseltine, described it as “a beautiful prairie with scattering shade trees, and the whole surrounded by noble groves of thrifty timber.” Richland County is located in the center of the Driftless area of southwestern Wisconsin and was not covered by glaciers during the ice age. This forced the original commercial district and residential neighborhoods into a distinct, compact area making for an easy walk. Why not make a visit and see for yourself?