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Janesville, Wisconsin: The Commission, 1989

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MAIN & MILWAUKEE:



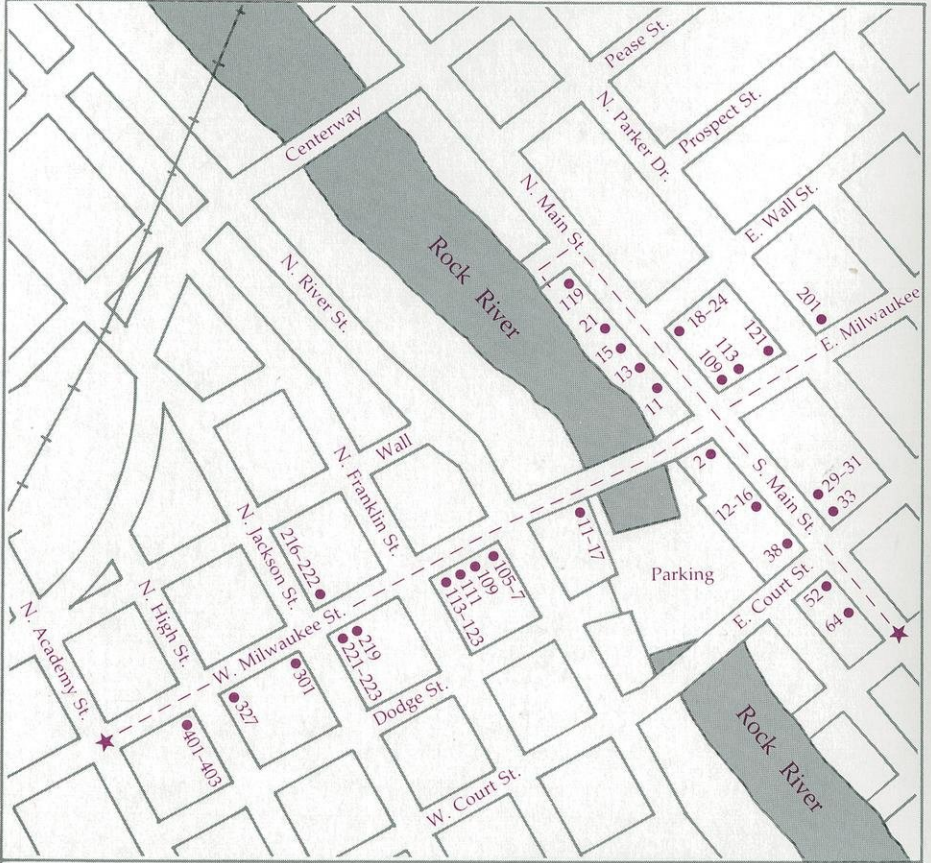
JANESVILLE'S DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICTS



A Guide

TOUR MAP

North



Downtown Janesville

Cover:
A.F. Hall and Co., photograph ca. 1892. A jeweler occupied the prominent corner store in the Lappin Block at the intersection of S. Main and E. Milwaukee Streets.

Main and Milwaukee:

A Guide to Janesville's Downtown Historic Districts

Prepared by
Landscape Research

for

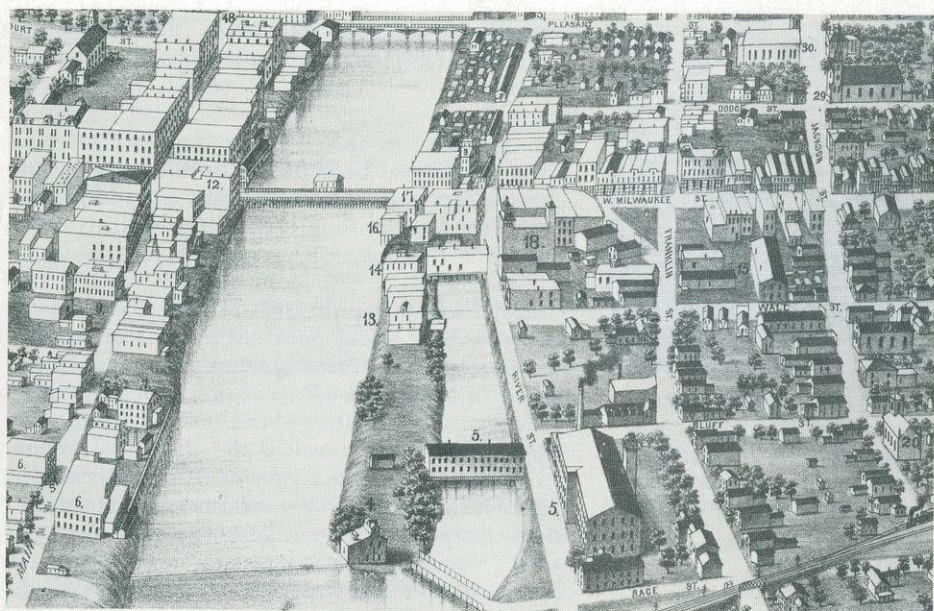
The Janesville Historic Commission
Janesville, Wisconsin

1989



Main and East and West Milwaukee Streets are her principal business thoroughfares on either side of which, magnificent and substantial blocks and buildings are erected, which not only do credit to Janesville, but which would do credit to a city of much larger size. . .

Janesville City Directory, 1876



The Heart Of The City

The historic buildings and spaces of Janesville's central business district are still expressive of the city's origins as a river city in southern Wisconsin, one oriented toward manufacturing, transportation and trade. Today, four historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places contain over one hundred buildings representative of a diverse economic, social, and architectural history. Many of Janesville's downtown buildings can be "read" to reveal a variety of information about past uses, past builders, and architectural styles. However, it is often necessary to look up – well above the buildings' first stories – to find the information. Orna te brick parapets are inscribed with the names of Yankee as well as German and other immigrant businessowners; old advertising signs announce previous enterprises, and the decorative details at the windows and roofline are indicators of the buildings' dates of construction.

A Brief History: 1836–1989

The Rock River rises in Fond du Lac County and runs through Lake Koshkonong on its route to the south. With its tributaries, it drains an area of approximately 3,635 square miles. Between 1835 and 1837, during the height of early land speculation in the Territory of Wisconsin, three separate towns were laid out along the banks of the Rock River in southern Rock County. The Rock was noted by early investors for its waterpower potential, and it also figured in other schemes, such as one proposal to ship lead ore from the Mineral Point area to the Mississippi.

Above:

A portion of the central business district as shown on a bird's eye view of Janesville, Wisconsin: Looking Down the River in 1877."



THE HEART OF THE CITY

SHSW WHI (X3) 27339



An early view of North Main Street on the occasion of a circus or county fair, ca. 1868-1871. The photograph was taken from the northeast corner of Court Street.

HIRAM JACKMAN,
PROPRIETOR OF
BIG MILL,
Manufacturer of
"JACKMAN'S BEST" FLOUR,
CUSTOM WORK DONE IN THE BEST MANNER AND
ON SHORT NOTICE.
4 & 6 W. Milwaukee St.,
JANESVILLE, WIS.

Henry Janes' townsite, platted in 1837 on the east bank of the river, was the only of the three to survive. In 1839 the county seat was established here by the Territorial Legislature, and its future importance was thus secured. In addition to the potential of waterpower to be supplied by the river, future economic growth was promised by a road from Racine to the lead-mining area of the southwestern part of the Territory.

In 1839, Thomas Lappin and a Mr. Ward of Milwaukee erected the first general store. The frame building was located near Henry Janes' cabin at the intersection of Main and Milwaukee Streets. In 1842 a toll bridge (at Milwaukee Street) replaced an early river ferry and encouraged the westward expansion of the city, particularly in its residential sections. The first store on the west side was constructed on Milwaukee Street in 1844. Typically, the earliest commercial buildings were of wood frame construction. The manufacture of brick was well underway by the mid-1840s, and in 1844, Daniel Richardson put up a three-story brick block on S. Main Street.

Janesville's earliest commercial and industrial enterprises were typical of river settlements in this area of fertile farmland. The construction of a dam and raceway in 1844-5 provided the nucleus for a waterpower district. The so-called "Big Mill" was finished in 1847, and it attracted grain producers from a wide area to Janesville.

Although a steamer from St. Louis reached Janesville in 1844, river transportation was not of great importance to the future of the settlement. The establishment of a tri-weekly stage between Janesville and Milwaukee in 1846, the connection of a telegraph line in 1848, and the initiation of daily mail service between Milwaukee and Janesville in 1849 were of more significance to long-term economic growth.

The city's mercantile interests reflected this industrial strength. In the 1850s, a variety of retail buildings were constructed, including large business blocks that housed banks and professional offices, and small shops that contained a great variety of enterprises, including grocers, dry goods and furniture stores, jewelers, druggists, and meat markets.

From the beginning, West Milwaukee Street on the west side of the river, and East Milwaukee and North and South Main Streets on the east side, formed the main commercial and retail spine of the city. The buildings on the east side, near the county courthouse, tended to house banking and professional offices as well as merchants, while the west side provided a mixture of shops and services. A variety of industrial firms were located on both sides of the river but were concentrated near the raceway and dam.

RCBS



The Smith Block, northeast corner of N. Main and E. Milwaukee Streets. Constructed c. 1866; demolished 1966. Photograph 1888.

THE HEART OF THE CITY

Two rail lines, the first completed in 1856, linked the city to Chicago, Milwaukee, Green Bay and the West. By the beginning of the Civil War, hotels, banks, packing houses, flour and textile mills, and several agricultural implement dealers were among the enterprises that symbolized Janesville's location on the river and on rail and overland routes.

The city's population grew from only 412 in 1842 to 3,100 in 1850, and reached 7,018 in 1855. In 1870, it numbered 8,000 and was outranked in size by only five other cities in Wisconsin: Milwaukee, Fond du Lac, Oshkosh, Racine, and Madison. Most of Janesville's early residents, like those who would settle here during the rest of the nineteenth century, were native-born, with many coming from New York and New England. Lappin, Jackman, and Richardson are names associated with still-extant buildings that represent this influential Yankee group. Irish, English, Scotch, Norwegians and Canadians were also represented in some number in the early population, but by 1880 the Germans were a significant foreign-born group in the city. Buchholz and Yahn are among the names of German businessmen whose buildings are still standing on East and West Milwaukee Streets.

Flour milling was a basis of the local economy in the 1850s and 1860s, but agricultural machinery production, woolen and cotton manufacture, fruit and vegetable processing and tobacco warehousing overshadowed it in importance during the 1870s and 1880s. In addition, transportation-related industries, including carriage, harness, and saddlery manufacture were also well-established by 1870.

The 1880s and 1890s were characterized by less dramatic economic growth than in the previous decades, but new retail and commercial buildings were erected downtown, and many were remodeled. During this period, Janesville was also the head of the draft horse importing industry, and attracted horse buyers from a wide area. Although the horse farms were located outside the city, horse "showrooms" were built in several downtown locations.

By 1900, Janesville was a small but modern city. The commercial district boasted one building with an elevator, and streets with electric lighting and modern transportation. The horse-drawn street railway was rebuilt with electric cars in 1892, and by 1900, concrete curbs and gutters replaced old plank sidewalks. Over the next decades, the city's reputation was based on its manufacturing enterprises, notably the production of automobiles and fountain pens, as General Motors' Chevrolet and Fisher Body plants and the Parker Pen Company rose to be the area's principal employers. All of these concerns had their origins in the central business district, but expanded their plants at the edges of the city.

FRED. L. CLARK,
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL DEALER IN
GREEN, DRIED,

AND
PRESERVED FRUITS,
Cigars, Tobacco, &c.

Cor. Main & Mil. sts., Janesville, Wis.

JOHN W. NOYES,
GROCERIES, PROVISIONS,
FRUITS, FRESH FISH, SHELL, KEG AND CAN
OYSTERS, CLAMS, LOBSTERS, HALLIBUT,
And all kinds of Confectionery.
Our Door shows the American House, Janesville, Wis.
CASH PAID for all KINDS OF COUNTRY PRODUCE.

JOHN THOMSON,
(LATE FROM SCOTLAND.)
MERCHANT TAILOR,
IS PREPARED TO DO ALL KINDS OF WORK
ON SHORT NOTICE.
East Milwaukee Street. - - Janesville, Wisconsin.

*Owen's Rock County
Business Directory, 1876.*



*Main Street grocer, I.C.
Brownell, about 1901.*

RCHS

THE HEART OF THE CITY

RCHS



The intersection of Main and Milwaukee Streets was once "anchored" by four prominent business blocks. The Myer's House, a hotel and business block at the southeast corner, opened in 1861. Its early retail tenants included Sonnebarn and Company, clothiers; Edward Connell's grocery; George Reum's meat market; and the Richard and Buckingham saloon. The building contained 100 rooms and cost \$60,000 to construct. The hotel continued in operation until 1958. Photograph 1888.

Several business organizations were concerned with the development of the city. The Janesville Advancement Association was founded in 1905 for the purpose of attracting new industries, and the Janesville Chamber of Commerce also saw the need to plan for change in the downtown. In 1920, the Chamber hired city planner John Nolen of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to develop a park and planning scheme for the city. In his report to the Chamber he wrote: "it is believed that Janesville may stand high in the list of cities making very rapid growth during the decade which we have just entered. Will that growth be orderly or haphazard? Will improvement be piecemeal or according to a comprehensive plan?" Nolen recommended a thoroughfare system, the development of the Rock River for park and recreation purposes, and the adoption of a zoning ordinance.

Downtown construction generally came to a halt between 1929 and the end of World War II. Following the war, several proposals were made to improve the downtown area; one notable project was the construction of a parking lot over the Rock River. The lot, completed in 1963, spans the area between Dodge and Court Streets. The demand for downtown parking was symptomatic of the struggle to fit an automobile-oriented culture into the spaces designed for earlier modes of transportation. Although the horsecar service begun in the 1880s initiated Janesville's pattern of decentralization, the greatest impact occurred almost a century later. The construction of I-90 at the city's far east side and the opening of the Janesville Mall in the early 1970s were among events that eventually led to the closing of many downtown businesses. Empty stores, poor maintenance and drastic remodeling of once-handsome downtown buildings were the most visible effects of these changes.

THE HEART OF THE CITY



SHWS WHI (X3) 33522

However, the early 1970s also marked an increased national and regional awareness of the problems of declining shopping areas, as well as the historic and cultural significance of historic buildings like those found in Janesville's downtown. The interest in historic preservation extended not only to distinctive house museums such as the Tallman house, but to the "everyday" buildings at the center of the city.

Main Street, looking northwest from Court Street, ca. 1888.

Public and private efforts to maintain the vitality and appearance of Janesville's commercial center began with Project Facelift, a community effort organized by the Greater Janesville Corporation in the early 1970s. Further planning has focused on business strategies to keep firms downtown. The sensitive revitalization of historic buildings is a cornerstone of improvement efforts, and a variety of programs have been developed to help property owners finance exterior work. The *Downtown Plan and Revitalization Strategy* adopted by the City Plan Commission in 1988 recognized that "the presence of the Rock River and a substantial number of historically and architecturally significant structures along Main Street and Milwaukee Street help define the image of the city and contribute to the urban fabric of the downtown."



RCHS

The intersection of N. Franklin and W. Milwaukee Streets about 1890. The Corn Exchange and a cast-iron fountain are at left.

THE HEART OF THE CITY

RCHS



Downtown grocers and their shops, ca. 1900. R.H. Pickering was located on South Main Street.

Janesville's Commercial Building Types and Styles

The earliest commercial structures on both sides of the river were typically one-, two-, and three-story frame buildings that were eventually replaced by those of brick. Two primary commercial building types are representative of the period between 1845 and 1900. Narrow, party-wall stores that housed a retail business at the first level, and apartments or offices above, were most prevalent. The shopkeeper and his or her family often resided above the business. Good examples of this building type still stand on North and South Main Streets. Large business blocks, usually constructed on prominent corner lots, provided for a number of businesses at the ground level and many offices and apartments above. The Lappin-Hayes Block at 2 South Main is the city's best remaining example. The large business blocks also provided public halls and meeting rooms that served performances, fraternal organizations, and a variety of other purposes. Eventually, many of these halls were replaced by theaters and opera houses. Some fraternal organizations built their own business blocks, renting out the ground floor shops.

RCHS



The Hyatt House was built in 1857–1857 at the northwest corner of West Milwaukee and North Franklin Streets. The five-story hotel was known as one of the best in the state, and housed a variety of retail shops at the ground floor, including a jewelry store and barber shop. The building reportedly cost \$140,000 to construct, and was destroyed by fire in 1867.

Large, multi-story hotels were once an important building type in downtown Janesville. Typically, the hotels housed ground-floor saloons and businesses as well as lodging rooms. There are few surviving examples of nineteenth-century hotels; several have been recycled for other uses. Single and multiple-family dwellings were also interspersed with commercial buildings throughout the downtown, but most have been razed and their sites rebuilt in recent years.

Commercial Facades

The commercial facade served to advertise the business within the building to the passerby. Whether constructed in 1858 or 1908, the typical commercial building was provided with a prominent display window. Awnings and a variety of signs also occupied this zone of display space. The architectural treatment of the upper stories was usually concentrated at the windows and the roofline. Few examples of the popular Greek Revival style—often employed in the construction of Janesville's earliest commercial buildings—survive. Greek Revival style buildings were characterized by simple, regularly-placed windows with straight wood or stone sills and lintels and classical detail.

More examples of the Italianate style, and the highly decorated High Victorian Italianate survive. Builders employed round-arched windows and elaborate window surrounds, and ornate or deep, overhanging cornices to create a rich surface. These styles were popular between about 1855 and 1880.

THE HEART OF THE CITY

Prominent rounded bays and corner towers, and a variety of pressed-metal or shingled detail are typical of the Queen Anne style, favored by builders between about 1880 and 1905. Dark red brick, often with limestone trim, is typical. It is not unusual to see an Italianate style commercial block of the 1860s that was remodeled with Queen Anne style elements in the 1890s.

Turn-of-the-century builders turned away from the rich surface textures and decoration of the previous decades in favor of classical motifs. The plain wall of the facade was often divided horizontally by brick stringcourses, and a pediment replaced the cornice. The prominent display window remained, however.

From the 1920s and 1930s, there are several good examples of Moderne or Art Deco treatments. Some are remodelings of earlier structures; to the Italianate/Queen Anne style storefront, a glass front was sometimes added. Geometric, particularly “zig-zag” motifs and smooth, shiny wall surfaces characterize these buildings.

Local Materials and Builders

Locally quarried or manufactured building materials are evident in the brick, ornamental stone trim, and cast iron of many early storefronts. While butter-colored cream brick was very fashionable from the mid-1850s through the 1870s, red brick made in Janesville was more commonly employed. A series of fires in the 1860s increased the demand for fireproof masonry construction.

Several architects worked on the design of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commercial buildings in Janesville, but most buildings are the product of local builders working with plans derived from builders' books. Prefabricated parts, notably cast-iron columns and pressed metal bays and cornices, made possible elaborate details without the labor of skilled craftsmen. From one Wisconsin city to another, there are great similarities in the appearance of commercial buildings; the organization as well as the ornamental details of the facades were often derived from a well-established repertoire. Downtown Janesville is particularly significant for both its remaining handful of very distinctive buildings—such as the Fredendall and Lappin-Hayes Blocks—and its considerable number of still-intact streetscapes composed of smaller buildings.

The tour begins at the Janesville Public Library, 64 S. Main Street. (See tour map, inside front cover.)



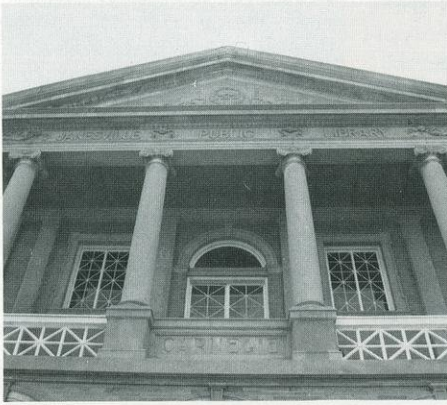
Italianate window detail, the Fredendall Block.



Manufactured by the Rock River Iron Works, Janesville.

ROCK RIVER IRON WORKS.
JAMES HARRIS & CO.,
Manufacturers of Harris' Patent Self-Regulating
SUGAR CANE MILL & CHAMPION EVAPORATOR.
— AND —
THE CELEBRATED LITTLE CHAMPION
Reaper and Mower,
Threshing Machines, Horse Powers and General Machinery,
Corner of River and Center Streets,
JANESVILLE, . . . Wisconsin.

SOUTH MAIN STREET



64
Janesville Public Library
1902
J. T. W. Jennings, architect (1856-?)

The library was one of three new public buildings constructed at the turn of the century by the City of Janesville. Built with \$30,000 donated by Andrew Carnegie, it is one of hundreds of Carnegie libraries across the country. Prior to the construction of this building, the library was housed in various business blocks. In addition to providing library facilities, the building included a second story auditorium that originally housed the Apollo Club. From 1932 to 1982 it was the home of the Janesville Little Theatre, the oldest self-supporting, continuously-operating group in Wisconsin. The library now serves as the Janesville Senior Citizen Center.

The building is constructed of gray brick trimmed with Bedford limestone. An Ionic portico with paired end columns marks the center of the facade. Brooklyn-born architect J.T.W. Jennings designed this building during his term as supervising architect of the University of Wisconsin Buildings and Grounds. He is responsible for many buildings on the Madison campus, including Agricultural Hall, the Dairy Barn, and the Engineering and Horticulture Buildings.



52
Kent Block
1895
Oscar Nowland and John W. Peters, builders

The Kent Block is the focal point of the South Main and East Court Street intersection. The prominent corner oriel of pressed metal is decorated with modillions, dentils, medallions, and a variety of other embossed detail. A stone plaque in the center of the main facade reads "Kent Block."

In its early years, the block housed a variety of grocery stores and the Janesville Floral Company, now next door. The upper story apartments of the Kent Block were called the LaVista Flats.



SOUTH MAIN STREET

Skip Drew



38
Court St. Methodist Church
1868

This majestic building occupies the site of the American House (1840), a stagecoach hotel that burned in 1867. In an unusual but practical combination, the building was designed to accommodate both the First Methodist Episcopal Church and, at the ground floor, commercial tenants, notably grocers. The building was used by the congregation until 1905, when it was sold to the Masonic Western Star Lodge, which occupied it until 1965. From 1920 to 1974, the J.C. Penney Department Store was also a tenant. At present an appliance retailer occupies the first floor.

Although the storefronts have been altered, the details of the upper floors are largely intact. The distinctive mansard roof, a hallmark of the French Second Empire style, is one of few examples in the city.



Above:
Court Street Methodist Church,
photograph ca. 1895.



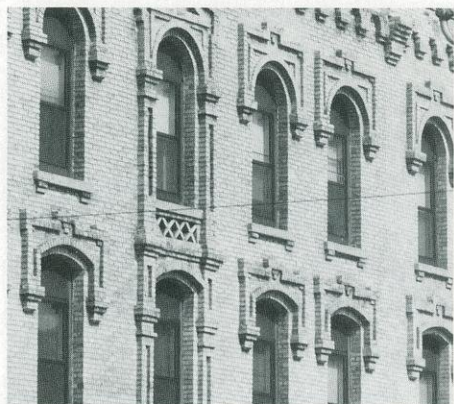
12-16
Bennett and Clapp Block
1851

Ensign H. Bennett and New Yorker J.F. Clapp erected this Greek Revival block for \$12,000. Early tenants were Bennett and Bostwick's dry goods store, Tallman and Collins' drug store, and the Empire Cash Store. The upper floors housed a number of professional offices. The R.M. Bostwick clothing store has thus been in operation at this location since the mid-nineteenth century.

Simple stone lintels and sills are original features of the facade, and the Bostwick storefront is a turn-of-the-century survivor.



SOUTH MAIN STREET



33
Fredendall Block
1868-1869
George Schulze, architect

A fire in 1868 destroyed the earlier buildings on this site, and John Fredendall and Hiram Baker each erected half of the block which now bears Fredendall's name. A great variety of businesses have occupied this large block, including harness makers, grocery stores, meat markets, a bike shop, a bakery, and clothing stores. The building has also provided apartments and housed the Ryan Funeral Home.

The Fredendall Block is a striking example of the Italianate style, here executed in cream brick. The heavy hoodmoldings over the regularly-placed windows and the deep corbels at the cornice provide a rich surface of light and dark.

In 1970, a fire gutted the upper stories. Owner Bob Kimball has sensitively restored the building, which now is occupied by retail businesses and offices.



29-31
Helms and McVicar Blocks
1905

The Helms and McVicar Blocks originally housed the Helms seed store and the McVicar Brothers plumbing firm. After about 1920, a popular cafe operated in the Helms Block, while the plumbing business remained in its original location until the 1950s.

The details of these buildings are quite typical of turn-of-the-century commercial construction in Janesville. The Queen Anne style buildings are topped with bracketed metal cornices stamped with the owner's names. Windows at the upper floors are set into pressed metal bays that are decorated with modillions and panels.



SOUTH MAIN STREET

SHSW WHI (X3) 33540



2

Lappin-Hayes Block

1855

Arthur Peabody and William J. Beasley, architects (1889)

The Lappin-Hayes Block is the focal point of the Main and Milwaukee intersection, and it has sheltered a great variety of enterprises over its 130-year history. The block stands on the site of Henry F. Janes' cabin, one the first dwellings constructed in Rock County. In 1842, Thomas Lappin erected a two-story store on this site. Thirteen years later he completed this four-story office block, a handsome Italianate style structure of cream-colored brick. Its details are typical of the Italianate blocks built in Janesville between 1855 and 1870. Particularly notable are the upper story windows; the window heads are treated differently at each story.

The original Lappin Block housed five ground-level stores leased by grocers, banks, and merchants, and upper story offices occupied by attorneys, real estate dealers, physicians, an architect, and other professionals. An early tenant was the Mutual Life Insurance Company, known today as the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company. A public hall seating 800 persons occupied the upper stories, and a saloon was housed in the basement. Until 1870, when the Myers Opera House was opened, Lappin's Hall was the center of the city's cultural and social life.

Above:

The Lappin Block in 1892.



In 1899, the building was purchased by Dennis and Michael Hayes, Janesville contractors. Their remodeling included the installation of an elevator and the construction of a new central lightwell. Exterior additions to the buildings included a Queen Anne style sheet metal cornice and two pressed-metal rounded bays at the corners. Much of the original 1855 building above the first floor was unaltered. Over the next seventy years, the building continued to house the offices of many prominent professionals.

In 1974, the upper floors were closed. In 1976 the block was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). In 1983, the federal program of tax credits available to owners of NRHP-eligible buildings was used in its rehabilitation. According to the NRHP nomination prepared for the South Main Street Historic District in 1988, the Lappin-Hayes Block stands today "not only as the last remnant of the four blocks that once anchored the east side shopping district in Janesville, but as a fine example of renovation and adaptive reuse of a commercial structure."



EAST MILWAUKEE STREET

192 HOLLAND'S JANESVILLE DIRECTORY.

Mrs. E. T. Horne,
PROPRIETOR

OGDEN HOUSE,

24 E. Milwaukee St.

I am prepared to accommodate Boarders by the day or week on lowest terms.
I HAVE ALSO

OYSTER PARLORS,
Where oysters are served in any style and at any time.

MRS. E. T. HORNE,
24 East Milwaukee St.,
JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN.



109-111
Ryan Building (see photo below)
1850-1853

The Ryan Building was built as the Merchants Hotel, and later became the Ogden House. The cream brick Greek Revival facade was remodeled about 1892 with two metal-clad bays, and changes were made at the roofline. Some of the original windows are still visible on the east and west sides of the facade.

113
Peters Block
1849

Like the neighboring Ryan Building, this building had its origins as a hotel. The first two stories were constructed in 1849, and three additional stories were added in 1855.

The present facade dates from 1913 and the decoration is based on brick and glazed brick geometric motifs associated with the Arts and Crafts style. In the twentieth century, the building has been used for office and retail purposes.

From right to left: the London Hotel, the Peters Block, and the Ryan Building.



EAST MILWAUKEE STREET



121
London Hotel
1893

Here, as in many of Wisconsin's larger cities, hotels offered lodging to traveling salesmen as well as more permanent housing for Janesville businessmen who had not yet acquired their own residences.

The London Hotel, now called the Regency, is still in operation as it nears the end of its first century. The Queen Anne style design is quite unaltered; the rusticated stone foundation and prominent corner tower are original features.



201
Hodge and Buchholz Carriage Factory
1880

Robert Hodge and Herman Buchholz formed a partnership to manufacture carriages in 1863. They constructed this building for the purpose of manufacturing and selling their line, which eventually included omnibuses, buggies, phaetons, carryalls, sleighs, and circus wagons. A three-story addition was built about 1900, and the glass facade was added at a later date.

In the 1880s, the business was renamed the Janesville Carriage Company. In 1919, as carriage manufacture gave way to horseless carriages, the firm sold out to Samson Tractor, a branch of the General Motors Corporation. Between 1923 and 1936, the building was the home of the Bower City Implement Company, a manufacturer of agricultural equipment.

HOTEL LONDON,

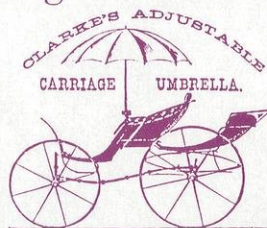
AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN PLAN.

ELECTRIC CARS RUN FROM DEPOT
TO HOTEL.

FRED R. JONES, Prop.

Opposite Myers Grand Opera House Janesville, Wis.

Hodge & Buchholz



CARRIAGE MANUFACTURERS,

A LARGE ASSORTMENT OF

Carriages, Phaetons, Buggies,

SLEIGHS AND CARRIAGE GOODS CONSTANTLY ON HAND.

Grant's Patent Shifting Top Rail.

WE DEFTY COMPETITION ON OUR LOW PRICED BODDIES AND CARRIAGES

ALL WORK WARRANTED.

REPAIRING, PAINTING AND TRIMMING PROMPTLY DONE.

Manufacture and Salesrooms - Cor. E. Milwaukee & Bluff Sts.

JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN



11
Otto F. Meyer Building
1865-70

The facade of this handsome red brick building has been virtually unaltered above the ground floor since the 1880s. Various owners and tenants have included druggists, grocers, and tobacco and wine and liquor dealers. Originally, Meyer's merchandise store was located at the ground level, and the two upper stories housed a pharmacy. The Star Billiard Parlor occupied the building from 1911 to 1973.

Round-arched window heads with soft limestone keystones and limestone string-courses are distinctive features of the Italianate style facade.



13 (right)
1853

A brick building was constructed on this site in 1853 by Alan Bates, an attorney. About 1900, the building was completely remodeled. It now has a pressed metal bay at the second story dating from the remodeling, and two cast iron columns from the original design. At the time of its remodeling it was operated as a billiard hall by Levant L. Leffingwell.

O. F. MEYER & Co.,

DEALERS IN

Choice Family Groceries,

FRUITS,

Wines and Liquors,

CANNED GOODS, CROCKERY AND GLASSWARE,

No. 45 N. Main St., Janesville, Wis.

NORTH MAIN STREET



15
Alan Bates Building
1865

Alan Bates erected this building about a decade after adjoining 13. It retains many of its original Italianate details, including round-arched windows at the second story, and cast iron columns and pilasters manufactured at the Rock River Iron Works. Bates rented the first floor to the proprietor of a dry goods store and maintained his law office on the second floor.

Alan Cole Bates (1822–1891) was a native of Sacket's Harbor, New York. He arrived in Janesville at the age of 21 and practiced law here for seventy years. He served as Second Ward alderman (1853–1874), as a State Legislator, and as Justice of the Peace. He built thirteen business blocks and owned a fine residence in Janesville.



21 1/2
1855

This narrow Greek Revival building with its pair of tall windows is among the oldest to survive in downtown Janesville. The window treatment at the second story is notable for the characteristic use of simple stone sills and lintels. Locally-manufactured cast iron columns are exposed at the entry. A. Horn, a jeweler, was the builder.

The northwest corner of N. Main and E. Milwaukee Streets; the Jackman Block is at left, and the Otto F. Meyer Building is third from left. Photograph 1888.



RCHS

NORTH MAIN STREET

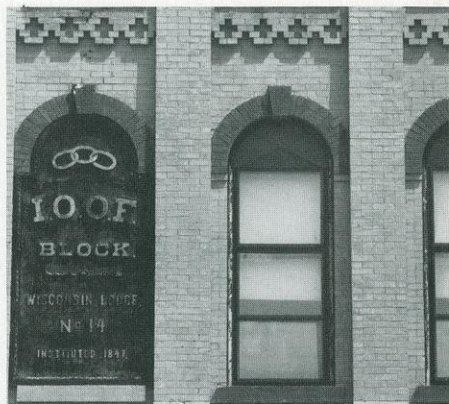


18-24
1866-68

A fire in December of 1865 destroyed a number of buildings on North Main Street as well as those several blocks to the east. The block was rebuilt between 1866 and 1868 and the rebuilding resulted in these excellent examples of post-Civil War commercial architecture. Although erected for three owners, the cream brick facades are treated in a unified manner with round arched windows, and identical deep, bracketed cornices. At the ground level, cast iron pilasters with foliate capitals serve both decorative and structural purposes. The cast iron pilasters are stamped RRIW, for the Rock River Iron Works. 22 North Main is of particular note, for its brick voussoirs topped by keystones at the upper story windows and ornamental brickwork under the third story windows.

18 North Main was first used as a saloon, and then a grocery. 20 North Main has housed a hardware store, a plumbing business, a shooting gallery and later, a saloon.

22-24 North Main has been occupied by the Wisconsin Lodge #14 of the I.O.O.F. for many years.



NORTH MAIN STREET

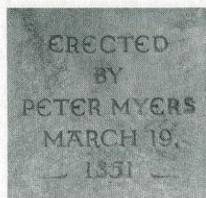


119-123
Peter Myers Pork Packing Plant
ca. 1851

These buildings contained the pork packing business established and operated by Peter Myers. Myers (1819-1888) was born in France and learned the trade of a butcher in the United States as a young man. In 1845 he arrived in Janesville. His first business was a meat market, but he soon turned to pork packing. He acquired considerable wealth at this enterprise, and built a number of other commercial buildings including the Myers Hotel, the Myers Opera House, the Myers Armory Block, the Galbraith Stables, and the Young America Block. Myers was also an investor in a number of early firms in the city, including the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company, the Rock County National Bank, two railroads, and the Janesville Cotton Mills.

The facade of 119-121 is treated very simply, while 123 has more elaborate brickwork at the window arches and cornice. The first story retains its cast-iron columns.

By 1870, the first floor of the block was subdivided. The pork packing plant continued in operation, but a gas steam fitter's shop occupied 119.



Follow the riverwalk to the Milwaukee Street bridge to resume the tour at the foot of West Milwaukee Street. You will pass River's Edge Park, with its sculpture by Joseph Kinnebrew (1981).

WEST MILWAUKEE STREET



11-17
Woolworth Building
c. 1946

Constructed several years after a major fire on this block, this was one of only a few large business blocks built on the west side of the river after World War II. The building was well-sited at the foot of the bridge, and the details of its modern, post-war facade are quite intact.

The Bennett Block, shown in the photograph below, still stands at the opposite end of this block (29-31 West Milwaukee). Built in 1880 and remodeled extensively in 1920 and 1988, it is now known as the Carle Block.



The Bennett Block. Photograph 1888.

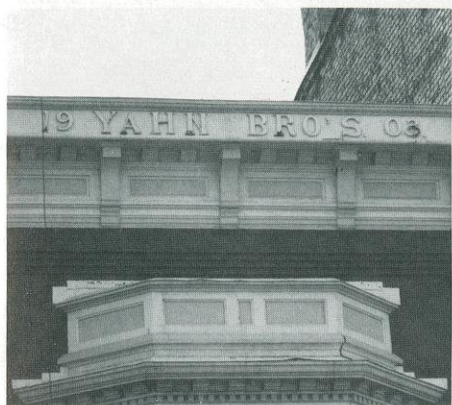


105-107
Williams Block
1890

This red brick, double storefront block has a metal cornice and pressed metal bays, features characteristic of Queen Anne style commercial architecture. Between 1890 and 1903, this was the location of the Edward Hall clothing store; the proprietor then joined with Albert Heubel to operate a furniture store here until 1919. Heubel then operated a clothing store until about 1936.

RCHS

WEST MILWAUKEE STREET



109
Yahn Brothers Block
1903
Larrin Hilton, architect

John and Michael Yahn's meat market operated here from 1903 to 1911, and then the Lowell Hardware Store until about 1927. The storefront is a simple example of the Neo-Classical style popular with Janesville builders after the turn of the century. Above the modernized ground floor, there is a pressed metal bay decorated with panels, modillions, and dentils.



From left: The Williams, Yahn Brothers, and Durkee-Hawes Blocks.



111
Durkee-Hawes Block
1869

Original features of this three-story cream brick block are the wooden cornice and segmental and round-arched windows decorated with prominent keystones.

J.T. Durkee first ran his hardware business here, and in 1871 George Hawes purchased the structure and operated a grocery store. During the 1880s, the building's upper floors housed a dance hall and apartments as well as the studio of George W. Wise, a photographer.

For the character of its business buildings and blocks, Janesville is greatly to be commended.

City Directory, 1859-60

WEST MILWAUKEE STREET



113-123
Richardson, Davis and Dunn, and
Richardson-Macloon Blocks
1869

These double-storefront, Italianate style blocks were likely executed by the same builder, although for different clients. The prominent arched parapets are distinctive features. The three blocks were home to a great variety of enterprises over the past century. At 121-123, for example, a clothing store, Colvin's Baking Company, a restaurant, the Stearns and Baker's Philadelphia Drug Store, and the Badger Drug Company were all housed at various times.

The floors above were occupied at the turn of the century by the millinery establishment of Mrs. S.M. Amsden, who advertised "a choice and varied assortment of ladies' bonnets and hats, feathers and French flowers, and sash ribbons of endless variety and beauty."

Photograph 1888.



MRS. S. M. AMSDEN.
Fashionable *Milliner,*
AND DEALER IN
Millinery & Fancy Goods,
FEATHERS,
FLOWERS,
PLUMES,
RIBBONS,
LACES.
Over 41 W. Milwaukee St., Janesville.



The intersection of Franklin and West Milwaukee Streets was a focal point of west side business activity. The Corn Exchange Block, built in 1855, was located across the street from 113-123 West Milwaukee. The distinctive curved facade was oriented toward a large cast iron fountain that rested in a small triangle on Franklin Street. The ground floors of the Exchange were occupied by a variety of stores, and the upper floors housed lawyers and physicians. Nearby, in a small frame building, Rock County dealers of grain, wool, and produce met to buy and sell their goods.

RCHS

RCHS

WEST MILWAUKEE STREET



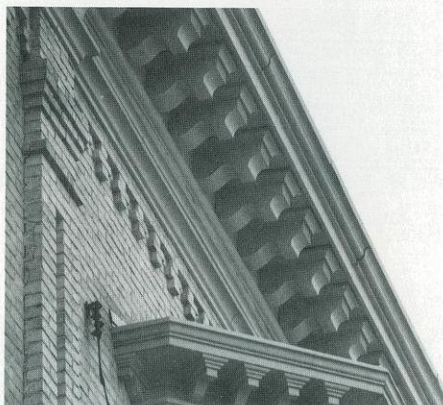
219 W. Milwaukee
c. 1870

Look up to see a central pair of round-arched windows with stone keystones, and a wooden cornice decorated with rosettes and elaborate brackets. These details have survived the remodelings apparent at the ground level.



221-223 W. Milwaukee
Cannon Block (right)
1878-1879

The drugstore currently at this location is the successor of a pharmacy that was established here about 1907. The brick block is comprised of three storefronts. The ground floor remodeling dates from the mid-1950s, but the upper story shows evidence of both the date of construction and a circa 1900 remodeling, when a metal Neo-Classical cornice with brackets and modillions and pressed metal bays were added.



In the course of this year many substantial dwellings, and some mercantile blocks of brick were built, and altogether the young city gave evidence, in every quarter, of remarkable thrift and progress.

Janesville City Directory and
Business Advertiser, (1859-60)

WEST MILWAUKEE STREET



216-222 (222 above)
1875-79



301
Thomas Mackin Block (left)
1885

This group of handsome commercial buildings was cited in the 1988 West Milwaukee Street Historic District nomination for its variety of cream and red brick structures. Although not particularly notable for their individual architectural treatment, the buildings present an excellent streetscape. Of particular note is the Carroll Block (218, 1876) which retains its historic storefront with large display windows, pilasters, and entry door with glazed transom.

Among the variety of specialty stores and businesses on this block was the hide and leather business operated at 222 between 1876 and 1911 by Josiah Wright, who constructed the building in 1875. Its successor, the Janesville Hide and Leather Company, was in operation until the mid-1930s.

The heavy cornice with brackets and dentils, and pairs of double-hung sashes decorated with heavy arches and keystones are fine details characteristic of the High Victorian Italianate style. The storefront at the ground level is still somewhat intact. The Mackin family operated a saloon and retail liquor business at this location until about 1900; it was succeeded by the saloon owned by Joseph Hunt.

Next door, at 305, Charles Mackin also built a three-story block. The facade of this handsome building was recently bricked over.

The Thomas and Charles Mackin Blocks, the Merrill Block (307), and 315 W. Milwaukee in a photograph of 1888.



RCHS

WEST MILWAUKEE STREET



327 (15 S. High Street)
Monterey Hotel
1930
Paul Frederick Olsen, architect
(firm of Frank Perry, Chicago)

The Monterey Hotel was the last addition to this block of specialty stores. Several hotels have stood on this site. Although not visible, a portion of the 1880 Grand Hotel is incorporated into the present building.

The Monterey was Janesville's last major hotel building and it remains its most imposing. The six-story Art Deco structure is decorated in tan terra cotta that flows across the building's exterior and caps the tower and parapets of the building. Gold leaf is baked into the black terra cotta details at the second floor. The resulting architectural statement is very urban, and reflects hotel construction trends of the period, particularly in larger cities such as Milwaukee.



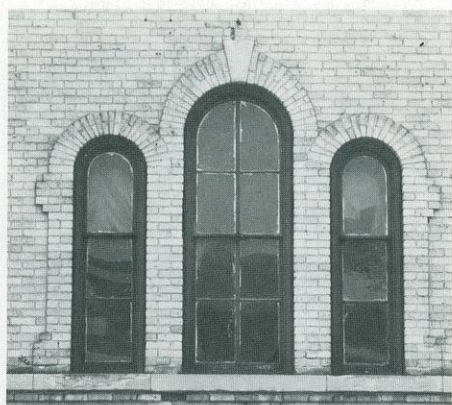
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The Grand Hotel, on the site of the Monterey Hotel, as it appeared in 1888.

WEST MILWAUKEE STREET



Above:
409-419 W. Milwaukee St.



401-403
E.C. Smith Block
1870

With the G. Davis Block at 419 W. Milwaukee constructed two years earlier, this Italianate style double storefront is the earliest on the block between High and Academy Streets. Look above the recent ground story remodeling to see the finely-detailed round-arched windows at the second story; in place of a cornice there is a row of brick dentils and corbels. The meat business that occupied this building for many years under several owners was known as the City Meat Shop.

The 400 block of West Milwaukee generally marks the edge of the historic commercial district. In addition to the E.C. Smith Block at 401-403, the remaining five buildings dating from 1868 to 1906 retain many of their original architectural details above the first story. These buildings, like many others in Janesville's downtown, should be cared for with special attention to their historic character. Look up, Janesville!

Glossary

Bay

One unit of a building consisting of a series of similar units, usually window and door openings.

Bracket

A projecting member which supports or appears to support a load, usually at eaves or overhangs.

Classical

Pertaining to the architecture of Greece and Rome.

Corbel

A bracket or block projecting from the face of a wall.

Corinthian Order

The most ornate of Greek orders: characterized by a slender fluted column and a capital decorated with acanthus leaves.

Cornice

The upper projecting section of the wall, which finishes or crowns it.

Keystone

The central voussoir of an arch.

Lintel

A horizontal beam that bridges an opening and supports the weight above it.

Modillion

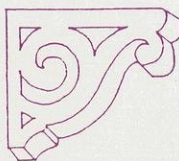
An ornamental bracket or console used in a series under a cornice.

Molding

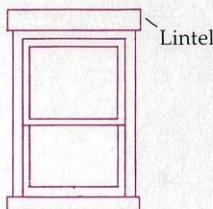
A continuous decorative band, carved or applied to a surface.

Voussoir

Wedge-shaped stones, which form an arch.



Bracket



For Further Reading:

An excellent discussion of the architecture of Rock County is contained in *Rock County Historic Sites and Buildings*, written by Nancy B. Douglas and Richard P. Hartung and published by the Rock County Historical Society in 1976. Of general interest to the history of commercial architecture is Richard Longstreth's *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture* (1987) and published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington D.C.

Much of the information contained in this guide is found in the National Register of Historic Places district nominations prepared by Carol L. Cartwright for the Janesville Historic Commission (1986-1989), and in the thematic reports prepared by Randall Waller (1988). Copies of this material can be obtained from the Janesville Community Development Department.

Written and designed by Carole Zellie of Landscape Research, Madison, Wisconsin and St. Paul, Minnesota, for the Janesville Historic Commission. Frank E. Martin, Landscape Research project staff. Photographs by Carole Zellie unless noted.

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1989

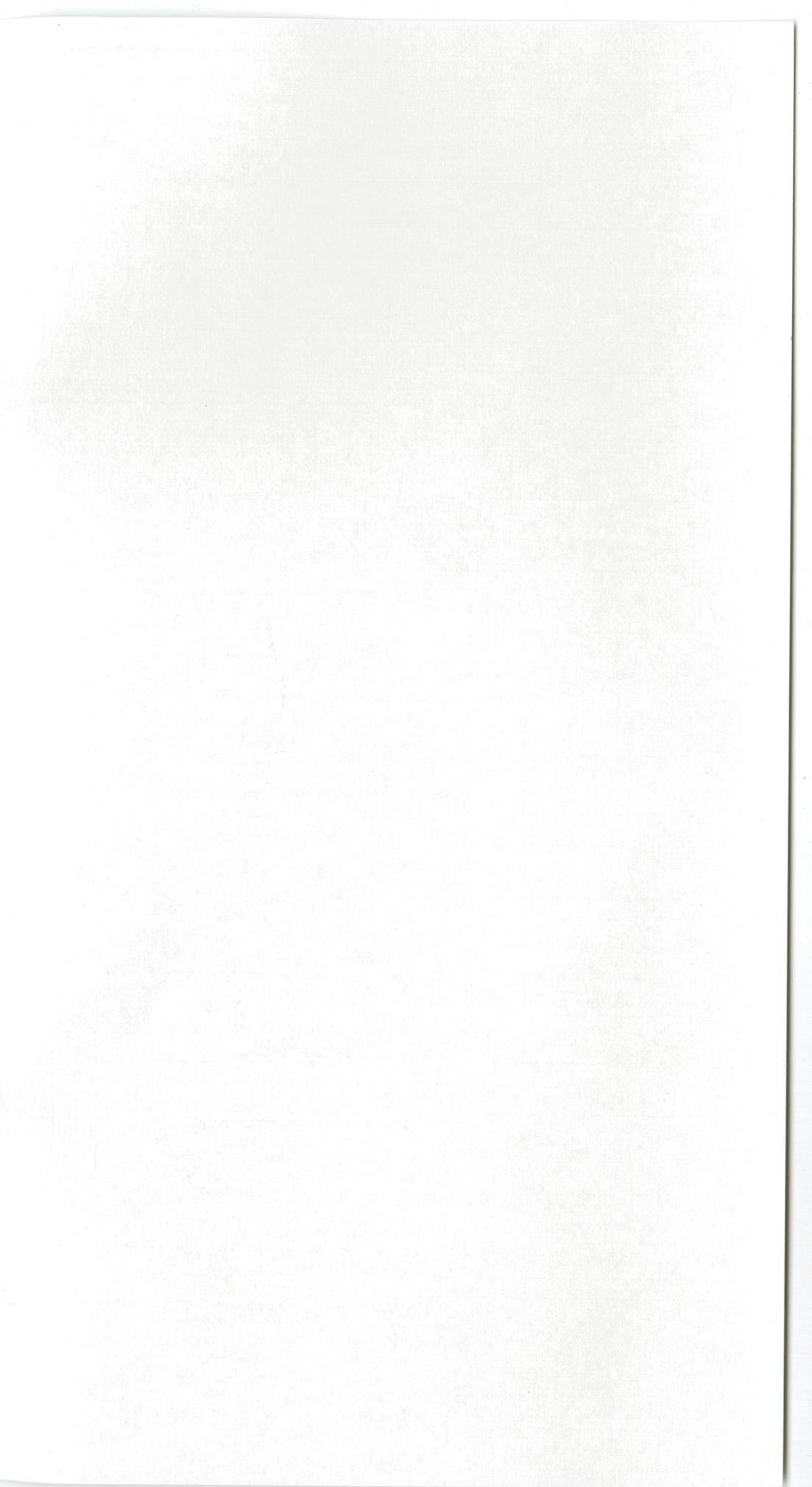
212 HOLLAND'S JANESVILLE DIRECTORY.	
<p>LAWRENCE & ATWOOD, Dealers in Hardware, Stoves & Tinware Coal, Stucco, Cement, &c., No. 7 South Main Street. JANESVILLE, WIS.</p>	<p>M. B. JOHNSON, DENTIST; Jackman & Smith's Block, Janesville, Wis.,</p>
<p>JUEL HERMANDSON, ORNAMENTAL CARVER In Houses and all kinds of Furniture work. Drafts of Carving sent on appli- cation. Shop at Anderson, Barry & Co., ex Bree, Janesville, Wis. P. O. Box, 1315</p>	<p>WILCOX & COLE, CARPENTERS. Contractors & Builders. Stair Building and Jobbing done on short notice. S.E. cor. E. Milwaukee & Bluff-sts., JANESVILLE, WIS.</p>
<p>CHARLES GOKY, FASHIONABLE BARBER & HAIR DRESSER, N. S. W. Milwaukee st., Near Franklin, Janesville, Wisconsin.</p>	<p>EDWARD RUGER, CIVIL ENGINEER AND SURVEYOR, Over 41 N. Main Street, JANESVILLE, WIS.</p>
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Holland's Janesville Directory, 1870.

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For further information on historic preservation programs in the City of Janesville, please contact the Janesville Historic Commission, 18 North Jackson Street, Janesville, Wisconsin, 53545, (608) 755-3085 or 755-3065.





The Janesville Historic Commission
Janesville, Wisconsin

1989