

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.



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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.



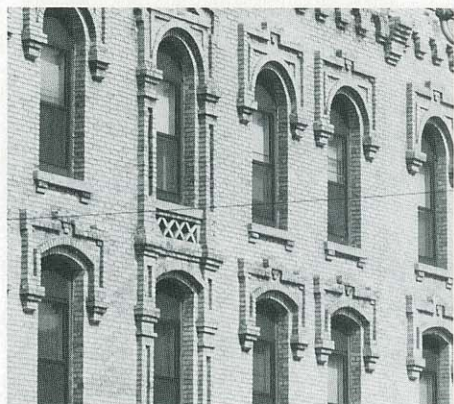
12-16
Bennett and Clapp Block
1851

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.



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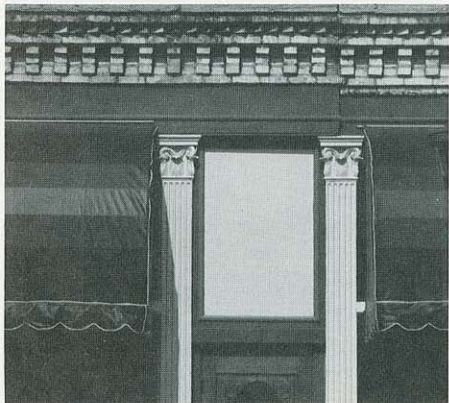


33
Fredendall Block
1868-1869
George Schulze, architect

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.



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Lappin-Hayes Block

1855

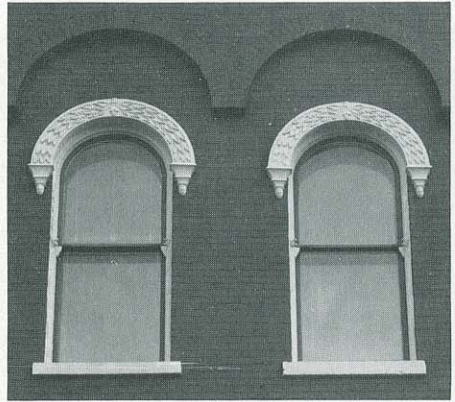
Arthur Peabody and William J. Beasley, architects (1889)

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."

