NPS Form 10-900
(January 1992)
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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

United States Department of 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 Whitewater Hotel
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number	226 West Whitewater Street						N/A	**not for publication**	
city or town	Whitewater						N/A	**vicinity**	
state	Wisconsin	**code**	WI	**county**	Walworth	**code**	127	**zip code**	53190

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _ nationally _ statewide X locally. (_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date: Dec 7, 2009

State Historic Preservation Officer – Wisconsin

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property X meets _ does not meet the National Register criteria.
(_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Whitewater Hotel	County Walworth	Wisconsin
Name of Property	County and State	

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
__ entered in the National Register.
___ See continuation sheet.
__ determined eligible for the National Register.
___ See continuation sheet.
__ determined not eligible for the National Register.
___ See continuation sheet.
__ removed from the National Register.
__ other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beall — 1.21.10

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as as apply)

x	Private
	public-local
	public-State
	public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

x	building(s)
	district
	structure
	site
	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

contributing	noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	total

Name of related multiple property listing:
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property listing.
N/A

Number of contributing resources is previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/hotel

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation	Concrete
walls	OTHER: Cement Board
roof	Metal
other	Wood

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 the National Register listing.)

X 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)

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1894-1952

Significant Dates

1894

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):
X 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:
X State Historic Preservation Office
_ Other State Agency
_ Federal Agency
_ Local government
_ University
Other
Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	358367	4743658
2			
3			
4			

☐ 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	Carol Lohry Cartwright, consultant				
organization	Prepared for the owner			**date**	December 26, 2008
street & number	W7646 Hackett Rd.			**telephone**	262-473-6820
city or town	Whitewater	**state**	WI	**zip code**	53190

Whitewater Hotel	County Walworth	Wisconsin
Name of Property	County and State	

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/title	Russell Walton				
organization	R. R. Walton & Company			**Date**	December 26, 2008
street&number	1005 W. Main St.			**telephone**	262-473-8646
city or town	Whitewater	**state**	WI	**zip code**	53190

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.

The old Whitewater Hotel sits on a large lot in the southeast part of downtown Whitewater, Wisconsin, a small city in southeastern Wisconsin. The building sits at the end of a streetscape of commercial buildings that line the west side of Whitewater Street for approximately two blocks. Historically, this side of Whitewater Street was lined with diverse commercial businesses and small shops that extended an additional block from the Hotel. A large industry once stood on the other side of Whitewater Street, along with a large feed mill and agricultural storage facility. Also across the street is the old Whitewater Passenger Depot that served the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad (Milwaukee Road) between 1890 and 1952 (passenger service).

Today, most of the old industrial buildings across the street have been cleared, along with the old feed mill. In its place is the Cravath Lakefront Park. Across the street to the southeast, where a block of commercial buildings once stood, is the large Whitewater City Hall, originally erected as a fire and police station in 1968, then expanded in 1991.

The old hotel takes up most of its lot so there is no formal landscaping. On the main (east) and south elevations, the sidewalks come right up to the building. On the west elevation, there is a small parking lot attached to the building. The other elevation sits on the lot line, next to a vacant lot that once housed a commercial building, but is now a parking lot.

Note on Description

The Whitewater Hotel was renovated in 2006 under the federal and state tax credit program for the historic renovation of National Register-eligible buildings. A Historic Preservation Certification Application was approved for this building. Prior to the renovation, the building was determined eligible under National Register criterion A, for local history in the area of commerce. The renovation was approved by the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society and the National Park Service. This nomination is a follow-up to this tax-credit project. Therefore, the description of the building will include original details, details at the time the renovation project was started, and details of the building at the present time.

Exterior

The Whitewater hotel was completed in 1894 and reflected the Queen Anne style of architecture that was popular at that time. Over the years, the building was re-sided (twice), historic porch elements were removed, and part of the original porch was enclosed. A few windows were made into doors. In 1989 a major fire in the building caused extensive smoke damage to the entire second floor. The first floor was inappropriately remodeled in the twentieth century, and during a multi-year period in the late

twentieth century, both the interior and exterior deteriorated while the building was vacant. Almost demolished, R. R. Walton & Company acquired the building in 2006 and began an effort to renovate it by using the federal and state tax credit programs.

The building has two large sections, a main block fronting Whitewater Street and a large side ell that projects from the southwest end of the main block and extends down Fremont Street. The side ell slightly projects from the main block, providing space for openings to enhance interior lighting. The two sections form an "L" plan that can be seen from the north side. This ell shape creates a "courtyard" at the back of the building, so that most of the interior spaces have natural lighting.

Each section of the building has two stories with an intersecting gable roof. According to a historic photograph, the original roof was covered with standing-seam metal roofing. Prior to the renovation, the roof was covered with asphalt shingles. The renovated roof was given a sheathing of standing seam metal like the original roof. Dormers project from the main or east and south elevations. Originally they were clad with narrow clapboards. Prior to the renovation, these dormers were clad with aluminum siding over asphalt siding, the original clapboards having been removed. The renovated dormers were clad with a narrow board clapboard of a composite material.[1]

The walls of the building, like the dormers, have seen several coverings. The original covering was a pressed metal that mimicked limestone. This cladding was removed in the early twentieth century in favor of asphalt sheathing. The asphalt was covered with aluminum siding after World War II, and some time in the 1980s, a small amount of vinyl siding was applied to the first story of the main or east elevation. The building currently has a covering of composite siding. Since a return to replicated metal siding was cost-prohibitive, the current clapboard pattern siding was used. This siding suggests the pattern and scale of the original metal siding.

The walls of the east elevation of the main block, the south elevation of the main block and the side ell, and the north elevation of the side ell are punctuated by numerous identically-sized windows. Original windows were largely two-over-two light double-hung sashes, but many were replaced with single-light sashes that were extant prior to the renovation. They were historically topped with cornice moldings that were removed at a later date. During the renovation, all windows were replaced with architectural-grade single-light sashes. Cornice moldings were returned to these new windows during the renovation. Along the south and west elevations, there were doors where once windows were located. During the renovation, the windows were returned to these openings as per the original building. Additionally, on the west or rear elevation of the main block, a few additional windows were

[1] This and other changes discussed below were approved by the National Park Service during the tax-credit certification process.

added to make paired windows for increased light into apartments.

Prior to the renovation, the main elevation of the main block had seen the most significant remodeling. Originally, this elevation was covered by a two-story Queen Anne style porch with turned posts and spool-and-spindle friezes. The second story had symmetrically placed windows and the first story had a combination of symmetrically-placed windows and doors. The main entrance was a double-wood and glass door, while the secondary entrance was a single wood and glass door. Prior to the renovation, the second story still retained its openings, but the first story had a partially-enclosed porch area with modern sliding windows, a single historic window, and the original double wood and glass door. The original porch was not extant except for the second story porch roof that was highly deteriorated.

The renovation replaced all of the windows on the second story, removed the partially enclosed porch on the first story, returned all original openings to the first story, replicated the original double-door main entrance, and replicated the single secondary entry door. The porch was reconstructed based on an historic photograph, with turned posts, spool-and-spindle friezes, and a second story balustrade.

The major change to the building during the renovation was to the rear elevation. A few additional windows were added, as described above, and modern, metal-paneled entry doors were added on the second story for access to apartments. The most significant addition was a wooden stairway and second story porch that was added to provide access to the upper story apartments. This stairway and porch are painted white and have simple wood posts and balusters. As with the rest of the renovation, these alterations were approved as part of the tax-credit certification process. Because these alterations are to the back, they have little effect on the building's two main elevations.

Interior, First Floor

Since the building's interior was extremely deteriorated and fire-damaged, most of the interior features were remodeled in the renovation of the building. Again, original details and renovated details will be explained.

Originally, as far as could be determined as there are no historic interior photographs of the building, the Whitewater Hotel consisted of large public spaces on the first floor and numerous small hotel rooms on the second floor in two different wings. Behind the double entry doors of the first story of the main block, there was a small foyer. To the right, or north, the foyer led into the lobby and reception area housed in the main block. Beyond the lobby was the hotel saloon, which could also be accessed via the secondary entrance of the main block. To the left of the foyer was an entrance into an individual room that was probably used as the hotel office or as a leased space. Just ahead in the foyer

was a wide staircase leading to the second floor hotel rooms. Running along the staircase on the right was a hallway that led to a rest room and a large dining room that sat in the interior space of the side ell. Behind the dining room was a large kitchen and pantry.

At the time of the renovation, the above plan was still visible, although significantly changed. Most of the original finishes were removed, covered over, or heavily damaged. The original main entrance was no longer in use and the main entrance into the building at that time was through the enclosed porch on the first floor of the main elevation. It led into a large room that once housed both the lobby and hotel saloon. A partial wall and support beams indicate where there was a separation between the old saloon and the lobby.

The tavern space had extensive remodeling. The bulk of the wall surfaces were covered with mid-twentieth century "knotty" pine paneling. Where the historic bar was located, part of the wall was accented with wainscoting. The ceiling in the old saloon area was covered with acoustical tile and the floor was covered with a mid-twentieth century version of a terrazzo floor. Behind the old saloon area was a twentieth century addition to the main block that was removed during the renovation. In this addition there was a small "cooler" for the tavern and an additional seating area. This addition had concrete floors and modern wall surfaces.

To the south of the partial wall and support beams in the old tavern space, there was a slight change in appearance. Most of the wall surfaces in this area were also covered with pine paneling, but there was a narrow-board oak floor, wainscoting on the partial wall, and a pressed metal ceiling. The pressed metal or "tin" ceiling was heavily decorated in a classical motif. The bulk of the ceiling had a small square coffered design. At the center of the ceiling was a large square medallion where a ceiling light fixture was hung. The medallion was decorated with a classical motif of torches and scrolls with a border of oval wreaths. A similar border spanned the edge of the ceiling, itself. Curving down from the ceiling was a decorated frieze that featured a running motif of torches, wreaths, scrolls, and other classical decoration.

A women's restroom for the tavern was probably carved out of the hotel's lobby. It had modernized fixtures, ceramic tile flooring, and modern vinyl wallboard. A dropped acoustical ceiling covered part of an old tin ceiling that appeared to be an extension of the tin ceiling found in the tavern space that was the old lobby area.

The foyer was still extant at the time of the renovation, as was the main staircase. The foyer had its original features, including a narrow oak floor and pressed metal ceiling that was identical to the ceiling described above. The main staircase was plain with wide steps, but no decoration. It was enclosed by walls so there was no balustrade except for a small area at the top of the stairs, which was

damaged by the second story fire.

Behind the staircase were the old bathroom, the dining room, and the kitchen and pantry. The dining room had an older linoleum floor and high-quality dark-wood paneling probably from the mid-twentieth century. This paneling covered the trim around the doors and windows of the dining room. A pressed metal ceiling was extant and also made up of classical motifs of wreaths, swags, and small torches. A border had a running pattern of oval wreaths inset with crossed torches and lyres and there was a curved fluted frieze along the edges of the ceiling.

Behind the dining room was the old kitchen, which was carved up into several spaces. These spaces included a large bathroom that could be accessed from the dining room only. Part of the original open area of the kitchen was extant and some original finishes, such as plaster walls, wainscoting, and trim around doors and windows were still extant.

A small apartment had been carved out of another part of the original hotel kitchen and pantry. Its small kitchen had a few of the hotel's original kitchen cabinets that were tall and made up of vertical boards with period hardware. Some old finishes were also extant. The rest of the apartment included what was probably a small living room with 1970s paneling, vinyl flooring, and a dropped acoustical tile ceiling. A smaller room with a closet, probably used as a bedroom, extended off of the living room and was similarly decorated. A long and narrow bathroom with 1950s era fixtures completed the apartment.

Behind the old hotel kitchen area was the extant part of the original kitchen pantry that included an old walk-in cooler. The walk-in cooler had most of its original features. A heavy, probably cork-filled, door led into the cooler next to a bank of windows attached to interior shelves. Inside the cooler, the room was covered with thin metal, probably over cork, a common insulating material of the time.

The entire first floor of the building had identical trim around doors and windows, where it was still extant. The trim was fluted and attached with bull's eye blocks additionally decorated with incised carvings suggesting birds. This stylized carving and the fluted trim suggested a simple Eastlake style influence.

Most of the interior of the first floor was deteriorated and remodeled. However, where possible, the renovation retained some important original features. The original double wood and glass entry doors were not built to current code, so a local carpenter replicated them in a slightly larger size. The foyer space is extant, and retains its pressed metal ceiling. To the left is the original "office" room. It has been retained and is currently serving as a leased office.

To the right of the foyer, the area that housed the tavern has been renovated into a coffee house. It takes up the same space as the old tavern. The floor has been covered with modern ceramic tile, and the ceiling of the saloon section of the tavern has been replaced. But, the pressed metal ceiling that was still extant was restored. Also, in this area, as well as in the foyer, the original fluted trim and bull's eye blocks have been repaired and retained, as have the original baseboards. A wall with French style doors was built along the west side of the coffee house for a separated space, and is used for more coffee house seating. In this area, though, the original trim was not extant, but the renovation replicated the fluted trim and used plain bull's eye blocks to blend in with the original incised blocks. The original secondary entrance is now the main entrance for the coffee house. The same carpenter who replicated the double entry doors made an identical single door for the coffee house.

This area also has an entrance into the hallway that once sat along the main staircase. However, the main staircase is not extant.[2] Its space was renovated into an office. The old dining room space and the kitchen and pantry were remodeled into a two-bedroom apartment. This apartment renovation retained some of the paneling from the old hotel dining room, as well as the pressed metal ceiling. An entrance from the old kitchen to the "courtyard" has been retained and is used for an apartment entrance. The rest of the apartment has modern finishes and fixtures.

Interior, Second Floor

The second floor plan of the hotel was fairly intact pre-renovation, but had been extensively damaged in a fire in 1989, and was further damaged from vandalism in the 1990s and early 2000s. The two interior hotel room wings were located in the main block and in the side ell. They met where the staircase ended.

Specific details of the hotel prior to the renovation are as follows. The landing had a short balustrade decorated in the Eastlake style with horizontal and vertical posts and cut-away corners on the newels. It was heavily damaged. Just to the south of the landing, in the main block, there was a large room with a wood floor, 1970s-era wood veneer paneling, and extant fluted trim around the doors and windows with the same incised bull's eye blocks that were used on the first floor. A door from this room led into a large bathroom, which could also be accessed via the landing. The bathroom had 1960s-era vinyl-type wall paneling, a composite tile floor from the same era, and some older fixtures.

The two wings of small hotel rooms had similar details. Each wing had long, narrow hallways with rooms on either side. In the north wing (in the main block), there were eight rooms, four on each side

[2] The staircase was badly damaged and did not meet code requirements, leading to its removal.

of the hallway. This wing was mostly intact, but, the 1989 fire caused extensive smoke damage and there was additional vandalism. The hallway in this wing had a wood floor and some extant plaster wall surfaces that were heavily damaged. Most of the rooms had 1970s-era wood veneer paneling and acoustical ceilings along with linoleum floors. There were extant baseboards and the fluted trim with bull's eye blocks around doors and windows. The entrances to the rooms all had transoms, but the glazing was not extant and the doors had been removed. A few rooms in this wing had period overhead light fixtures.

The west wing, or the wing of the side ell, had nine almost identically-sized rooms with another narrow central hallway. There was also a large closet, a small bathroom, and a rear staircase in this wing. The closet had some period features and may have been an original linen closet. The bathroom may have originally been part of the closet or it may have been an original bathroom for this wing. It had been remodeled with 1960s or 1970s fixtures and wall board.

The rooms of this wing were decorated like the rooms of the north wing. The entrances all had transoms without their glazing and the doors had been removed. Most of the rooms had wood veneer paneled walls, extant baseboards, fluted trim around doors and windows, acoustical tile ceilings, and a combination of composite tile or linoleum floors. In this wing, though, there was extensive damage to many rooms. The hallway had a carpeted floor, plaster walls and an acoustical tile ceiling.

Due to the extensive damage to the second story interior and the small dimensions of the rooms, it was completely renovated into apartments with modern walls, doors, ceilings, and other finishes. Access to each of the second story apartments was changed to the exterior walls, via outside staircases and porches.

While most of the features of the second floor have been lost due to fire, neglect and code issues, many of the open spaces related to the hotel remain. The tax credit project also returned many elements of the exterior that had been lost or altered. Today, the exterior of the hotel has a close resemblance to historic photographs of the building.

SIGNIFICANCE[3]

The old Whitewater Hotel is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A. It is historically significant at the local level as an important commercial building that aided in the success of downtown Whitewater during the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, a time when the city's commercial sector was the economic foundation for the community. Whitewater had a long history of extensive commercial development, particularly during the boom era of the mid to late nineteenth century, when industry was the foundation of the city's economy. The downtown served not only the city's residents, but the farming community around it. After the industrial boom went bust in the mid-1890s, the commercial activity of the community allowed Whitewater to hold its own economically for many decades.

Hotels were a significant part of Whitewater's downtown commercial development from its early years to the World War II era. The historic hotels provided lodging for both long-term visitors and overnight travelers. The hotels along Whitewater Street, the old Whitewater Hotel and its chief competitor, the Cortland House, primarily catered to short-term visitors, due to their location across from the railroad depot and near agricultural related businesses. The Cortland House is not extant, but the old Whitewater Hotel remains as a symbol of important historic commercial activity associated with traveling businesspeople and others.

Historical Background

Whitewater's downtown commercial district began in the late 1830s when an early settler established a "store" in a log building. The first frame store was built in the fall of 1840. By 1850, Whitewater was a growing community with 10 general and grocery stores, a hotel, and six shops making goods not available in general stores. Between the 1850s and the 1890s, Whitewater experienced an economic boom. The commercial district grew as the population of the village and its surrounding area grew. But, more importantly, in the 1850s, two important manufacturing companies were established in the village and by the 1870s, these companies, the Esterly Harvesting Machine Company and the Winchester and Partridge Manufacturing Company, were employing 500 steady workers. The success

[3] The period of significance for this building is 1894-1952. The building was completed in 1894 and its clientele were probably largely related to the railroad, whose passenger depot was across the street. When passenger service ended in 1952, one type of clientele was no longer available for the hotel. Also, the 1950s were a period when hotels in Whitewater were no longer operating as functioning hotels, but more as rooming houses.

of these companies and the "wheat boom" of the local farmers boosted the village's economy. Small frame commercial buildings in the downtown were replaced with brick blocks and by 1884, most of the lots in four block area were filled with commercial buildings.[4]

One of the earliest buildings erected during Whitewater's initial growth period was a hotel built in 1840 by early pioneers David and Joseph Powers at the east end of Main Street near the grist mill (just east of 130 West Main Street). This hotel was added to in 1841 by Freeman L. Pratt and renamed the Whitewater Hotel. Septer Wintermute purchased the hotel in 1850. In 1842, Squire Parsons built another hotel about a block west and named it the Exchange Hotel. It was later known as the Kinney House and operated until around 1890 (not extant).[5]

In 1855, Luther Cadman built the main block of the hotel that stood on the site of this hotel (226 Whitewater Street), and called it the American House. Around the same time, another hotel, the Badger State, was built just south of the American House. In 1858, Septer Wintermute remodeled and greatly expanded the first Whitewater Hotel (on Main Street) into the elegant Montour House, which became the most important hotel in the city in the mid-nineteenth century. The Badger State was also improved in 1863. It was purchased by Giles Kinney and reopened as the Cortland (Courtland) House.[6]

In 1867, the Montour House burned and was not rebuilt, leaving the American House, the Exchange Hotel, and the Cortland House as the city's only hotels. But, during the peak of the city's nineteenth century economic prosperity, two new hotels were built. In 1879-1880, a new three-story double-storefront block was built at the southeast corner of Main and North Second streets. It had commercial space on the first floor, but its upper two floors were used for the Bowers House, later the Hotel Duquesne (183-187 West Main Street). In 1890, the Walworth Hotel was built on the northwest corner of the same intersection. The Walworth Hotel (204 West Main Street) was a considered a "first-class," downtown-type hotel and became the leading hotel in the city. The growth of these two Main Street hotels probably put the old Exchange Hotel out of business, as it was a vacant building by1892.[7]

While the Bowers House and the Walworth Hotel took care of the upscale trade, the Cortland House

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[4] Prosper Cravath and Spencer Steele, *Early Annals of Whitewater 1837-1867*, Albert Salisbury, ed., Whitewater: Whitewater Federation of Women's Clubs, 1906, pp. 89-168; Information from the manuscript files of the Whitewater Historical Society, Whitewater Depot Museum, Whitewater, Wisconsin; Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Map, 1884, on file in the Archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.
[5] Cravath and Steele, pp. 5-57; *History of Walworth County*, p. 611.
[6] *Ibid*, pp. 83-84, 110, 146.
[7] *Ibid*, p. 167; Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1892, 1898, on file in the Archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

and the American House, by 1892 renamed the Whitewater Hotel, catered to traveling salesmen and other, less well-off patrons. Their location along Whitewater Street, a street full of industrial shops, warehouses, and the railroad depot, gave these hotels a primarily business clientele or housed short-term travelers who wanted easy access to the railroad or to the shops along the street. Both were still relatively small hotels that dated to the pre-Civil War era.

The Cortland House would remain the same for many more years, eventually becoming a rooming house in the twentieth century. In the late 1960s, it was demolished for the construction of the public safety building, now part of the municipal building. But, the old Whitewater Hotel would have a major change, as in May of 1892, a fire broke out in the hotel and destroyed the old main block of the building. A day later, a suspected arson burned the wing of the hotel that had not been destroyed in the original fire. The result was a complete loss. Fortunately, the owner had insurance, and in June, he cleared the entire site and made plans to rebuild. The current building, larger and better equipped than the old hotel, rose up on the site by 1894.[8]

The new Whitewater Hotel was rebuilt as a more upscale hotel, with a fancy lobby and bar. It was built on the optimism of the Whitewater economy, even as the nation was entering into an economic depression that was the worst in history. In 1892, when the decision was made to rebuild the Whitewater Hotel, the city's two major factories were still in operation. But, during completion of the hotel, both of these industries closed, leaving anywhere from 300-500 men out of work. And, the industrial depression of the 1890s meant that new industries did not come to the city.[9]

Despite these setbacks, the Whitewater Hotel held its own. The Whitewater Normal School, opened in 1868, experienced steady growth during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the farm economy did not collapse due to the fact that Wisconsin's farmers were turning from cash crops like wheat to cash dairying. These factors helped Whitewater's commercial sector remain stable. And, being a new hotel, with good quality amenities, the Whitewater Hotel could benefit from its location across from the passenger depot, built in 1890. It would compete very well due to its new facilities and its easy access to the traveling public.

The continued stability in the downtown during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be seen in the retention of the city's hotels. After 1890, there were four hotels in the community: the two Main Street hotels: the Hotel Duquesne (Bowers House), and the Hotel Walworth, and the two hotels on Whitewater Street, the Cortland House and the Whitewater Hotel. An historic photograph of the

[8] "Fire," *Whitewater Register*, 19 May 1892, p. 5; *Whitewater Register*, 9 June 1892, p. 5.
[9] Whitewater Historical Society information.

Whitewater Hotel, probably taken around the turn of the twentieth century, has a sign reading "Commercial Hotel." This suggests that its operation was set up to appeal to business travelers coming to and from the railroad depot.[10]

The Whitewater Hotel's heyday probably coincided with the heyday of Whitewater's commercial-agricultural economy between 1900 and 1930. After that time, it was hurt by changes in the needs and desires of the traveling public. In 1900, the majority of people traveled by train regardless of the distance. By 1930, people still travelled long distances by train, but most people traveled shorter distances by automobile. And, they were using small town hotels much less often. By 1924, the Hotel Duquesne was out of business, and its upper hotel rooms had been replaced with a fraternal hall.[11]

The Great Depression of the 1930s cut into the population's leisure travel and hotel stays. And, there was little money to improve small town hotels with their tiny rooms and communal baths. Two long-time members of the Whitewater Historical Society often mentioned that they spent their wedding night at the Walworth Hotel in 1943 and that its ambience was grim, at best. World War II improved the economy, but materials to improve hotels were scarce and the way people traveled changed even more. The 1930s and 1940s also limited commercial growth in most downtowns due to scarce resources, either from the economic depression or the war. This limited growth meant fewer salesmen and traveling business people.

By the 1950s, when the economy was again booming, retail businesses benefited, but small-town hotels did not. Most were at least 20 years out of date and did not have facilities to cater to the new dominant traveling family of the era: the couple with small children. Motels, usually on the outskirts of town, with plenty of automobile parking and often with swimming pools and nearby restaurants, appealed to these families. Small towns were also not usually tourist attractions for families, who did their traveling to larger cities, state and national parks, and newly built attractions, often sticking close to the newly-constructed interstate highways.

In Whitewater, these trends could be clearly seen. Railroad passenger service to Whitewater ended in 1952, so hotels catering to railroad travelers no longer had a clientele. Most people traveled by automobile, and while Whitewater did not immediately have modern motels, a tourist cabin business located on the western edge of the city was popular with travelers to the area. No one modernized any of the downtown hotels to attract modern travelers, probably because it was felt that there was no

[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Map, 1924, on file in the Archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

market. Rather, hotel owners turned their buildings into rooming houses, taking advantage of the growing student population attending the city's state college. After the demolition of the Cortland House, the Whitewater and the Walworth hotels were the only free-standing hotel buildings in the late 1960s. But, by that time, they were no longer real hotels. Today, the Walworth Hotel is known as the Landmark Building and is used for apartments and a tavern, and the Whitewater Hotel is newly renovated as an apartment building and commercial space.

Statement of Significance

The old Whitewater Hotel building is historically significant at the local level under criterion A, for its contribution to the history of an important commercial activity in Whitewater. Between its construction in 1894 and its general demise as a functioning hotel around 1952, the Whitewater Hotel was an important component in the commercial life of the city. During this period, Whitewater's economy was almost entirely dependent upon commerce and the only area of growth was in agricultural commerce. The Whitewater Hotel had a prime location near businesses catering to agricultural commerce, such as the large Dadmun feed mill and the Wisconsin Dairy Supply. Its location in downtown Whitewater, as well as its location across from the Whitewater Passenger Depot, meant that it was an easy place for traveling salesmen and farmers to lodge while doing business in Whitewater. As such, it was an important building that helped keep Whitewater's commercial economy going during a time when the industrial economy was almost non-existent.

The historical background discusses the history of hotel-building in Whitewater and shows the context within which the Whitewater Hotel was built and operated. Of the number of hotels built in Whitewater, only three resources related to these hotels are still extant. The first is, of course, the Whitewater Hotel. The second is the Walworth Hotel (204 West Main Street). This hotel was Whitewater's principle historic luxury hotel when it was constructed in 1890. It is currently listed as a Whitewater Landmark under the city's landmarks ordinance. It is also potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A because of its long use as a high-quality downtown hotel.

The third "hotel" is the Bowers House (183-187 West Main Street), built to be a prominent downtown hotel in 1880, but soon overshadowed by the Walworth Hotel, built in 1890. It quickly became primarily a commercial building, as mentioned in the historical background. Part of its hotel rooms were converted to fraternal lodge space in the early twentieth century, and in the later twentieth century, the building was given a heavy coat of stucco and most of its windows were enclosed and covered with stucco as well. Because of this alteration, the building is not eligible for the National Register.

The Whitewater Hotel and the Walworth Hotel are both historically significant for their association with important commercial activities in Whitewater, but had somewhat different purposes. The Walworth marketed itself as a "luxury" hotel, while the Whitewater Hotel was more of a "commercial" or "railroad" hotel, largely depending on the nearby passenger station for its clientele. When it was rebuilt in 1894, it was touted for its amenities, but its overall appearance, with pressed metal siding, and very small rooms, suggests a more modest establishment. But, it was equally as important as the Walworth Hotel for its support of Whitewater's commercial economy.

The Whitewater Hotel, in particular, was well-placed to serve a short-term traveling public. Advertising itself as a commercial hotel, it catered to salesmen doing business in the community and using the railroad for transportation, a common activity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. And, Whitewater needed such accommodations to attract commercial businesses. With the large factories closed, only the commercial trade of the community kept the city from becoming dormant.

Note on Integrity
The old Whitewater Hotel was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and underwent a tax-credit certification renovation. It was literally saved from the wrecking ball by a developer who could see the potential for the reuse of this historic building in an area of Whitewater's downtown sorely in need of revitalization. In fact, it was the first successful public-private renovation project in downtown Whitewater, and it led the way for other like renovations and the formation of Whitewater's Main Street program, Downtown Whitewater, Inc. Just northeast of the hotel, most of the commercial buildings have also been renovated, making Whitewater Street the most attractive street in the downtown.

In the process of the renovation, some alterations to the original building had to be made due to its extensive exterior and interior deterioration, and to make it a viable commercial building that could serve the local economy. The renovations significantly raised the exterior integrity of the building, bringing back much of its historic appearance. For example, the developer removed all the inappropriate siding materials, restored original window openings, replicated the original standing seam metal roof, and replicated the original front porch, the most significant detail of the exterior. Existing windows, most of which were broken, damaged, or inappropriately enclosed, were replaced with architectural grade windows. The front entry doors were not extant and did not meet code, so slightly larger, but identical replicas were hand-crafted. The completed exterior looks very much like a photograph of the hotel taken shortly after it was built.

The interior had lost considerable integrity due to a fire, neglect, vandalism, and inappropriate remodeling. The original second floor plan of small rooms with a narrow central hallway could not be restored due to damage, code issues, and the need to adaptively reuse the building. Instead, the interior was converted into apartments, but the original lobby, saloon, and office areas were retained and are now used as a coffee shop and office space. In this area, as much of the original woodwork and pressed metal ceiling panels were restored and reused as possible.

Due to the sensitive restoration, the building retains its appearance as a hotel. On the public elevations, the building has the historic entrances, long front porch, and multiple windows that appear in historic photographs of the hotel. Only in the rear, not highly visible to the public, have some alterations occurred to service the apartments and meet codes. The interior public spaces also still evoke the idea of a hotel. The coffee shop is in the same location as the original lobby and saloon, and an office is still being used as an office. There is no obvious evidence that the building is now used primarily for apartments. Rather, it appears as what it was, a hotel with a combination of commercial and residential spaces that was an important business in Whitewater's historic downtown.

Summary
The old Whitewater Hotel is historically significant under criterion A for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level because it was an important component of Whitewater's historic commercial activity during the period of significance. This period in Whitewater's history was difficult economically, after the close of two large factories. Only the commercial activity of Whitewater's downtown, and the commercial-agricultural activity largely centered near the hotel, kept the city's economy stable. The Whitewater Hotel was a large part of this new economy, catering to travelers doing business in the downtown and to people involved in the agricultural economy nearby. Its location across the street from the Whitewater Passenger Depot gave it a ready-made clientele for people using this form of transportation. For these reasons, it is a significant historic resource in Whitewater.

Bibliography

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of this property is equal to its legal description. The southeasterly 118.8' of Lot 4, Block 14, Original Town Plat, City of Whitewater.

Boundary Justification

This boundary is the legal description of this property and has been its historic boundary since the date of the building's construction.

Whitewater Hotel, Whitewater, Walworth County, Wisconsin.
Photos by C. Cartwright.
Negatives on file at the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

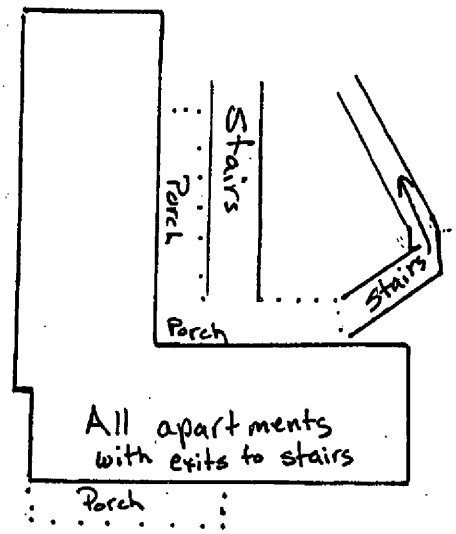
Views:
1 of 12: Site view, prior to renovation, from the southeast. Photo: 2007.
2 of 12: Site view, after renovation, from the southeast. Photo: 2008.
3 of 12: Main or east elevation, prior to renovation, from the northeast. Photo: 2007.
4 of 12: Main or east elevation, after renovation, from the northeast. Photo: 2008.
5 of 12: North elevation, prior to renovation, from the north. Photo: 2007.
6 of 12: Main and south elevation, prior to renovation, from the southeast. Photo: 2007.
7 of 12: Main and south elevation, after renovation, from the southeast. Photo: 2008.
8 of 12: Interior, old tavern, prior to renovation. Photo: 2007.
9 of 12: Interior, coffee house in old tavern area, after renovation. Photo: 2008.
10 of 12: Interior, coffee house in old tavern area, after renovation. Photo: 2008.
11 of 12: Interior, pressed metal ceiling in old tavern area, prior to renovation. Photo: 2007.
12 of 12: Interior view of extant original trim in foyer. Photo: 2008.

Figure #1: **Whitewater Hotel**
Whitewater, Walworth County, Wisconsin

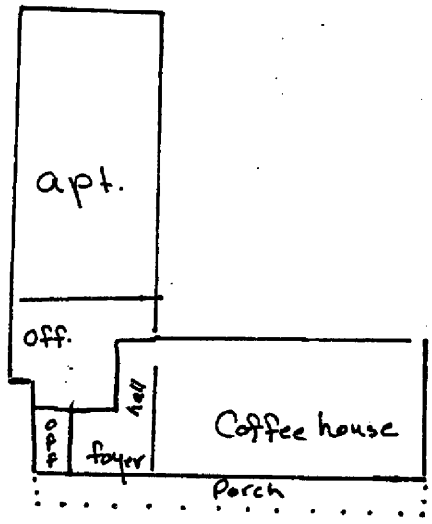
Rough New Floorplan

N →

second floor



first floor

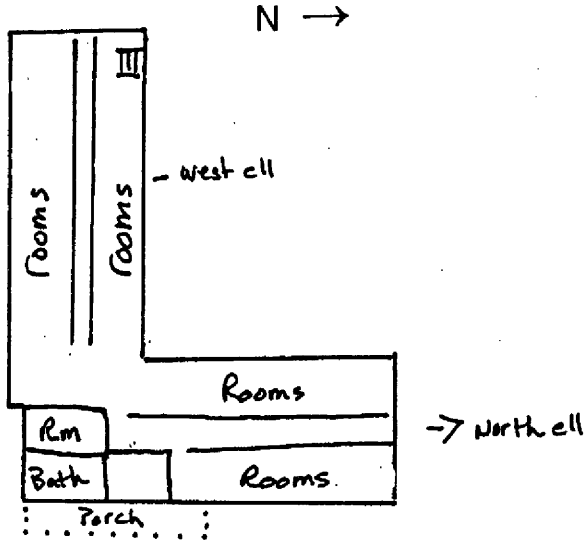


Not to Scale

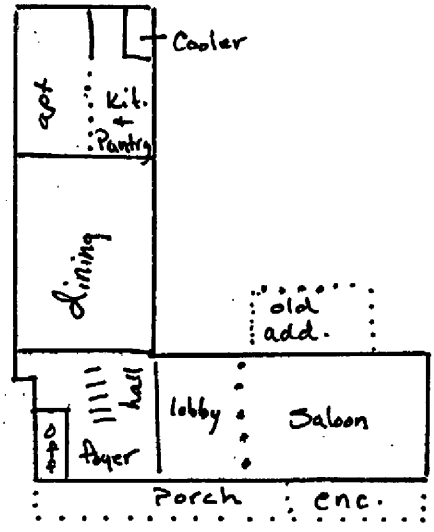
Figure #2: **Whitewater Hotel**
Whitewater, Walworth County, Wisconsin

Rough Original Floorplan

second floor



first floor



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WHITEWATER ST

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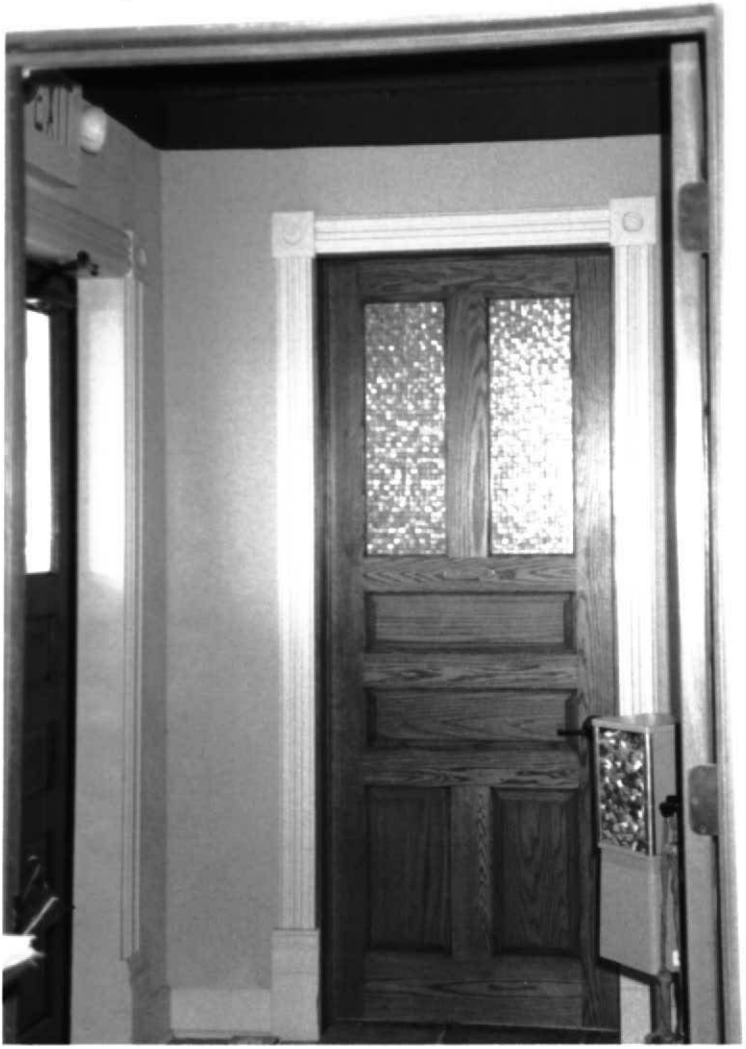
WINTERHAVEN

COFFEE