

City of Waseca Historic Context Study



Prepared for the
Waseca Heritage Preservation Commission
Waseca, Minnesota

Prepared by
Thomas R. Zahn & Associates LLC

Spring 2010

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City of Waseca Historic Context Study

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Spring 2010

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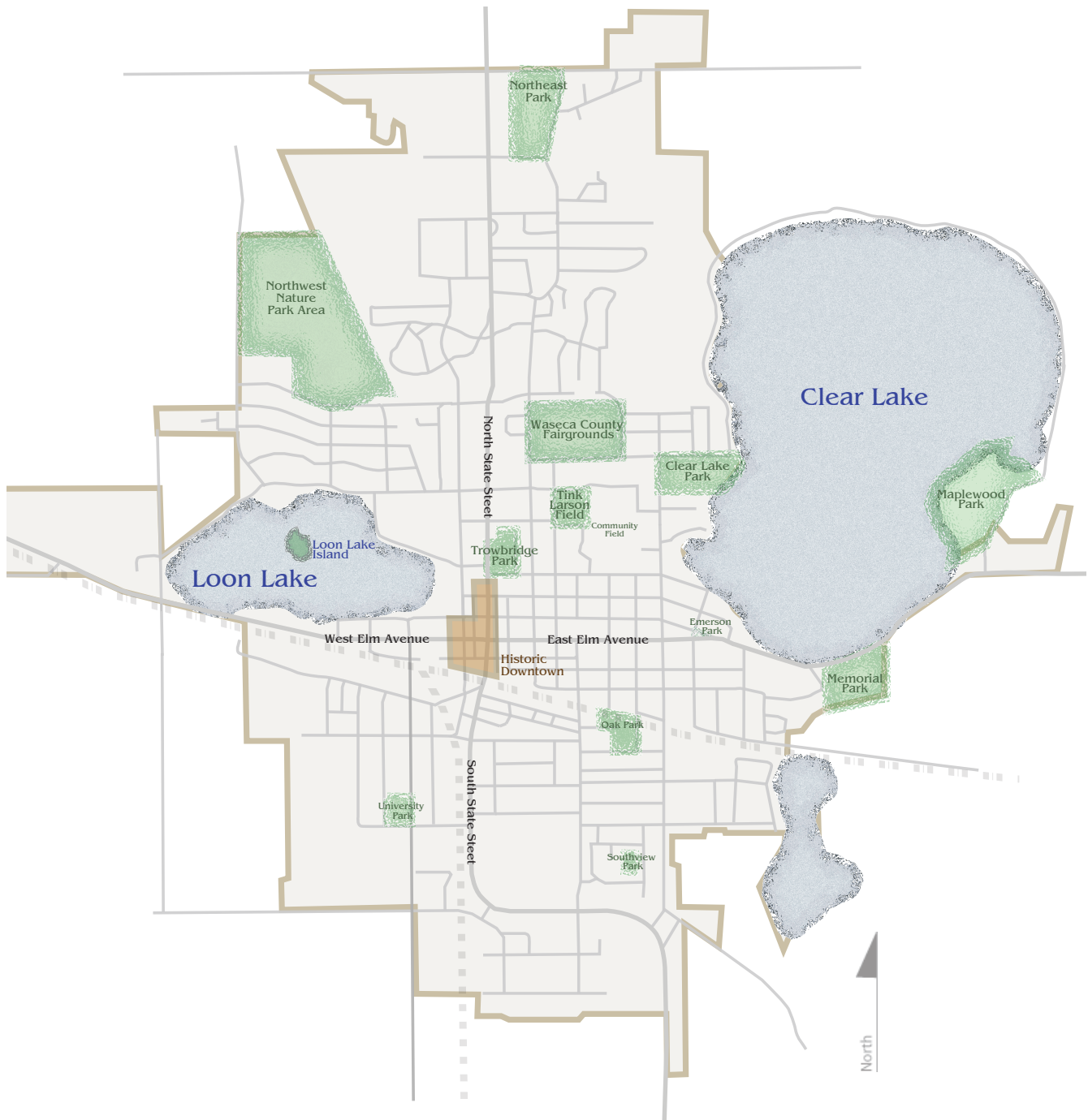
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Waseca Area Map



City of Waseca Historic Context Study

From the town's inception, Waseca's history has been shaped by innovative, visionary civic leaders, whose individual efforts crafted and shaped the community. In many ways, the city's efforts in historic preservation have mirrored that history, with key buildings initially saved by prominent individuals who realized the importance of the sites to the city and its history, and who privately acquired and redeveloped the buildings. Founded in 1938, the Waseca County Historical Society (WCHS) has also been an integral preservation resource, seeking to keep the area's history "alive and accessible." More recently, the city leadership has seen the importance of preservation to Waseca's community development and tourism. In 2009, the city became a Certified Local Government (CLG), and a newly-empowered Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) began work on a number of preservation priorities.

Today, residents and city planners alike are eager to see the community better incorporate historic preservation into everyday life. Homeowners and business people are ready to restore their properties, schoolchildren are excited to learn about their city's history, and the city itself plans to use past development to inform future planning activities.

With this historic context study, the city takes the next big important step of tying preservation to planning, ensuring a vibrant future for the community by building on the resources of its past. Historic contexts will allow the city to evaluate its resources and plan for future development, while continuing to secure the unique character and spirit inherent in Waseca's history.

The Importance of Historic Contexts

The National Park Service, as it evaluates potential National Register properties, is very specific as to the importance of historic contexts. These standards are primarily defined in the following publications:

- *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (Bulletin 16A)
- *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Bulletin 15)
- *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning* (Bulletin 24).

Bulletin 24 in particular defines historic contexts as "broad patterns of historical development in a community or its region, that may be represented by historic resources." Bulletin 15 expands on the importance of historic contexts by remarking that "its core premise is that resources, properties or happenings in history do not occur in a vacuum but rather are parts of larger trends or patterns." Bulletin 16A organizes historic context by "theme, place and time" that "allows applicants to understand a historic property as a product of its time and as an illustration of aspects of heritage."

In general, historic contexts are considered most valuable to communities as a "framework" for evaluating the relative significance of cultural resources such as varied sites, structures, districts, and other elements. They serve as an organizational tool for defining a community's history, a past which otherwise can be extremely lengthy, complex, and unwieldy.

Rather than concentrating on each individual property, historic contexts focus on broad, overarching themes that would provide the city with the means to organize and evaluate its resources and lend perspective on the past. By developing these preservation themes, Waseca can most effectively evaluate current resources, designate new ones, and plan for preservation in future generations. The contexts will allow for a more fair designation of properties, as each site can then be viewed in terms of what is best for the city as a whole, rather than as a single

instance in isolation. These contexts also assist commissioners in making difficult decisions about the preservation of buildings, sites, and structures that best represent Waseca's history, and to target future preservation efforts in the areas where they are most effective.

The contexts identified herein can also be used as a rallying point for educational and community participation initiatives and are integral to future planning for land use, economic development, parks and recreation, transportation, public infrastructure and housing. As more data is organized, the contexts will evolve and change, recommendations will be updated, and the study will become more useful as a long-range planning tool. The expanded contexts, in addition to being a framework for evaluation resources, will be useful in public education programs for neighborhood organizations, government bodies, and local schools. Rather than serving as a static end point that mothballs historic resources, this study is designed to be an exciting jumping-off point for the future of preservation in Waseca.

Objectives and Methodology

As defined above, the main objective in defining historic contexts for Waseca is to provide a framework for the community's history that can assist in making future planning decisions, including, though not limited to:

- individual, district, and multiple-property nominations to the National Register of Historic Places
- state and national tax credits
- a local designation process
- a full building survey
- commercial and residential design guidelines
- historic tourism initiatives
- educational outreach

The study process began by meeting with Waseca's Heritage Preservation Commission to identify prominent local resources, sites, and priorities. Throughout this process, the commissioners' knowledge and expertise has been crucial in creating a set of contexts that reflect Waseca's unique character and history.

We then consulted with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding federal guidelines and state contexts. We also consulted with the statewide preservation non-profit, the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota.

The consultants proceeded to collect and review information and history on the city, ranging from primary sources such as city records, Sanford Fire Insurance maps, historical photo databases, city directories, and the Waseca County Historical Society's collection, as well as secondary sources including previous studies and reports and several early histories of the area. Particularly valuable in this research were three already compiled histories: *Child's History of Waseca County*, the *History of Steele and Waseca Counties*, and *The Streets are Wider Now*. We also visited the Minnesota History Center libraries, and the files at the State Historic Preservation Office.

We compiled a comprehensive map of the city and historic areas, based on several sources. Particularly informative to the process were the maps provided to us by the city offices. Based on these maps, we conducted extensive fieldwork, photographing literally hundreds of properties and features. This fieldwork gave us a first-hand understanding of Waseca and its varied elements — the siting of the city between the lakes, the various neighborhoods, the importance of the downtown core along State Street, and the relationship of mills and industry to the town and railroad.

Following this research and in consultation with the Heritage Preservation Commission, we identified eight contexts that most clearly demonstrated Waseca's history. Though they touch briefly on the area's prehistory, they really start with the city's founding in 1867; they then investigate its rise to prominence during the latter

part of the 1800s and into the early 20th century, and its continued development since. Though all resources are addressed, particular attention is paid to the city's residences and historic downtown.

These contexts are arranged as follows:

Number 1 – “Early History” considers the Native American history of the site, as well as pre-township settlement (mainly agricultural). It focuses mainly, however, on the initial establishment and platting of the town.

Number 2 - “The Railroad.” This context addresses the main reason for Waseca's prominence — the railroad. It considers not only the physical resources of the railroad (depots, storage buildings, tracks, etc.), but also the importance of the city's two railroad lines with regards to its planning and development.

Number 3 - “Agriculture” continues exploring the relationship between the area's rich farmlands and the railroad, detailing Waseca's agriculture-related businesses.

Number 4 – “Commerce and Industry” covers the wide range of businesses, retail, and industries, prevalent in the town, from the importance of the city as the county seat, to the plethora of retail establishments, to services from attorneys to undertakers. State Street commerce is especially important in this section.

Number 5 – “Civic Life and Leadership” looks at the development of Waseca, from its initial platting to current day city services. This section also discusses some of the town's leaders, such as Ira Trowbridge, W.G. Ward, J.H. Jenkins, and Philo Bailey.

Number 6 – “Social and Cultural” is a context focusing on less tangible assets of the town's history — its interpersonal relationships. From arts and culture to religion, clubs and societies to parks and gathering spots, this is an important part of Waseca's past and present livability.

Number 7 – “Tourism and Recreation” especially acknowledges the location of Waseca on the shores of both Clear Lake and Loon Lake. Particularly at the turn of the century, this brought the town visitors and tourism revenue, as well as recreational opportunities for its residents.

Number 8 – “Residential” context outlines the kinds of housing styles found in Waseca, including defining architectural elements and providing visual examples. This section is one of the most varied, looking at everything from Waseca's grand mansions to its cottages.

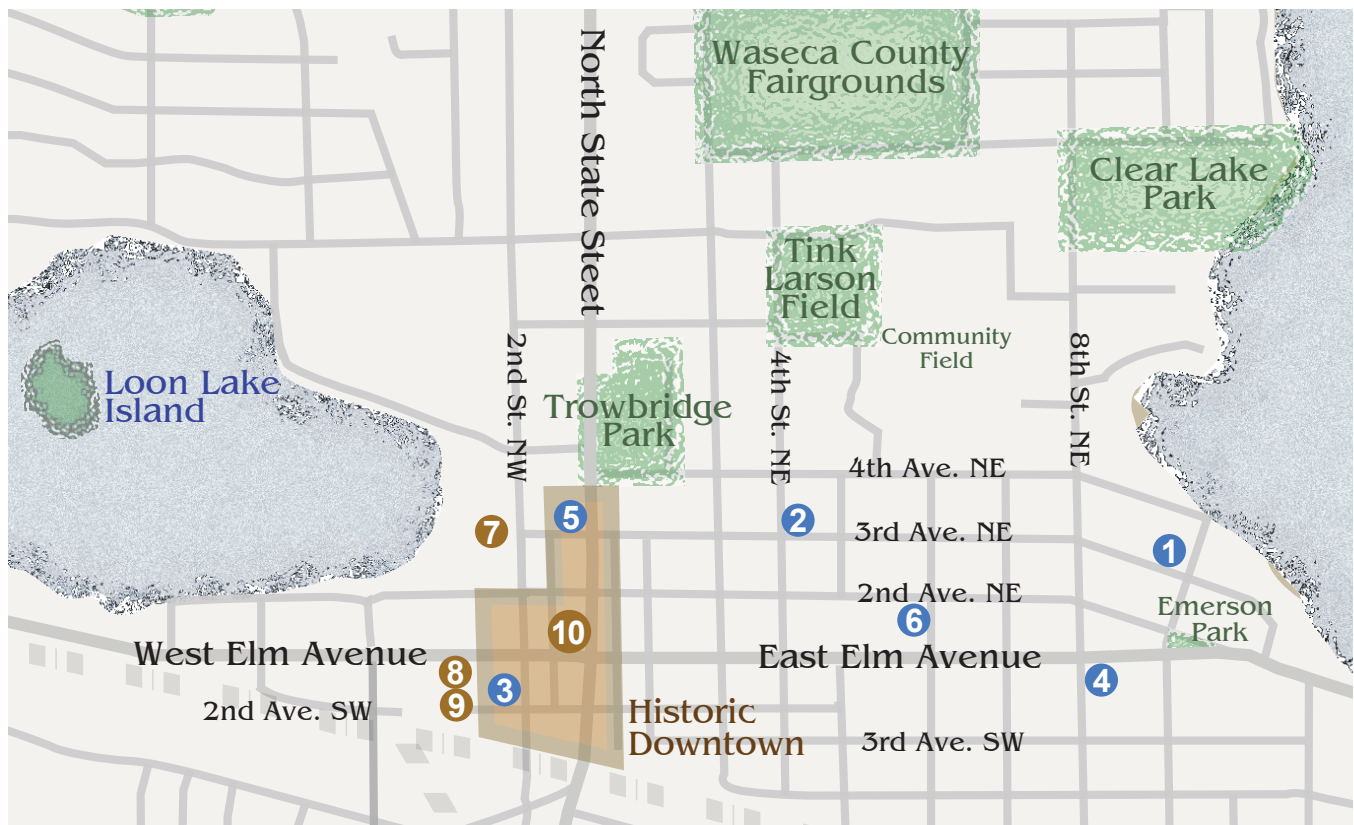
Each context is arranged around a short narrative, which is not designed to be a full history, but rather to serve as a brief introduction to the theme. Each section also includes both historic and modern photographs; some also include maps as appropriate. In many cases, some time is spent on descriptions of the past and on lost resources; these narratives are designed to fill in information that would be missing were only current resources to be considered, and to demonstrate the importance of remaining properties. The next component is a fairly comprehensive list of typical property types associated with the context; this section also identifies some specific Waseca sites as practical. Recommendations for future actions round out the individual sections.

Finally, all of the contexts are consciously designed to be modified through time. The Waseca Heritage Preservation Commission is extremely active and involved, and perhaps more than any community with which we have worked, truly understands the relationship of preservation to future development. We have kept these strengths in mind in designing the contexts to be open and flexible, and anticipate that the next steps would be for the HPC to develop a number of new programs and outreach, ranging from a comprehensive site survey to public education processes.

Current National Register Listed Sites and Eligible Sites

Waseca has several structures on the National Register of Historic Places. It appears that the city was one of the last in the state to be intensively surveyed by the State Historic Preservation Office in the early 1980s, before that program was discontinued due to funding cuts. These surveys led to several successful National Register nominations, as well as several more Register-eligible sites.

All but one of Waseca's National Register listings were completed in 1982 by Peggy Korsmo-Kennon and Jan Brown of the Waseca County Historical Society, following up upon the 1981 SHPO survey.



The following is a listing of current properties on the Register (date added is in parentheses following the building name):

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1 John W. Aughenbaugh House/Masonic Temple (1982) | 831 3rd Avenue NE |
| 2 Philo C. Bailey House (1994) | 401 2nd Avenue NE |
| 3 W.J.Armstrong Company Wholesale Grocers (1982) | 202 2nd Street SW |
| 4 Roscoe P. Ward House (1982) | 804 East Elm Avenue |
| 5 Waseca County Courthouse (1982) | 307 North State Street |
| 6 William R. Wolf House (1982) | 522 2nd Avenue NE |

In addition, there are several sites currently considered Register-eligible:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 7 EACO Mill (owner opposed) | 212 3rd Avenue NW |
| 8 Minneapolis and St. Louis Depot | 231 West Elm Avenue |
| 9 Railroad storage structure/freight depot | located behind the depot |
| 10 Commercial historic district | along State Street |

Related State Contexts

The Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office has identified three major state historic contexts that apply to Waseca:

Broad Statewide Contexts:

“Indian Communities and Reservations, 1837-1934”

“Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940”

“Minnesota’s Tourism and Recreation, 1870-1945”



Early 20th century photograph looking northwest showing the W.J. Armstrong Co. Warehouse, Sacred Heart Church to the upper left, and Loon Lake and the island behind.

Brief History of Waseca

Unlike many of the nearby settlements along the Minnesota River Valley, landlocked Waseca was not an early settlement priority. Occasionally occupied by peripatetic Santee Dakota Native Americans, the land was not settled by Anglo-American homesteaders until several years after the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux opened up the area. Asa and Eliza Sutlief filed the first claim in the county in 1854. Soon after, the area became known for its rich farmland and was densely settled, with several small townships established, including Wilton, the county seat.

The entire nature of the community changed, however, in 1867 when the Winona & St. Peter Railroad was mapped through Waseca. Seeing the opportunity, entrepreneur Ira Trowbridge purchased the townsite and platted the land, and the city of Waseca sprung up almost overnight. Within a few years, Waseca had become the county seat and the dominant community in the area.

A second railroad line in the late 1870s added to the prosperity, and Waseca became an agricultural and commodities center, especially focused on wheat. This, in turn, resulted in thriving retail and service establishments, especially along 2nd Street (now State Street), which was commonly referred to as “Main Street.” Waseca experienced a business boom that lasted until the turn of the century. At this time many of the town’s civic leaders also built grand homes, demonstrating their status and community position, especially along Elm Avenue and in the northeast quadrant of the city.

Even after the turn of the century, Waseca’s downtown thrived, and many businesses succeeded, including retail such as Herter’s and Leuthold Brothers and industry including the EACO Mill, General Foods (now Bird’s Eye), E.F. Johnson, and Brown Printing. The area also became a popular tourist destination; there were many recreational facilities, restaurants, clubs, and lodging options on Clear Lake and even a few on smaller Loon Lake. Local residents also enjoyed the extensive park system and the numerous social activities, including clubs and associations, church groups, and educational events.



EACO Mill on Loon Lake ca. 1914

The Southern Research and Outreach Center was an important factor in the town for many years, enhancing local educational opportunities. It still operates some limited programming. More recently, the South Industrial Park development has been a successful program of the Waseca Economic Development Authority.

Waseca lost some historic buildings, especially on the periphery of the downtown core, in the 1970s and 1980s, but escaped the kind of wholesale “urban renewal” that many Minnesota towns experienced. It has also experienced several large fires. The housing stock has also generally held its integrity, even after the disastrous 1967 tornado, which killed five and caused almost a million dollars in damage. Individual citizens and the HPC have worked hard to protect and designate many important historic resources, including State Street businesses, important residences, parks and recreational areas (including the bandstand), industrial and commercial buildings such as the Armstrong Grocers, and railroad structures such as the depot.

Waseca has always been a city of entrepreneurs, of innovative thinkers determined to make their community succeed and prosper. That current spirit holds true today, and Waseca’s careful determination to plan for its future by honoring its past is an important lynchpin in the future development of the city.

Context 1 – Early History

Time span – 1683 to 1860

Unlike towns in the Minnesota River Valley, which drew early residents arriving by steamboat, landlocked Waseca was not settled until several years after the 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux. Indeed, despite the rich prairie farmland, it might not have been settled at all without the advent of the railroad lines, and without visionary land speculators who took a risk on the town.

Native American Settlement

The Santee branch of the Mdewakanton Sioux (Dakota) tribe are known to have passed through and camped on the Waseca prairie land, but it does not appear to have been as consistently used as land along the river valley. Nevertheless, the lakes likely provided good camp areas, and archeological work at nearby Watkins Lake has evidenced some potential burial mounds and some relics.

In 1856 the Winnebago tribe, originally from south-central Wisconsin and then moved to a reservation near Long Prairie, MN, were relocated by their request to Waseca and Blue Earth counties, with the reservation encompassing part of what is now within the City of Waseca boundaries.

Though nearby communities, including Mankato, New Ulm, and Fort Ridgely, were attacked during the Dakota Conflict of 1862 (also known as the “Indian Uprising”), Waseca was not settled enough to be a target. The Winnebago were not one of the tribes to participate in the Conflict; however, following the situation tensions still ran high, and the reservation was dissolved and the Winnebago relocated in 1863.

Early Anglo-European Settlement

Waseca County was first settled in 1854, when Asa and Eliza Sutlief claimed land near what would become Wilton Township. In 1856, land speculators planned a site in Woodville Township which they initially called “Waseca” after a Dakota word meaning “rich in provisions,” but abandoned the claim soon afterwards.

The area began to be known for fertile soil, timber resources, and its lakes. Settlers, mainly Yankees, Scandinavians, Irish, and Germans, began to move inland from the river towns. Waseca County, encompassing Woodville, Empire, St. Mary, Janesville, Blooming Grove, and the bustling town of Wilton was created in 1857, and Wilton became the county seat. By the time the Homestead Act of 1862 offered free land to Minnesota citizens, the area had already become well populated.

Waseca itself was pre-cursed by the Clear Lake Settlement, a small community with a church, a school, and a general store situated at the south edge of Clear Lake, and by Clear Lake City, a small community to the south of what is now downtown Waseca. In general, however, the area remained rural and agricultural.

This was all to change, however, in 1867 when the Winona & St. Peter Railroad announced plans to run a railroad line through the area, a few miles west of Wilton. The railroad was designed to connect the Mississippi to the Minnesota Rivers, allowing crops to move to these cities and then be transported up the rivers to Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

Ira Trowbridge, who had come to Wilton from Illinois to investigate the railroad surveying, met chief railroad engineer W.G. Ward and surveyor J.H. Jenkins. Trowbridge convinced the railroad men that the ideal layout

for the railroad ran just south of Clear Lake and Loon Lake. He then purchased land in Sections 17 and 18 of Woodville Township, starting with Jacob Myer's farm sited just north of the proposed tracks, and the city of Waseca was born. The alliance between the men was further cemented when both men married Trowbridge's daughters — W.G Ward to Ella Trowbridge and J.H. Jenkins to Augusta Trowbridge, in a double wedding on December 9, 1867.

Jenkins platted the townsite and it rose quickly and simultaneously with the railroad tracks, with 102 homes, stores and other buildings constructed by the end of December, 1867. At that point the post office also relocated to Waseca, from its original Woodville site. Clear Lake City attempted to equal that growth, but was quickly absorbed into the City of Waseca. Five more additions to the city were made by 1873, and the city continued to grow.

A rivalry soon developed between Wilton and Waseca, with the newer and more populous city seeking to become the county seat. Wilton, as well as several other towns in Waseca County that were bypassed by the railroad, was declining in population. In 1869, a fire destroyed the Wilton courthouse, and the year after Waseca received permission to issue courthouse bonds. Nearby Janesville also entered the fray, and in a highly-contested election held November 8, 1870, Waseca was named the county seat by a 217-vote majority. County records were transferred immediately, legendarily by the light of the moon, through the mud, via a broken window in the Wilton courthouse, that very same night.

In 1877, a second railroad line — the Minneapolis & St. Louis — was added through Waseca, connecting directly to Minneapolis. This allowed the town to expand its commodities business, and it grew even more rapidly. Waseca was officially named a city in 1881. Meanwhile, most of the earlier Waseca County communities without railroad access, most notably Wilton, dissolved. Other towns, such as Janesville, actually moved to more advantageous locations. Waseca, the town created solely from one man's vision for the area rather than any natural advantages, survived as the dominant economic force of the area.

Related State Contexts

Waseca's early history is incorporated within two of the larger, statewide contexts as determined by the State Historic Preservation office:

- "Indian Communities and Reservations, 1837-1934"
- "Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940"

Property Types

Note: In general, property types listed within these contexts will often identify specific Waseca examples as practical. Unfortunately, relatively few of these examples are available for the Early History context. The following list represents cultural resources that are likely present in the area, though many may not currently be evident, or may be so altered as to have lost most, if not all, of their integrity.

Pre-European sites

Gravesites/mounds

Habitation sites

Ceremonial and religious sites

Treaty and meeting sites

Reservation sites

Winnebago reservation

- Other archeological sites
- Prominent natural features
- Early settlement
 - Camp sites
- House/cabin/farmstead sites and original commercial sites
 - Myers farmsite
 - Any remaining evidence of the original 102 buildings
- Early additions to Waseca
 - Clear Lake City site
 - Clear Lake Settlement site
- First Addition (1867)
 - Barney's Addition (1867)
 - Woods' Lakeside Addition (1868)
 - Bennett's Addition (1872)
 - McNamara's Addition (1873)
- Plat lines
- Civic sites
 - Original post office site
 - Original courthouse site
- Railroad tracks and sites
 - (see separate context)
- Recognition of original Waseca County townsites

Context Recommendations

- *The Associates have found that early Native American resources are often overlooked, often due to the scarcity and lack of integrity of the remaining resources. Given this, Waseca should pay special attention to archeological investigations of Native American sites. Ideally, a full archeological survey should be completed. Minimally, investigation should be required of any new development, in an effort to discover and inventory any early archeological resources. Investigating these sites may set the tone for other lost Waseca resources.*
- *Waseca's origins are mainly due to the vision of Trowbridge, Ward, and Jenkins. This should be commemorated and interpreted, perhaps through signage in Trowbridge Park.*
- *Waseca also owes its existence to the railroads; recommendations for interpreting this context are included later in the study.*
- *Although outside the boundaries of the City of Waseca, the decline of local competitors such as Wilton is a compelling part of Waseca's history. The Waseca County Historical Society refers to these lost communities as "memory towns," and it may be informative to chart a driving tour or otherwise commemorate these early settlements.*

Context 2—The Railroad

Time span – 1867–1960s

“The history of the time might almost be written in terms of railways.”

A.M. Schlesinger

Although Minnesota’s earliest transportation network was its waterways — the plentiful and interconnected lakes, streams, and rivers — it was the coming of the railroad that revolutionized transportation throughout the state. Not only could passengers, including new settlers, travel relatively quickly and easily, but — more to the point — commodities could easily be brought to market. In southern Minnesota especially, crops expanded and diversified as they could easily be transported to Minneapolis mills and to other major metropolitan areas, and even to nearby states such as South Dakota. The railroads also played a key role in encouraging settlement, and the population of the state grew as the miles of railroad track increased. Railroads and farms developed a vital and interconnected relationship, as highlighted in the statewide context “Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940.”

Perhaps nowhere was this relationship more important than in Waseca. The town owes its very existence to the railroad; it simply would not have been platted had the Winona & St. Peter line not been laid. Nearby towns that pre-dated the railroad, such as Wilton, literally disappeared without transportation access.

Thus, the history of Waseca and the presence of the railroad go hand in hand; the railroad is a crucial factor in evaluating not only the city’s transportation history, but the commercial, industrial, and agricultural development of the town as a whole.

The Winona & St. Peter Line and the Minneapolis & St. Louis Line

The Winona & St. Peter (W&StP) was a federal land grant line, created at the end of the Civil War to assist in developing and settling the area west of the Mississippi. These grants, which peaked in the mid 1800s, granted public land to the railroads, in exchange for the railroads privately providing infrastructure and laying the tracks. Generally the land was granted in alternating sections, with one plat going to the railroad and the next retained by the government, in a checkerboard pattern. The railroad companies could sell the lots they did not use to pay for labor and materials. As the land increased in value, both the railroad companies and the government profited.

In Waseca, the oral history is that, as the land was surveyed, Ira Trowbridge was extremely influential in convincing railroad executives W.G. Ward and J.H. Jenkins that the area just south of Loon Lake and Clear Lake was the perfect location for the tracks. Trowbridge then bought up the land surrounding the site, convincing Jenkins to plat the town and quickly erecting over 100 buildings over the course of the summer.

The W&StP itself was equally responsible for the rapid development of the town. As well as laying the tracks, the railroad built a depot, a round house, a grain elevator, and a brick water house near Loon Lake. Railroad workers populated the town, soon followed by stores and service industries catering to both the railroad employees and the farmers bringing in goods. In any case, growth was rapid, and by early December of 1867, the Waseca News reported that there were:

11 mercantile establishments, 8 liquor stores (God save the mark), 4 hotels, 2 livery stables, 2 cabinet and furniture shops and stores, 2 harness shops, several carpenter and blacksmith shops, 2 meat markets, and a printing office.

The first harvest season after opening, the W&StP was hauling over 10,000 bushels of wheat a week, plus other produce and livestock. The gamble on an advantageous relationship between the areas rich farms and eager markets had obviously paid off, and quickly.

Soon after the Waseca section of the line was built, the Winona & St. Peter Line was acquired by the Chicago & North Western (C&NW) Line, so has been known by that name for most of Waseca's history.

James Child led an effort to secure another \$30,000 in railroad bonds to add more service to the town. His efforts paid off, and in 1877, The Minneapolis & St. Louis Line (M&StL) added a north-south connection with direct access to Minneapolis. The line had been formed in 1870 with the express purpose of accessing the agricultural areas to the south of the Twin Cities, and eventually extended through Iowa and all the way to Peoria, Illinois. The line was especially popular for commodities because it bypassed Chicago and thus encountered less traffic and delay. The M&StL was also acquired by the Chicago & North Western line, but not until 1960; passenger rail service for Waseca ended soon after.

In 1880, one hundred of Waseca's business leaders petitioned the city to purchase 20 acres of W.G. Ward's central land and cede it to the railroad for improvements. The C&NW (formerly the W&StP) line was thus able to spend over \$100,000 on new construction in 1881. The largest building was a 36,400 square foot new roundhouse and turntable that could handle twenty locomotives. Repair shop facilities included five forges, a steam boiler, offices, and a frost-proof oil storage tank. They also added a wooden sand house and a coal shed that could handle 2,500 tons of coal. Nearby iron works and lumberyards expanded to meet the railroads' needs, and more hotels and restaurants opened to host travelers and workers.

At the peak, as many as 165 men worked twenty-four hour a day shifts at the roundhouse, adding a \$10,000+ monthly direct payroll to the city. Almost all of them had families and homes in town, adding to the economic impact.

Although the commodity-freight traffic got most of the attention, there was also excellent passenger service. By 1900, eight freight trains and twelve passenger trains arrived daily. This increased exponentially during Chautauqua season, when the railroads added several passenger trains a day in order to meet the demand. They also ran a small spur directly to Clear Lake, with twenty trips daily during the season. The Armstrong Company also had its own spur for goods, as did Johnston's ice warehouse.

Railroad Controversy

Although Wasecans understood the importance of the railways to the existence of their town, there was certainly some controversy about their practices. Both the conduct of the railroad corporations in general, and the property tax exemption of the lands held by the W&StP, were under contention. Legislators specifically challenged passenger fares and commodity rates, as well as their lobbying power. However, perhaps since Ward and Jenkins continued to hold key city positions (including as mayor), the relationship between the railroad and the City of Waseca was perhaps better than in other similar municipalities.

Railroad-Related Buildings and Resources

Although the railroads built several buildings in Waseca, as well as the tracks, trestles, and other infrastructure, many of those resources are now gone.

A notable exception is the restored depot, located at 231 West Elm Avenue. This small, yellow Chaska brick building was a passenger depot built by the Minneapolis & St. Louis Lines. The depot, constructed in 1913, replaced earlier depots that had burned. It served passengers until 1959.

The recent renovation of the depot is a true historic preservation success story. The building, one of only two remaining passenger depots in all of Waseca County, was threatened with demolition after Depot Liquor closed in 2000. The Waseca City Council purchased the building, and the Waseca Minneapolis & St. Louis Depot Society



Minneapolis & St. Louis Depot

was formed in order to restore the building, using an innovative mix of public and private funding and over 150 hours of volunteer sweat equity. Society members gutted the interior alterations and un-blocked the bricked up windows, with funding from the City of Waseca, the Minnesota Historical Society, and private institutions. The current leaseholders finished the restoration work and run a specialty retail store in the building, called "Zinnia's."

A freight depot, also built in 1913 and of similar proportions to the passenger depot, had been located on the edge of town. Local preservationist Gene Miller acquired the building and moved it to its current site

behind Zinnia's, putting a foundation under it and securely mothballing it. The building retains strong integrity and is in good condition. Restoration is planned to begin soon.

Both depots have been surveyed by the SHPO office and are deemed National Register-eligible.

A second passenger depot, also used by the Chicago and North Western, stands just a few blocks away on South State Street. This depot predates the other surviving passenger depot by one year. Though un-restored, it maintains strong integrity and should be a preservation priority.

These depots are, indeed, the only surviving railroad depots within Waseca County.

However, several structures that clearly demonstrated the everyday workings of the railroad no longer exist. The original round house built in 1867 was replaced with a larger version in 1881 as described above, which was located between West Elm and 5th Avenue SW. That building, however, burned in 1953. The original grain elevator and water house are gone, as well as any interim buildings (storage buildings, repair shops, and the like). Thus, the depot and storage building are the last remnants of the railroad in Waseca.



Chicago & North Western Depot in 1939

The tracks and trestles still exist, however, as do railroad-related buildings such as the mill, W.J. Armstrong Grocers, and hotels and businesses (see the section on Commerce and Industry for more). In addition, the railroad had some permanent effects on the geography of the town, such as influencing neighborhood development and raising the water level of Loon Lake when the trestles were replaced in 1910.

The Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad Corporation (DM&E, which is the company that acquired the C&NW) still transports commodities through Waseca, carrying 300,000 carloads annually through the upper Midwest.

Property Types

Tracks
Trestles
Depots (freight and passenger)
 M&StL
 C&NW
 freight
Storage buildings
Signal buildings
Bridges and crossings
Repair shops
Roundhouses and section houses
Railroad cars
Telegraph
Warehouses
Support buildings (repair facilities, storage sheds, etc.)
Distribution facilities
Related Properties
 Mills
 EACO
 Warehouses and storage buildings
 Armstrong-Miller building
 Hotels and other service industries
 Stores and other commercial industries



Waseca's freight depot

Context Recommendations

- Only a few railroad resources remain, such as the depot and some railroad warehouse, as well as gradings, trestles, etc.. The highest importance should be placed on surveying, cataloging, preserving and interpreting these remaining resources. The HPC should investigate placing some kind of interpretive exhibit at the depot, since it is the most evocative remaining resource.
- Waseca should be surveyed for any remaining railroad resources or remnants (foundations, moved buildings, etc.). Most of these would likely be located near the current depot; however often railroad storage buildings, which were considered quite valuable because they were well-built and made of good materials, were moved some distance to nearby farms or other properties. Any of these items would be very valuable in interpreting the importance of the railroad in Waseca.
- The HPC should prioritize the renovation of the warehouse storage building, on continuing to preserve the M&StL depot, and on the preservation and protection of the C&NW depot. All three should be placed on the National Register, perhaps as a multiple-property nomination.
- Many of Waseca's historic landmarks, especially the Armstrong-Miller building and the EACO Mill, gain their historic context from the association with the railroad. The Armstrong-Miller's National Register nomination cites it as "the best preserved building and unaltered business representing an important historical link to the railroad and Waseca's development." The importance of the railroad should be cited in interpreting these sites.

Context 3 – Agriculture

Time span – 1867 to present

Few places in the world are blessed with the combination of rich soil, water, and climate for growing crops as Waseca County...It was inevitable that Waseca's growth and prosperity should be dependent on the productivity of the soil.

Joseph Gabiou, former Soil District Conservationist

Even before the railroad, "immigration trains" (wagon trains full of settlers) brought homesteaders to Waseca County. The richness of Waseca's land was well-broadcast, and by the early 1860s the county was already fairly well-settled, especially for an area that could only be accessed overland. Most of the early farmers of the area were re-locating from the eastern United States, usually Yankees or first generation Germans and Scandinavians; as the century progressed many emigrated directly from Europe. They acquired land through government programs offering homestead properties of 160 acres or less as outright land grants or at low rates of less than \$1 / acre.

Most farms began on a subsistence basis, as the homesteaders removed the trees on the plot and began creating fields on the prairie. Early crops were mainly vegetables, including potatoes, onions, cabbage, carrots, and corn. Each farm maintained some livestock, usually pigs, chickens, and a cow; early properties within Waseca proper also kept livestock, and there was much debate as to how this should be regulated within city limits.

As the farms became more established, they were able to produce cash crops, starting with eggs, butter, and wheat. Waseca's first wheat crop was recorded as early as 1859, but it was difficult to market with limited transportation access.

The W&StP Railroad was keenly aware of this, understanding that it could succeed by bringing in residents and supplies at the same time that it exported crops and other commodities. Indeed, the line was based on this issue, and the effect was immediate. The railroad established Waseca as a marketplace, and of the original 102 buildings in town, several were farm-related businesses and services, including implement dealers, liverys, and blacksmiths.



Postcard advertising Cottage Cereals from the Waseca Milling Company

The effect of the railroad transportation network on the farms was immediate. A speaker at the opening of the M&StL line in 1877 recounted "from 50,000 acres she [Waseca] has produced over 1,000,000 bushels of wheat. She boasts of over 3,000 work horses, 1,300 beef and working cattle, 4,000 milk cows: 1,300 farm families: 69,000 acres of plowed land and numerous cultivated groves containing 265,000 forest trees..." By the mid 1880s crops had diversified to include wheat, oats, corn, barley, rye, potatoes, beans, hay, alfalfa, grapes, apples, sugar cane, and flax, timothy and clover seed. Dairies and creameries produced butter and cream as well as milk. By the end of the century, farmers had begun to move away from wheat and to oats and corn, and

eventually soybeans, all crops better suited to the soil and climate conditions. Area farms still thrive today.

Although most of these farmsteads are outside of the boundaries of the City of Waseca, they are crucial to its development. In other cases, former farms are now within the city limits. The preservation of both should be encouraged, perhaps in collaboration with the Waseca County Historical society.

Waseca's Agricultural Businesses

As discussed above, the close relationship between city and countryside led to a thriving agricultural industry in Waseca.

Creameries

With dairy as a crucial commodity, Waseca's creameries were important businesses, selling milk, cream, butter, cheese, ice cream, and related products. There were three major original creameries in the city: the Waseca County Cooperative Creamery, the Waseca County Creamery, and Draheim's Dairy; they were later joined by Swift and Company, who added cream to their hatchery business. They delivered to homes and groceries, and also handled rail distribution, cooled by Clear Lake ice.

The Waseca County Cooperative was especially important, established in 1896 by farmers and businessmen who pledged 700 dairy cows to provide milk. The city considered it crucial to the area's agricultural success, and donated a building at 2nd Street and 2nd Avenue NW to the venture. It was known nationally for its "Luella" brand butter.

These creameries initially benefited by mechanization, first by cream separators in the 1870s/80s, and again in the 1920s when milking machines dramatically increased farm production. The Waseca County Cooperative Creamery installed a revolutionary new buttermilk-drying machine, one of the first in the nation, in 1923.

However, the Rural Electrification Act (REA) passed by the federal government in 1935, inadvertently caused the decline of creameries by allowing farmers to cool and process milk on-site. Rural Waseca was electrified in 1937, when the Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric began to bring electrical power to farms throughout the county. By the 1960s, almost all of the nineteen creameries in Waseca County had closed down.

Poultry

A similar commodity to milk, eggs were also originally produced on local farms and sold through local distributors. By 1900, there were two hatcheries in town, the Waseca Hatchery and Priebe and Company (which became Swift and Company in 1919). By 1935, Swift's hatchery had a capacity of 30,000. This company also closed in the mid 1960s.

Breweries

Waseca had a number of breweries from the 1880s to the early 1900s. The two main breweries were the Waseca Brewing Company off of Clear Lake, and the Engesser and Gund Brewery closer to the mill, but breweries were also operated by Ginsberg and Brothers, Anthony Guyer, Herman Wenner, Robert Reichel, Adam and Ringer, Simon Craft, and J. Rawsdale. As wheat production declined, these breweries eventually closed, and at least one brewmaster's house was moved and stands today. The hill off of the canal between Clear Lake and Loon Lake was referred to as "Brewery Hill," with "Brewery Bay" below. Some saloons also had their own on-site brewing facilities.

Stockyards

As livestock shipping on the railways increased, Waseca needed holding facilities. A stockyard was created off the railroad spur, next to the current Birds Eye plant.

As trucking overtook the trains for distribution, the stockyards were moved to the outskirts of town, and expanded in size. The largest of these, Olson's stockyard, was a buying station for Hormel and Wilson.

Ice

W.C. Johnson and Malecha Sheeman began a business harvesting ice off of Clear Lake in 1894. The ice was cut from the lake and stored in long sheds, and then used mostly for cooling supplies in railroad cars as they were shipped out of town. Although Johnston's was the major business, smaller businesses also cut ice for use in the city's restaurants; this was limited after a 1932 city regulation required a permit for ice cutting.

The Waseca County Historical Society still holds an annual Ice Harvest event that demonstrates and teaches about ice cutting.

Related Businesses

Waseca's fertile soil could also be wet, and over half the fields needed to be drained in order to increase growth. Early drainage outlets were replaced by concrete drainage tiles. The Waseca Concrete Company was the largest producer in the city, starting in 1947. As farmers became reliant on the tiles in order to increase production, untilled lands were converted into horse and cow pasture.

Priebe Implement Company was founded by Edward Priebe and John McLoone II in 1904. They first sold Deering-McCormick machinery, adding Rambler automobiles a few years later and John Deere products in 1923. Ag-Power now runs the business located on Highway 13 south.

Canning and Frozen Foods

Waseca farmers diversified their crops and went back to their vegetable-growing origins in 1929, when the Fairmont Canning Company partnered with the City of Waseca to open the Waseca Canning Company. The plant, which originally contracted with local farmers for sweet corn and green peas, expanded in 1934 to canning meat as part of a government program to reduce excess livestock. In 1942, when Fairmont took over exclusive operation the plant, it added freezing equipment under a co-packing contract for Birds Eye. Production increased to include a wide range of vegetables, including carrots, squash, lima beans, potatoes, and sweet potatoes.

World War II saw an enormous increase in the plant's operations, which processed C-rations for the troops. However, as most young men were serving in the military, there was a shortage of labor, and youth as young as 16 were allowed to work while area housewives were encouraged to work "even if they can work only two or three hours a day. Those few hours may be enough to give a factory worker rest that will permit him returning to his shift." By June of 1943, the labor situation was described as "critical" and the factory began arrangements with the Farm Security Administration to bring in foreign workers.

The first such group of workers to arrive were one-hundred-twenty-three Jamaicans, starting in summer 1943. The men were housed in barracks-style units in southern Waseca (between what is now the prison and Calvary Cemetery on Highway 4), and were under strict work requirements that guaranteed them 90 days work at \$3 a day, as long as they returned at least \$1/day to their families in Jamaica. The Jamaicans stayed through the end of the pea and corn harvest, and were well-regarded by community members; many local farmers also hired them to assist with the harvest during their time off from the cannery.

In 1944, two groups of foreign nationals arrived to help with the vegetable harvest, a group of one hundred Mexican laborers, and two-hundred-fifty-eight Barbadians. Again, there was much curiosity about these foreign

visitors and their lifestyles, with the Waseca Journal and Minneapolis Sunday Tribune commenting “Transition of these dark skinned workers to Minnesota’s fields from Barbados...reads like an Aladdin’s lamp fairy tale.”

In 1945 the labor shortage became so acute that yet another group of laborers was brought in — German (and Italian) Prisoners of War (PWs). The PWs were bussed in from a prison camp near Wells, and generally worked in the plant, rather than in the fields. In addition, the Federal Housing Administration established a five-acre trailer camp near the 8th Street SE railroad tracks, available for canning overhire workers of American citizenry (eg: not for the foreign nationals or the PWs.) Both the trailer camp and the barracks lasted into the 1950s, but little information remains about them today.

Following the war, the plant was purchased by General Foods (Birds Eye Snider Division), which further diversified the industry. New innovations in insulated railroad cars allowed much larger quantities of frozen foods to be shipped along the rails. By 1954, Birds Eye Waseca was considered the “beef and chicken pot pie capitol of the world,” with over a million pies shipped from the Waseca plant weekly, as well as fruit pies, entrees, puddings, malts, soup, and the brand-new concept of tv dinners. In 1960, the plant became the pilot production site for Cool Whip, eventually producing over 50% of the nation’s supply of the emulsified dairy product.

Today, the Waseca Birds Eye facility has returned to its corn and sweet pea roots, contracting with two-hundred-twenty-five area farms to freeze 13,000 acres of corn and 7,500 acres of peas annually.

EACO Mill

The Waseca building that best symbolizes the affiliation between Waseca’s agricultural community and its railroad is the EACO Mill, a striking complex whose main building still stands at 212 3rd Avenue NW, at Loon Lake.

The W&StP line excelled at hauling wheat, and it was obvious by 1877 when the M&StL line was added that the town badly needed its own wheat processing facility. Farmers sold their wheat to the W&StP elevator, the Grange elevator, or a few smaller elevators, but these were storage facilities only, with no milling or grinding capacity. W.G. Ward, Thomas White, and H. Willyard had built a small grist mill in town in 1870, but the town really needed a facility that could effectively process thousands of bushels of wheat a day. Community businessmen and visionaries William Everett and J.W. Aughenbaugh decided to capitalize on this need, constructing the mill on rail lines just off of Loon Lake in order to facilitate the steam-powered equipment.

The EACO mill was immediately successful in increasing Waseca’s wheat production and commerce. In 1887 it added machinery that allowed it to run 24-hour shifts, and it soon became one of the best-producing mills outside of the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, ranking 14th in the state from 1899-1912.

The mill complex expanded and contracted over its history. Fires in 1891 and 1896 burned several structures, but they were immediately replaced. At its peak, as rebuilt after the 1896 fire, the mill property included the mill itself,



the grain elevator, an electrical power plant that provided dedicated power to the mill, a coal-burning power plant, offices, work and repair shops, storage sheds, warehouses, and other auxiliary buildings. Today, though only the mill, the elevator, and the power plant remain on the site, the foundations of many of these buildings are visible in the mill yard.

The EACO Mill was sold to Russell Milling in 1925, and many jobs were lost when that company moved several of the functions to Minneapolis. Central Soya operated the site as a soybean operation in 1945, demolishing and altering many of the buildings. All milling functions ceased by the early 1980s. The former milling offices were donated to the City of Waseca, and was used as its Neighborhood Service Center for a number of years.

The most striking remaining building is the mill itself. A three-story brick building with a stepped roof and relief brickwork, it is reminiscent of Dutch or Belgian warehouses, and adds a sense of romance to the practical structure.

Although in poor shape, the EACO mill stands as Waseca's most visible representation of the extremely important relationship between the area's agriculture and its railroads, and all efforts should be made to preserve and protect it.

The Southern Research and Outreach Center

In 1911, the Minnesota state legislature authorized the University of Minnesota Agricultural School to acquire two demonstration farms in problem areas, rocky Duluth and the wetlands of Waseca. The original demonstration area was located on the site of the RP Ward Farm (two more farmsteads were later added), and was conceived as a study on how to profitably run a farm. It was originally called the Southeast Demonstration Farm and Experiment Station.

With numerous ponds, ravines, and sloughs, the station was often referred to as a "mud hole" or "sea of mud." This turned out to be of great value for experimentation and education.

Of the original two-hundred-forty acres, two hundred were used as the demonstration farm and 40 an experiment station and farmstead. All were tiled using Waseca concrete tiles. In 1919, superintendent "Bob" Hodgson eliminated the demonstration farm, and the whole site became the Southeast Experiment Station. This shifted the focus to research, particularly on Minnesota-hardy varieties of desirable plants. He developed a walnut grove and arboretum. Original research was on soybean crops, but livestock and other grains were added in the 1920s. The station developed crossbred swine, large sheep, and the first Minnesota hybrid corn in 1925.

More land was purchased in 1941, and with more drainage lines and new facilities, the site became the Southern School of Agriculture, admitting its first students with the "Boys of 1953." In 1969 it became the University of Minnesota Technical College – Waseca, after the legislature voted to phase out the agricultural emphasis and create a technical college; it then shared land with the newly named Southern Experiment Station. It then became simply the University of Minnesota – Waseca, and in 1995 gave up 95 acres for prison facilities.

Today the school exists as the "Southern Research and Outreach Center," one of six such centers located throughout Minnesota. Though at 926 acres it is much smaller than the expanded farmlands had been, it still conducts wide-ranging research on both plants and animals.

Property Types

Farms

Farmhouses

Barns

Stables

Dairies

Pump houses

Chicken coops

Smokehouses

Root cellars

Doghouses

Sheds and other outbuildings

Related infrastructure

Wells

Post roads

Livestock sites within the City of Waseca

Agricultural businesses

Canning and freezing plants

Birds Eye

Mills and related buildings

Ward original mill

EACO mill

Breweries

Creameries and dairies

Grain elevators

Hatcheries

Farm tile factories

Stockyards

Meat packing facilities

Produce facilities

Farm implements / feed / seed stores

Preibe site

Barracks and residences

Agricultural schools

Southern Experiment Station

Context Recommendations

- *Waseca should identify and inventory any remaining historic farmsteads within the expanded city limits, and be aware of other significant such properties in the greater Waseca County area. Ideally, this could be done in conjunction with the Waseca County Historical Society. These properties should be preserved and protected.*
- *The EACO Mill went through the National Register of Historic Places review process and was determined eligible by the Keeper of the Register on August 9, 1982, but was not listed due to owner opposition. The mill draws a critical connection between Waseca's agricultural industry and the railroads, and its preservation, protection, and interpretation should be a priority.*
- *The Birds Eye plant is currently operating and well maintained. The HPC should work with the plant to ensure that historic resources on the site are preserved and protected, especially if there are any changes in the future.*
- *Any remaining resources in the University of Minnesota Southern Experiment Station should be inventoried, preserved, and protected. A National Register nomination may not be practical at this time, due to the current disparate use of the site(s), but should be a consideration for the future. The HPC may want to coordinate these efforts with an alumnae organization for the school, if one exists.*

Context 4 – Commerce and Industry

Time span – 1867 to present

Beginning as it did, as a land speculator's town centered on the railway, Waseca was designed to be commercially successful. While the farms of the area created valuable commodities, and the railways ran a transportation network, commerce and industry provided the "third leg of the stool" — goods and services that residents and visitors needed, from dry goods stores for farm families to purchase from, to hotels for visitors to stay in. The strong business community is what made Waseca into a thriving city, rather than merely a railroad junction.

When the railroad went through town in 1867, the town's commerce and industry sprang up literally overnight, in order to meet the needs of the influx of settlers and workers. The town was platted with Second Street (renamed State Street in 1928) as the Main Street, with four blocks at the town's center providing a planned downtown core. The street was open at both ends to farmland, enticing area farm families into town on their way to and from the train station and cementing the relationship between agriculture, transportation and commerce.

As a speaker remarked during an early railroad celebration:

She is noted for her rich and productive soil; for her industrious and well-to-do farmers; for her No. 1 wheat; for her pleasant and comfortable homes; for her four newspaper offices; for her numerous churches and numerous saloons, almost equaling Minneapolis, and for her enterprising businessmen in every branch of trade.

However, Waseca's trade and business community has lasted and prospered, even after the railroad lost its dominance. Although it has been faced with challenges such as fires and economic downturns, State Street remains a diverse, vital, and well-preserved Main Street. While farming as an industry has shifted to a larger, more corporate focus, Waseca still has a strong agricultural base. Several industries founded in the area have grown and expanded, and there is a new industrial park south of town.

Throughout it all, it has been Waseca's commercial success that has influenced all of its other factors — its transportation systems, civic life, residential quality, social and cultural life, and general sense of community. Perhaps crucial to this is the interconnectedness of the various enterprises, in a town where the civic leaders still arise from business pursuits. Waseca survives — and thrives — because its commerce, business, transportation and agriculture are all based on one another, as much today as they were 140+ years ago when the town was founded.

Waseca's Main Street

Most of Waseca's commercial activities were clustered downtown, along Second Street — later renamed State Street — and often referred to simply as "Main Street." This concentration of resources was purposeful when Trowbridge, Ward, and Jenkins planned the town. First, at a time when the buildings went up quickly, often with commercial spaces on the main level and the owners living above or behind them, it provided an instant sense of community. Secondly, it allowed easy access on the way to the railroad depots. Finally, it allowed the newly-incorporated community to consolidate their civic improvements such as streetscapes and curbing, utilities, and other amenities.

The first buildings along Second Street were wood frame, multipurpose structures. William Everett is said to have built the first commercial structure, which included a general store, newspaper offices, and apartments. Ira Trowbridge constructed the city's first hotel, and two banks opened, though neither stayed open for very long.



Early 20th century postcard that reads:
"MAIN ST. SOUTH FROM
ELM WASECA MINN. 754"

Another significant building from 1867 is what is now referred to as the McLoone Building at 111 N. State, which began as railroad offices plus a saloon/ auction house.

Construction continued apace in the 1870s, with even more stores and businesses needed to support the second railroad line. Frame buildings began to be replaced by Waseca's characteristic brick, 2-3 story buildings, with glass storefronts on the street level and apartments or offices above, and often below in "walk-downs."

A fire destroyed all twelve buildings at Second and Oak Streets in October of 1881, including two doctors' offices, Kraft's hotel, Karstedt's shoes, McLoughlin's general store, Preston's jewelers, Comee's furniture, and the drug store. The fire also left six families homeless. Reconstruction, however, ushered in a downtown building boom, and that fire also led to the establishment of the first professional fire department.

The 1880s were known as a period of great expansion for downtown Waseca. Stone gutters along the street contained the muddy roadway, and new, grander, mostly brick buildings went up. Patrick Moonan built the Sheridan House hotel, known for its elegant lobby, large kitchen and dining area, and two full floors of guest rooms. A diagram of the street in 1884 shows the street fully lined with businesses:

- 4 hotels — the Grant, Sheridan House, Minnesota and City
- 1 bedsprings manufacturer and 3 furniture shops, plus 1 carpet store
- 1 dressmaker, 1 tailor, and 1 bootmaker, plus 2 milliners
- 4 clothing stores
- 5 saloons (at least 1 with billiards)
- 1 cigar shop
- 1 baker
- 2 meat markets
- 12 dry goods/grocers
- 1 harness shop
- 3 drug stores
- 2 barbers
- 2 books/stationery/gift shops
- 1 jeweler

Grant House ca. 1913



1 music store
 3 hardware/stoves/tin stores
 4 restaurant/confectioners
 1 doctor
 an Odd Fellows and a Masonic Hall
 3 banks — Bank of Waseca, People's Bank, and Waseca Bank
 an American Express office
 a printing press and newspaper
 a roller skating hall

 for a total of 65 businesses in a 4-block stretch

Following another large fire in 1899, this progress continued into the 1900s, with thriving businesses spreading farther down Second Street and expanding onto adjoining streets. Offices and services such as dentists, doctors, and barbers replaced living quarters above the storefronts, and several three-story buildings were constructed. The streets were paved, and sewer, electric, and telephone service followed.

Many of Waseca's most significant remaining State Street buildings date from the period between the 1880s and 1920, including:

- the aforementioned Sheridan House (1882) at State and Second, which was renamed the Stevens House, then Hotel Ward, and finally the Waverly Hotel. Converted into offices and apartments in the late 1930s, it remains the best example of Second Empire commercial architecture in Waseca County.
- the Weller Building (1891) at 109 S. State. Originally a saloon, it was then Armstrong Motors before becoming a billiard hall and then a café. It was most recently Deike Law Offices, and is now owned by State Street Investments, LLC.
- the Norman/McIntire building (1902) was passed among members of the Trowbridge family. The building was then doctors offices for almost 40 years, and is now owned by State Street Investments.
- First National Bank (1903), at the prominent corner of Elm and State streets. Originally a bank, with a barber's below, this was another building that housed a plethora of businesses over the years. It is now the Daily Grind.
- Farmer's Bank (1910) at 2nd Street NW. A neo-classical revival building that was originally a bank with offices above, this has been occupied by several businesses over its history, including gifts, a beauty shop, and a pool hall. It is now retail on the first floor with apartments above.
- Waseca Music (1914). This was originally Perrin's Music, with Kozan's Music right next door. Dresden Perrin was a long-time leader of local school and social bands, and operated in friendly competition with his next-door neighbors until he sold the store to Ruth and Joe Kozan in 1952.
- the Lewer Auto Building (1917), a three-story brick building built by Ewald Lewer for auto and carriage sales below and office rental above. The building was hit by lightning in 1960 and the entire 3rd floor destroyed, but the rest of the building was saved.
- Several distinctive commercial buildings near the intersection of State and Elm, all of which were surveyed as part of the 1981 SHPO work, but remain generally un-researched. These include:
 - Champion Fridlund Auto
 - Guyer Building
 - Charlie Brozik/Meat Market
 - Guyer and Didra Drug buildings
 - First National Bank (1903)
 - Barden's Liquor
 - General commercial building

- Waseca Jewelers
- 2 more general commercial (one dating from 1885)
- Drieber's Fabrics (1897)

Since the time of that survey, more downtown buildings of that period have been restored, and should be surveyed.

From the Depression through WWII times were tough for Waseca businesses, but State Street persevered. Restaurants, bars, and gathering spots became top destinations, from the Corner Lunch to the Busy Bee Café. People even gathered outside the newspaper offices — especially on big news days like elections — to watch the presses through the big, plate glass windows, until the newspaper outgrew the space. Grocers started to generally move off of the street, relocating to free-standing stores, and the Waseca Legion-Commercial Club was formed to promote area businesses. Luckily, urban renewal efforts of the 1970s generally left State Street untouched, although many buildings just behind them were taken down for parking, breaking the pattern of densely populated businesses and leaving open areas that generally remain un-improved, even to this day. As of the early 21st century, State Street is filled with specialty businesses that fill an important role in Waseca's economy. This beautiful main street — one of the longest and best preserved in southern Minnesota — should be a preservation and economic development priority for the HPC and the City of Waseca.

Other Main Waseca Commerce

A town of entrepreneurs, Waseca had other commercial success stories.

Herter's

Long known as one of the most comprehensive hunting and sporting companies in America, Herter's claimed that "Herter's Has Tomorrow's Products Today" and "If Herter's Do Not Make It Better, Herter's Do Not Make It At All" [sic]. Starting in 1893 when George Herter began a fly-tying business above his father's Beehive Dry Goods Store, it moved in 1912 to a former dry goods store purchased from C.J. Johnson.

In the mid-1930s, Herter began mail order sales, initially of feathers imported from China for fly-tying. After a disastrous explosion in 1942 that destroyed his store and eight others, plus killing one sales clerk, Herter moved into the Lower Building, and from there to a warehouse on Highway 13 South when the business began focusing almost exclusively on mail order.

Herter's was especially known as a hunting supplier, and was known as the "world's largest manufacturer of decoys." It offered several duck and waterfowl lines, as well as doves, owls, and crows. As well as the Waseca-manufactured decoys, it sold a wide range of imported items, ranging from fishhooks to gunstocks to boats and snowmobiles. At its zenith, the store mailed a million catalogs annually, rivaling L.L. Bean for the sportsman market.

Unfortunately, Herter's over-expanded, going bankrupt in the 1970s. Herter's vision and niche marketing, however, was indicative of Waseca's business tradition.

Leuthold Brothers

Another of Waseca's most prominent businesses was the Leuthold Brothers Clothing stores. The six brothers operated fourteen clothing stores, spread throughout Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa and Wisconsin, including a large store on State Street. With so many outlets, the Leutholds were able to leverage purchasing power; the stores were a predecessor to the idea of "chain stores," and it is rumored that J.C. Penney got the idea for his stores after

working for the Leutholds. Charles and Josephine Leuthold, along with their four children, resided in a beautiful and prominent home at 824 E. Elm Avenue.

Today the Leuthold Family Foundation is a generous donor to hundreds of nonprofits annually, and a Leuthold store remains in Northfield, Minnesota.

W.J. Armstrong Grocers

W.J. Armstrong Wholesale Grocers was perhaps the most successful business to capitalize on the relationship between the area's farmers and railroads, by serving both as a middleman. Armstrong built the 3-story brick structure (with old-growth lumber shipped from Thorwood, Washington) in order to receive and dispense a variety of goods via its own railroad spur. The building included, as well as the grocers: two bottling plants, a cigar factory, and an ice cream plant, as well as packing and distributing the highly regarded Blue Jay coffee and tea lines.



Early 20th century photograph of the W.J. Armstrong Co. Warehouse

In 1938, David Isker purchased the building, renaming it and adding the distinctive painted lettering reading SOUTHERN MINNESOTA WHOLESALE GROCERY COMPANY.

Although very solid and relatively unaltered, the building gradually declined, and was ordered demolished in 1999. Local preservationist Gene Miller purchased the property, with the idea of not only restoring it, but also developing it into a multi-use building that could provide jobs for local residents. Today it holds a conference room, a B&B, event space, offices, a sports bar, and a coffee shop. Miller then restored an adjoining 1930s warehouse and crating factory to house the Starfire Grill Restaurant. From a vacant warehouse, the building has become an important community gathering place and public face for preservation in Waseca.

Other Commerce

Waseca has a wide range of other commerce, ranging from Kritzer Oil to Winegar Brothers to Fitzsimmon's Trucking. Corchran, Inc. has its roots in blacksmiths and iron-monging, and today provides a wide range of equipment and maintenance, ranging from dry cleaning machines to front-end loaders. Newer businesses are drawn by the industrial park in south Waseca such as Shady Oaks Nursery, or located in north Waseca like Itron. Walter's Cookbooks printed fundraising cookbooks familiar to churches and social clubs across the country. There is a thriving horse industry, epitomized by Spring Hill Morgan Horses and by Mishek's Arabians and the Arabian Horse Times publication.

Waseca Services

As well as its rich tradition of commercial ventures, Waseca businessmen offered a wide range of services, ranging from hotels to printing to banking.

Banks

Early financiers were some of the most important influences on the newly platted town, and Waseca started with two banks, Milles & Follett and Baldwin & Kittredge. These lasted only a few years, and were followed by Kinyon Brothers, which was robbed almost immediately.

Several early banks were forerunners of major banks in Waseca today:

- The People's State Bank was organized in 1880, with Ira Trowbridge on the board of directors. It was renamed The People's State Bank of Waseca in 1900.
- Not to be confused with the above, the People's Bank of Waseca was rechartered and renamed in 1908 to become the Farmers National Bank of Waseca, then the First State Bank of Waseca in 1971 when it moved into its distinctive round building on 2nd Avenue NE.
- The First National Bank of Waseca was chartered in 1902, absorbing the Citizen's State Bank in 1903. This bank has a modern building on State and Elm.

In addition, several original bank buildings dot downtown Waseca (especially on State Street), and are particularly attractive for re-use.

Attorneys

Many of Waseca's earliest and most prominent citizens were lawyers, including W.G. Ward and James E. Child (author of *Child's History of Waseca County*.) As the county seat, Waseca especially promoted firms involved with commodities and land use, and was known as a law center especially during the 1930s-1940s. Many families, such as the Senns, Maddens and Moonans, were known for having multiple generations of lawyers in the family, and for their public service. Henry Gallagher was the chief justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court from 1938-44, and his brother served an associate justice; their sons have remained practicing in Waseca and have been municipal judges.

Newspapers

James E. Child was also the first publisher in the area, moving from Wilton in 1868 to found the *Waseca News*. It grew to become the largest southern Minnesota newspaper west of Winona, and was renamed *the Minnesota Radical* in 1875. In 1878 Child and his son Walter consolidated the Radical with Minneapolis' *Liberty Blade* as one conservative temperance and anti-monopoly newspaper. Purchased by W.G. Ward in 1880, it became the *Waseca Journal* and returned to more local reporting, with a succession of owners following.

Donald C. Brown purchased the newspaper in 1924, adding the *Waseca Herald* in 1948 and printing each paper weekly. Brown published through his death in 1975, and the paper ceased operations in 1982.

Locals have fond memories of watching the newspaper print through the windows of its State Street offices. Wayne "Bumps" Brown credits his father's newspaper printing to his own branching out to form Brown Printing.

Industry

Waseca was also known for its industry, particularly the E.F. Johnson and Brown Printing plants. Although not a large industrial center, these two companies in particular have had an important effect on the City of Waseca, especially in terms of providing good local jobs.

E.F. Johnson Company

The E.F. Johnson Company stemmed from modest beginnings in 1923, when Edgar and Ethel Johnson began a mail order radio parts business out of a corner of his father's woodworking business. Quickly outgrowing that site, they moved on to a State Street storefront, expanding the hobby into a full-time business with several employees. Johnson increased his line by making parts he could not purchase.

In 1933, the Johnsons built a 37,000 square foot, deco-styled building housing offices and manufacturing, on the site of the old Nicollet Hotel on 2nd Avenue SW.

The real expansion happened when the Johnsons received a government contract for radio receivers and military components. They won an Army-Navy “E” award for efficiency in 1944. This rapid growth led to over 500 employees . The realization of this growth and a fire in the retail store led the company to focus solely on manufacturing, ceasing retail sales.

By the 1950s, the company had become dominant in the citizen’s band radio market, and built a new plant and offices on 10th Avenue (now Johnson Avenue). By the 1960s, they had added commercial radio products to their line, and in 1976 they were added to NASDAQ.

The original company has been through a number of mergers and acquisitions. Now known as EFJohnson Technologies, it is now headquartered in Irving, Texas. The old, deco-styled headquarters on 2nd Avenue SW is owned by local preservationist Gene Miller; it is currently undergoing hazardous waste abatement and will be restored in the future.

Brown Printing

Perhaps Waseca’s most famous industry is the Brown Printing Plant. Brought up in his father’s newspaper printing plant, Wayne “Bumps” Brown had an early exposure to printing and paper. One of his first major endeavors, in 1949, was to print the catalogs for Herter’s, which ordered over a million catalogs annually.

With production like that, Brown soon outgrew the newspaper printers, and built a plant in western Waseca in 1958. The plant continued to grow quickly, becoming one of Minnesota’s largest printing companies by the mid-1980s. The company is now the forth largest magazine printer and the sixth largest catalog printer in the United States, producing over 1,000 different magazines and catalogs in three different locations (with sales and marketing based in New York.)

Though now owned by Gruner + Jahr AG and Co. KG of Hamburg, Germany, the company headquarters are still in Waseca. The plant spans more than 775,000 square feet on over 50 acres. It employs 900+ people.

Waseca’s commerce and industry, especially along State Street, represents the true core of the historic presence of the city, and should be a preservation priority.

Property Types

Note: In most of these property types, we have given examples of some specific kinds of businesses. This is not meant to be a comprehensive listing, but rather a representative one demonstrating the development of Waseca’s commercial and industrial base. We have also listed some business names, especially those along State Street, in order to start to give people a visual picture of the past. This is not meant to be an inclusive list, but rather a way to get people thinking about the businesses of the past. In a great deal of these cases, these businesses and buildings no longer exist.

Commerce

- Appliances and Electronics

 - Buckley

 - Frank’s

- Automobile

 - Lewer

- Bakeries

 - Preuss

 - Rindelaub’s

- Books, Stationary, and Gifts

 - Oman

- Carpet Stores
- Cigar Stores
- Clothing, Shoes and Boots
 - Guyer
 - Leuthold Brothers
- Confectionary / Candy
 - Crystal Candy Company
- Dry Goods / Grocers
 - Lord, Addison and Company
- Department Stores
 - JC Penney's
- Drug Stores
 - Didra
 - Thompson's
- Farm Implements / Feed / Seed
 - Priebe's
- Furniture and Cabinetry, Bedsprings
 - Maylett's
 - Pfaff
- Gas Stations
 - Lee Krough
- General Stores / Variety Stores
 - Bundlie's
 - Johnson's
 - Thering's
 - Wolf & Habein
- Grocers / Food Markets / Butchers
 - Minske & Wahlberg's
 - Ray's
 - Herbst
 - Anderson Brothers
 - King's
- Hardware / Stoves / Tinware
 - Marshall Wells
 - Mahler
- Harness Shops
 - Koechel's
 - Juhnke
- Jewelers / Watchmakers
 - Dee's
 - Preston's
- Liquor Stores
 - Main Street
 - Chalet
- Meat Markets
 - Brozick's
- Millinery
 - Brown's
 - Fiebiger's
- Music Stores
 - Kozan's
 - Perrin's
- Paint
 - Gehring and Son
 - Sutton's
- Radio Stores
 - EF Johnson
- Shoemakers
 - Beje and Company

Sporting Goods
 Herter's
 Tires
 Wobschall
 Lundberg
 Services
 Accounting
 Coopers
 Attorneys
 Madden
 Moonan
 Senn
 Gallagher
 Banks
 People's
 Citizen's
 First National
 Barbers
 Meyer's
 Paschall
 Beauty Shops
 Fean-Shir
 Stella's
 Blacksmiths and Ironmongers
 Reibold
 Corchran
 Boarding Houses
 Bowling Alleys
 Builders, Carpenters and Contractors
 Deed Registrars
 Dentists
 Welna
 Doctors
 Dr. OJ Swenson
 Dr. Lorenz
 Dry Cleaning and Laundry
 Wynnemer
 Waseca Lundry
 Funeral Homes/Undertakers
 Lindquist
 Garages
 Lewer
 Lou Fox
 Lortis
 Hotels
 Sheridan Hotel/Waverly House
 Waseca Hotel
 Ice Cream Parlors
 Candy Kitchen
 Insurance
 Waseca Mutual
 Farmer's
 Land Agents
 Liveries
 Machine Shops
 Winegar
 Movie Theaters
 Newspapers
 News



Farmers National Bank ca, 1909



Lewer Garage Building, 1908

- Herald
 - Journal
- Notaries
- Painters
- Photographers
 - Crawford
- Plumbers
- Pool and Billiards Halls
 - Jondal
- Printers
 - Child's
 - Brown
- Realtors
 - Waseca Real Estate
- Repair Shops
 - Auto
 - Blacksmith
- Farm Implements
 - Railroad
- Restaurants and Cafes
 - Busy Bee
 - Shorty Young's
 - Corner Lunch
 - Crevice Cafe
- Roller Skating Rinks
- Saloons, Bars and Taverns
 - McLoone's
- Shoe Repair
 - Holmstrom's
- Shooting Galleries
- Tailors
 - Jensen's
- Theatres
 - State
 - Opera House
- Wagonmakers
- Industry
 - Cement
 - Ready Mix
 - Cigar Factories
 - Coopers
 - Glass
 - Boilermakers
 - Brickyards
 - Lumberyards
 - Hayes-Lucas
 - Botsford
 - Factories
 - EF Johnson
 - Foundries
 - Ice Plants
 - Johnston's
- Mills
 - Sawmills
 - Flour Mills
 - EACO Mill
 - Pottery
 - Tanneries

Context Recommendations

- *As demonstrated above, the volume of commerce, service and industry records in Waseca is large, and also transitory. **The Streets Are Wider Now**, as well as the Waseca County Historical Society other local histories, do an admirable job of chronicling this information; however, due to the amount of history and changes in the various businesses, even the most clear records can become confused. The HPC should create a comprehensive database that cross-references past businesses and buildings.*
- *These contexts provide an extremely brief overview as to the significance of Waseca's commercial and industrial operations, as well as its civic services. Further research should be completed on the topic, and complete survey work completed to establish the existence and condition of these resources.*
- *The State Street core is a remarkably well preserved downtown. The HPC should consider designating it as a historic district on the National Register; based on SHPO files, the Associates believe this would be well-received.*
- *Waseca should commission design guidelines for the downtown area. As businesses in the downtown core complete renovations, they could follow the design guidelines to the best of their ability, creating a sense of cohesion and increasing the property values by adding to their integrity and aesthetics. If Waseca is not able to commission their own, specialized guidelines, they should consider implementing the statewide guidelines about to be released (see example in appendix).*
- *The HPC should work with Waseca commercial property owners to assist them in maximizing both federal and the new statewide tax credits.*
- *The statewide non-profit, the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, is about to re-establish the Main Street program. Five communities will be accepted annually in a program designed to capitalize on the unique assets and character of historic downtowns. The Alliance would give technical assistance and some funding to the project. Waseca seems especially appropriate for this program, and should apply for it.*
- *The HPC should investigate ways to preserve and protect important businesses that are not in the downtown core, including Brown Printing and the former Herter's and E.F. Johnson facilities.*

Context 5 –Civic Life and Leadership

Time span – 1867–1970s

Development of Waseca as a City and as the County Seat

Waseca's development history is slightly unusual. Rather than the more typical model of a town rising slowly from a collection of associated homesteads, Waseca was built on Ira Trowbridge's private land, platted in advance, and sprung up quickly, over just four months, in response to the new railroad line.

The city soon engulfed other nearby settlement, including Clear Lake City, and added several formal additions. Waseca was incorporated as a "village" in March of 1868.

Waseca's rapid growth soon led to a controversy about relocating the county seat from nearby Wilton. Already, many of Wilton's leading businessmen and leaders had moved to Waseca (including James Childs), but Wilton was understandably unwilling to cede its authority. At the same time, Wasecans pressed their case, citing the town's rapid expansion and willingness to construct new civic buildings, such as a courthouse.

When Wilton's courthouse, jail, and adjoining buildings burned in April, 1869, the competition began in earnest. Waseca received legislative approval to issue bonds for a new county courthouse, and with characteristic haste, a handsome new brick building was erected on Second Street, with four offices on the first floor, a courtroom encompassing the entire second floor. The sheriff's residence and jail were later added in a separate building behind. Wilton's remaining businessmen countered with an offer to rebuild a new courthouse at the previous site, and Janesville also put forth a proposal.

On November 8, 1870, a general election was held to determine if the county seat should be moved to Waseca. The vote was 870 in favor and 653 against, and that very night several leading Wasecans were said to have gone to Wilton to collect records, furniture, and the county seal, setting up Waseca as the new county seat by morning.

Waseca grew and thrived during the 1870s, and in 1881 was officially designated as a city. With a strong basis for success, Waseca still thrives today with a robust economy, innovative government, and responsible citizens.

The Courthouse

As Waseca had not originally planned to host county services, no appropriate sites had been designated on the original plat. When the town built the 1870 courthouse, it was sited on a narrow lot on Second Street, bounded by 1st Street (now 2nd Street NW), Lake Avenue (now 3rd Avenue NW), and Loon Lake Avenue (now 4th Avenue NW).

The sheriff's house and jail, an Italianate building designed by Winona architect C.G. Maybury, were added in 1878. Not long after, it was evident that the rapidly growing county needed new public facilities, and after funding was finally allotted, the county commissioners called for proposals in early 1896. Eleven plans were received, and the plans from Minneapolis architects Orff and Joralemon selected in May. The architects had recently completed the Bayfield County Courthouse in Washburn, Wisconsin, which is also listed on the National Register. Other prominent buildings by the partnership include the Van Dusen house in Minneapolis (1893) (NRHP), the Decorah East Side Elementary School in Decorah, IA (1896) (NRHP), and state agricultural college buildings in Fargo, North Dakota. Although the firm dissolved soon after the Waseca County Courthouse was finished, each went on to prominence, with Orff also designing the Waseca School Building (now lost).

The new courthouse was built on the site of the old structure, with the bricks from the original courthouse even used as fill for the new foundation. The original contractor was J.D. Carroll of Saint Paul Park; when he defaulted, he was replaced by C.F. Haglin of Minneapolis.

Though massive, the building went up quickly, and the three-story, Richardsonian Romanesque building was dedicated in September, 1897. The 100-foot clock tower became the highest point on the Waseca skyline, until surpassed by the Sacred Heart steeple a few years later. Similar to the original courthouse, offices were placed on the first floor, and courtrooms and associated rooms on the second floor.

The grounds were not originally considered, though the rolling lawn and trees were maintained. Over time, the grounds were expanded, first with a Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) cannon placed in 1898, and the War Memorial established in 1941. The flagpole was also relocated several times.



The Waseca County Courthouse

The Security Building was constructed on the courthouse lawn in 1971, on the site of the historic jail. This was followed in 1976 by a modern two-story county office annex, added at the north end of the courthouse. Parking and some auxiliary buildings have also been added, and there have been recent infrastructure improvements.

The Courthouse was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Perhaps more than any other building in Waseca, the courthouse is indicative of both the physical history of the community, and a representation of the political history. Its preservation should be a priority.

Streets and Highways

Because of its careful platting, an emphasis has always been placed on Waseca's streets. Civic leaders and businesspeople understood that the town's success would depend on local farmers being able to easily transport their crops to the railroad yards, and planned accordingly. Second Street, the town's main street, was long and wide, open at both ends to surrounding fields and farms and acting as a funnel into downtown.

Waseca's streets originally had names typical for the late 1800s, picturesque and generally botanically or geographically based, such as Wood, Elm, Oak, Maple, Lake and North. One of the first actions taken when Waseca was incorporated as a village was to plant shade trees along the avenues — including flowering crabapple and Japanese tree lilacs — giving the new settlement a sense of permanence and grace. Hitching posts were also added along the main streets.

The original roads were simply dirt paths, however, and heavy rains in 1868 made them mucky and almost impassable. The village board dedicated its entire tax revenue collected (\$600) to repairing roads, with city leaders adding extra funds and Ira Trowbridge reputedly grading Second Street himself.

The roads were better maintained annually thereafter, and in the 1880s the town added stone gutters on Second Street. The legislature also approved \$5,000 in new road construction bonds, and so roads around Loon Lake and Clear Lake were added.

However, by the turn of the century it was obvious that the roads needed to be paved. Second Street was paved in brick in 1903, followed by adjunct commercial areas, with Lake Street the first residential street to be paved in 1909.

In 1928, the post office asked that the streets be changed into a quadrant-based, numbered system in order to increase postal efficiency. Although many decried losing the historic street names, Ordinance 202 officially changed the names in March, 1928. Only Elm Avenue retained its name, and Second Street was changed to State Street in order to make the numbering system work. Eventually, a few streets such as Johnson Avenue and University Drive, were re-named, but the change from street names to numbers was a historic loss for the city.

In 1913 a state constitutional amendment authorized the creation of over seventy new roads statewide. In 1920, Waseca benefited from this by receiving two gravel roads, Highways 13 and 14 (originally 7). Both were paved in 1931. Though the railroad was still dominant, the highways added transportation options, and are today major thoroughfares.

City Services

Obviously, Waseca needed more than physical infrastructure — it needed services, ranging from police and fire departments to utilities, and city / county buildings.

Waseca had just one police officer in 1868, Marshal H.P. Norton. In 1869 a night watchman was added. As county seat, law enforcement was often a county-wide issue, and the sheriff maintained a residence and adjoining jail behind the courthouse.

Waseca relied upon volunteer firefighters until the enormous Second Street fire of 1881. After that, the fire department was reorganized into two professional divisions, the First Engine Company and the First Hose Company. The city purchased fire equipment, and fire hydrant service was added in the 1890s. No original fire stations exist, with Waseca currently served by a newer station built in the 1970s.

Although utility service was originally privately supplied, to those who could afford it, by the early 1890s it was clear that comprehensive, city-owned facilities were needed. One reason for this was the EACO Mill, which really needed more power than it could self-generate.

Following more city bonding, the Water and Light Plant began operating in late 1894. It included three miles of water mains, as well as city-wide street lighting. This engendered a need for skilled electricians, and Brown Electric Company was founded in 1914. Although Waseca-area farms started to join the grid in 1922, when entrepreneur Howard Deichen planted poles and strung wire, it was not until the Rural Electrification Act of 1935 that they were reliably serviced.

Gas utilities through Interstate Power Company were not standardized until 1927.

The Waseca Telephone Company began service in 1898 with operator service for 93 subscribers. By 1905 it had grown to 312 city and 111 rural customers, with telephone communication especially valuable to the widespread farmsteads surrounding the town. The company became Tri-State in 1933, and Northwestern Bell in 1942. Regional offices have since been moved to Rochester.

The multi-functioned Lower Building, at various times, hosted both the post office and the library.

Unfortunately, few of these original service buildings currently exist. The old telephone office still exists on 2nd Avenue NE, and is reputed to have been designed by Waseca County-born Clarence Johnston.

Hospital

The Mayo brothers had a cabin in Maplewood Park, and local legend has it that they considered Waseca for their Mayo Clinic. Ultimately, Waseca did not get its first hospital until February, 1922. Named after Waseca's war veterans, the Waseca Memorial Hospital was a large and pleasant brick building and included an emergency room, operating suites, a maternity ward, a sun parlor, a diet kitchen, and thirty beds over twenty-five rooms. This met Waseca's needs fairly well for a number of years, but in 1950 the Board of Health found the building inadequate.

A hospital auxiliary was formed, helping to fund a 1960 addition that greatly increased the hospital with more rooms, public spaces, and facilities. That was in turn replaced with a new hospital in 1975. Today, the Waseca Hospital is part of the Mayo Health System.

Schools

Before Waseca itself was founded, the county had several schools, including many in the Powell District and five parochial schools, including one by the Norwegian church. With many new building projects in progress, it was not until 1869 that the town of Waseca built its first school, a two-story, two room school house at Wood and 6th Streets, that began classes in October. After those classes were established, education became a Waseca priority. The rapidly expanding population, and resulting schoolchildren, required an addition to the original building, and then a larger replacement in the late 1870s. The new Central School was constructed in the early 1880s, joined by two more schools in 1899. Oak Grove School was built in Trowbridge Park in 1899, and was in use through 1934, when it was razed. Southside School, also built in 1899 on South State Street, lasted until 1962, when a new school was built on the same site.



Central High School ca. 1915

Central School burned in 1923, presumably due to defective wiring, and was replaced in 1924. Many additions followed. Hartley Elementary School was added to the system in 1960.

By the late 1960s, all of the rural schools had consolidated, with urban and rural districts under the umbrella of Waseca Schools. Services were also standardized, with kindergarten offered throughout and a unified PTA.

Currently, Waseca has one elementary school (Hartley), one intermediate school (Central), a junior high (Waseca Junior High) and one high school (Waseca High School). There is also an elementary charter school (Team Academy), an Alternative Learning Center (in the old Southside building), and an off-campus program. Offerings

include core classes and a number of extracurricular clubs and activities, ranging from sports to band to drama to languages. History is an important part of the curricula, including strong ties with the Waseca County Historical Society programs.

Sacred Heart also hosted a parochial school, starting with a small seminary in 1886. This expanded to a full, 300+ student school serving grades 1-12 in 1923. In 1971, this was changed to an elementary focus on grades K-4, plus a Children's House Montessori.

The Library

Another early priority for the city of Waseca was a town library. A library association was begun in 1871 and held 150 volumes, almost all donated, used volumes. James Child was not at all sure that this was of benefit to the citizens of Waseca, noting:

The demand for history, biography, and standard literature was slight compared with the demand for trashy stuff of a romantic character.

Unfortunately, that association did not last long.

By the turn of the century, another attempt was made, with the Waseca Literary Society meeting in people's homes and a Civic Improvement League started. The league held book drives and lobbied for a library tax. By 1904 a small library was established in the Hemingway Building; it then moved to the basement of the First National Bank Building, and then to City Hall in 1912. A full-time librarian was hired.

Waseca tried to get a Carnegie Library, but could not muster enough public support and was turned down. In 1939, the Waseca County Citizen's Library Association was formed, and in 1950, a new library constructed just off of Trowbridge Park. That building was replaced with the current library, built in 1967.

Civic Leaders

Waseca is characterized by a number of entrepreneurs and civic leaders. These include:

James Child, a newspaper publisher who relocated to Waseca from Wilton in 1867. As well as publishing the newspaper, he wrote *Child's History of Waseca County*, covering the community's first five decades. He was married to Julia Krassin Child.

Martin Krassin and his family were some of the first settlers of the area, after Asa Sutlief. He is generally regarded as Waseca's first settler. The Krassin house still stands on 3rd Street SW.

Ira Trowbridge, referred to extensively throughout this study, is the true founder of the city of Waseca. Built on his land, under his vision, Trowbridge established the town and then served it for the rest of his life, investing in a number of business opportunities. His house is on 4th Avenue NE, turned from its original siting to face Trowbridge Park.

W.G. Ward was a railroad man who assisted in founding the town and later became Trowbridge's son-in-law, marrying his daughter Ella. He was especially known for his political acumen, serving as Waseca's first mayor and later in state politics. His son, Roscoe Percy was a leading area financier, whose home on Elm Avenue is now

on the National Register. In turn his son, Emerson Ward, continued the family's business and community service.

J.H. Jenkins, another railroad man, was the third of the founding triumvirate, and also later married Trowbridge's daughter Augusta.

Philo Bailey was an early commercial, cultural, and social leader. His Italianate home on 2nd Avenue NE, purchased from reputed horse thief Dayton "Date" Smith, is now the Waseca County Historical Society library.

The Everett family was very active in local business, especially the EACO mill. William Everett's partner at the mill was John W. Aughenbaugh, whose house is on the National Register and is now used as the Masonic Temple.

Joseph Moonan maintained a large home on North State Street and was well-known as a leading attorney in the community. The Gallagher family also provided many great lawyers for Waseca, including Henry Gallagher, who was the Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court.

The Brown family brought printing expertise to Waseca. Don Brown published the newspaper, while Wayne "Bumps" Brown started Brown Printing.

Other important business leaders included George Herter, E.F. Johnson, Howard Deichen, Nate Thompson, Perrin Dresden, Joe Kozan, and too many others to list. In many of these cases, their homes or businesses remain, and should be included in a preservation plan.

Sites Currently Designated

The Waseca County Courthouse is listed on the National Register as an individual site.

Property Types

Civic Buildings

- Waseca County Courthouse
- Associated buildings
- Landscape

- City Hall

- Jail

- Library

- Fire halls

- Police stations

Public Services

- Streets and roadways

- Curbs and gutters

- Original trees

- Hitching posts

- Streetlights

Nursing Homes

Post Office

Poor houses

Social services

Public Services

- Electricity

- Sewer and water

- Gas

Telephone
Telegraph
Water
Hospitals and clinics
Public Schools
 Waseca High School
 Central Middle School
 Hartley School
 Southside School
Private/Parochial Schools
 Sacred Heart
Library
Homes of civic leaders

Context Recommendations

- *The courthouse is an excellent resource for Waseca, demonstrating both historical importance and architectural grandeur. It is already open to the public, but public use of the space and grounds should be encouraged, perhaps through tours and events.*
- *Most of the infrastructure resources (such as trees, hitching posts, curbs, etc.) have been lost. These should be preserved as available or as discovered.*
- *Anything that utilizes the original numbering and naming system of the streets, if found, should be a preservation priority.*
- *It appears that almost all of the original service buildings (fire stations, utilities, etc.) have been lost. The HPC should find a way to recognize these structures, perhaps in a “Lost Buildings” section of the website.*
- *More research should be conducted on the former telephone building. If it was indeed designed by Clarence Johnston, it could be a significant historic resource.*
- *The city should look at installing an interpretive exhibit at the hospital, which might be of great interest.*
- *Waseca should work with its schools on including local history and events in the curriculum. Ideally it would partner with the Waseca County Historical Society on this, since they are already conducting similar work.*
- *Waseca should consider a multiple property nomination to the National Register for the remaining homes of community leaders (several of which are already listed). Alternately, it should list homes not already on the Register as individual landmarks, and protect all of them with local designation.*
- *The HPC should consider creating a walking tour, driving tour, or podcast that includes the homes of important civic leaders.*

Context 6 – Social and Cultural

Time span – 1860s–1950s

Social Waseca

Although Waseca's success was related to its railroad and its robust commerce and industry, its social history and development is equally important. The interconnectedness of the society is demonstrated somewhat in the ways that this context overlaps with others; in a town where all business is local, social and cultural connections have a strong link to commerce and industry.

Waseca's citizens valued their leisure time, and there were a number of recreational outlets, especially the city's park system. The city's many churches were another important cultural aspect. As addressed in the next section, many of these leisure endeavors had a crossover with the city's tourism, especially the lakes and the annual Chautauqua.

A City of Churches

Waseca's many churches reflected the spirit of the town — the wide range of faiths, the religious values of the area, the educational opportunities, and the over-arching theme of faith and community. Churches provided the gathering spots in town, and one's congregation was as important a factor as one's home and occupation. In short, religious institutions in Waseca provided the town with three major initiatives — social organizing and opportunity, networks for community interaction (including between rural and urban residents), and acculturation for recently-arrived residents. Church services were one of the first activities to be held in the new settlement, with Presbyterian services beginning in the summer of 1867 in Philo Bailey's hardware store. By 1868, there were six regular denominational services held weekly.

First Congregational, organized by Reverend E.H. Alden (immortalized in the *Little House on the Prairie* series) was one of the first churches to meet regularly, with services in Comee's Furniture Shop. They then moved to the Odd Fellows Hall, until 1871 when their church at 317 East Elm was finished. In 1890, the church building was moved to its current location at 503 2nd Avenue NE. That church burned when struck by lightning in 1951, and was rebuilt on the same site in 1952.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church, on 4th Street NW and Elm Avenue, is still one of the city's most significant historic landmarks. The first church building was constructed in 1874, with a boarding school added in 1887. The present church replaced the original building in 1900, and a school constructed in 1923; there are also other nearby accessory buildings including a rectory (1950), school addition (1955), dining hall (1956) and high school (1958, now housing the entire school of grades 1-4 and preschool). The Sacred Heart steeple marks the highest point in Waseca.

German immigrants started two Methodist churches. Salem Evangelical Church was built in 1875, after years of the congregation meeting at various properties. A new church was built in 1902, and the congregation experienced many mergers and changes. It is now called the Evangelical United Methodist Church, and meets in a 1960 church building located at 309 6th Street NE. Concurrently, the German-speaking M.E. Church was organized in Waseca County in 1858, while the English-speaking version began meeting in the Odd Fellows Hall in 1866. The two congregations merged in 1920,



Sacred Heart Catholic Church

meeting in the church that now houses the Waseca County Historical Society. Due to a national merger, the church is now called the Faith United Methodist Church, and meets in a 1962 church building at 801 4th Avenue NE.

The Calvary Episcopal Church began simply enough with home meetings at the Trowbridge residence. After meeting in various other halls and buildings, the congregation bought land from Trowbridge at East Elm Avenue and 3rd Street NE, constructing a new church building in 1929. Attendance fell when the mill closed, and many of its executives, who were church members, moved out of town. In 1959 the congregation traded buildings with Grace Lutheran Church, moving the smaller building to 700 7th Street NE, enlarging it, and adding a parsonage. This church has now closed and is in private use.



St. John Lutheran Church

The several Lutheran churches in Waseca all have Scandinavian or German ties. St. John Lutheran Church began as a German-speaking church. Their church at 314 4th Street NE dates from 1929, with a mid-1960s educational wing and parsonage. Another church with German beginnings is St. Paul's Lutheran at 314 4th Avenue NE, in a 1924 building. The Grace Lutheran Church began as a Norwegian-speaking congregation; a splinter group, wanting English services, split off in 1922. The congregations re-united in 1938 and grew quickly, trading buildings with Calvary in 1959. They still meet at 300 East Elm Avenue, and are one of Waseca's larger congregations.

Smaller congregations had more recent buildings, including: The Evangelical Free Church, formed in 1960 — their building at 808 8th Avenue NW was built in 1962; The Wesleyan Methodist Church at 605 4th Street NE, formed in 1961 and with church dating from 1962 (now closed and the building used as apartments); and the Grace Baptist Church, which met in various locations from 1961 until its facility was constructed in 1968 — they now meet in a simple, wood frame church at 1221 8th Street SE. There are still more recent and smaller congregations that continue to meet in rented space.

As well as their strong religious presence, Waseca's churches had an important effect on other social initiatives. The city hosted a strong temperance movement from 1878 until the turn of the century. James Child's *Minnesota Radical* was a conservative, temperance based newspaper. There were also many Luther League, Christian Endeavor, and Ladies Auxiliary groups.

Social Organizations and Clubs

The churches, with their schools and Sunday schools, choirs, Ladies Auxiliaries, Bible study groups, and other activities, provided diverse social activities to their members. However, Waseca also had a number of other social organizations that proved extremely popular.

Perhaps the most colorful of these is the Waseca County Anti-Horse Thief Detective Society, which is said to have begun in 1864 to combat Civil War deserters stealing horses and goods from farmsteads while the men were at war. Waseca is said to have hosted several notorious horse thieves, including Dayton "Date" Smith whose Italianate-style house is now the home of the WCHS library.

Fraternal organization have also flourished in Waseca. The Tuscan Masonic Lodge (and their sister society the Eastern Star) began in 1868; they purchased the Aughenbaugh house when it was threatened in 1931 and have

met there since. The Odd Fellows (and Rebekah Lodge's) turn of the century building at 2nd Street and 3rd Avenue NE served the community for many years as a community gathering place and meeting house; it is now privately owned, with a candy shop on the street level and apartments above. The Elks Lodge met in a clubhouse on Clear Lake that later became King Melody and is now lost. Waseca also has chapters of the Shriners, Lions and the Knights of Columbus.

There are also several youth and seniors groups. The Cedar Valley Boy Scouts, which began in 1915 and for years owned property in the former Maplewood Park, are especially well known.

Arts and Culture

Arts and cultural activities also had a particular role in Waseca's social life. With a number of activities ranging from amateur to professional, plus the Chautauqua in the summer, the average Waseca had many such activities to choose from.

Waseca had several theater venues. W.G. Ward bought a former gymnasium at the corner of Trowbridge Park in 1880, installed a stage, and renamed it Ward's Opera House. The Opera House hosted local and touring stage presentations, dances, music, and other events until it burned in 1910. Vaudeville continued thereafter at the Palace Theater on State Street, which opened in 1912 and ran live performance alternating with films. This was followed by the State Theatre and the Park Theatre.

Encouraged by the success of the Chautauqua, beginning in 1928 the Aulger Brothers Stock Company set up a 300-seat performance tent in Trowbridge Park in the late spring/early summer. The Aulgers were also great sponsors of the high school theater program, beginning a tradition of school and community theater that continues to this day.

Music was an especially important part of Waseca life, with the city's first brass band organized in 1868. For the first half of the 1900s, State Street had two music stores in friendly competition with each other — Kozan's and Perrin's, located right next door to each other. Dresden "Dutch" Perrin had come to Waseca in 1900 to direct the "Little Dutch Band," adding a town band in 1914 and an orchestra in 1924. The Waseca band was especially known for its patriotic music during WWI, and was featured at the 1916 Minnesota State Fair. Perrin sold his store to Ruth and Joe Kozan in 1952, and the store, now called Waseca Music, still carries on the tradition today.

The Trowbridge Park Bandstand

Music was especially featured at the Trowbridge Park Bandstand, erected in 1915 by the Ella (Trowbridge) Ward and Augusta (Trowbridge) Jenkins and their families to honor town founder Ira Trowbridge. It was at this time that the name of the park was also changed, from City Park to Trowbridge Park.

The Bandstand, which cost \$1,500 to build, was constructed of concrete to be "fireproof," with a stucco finish and tin roof designed to emulate terra-cotta tiles. The main part was a covered band platform, with high walls but open sides,



Early postcard of the bandstand labeled "Grand Stand"

designed so that music could be broadcast to all directions. The basement was divided into restrooms, storage, and a confectionary stand.

The Bandstand has suffered some neglect, and in recent years has been unused. However, due to its sturdy construction it could be easily restored and used again for community functions; its restoration and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places is an HPC priority.

Gathering Spaces and Festivals

There was another kind of social life in Waseca, a less organized, but no less important one. It revolved around informal gathering spaces — restaurants and cafes, bars and saloons, and other social establishments. Even today, whether it is morning coffee or an afternoon beer, it is these kinds of places to which one goes to sense the spirit of the place.

Many of these were historically located along State Street, such as the Busy Bee, Clayton & Nelson's/Wicklow's soft drink parlor, the Pheasant Café, the Corner Lunch, and various hotel restaurants. As detailed later in the study, Loon Lake had a dance hall on its island, and clubs ringed Clear Lake, including Dude's Place, the White Castle, the Hill Top and King Melody. As well as gathering at these places, everyone from teenagers to families would "cruise" between them, along State Street or around Clear Lake.

Waseca also hosted more organized events that served as get-togethers for the entire community. The Village of Waseca held its first town picnic in June, 1869 at Maple Hill. This became an annual event that almost everyone in the town attended. The town was also known for its holiday celebrations, including an annual Memorial Day parade and celebration and a Fourth of July event that includes the yearly Horse Thief Detective Picnic.

The Waseca Sleigh and Cutter Festival is the longest running such event in the United States. Founded by Einer Iversen, Lee Gilchrist, and Ed Priebe in 1950, the festival includes dog races, ice fishing, a run, children's events, snow sculpting, and curling. The highlight of the celebration is a parade wending through town, featuring horse drawn sleighs and other vehicles pulled along the snowy streets. The Sleigh and Cutter Festival is predicated by earlier winter events, including ice festivals on Winter's Point on Clear Lake that drew hundreds of people for ice masquerades.

In the summertime, Waseca residents gathered at the County Fair. The County Agricultural Society formed in 1870 to hold the first fair, and the fairgrounds were purchased in 1894. The annual fair is still held on this 8th Avenue NE site; these buildings and facilities should be included in a citywide preservation plan.

Parks and Public Land

Perhaps the most distinctive recreation advantage Waseca has possessed, however, is its attractive and well-developed park system. In planning the town, Trowbridge, Ward, and Jenkins wanted to ensure that the inherent beauty of the area, situated between the two lakes, was preserved, and so planned public green space from the beginning. Although parks were not originally landscaped, they were planned for, and developed over time.

Maplewood Park

Waseca's first park has traditionally been a tourist and recreation area, hosting the city's first picnic in 1869. Developed for tourism and recreation, it was a Chautauqua site until the turn of the century, and hosted a boy camp and University of Minnesota facilities after that. Most buildings in the park have today been lost, and the

large park is used as a public picnic ground and for boy scout camping (as well as the annual Chautauqua reenactment by the WCHS.)

Clear Lake Park

This park, dedicated in 1930, is a local recreational spot more focused on Waseca's residents than its tourists. It includes a swimming area and bathhouse, a bandstand, picnic facilities, a children's playground, and recreational fields.

Trowbridge Park

Originally called City Park, this central green space was an original feature of the town. Renamed "Trowbridge Park" to honor the city's founder when the bandstand was installed in 1915, it was originally a smaller space, but has since encompassed land originally used by Oak Grove School and other public buildings. The topography was originally a wetland when a shallow canal connected Loon Lake and Clear Lake.

Waseca is dotted with twelve other parks and green space, including Memorial Park (where most of the debris from the 1967 tornado is buried), Emerson Park, Southview Park, University Park, Northwest Park, and Oak Park, plus two public spaces on Loon Lake (one on the island, as discussed in the next context).

Although they vary widely in age and level of development, these green spaces are crucial to Waseca's identity and should be included in a preservation plan.

Sports in Waseca

In the same way that community arts were important in Waseca, its amateur sports were equally treasured.

Waseca was especially known for some unusual sporting activities. With several stables in the area, equine activities were especially prevalent. Harness racing was popular at the county fair during the 1920s and 1930s, and there was a horseshoe pit in Trowbridge Park (it has since moved to groomed facilities in Clear Lake Park).

Baseball and softball were probably Waseca's most popular sports, however. The Clear Lake Baseball Club started in 1869, but ran for only one year. By the early to mid 1900s Waseca had multiple baseball and softball club teams, including the town amateur team, the Braves.



Grandstands at Tink Larson Field

A fascinating part of Waseca's baseball history was the EACO Mill team of 1900-1901. This team had a winning record 42 of 57 games, and won the state championships in both 1900 and 1901. Perhaps more remarkable for the time was that, of the ten team members, five were African-American, at a time when such teams were generally not integrated, and when few people of color lived in Waseca. The pitcher, George Wilson, was well known in the Negro Leagues.

The Southern Minny League was organized in 1937 and included Waseca, Owatonna, Faribault, Winona, Rochester, Austin, Albert Lea, and Mankato. Waseca was one of the top teams in the league, and drew large home game audiences.

These teams played in Tink Larson Field (formerly known as the Waseca Community Field), a field with wooden stadium bleachers built in 1939. The field was renamed in 1994 to honor a local high school coach. The field is an excellent example of a traditional, outdoor facility, and has strong integrity, as well as an important role in the city's history.

Property Types

Churches and related buildings

- Parochial schools
- Convents and monasteries
- Church social halls
- Rectories and other residences
- Church administrative buildings and offices
- Cemeteries

Meeting halls and social halls

- Ethnic organizations
- Fraternal organizations
 - Tuscan Masonic Lodge / Aughenbaugh house
 - Odd Fellows Hall
- Social organizations
- Multi-purpose meeting halls
- Union halls

Arts and culture

- Theaters
- Chautauqua and other tent sites
- Music halls and associated
 - Waseca Music

Recreation

- Bars, taverns, sample rooms and saloons
- Billiards
- Bowling alleys
- Dance halls and classes
- Museums
- Music halls and concert halls
- Restaurants and cafes
- Sports grounds and ball fields
 - Tink Larson Field

Parks

- Grounds
- Gardens
- Trails
- Buildings
- Structures (gazebos, walls, picnic tables, etc.)
 - Trowbridge Bandstand

Fairgrounds

Festival sites

Context Recommendations

- Waseca's churches are a crucial part of the city's history. Many original churches have been lost; others have been deconsecrated and put into alternate use; many have been moved (even by just a few feet); some still remain. In many cases, religious cultural resources are lost because congregations need to expand on limited budgets, and in the past have been ineligible for federal tax credits due to their non-profit status. The new Minnesota tax credit does have a non-profit*

provision, and should be helpful in this regard. The HPC should work with local churches to ensure that resources are protected and interpreted.

- *Two of Waseca's fraternal halls, the Tuscan Masonic Lodge/Aughenbaugh house and the Odd Fellows Hall, have been especially significant in the city's history for a variety of reasons. The HPC should investigate protection of these resources, perhaps through a local designation system.*
- *Parks play such an important role in the development of the city that they should receive special attention, including interpretation and designation.*
- *The HPC should prioritize attempts to restore the Trowbridge bandstand appropriately, and to list it on the National Register of Historic Places.*
- *The HPC should encourage and support events such as the Sleigh and Cutter Festival.*
- *The HPC should work to preserve and protect Tink Larson Field, and to better interpret its history for ballpark visitors.*
- *The HPC should work to preserve and protect the fairgrounds, perhaps setting up an interpretive exhibit and events.*



The Bandstand in Trowbridge Park

Context 7—Tourism and Recreation

Time span – 1870s to 1950s

Recreation as a Context

Aside from its commercial, agricultural, transportation, and entrepreneurial assets, Waseca has another, less tangible attribute — its natural assets. The 1884 Minnesota Board of Immigration commented:

Clear Lake ... is the most attractive, aesthetic feature about Waseca. With high banks and wooded shores, filled with fish, and having a delightful drive around its entire shore, it is a gem of beauty...

With this natural beauty, and with many travelers passing through, it was not long until Waseca also became recognized as a tourist destination.

For the purposes of this work, “Recreation” shall be defined as activities and buildings that are primarily established for others to come in and enjoy, such as hotels, natural features, and entertainment centers. This is not to say that local residents did not also avail themselves of these pleasures, especially the lakes and outdoor activities. But the main parts of this context are the things that drew outsiders to come to Waseca, which made it a distinctive destination point. Many other amusements, those designed particularly for the local residents such as organizations and gathering spots, are covered in Context 6 – Social and Cultural. The extent to which these two related contexts overlap demonstrates the recreation-focused themes of the town.

Waseca is included in the Minnesota statewide context of “Minnesota’s Tourism and Recreation, 1870-1945.”

Loon Lake

Defining the western edge of Waseca, Loon Lake was originally a marsh, averaging about two feet deep until 1868. Railroad work, and later the EACO mill, greatly affected the water level, both taking on water for the engines and mechanics and returning clear water. That, plus a railroad trestle built along the east side of the lake, eventually rendered the water a “clear but shallow” true lake, with an average depth of seven feet. The increase in water depth also reclaimed Latham Avenue.

Small and shallow as it is, Loon Lake was a very active recreation site. A peninsula on the north side led to a small, wooded island, which was described as “aspiring to Coney Island” in its entertainment focus (the peninsula is now gone, and the park is a true island). Known as “Ward Island” because W.G. Ward ran a beer and dance hall on the island, the August 1887 newspaper reports that “Dances on Ward Island occur almost every night. And the steamer whirls the people over and back at a lively rate.” In 1888, John Myers added a lunch room, card room, and shooting gallery to the island’s attractions.

The steamer referred to above ran from Bill Topal’s boat landing on the southeast shore of the lake, running ferry service, excursions, and fishing trips until 1920. The Fell family, who had purchased the island in 1898, retained it and continued some activities on it until 1957, when they sold it to the city for \$300 for use as a public park. The city rip-rapped the island with stone and planted over forty evergreens, only a few of which remain today.

Loon Lake was drained and dredged in 1979, and in the 1980s the DNR restocked it with fish, and the city banned motorized lake traffic. Today it is a small and peaceful lake, with little hint of its original notoriety.

The Canal

A shallow canal connected Loon Lake on the west side of Waseca to Clear Lake on the east, through what is now the center of town and Trowbridge Park. Reports vary as to exactly how substantial this canal was — it probably was far deeper with spring melts and rainfall, for example, and marshier at other times. It was large enough to have a small bay area (often called “Brewery Bay” or more colorfully “Andy’s Stink”), but likely not deep enough for full boat traffic. Twelve-foot boardwalks in the center of town allowed people to cross the canal easily.

The canal eventually was re-routed underground, where it still dampens some basements in the spring.

Clear Lake

Clear Lake, on Waseca’s eastern edge, is perhaps the city’s defining natural feature, so much so that the small settlement of Clear Lake City actually predates Waseca. At 685 acres, and averaging seventeen feet deep, its waters remained remarkably clear until the 1950s, and it has been called the “best fishing lake in Southern Minnesota.”

In 1883, Ira Trowbridge was one of the first to capitalize on tourism on Clear Lake. He and partner A.P. Jamison began to run *The Commodore*, a small steamer that had previously run Lake Minnetonka excursions, for daily trips during the summer.



Clear Lake boat dock

In the early 1900s there were seven boathouses surrounding the lake. The best known was Thompson’s Boathouse, built by Nate Thompson and Charlie Grant on the south shore in 1910. Thompson’s ran 38-foot ferries back and forth to North Star Park and Maplewood, at the rate of 15¢ round-trip; they also ran fishing excursions and day-trips. Nate Thompson made Thompson’s especially remarkable because he also built fishing boats, 18 foot by 5 foot solid wood craft seemingly designed for the waters of Clear Lake. Nate’s son Ray Thompson and his wife Blanche ran the business from 1951-1976. The restaurant continued operation under various owners. After a fire in 1988, it is now a restaurant called Boat House Grill and Bar.

All of the boat launches took advantage of Clear Lake’s excellent fishing. The lake was known for its pike, walleye, catfish, crappies, bluegills, and bass, and for its avid fishermen resisting the lake being stocked with carp in 1885. It was also popular for winter ice fishing.

Recreational spots abounded on Clear Lake, serving a variety of constituencies.

North Star Park was a resort on the northwest side of Clear Lake, on what had been Smith’s homestead. With a double-decked boathouse, campground and boat launch run by Herb Starr, it was very popular, with Starr’s launch bringing in consistent traffic.

Maplewood Park, on Clear Lake’s eastern shore, is Waseca’s first park and a favorite tourist destination. It was also a local favorite spot, the site of the annual Waseca picnic and the Chautauqua grounds. In private

ownership by Moses Plumber and called Plumber's Point until 1882, this park was originally rather remote, accessible only by boat or walking paths. The thick forestry, all the more prevalent since it was on the edge of the prairie, marked the far edge of the "Big Woods."

In 1883, the legislature approved bonds for a roadway around the lake and to the park. New land owner A.P. Jamison, Reverends Jennings and Stower, and seven board members founded the Maplewood Park Association/Waseca Chautauqua Assembly, whose mission was to develop the park, and hold camp meetings, Sunday school assemblies, meetings for religious instruction and worship, and mutual improvement in moral, literary and social culture. Stock was sold to initially fund the endeavor.

Clear Lake Park, at 8th Avenue NE, was dedicated on July 4, 1930, as Waseca's recreational park on the lake. It has had numerous facilities over the years, including a swimming beach, bathhouse, picnic shelter, bandstand, playground, tennis courts, and ball fields, but no camping or lodging facilities.

Chautauqua

The Chautauqua movement was perhaps the most influential rural educational and entertainment initiatives of the 19th century. The movement was founded in 1874 at Lake Chautauqua in New York as further training for area teachers, but soon became a place where families could gather for days of education and entertainment.

By the end of the 1800s, the movement had spread throughout the nation with 21 traveling Chautauquas operating on 93 circuits. They reached over 35 million people a year, with estimates that one out of three Americans participated in some sort of Chautauqua activity in the period between 1890-1920. A number of famous personalities were featured on the circuit, including William Jennings Bryan and Teddy Roosevelt, who remarked "Chautauqua is the most American thing in America!" It is rumored, but not confirmed, that both Mark Twain and John Phillips Sousa toured Waseca's Chautauqua.

Some communities maintained permanent Chautauqua facilities, but in most areas, the large tent would set up in a temporary spot. Topics included religion, politics, science, literature, music, oratory, and drama, providing a "feast of reason and flow of soul."

Waseca's Chautauqua was extremely popular, providing a high point of city and tourism activities from 1883-1898 (the year that the hotel burned). Hundreds of people attended daily presentations by speakers including preachers, writers, politicians, and even musical acts, enjoying "the delights of culture amid the works of nature." Admission was a nickel, free for children under five. The event was such a summer standard that the railroads ran a special spur to the park, adding lines, and entire businesses survived off of yearly rentals of tents and other goods to Chautauqua visitors.

Although their peak was at the end of the 1800s, some Chautauquas continued into the 20th century, although their focus was entertainment-based, and less on education. By the 1930s, competition from movies and radio, as well as the impact of the Depression, had taken their toll, and the traveling shows folded up their tents for good.

Today, the Chautauquas are recreated annually for one day every summer, as a program of the Waseca County Historical Society — and admission is still just 5¢!

Accommodations

Unlike the downtown hotels, which catered to travelers and businessmen, the lakeside lodgings were designed for families and summer recreation.

Maplewood Park was especially well equipped with tourist accommodations. The Maplewood Hotel, built in 1883, was often considered southern Minnesota's nicest hotel. Three stories, with forty guest rooms, a large lobby and equally spacious parlor, and an airy dining room, the hotel was wrapped on two sides with a full three-story veranda to catch lake breezes and promote the view. Other structures included the Tabernacle — a 500-seat open sided, roofed auditorium, and an 80-foot wooden water slide, where riders slid over one hundred feet into the lake at the base.

Unfortunately, the hotel burned in 1898, which marked the end of the Chautauqua era.

The park was also populated with forty wooden platforms, where tourists could rent tents and furniture from Grapp Furniture and set up for a few days or the entire summer. Maplewood Park also housed a small community of thirty private cottages, with winding roads and full infrastructure. These provided summer residences for wealthy Waseca families but also others, including the Doctors Mayo from Rochester, who according to local legend, initially considered locating their clinic in Waseca.

After the Chautauqua ended, Maplewood Park fell into decline, and was acquired by Guy Everett. Upon his death it was deeded to his brother, E.A. Everett, who in turn left it to the Cedar Valley Boy Scouts. When the Boy Scouts fell into tax arrears, it went to the University of Minnesota, per the terms of Everett's will. Today, very few buildings remain, but those that do should be preserved. Among these are a pavilion, cabins, and bathrooms, all built in the 1920s by the Cedar Valley Boy Scout Troop.

Lodging at Lake Aire, which opened in 1950 (mainly for extended stays) and Kiesler's Campground, which opened in 1973, are much more recent additions to Waseca's tourist facilities.

Over at Loon Lake, the log cabins at Veteran's Landing were originally built as temporary housing for soldiers coming back from WWII. Following that, they were used as tourist summer cabins. They have since been restored to rustic charm by local preservationist Gene Miller.

Nightlife and Events

Although Ward's dance hall on Loon Lake Island was well known, Clear Lake had the majority of the nightclubs. Unfortunately, none of them remain. The Hill Top Inn, built on the western shore in the 1940s, then became the Alano Club and was razed in 1985. Its neighbor, Dude's Place, was also torn down and is now townhomes. The White Castle, on the north shore, was a popular club and card hall, destroyed in the 1967 tornado. The Elks Club of 1924 became King Melody, and burned in 1985.

Clear Lake was also a popular spot for Winter Carnival events. The lake ice was cleared and lighted for skating starting in the late 1890s, and music was broadcast out over the ice. The newspaper estimated that over 500 people attended the winter ice masquerade on January 18, 1898.



Postcard photograph that reads: "EVERETT HORMEL BOY SCOUT CAMP NEAR WASECA, MINN."

Property Types

Natural effects

Clear Lake
Loon Lake
Canal remnants

Public spaces

Beaches
Parks
 Loon Lake Island
 Maplewood Park
 Clear Lake Park

Tourism

Hotels and cabins
 Maplewood Park sites
 Maplewood Hotel and amenities, including water slide
 North Star Park
 Lake Aire
 Kiesler's
 Veteran's Landing
Nightclubs and entertainment
 Winter Carnival sites
Boat launches
 Thompson's
Chautauqua site

Context Recommendations

- *The remnants of Maplewood Park structures should be surveyed, and a preservation plan enacted.*
- *Although most of the entertainment resources have been lost, the HPC should find a way to interpret what was there. One suggestion would be a driving tour that provides information on, and historic photos of, the sites.*
- *The annual recreation of the Chautauqua is an accessible and fun event, and should be supported.*
- *The island on Loon Lake should be interpreted, since its use has changed so much.*
- *Natural resources are often not considered in preservation efforts. Since the lakes are so prevalent in, and important to Waseca, they should factor into future planning and preservation endeavors.*

Context 8—Residential

Time Span – 1868-1960s

Preserving Waseca's varied housing stock is probably the Heritage Preservation Commission's biggest challenge. Most residents, when asked about the city's historic homes, will cite the city's grand mansions, especially along Elm Avenue and in the northeast quadrant of the city. They may not think of their own home as remarkable or historic at all. Yet the fact remains that Waseca has a wide variety of historic homes, ranging from early Italianates to grand Queen Annes, from picturesque Craftsman bungalows to pristine mid-century ranch houses. All of these fit into a continuum that demonstrates Waseca's rich history, and all should be considered in a preservation plan.

Luckily, Waseca's housing stock also has a great deal of integrity. Providing residents with clear and accessible information about their house is probably the best way to draw them in to historic preservation. People love their homes, and are usually eager to preserve and protect them. By demonstrating how each house style fits into Waseca's historic contexts, and by providing preservation information to homeowners, the HPC will gain many new supporters and advocates, while having a dramatic effect upon the preservation of the city's housing stock.

It cannot be ignored, however, that Waseca's most predominant homes, especially the National Register designated residential properties, are the keystone to the city's preservation efforts. This context considers first these four main properties followed by a listing of other prominent family homes in Waseca.

This section then presents a detailed and illustrated synopsis of the city's housing styles. The style section may prove to be the most valuable part of the entire context study for Waseca homeowners, because it allows them to see their particular home within a larger historic framework.

The study then goes on to investigate special features, such as streetscapes and multi-family housing. Similar to other contexts, it then ends with a list of property types and future recommendations.

National Register Properties

The following Waseca residences are currently individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

Philo C. Bailey House

401 2nd Ave NE

areas of significance: politics/ government, social history

One of the oldest homes in Waseca, this brick Italianate was built in 1868 and currently serves as the Waseca County Historical Society library. The house was built by Dayton "Date" Smith, rumored to be a Civil War horse thief. Bailey was the owner of the first hardware store in town; that building (no longer extant) housed the first church services and was the first to be electrified in 1892. He purchased the house in 1872, and lived there until his death in 1907. Bailey was an early leader in local commercial, cultural, and social development.

William R. Wolf House

522 2nd Ave NE

areas of significance: architecture, commerce

The Wolf house, built by merchant William R. Wolf in 1895, is Waseca's best example of the Queen Anne style and representative of the town's "boom years." It is representative of the development of the northeast quadrant of the town by the town's leading citizens, filling it with Waseca's most notable mansions. The home was sold at auction in 2000 and is now a bed and breakfast.

Roscoe Percy Ward House

804 Elm Ave. E.

areas of significance: architecture, commerce, politics/ government

Perhaps the most striking house in Waseca, this classically-detailed Neoclassical white clapboard house, with its four enormous main columns, was built in 1896 by the son of town founder and first mayor W.G. Ward. Roscoe Percy Ward was a prominent Waseca citizen in his own right, active in the financial and political arenas. The home's striking style, as well as its location on Elm Avenue as you come into town, likely makes it the most recognizable home in the city.

John W. Aughenbaugh House

831 3rd Ave NE

areas of significance: architecture, industry

Aughenbaugh built this brick Italian Renaissance home in 1897, demonstrating how successful his milling business had become. Situated overlooking Clear Lake, with its wide, wrap-around porch, this home also has a well-preserved interior, which is sometimes opened to Waseca residents at holiday time. The Tuscan Masonic Lodge purchased the property in 1931, when it was threatened by demolition after the last of the Aughenbaughs passed away.

Other Prominent Properties

Waseca has many other prominent homes, which have not yet been listed on the National Register but which are locally significant. Some prominent examples of these are:

Krassin House

931 3rd Street SW

circa late 1860s/early 1870s?

A stone, brick and clapboard house built in several different stages.

Neidt House

3rd Avenue NE at 3rd St

circa 1870s

Originally the first church in Waseca, built by Ira Trowbridge

Herter House

615 E. Elm Avenue

circa 1870s

Frame Italianate house.

Guy Everett House

814 E. Elm Avenue

circa 1890

A clapboard Queen Anne originally built by Earl Ward.

Smith House

801 3rd Avenue NE

circa 1890s

Another Queen Anne, owned by six-term mayor Charles A. Smith.

Charles Leuthold House

824 E. Elm Avenue

1898

A grand home built by architect Frederick Kees for Leuthold, founder and owner of the Leuthold Brothers Clothing chain.

Rinehart Miller House

6th and E. Elm Avenue

circa 1900?

A late Italianate built by a prominent local businessman.

Trowbrige House

106 4th Avenue NE

circa 1880s

Town founder Ira Trowbridge's home. The house faced State Street until 1900, when it was turned to face the park.

Lindell House

819 3rd Avenue NE

circa 1910

Queen Anne with circular parlor rooms in the corner, now altered with a front garage.

"First Electric House"

510 3rd Avenue NE

circa 1923

On public display by Wolf Electric to demonstrate "modern electrical conveniences."

Eugene B. Collester House

621 3rd Avenue NE

1892

A distinctive Victorian home with several original features.



The Sam Loftus house in Waseca ca. 1905 is an excellent example of the "Gabled-Ell/Homestead Cottage" architecture

Housing Styles

Waseca displays a wide range of different kinds of residential architecture, many of which are historic. It is important to understand the types of architecture present in order to understand how to preserve these homes and to guide sympathetic future development.

To this end, the following pages of this context spend no small amount of time on defining and clarifying various styles of vernacular architecture, as well as giving examples and visual references. The end of the context touches on some associated issues, including design elements such as outbuildings and fencing, as well as considering apartment units.

The Gothic Revival Cottage **Predominant period 1850s to early 1880s**

Gothic inspired homes, often referred to as “cottages,” were popularized by Andrew Jackson Downing in two successful pattern books, *Cottage Residences* and *The Architecture of Country Houses*, and are based loosely on ecclesiastical architecture.

Identifying characteristics:

- Gothic arched detailing
- steeply pitched roofs, often with steep cross gables
- strong vertical orientation, often with full porch or one-story entry
- heavy decorative ornamentation, made possible by the innovation of the scroll saw



*While there are no outstanding examples of Gothic Revival residential architecture in Waseca, this residence at **607 Second Avenue NE** displays the steep pitch and decorative vergeboards of the style.*

Italianate

Predominant period 1850s to late 1880s

The Italianate style evolved from the romantic notion of the northern Italian houses and landscapes depicted in late eighteenth-century paintings. These residences often strongly influenced the architecture of the commercial storefront of the late nineteenth century. A typical Italianate is two to three stories high, is characterized by a square or rectangular shape, and is of stone or wood frame construction. The style is particularly prevalent in rapidly expanding Midwestern towns such as Waseca.

Identifying characteristics:

- rectangular or square plan
- vertical orientation, with tall windows and doors
- wide eaves supported on large ornamental brackets
- projecting door and window crowns, often arched or hooded

Examples in Waseca are:

401 Second Avenue NE

402 Second Avenue NE

621 East Elm Avenue



402 Second Avenue NE



Although this home at 312 Second Avenue NE has lost much of its former detailing, its basic profile and bracketed soffit remains.



*House with Italianate influences at
401 Second Avenue NE*



*The home at **621 East Elm Avenue** is another example of the Italianate style rendered in lap siding.*

French Second Empire

Predominant period 1870s to 1880s

This style was somewhat contemporary with its French inspiration of the 1850s-1870s and was therefore considered very stylish and modern. The most distinctive feature of this style is the boxy, mansard roof, which was considered particularly desirable because it allowed for a full story of usable space; for this reason, it was common during the period to remodel earlier homes to a modified Second Empire style. Pure examples of the style are relatively uncommon, as the predominant period was short-lived.

Identifying characteristics:

- dual pitched, mansard roof with flat, convex, or concave lower slope
- arched dormer windows projecting from a lower roof slope
- lower slope defined by a molded cornice at top and bottom
- eaves usually bracketed



*The house at **700 Third Avenue SE** is a good example of the French cottage with its Mansard roof with dormers*

Queen Anne

Predominant period 1880s to approximately 1910

This popular style, considered by many to be the quintessential Victorian style, mixes medieval, Elizabethan, and Jacobean elements in asymmetrical collections of architectural details. In particular, the use of highly ornate spindle work was an American interpretation of the style popularized by the distribution of pre-cut architectural elements through the rapidly expanding railway system. Whether architect-designed or vernacular, Queen Anne homes, with their distinctive ornamentation, wide front porches, and romantic towers and turrets, are a favorite Midwestern house style.

Identifying characteristics:

- asymmetrical composition of towers, tall chimneys, and steeply pitched roofs
- front facing gable
- wrap around, one-story porches with ornate spindle work
- exterior texture through shingles, bay windows, and other details

Examples in Waseca include:

106 Fourth Avenue NE

522 Second Avenue NE

601 Second Avenue NE

621 East Elm Avenue

621 Third Avenue NE

814 East Elm Avenue



522 Second Avenue NE is an excellent example of the Queen Anne style in Waseca.

106 Fourth Avenue NE



601 Second Avenue NE is a fine example of the Queen Anne cottage



620 East Elm Avenue



621 Third Avenue NE

Gabled-El/Homestead Cottage

Predominant period 1880s to late 1950s

The Gabled -El layout refers to the non-style conscious house design which evolved from the rural dwelling of the 1870s to the modern home after the turn of the century. Simple in layout, and home to an emerging working class, the Homestead dwelling rejected the ornate architectural detailing of the former century and remained simple, utilitarian, and popular through the mid-century.

Identifying characteristics:

- minimal architectural detailing
- defined by shape, rather than architectural detailing
- tri-gabled, in the shape of an L, with the front porch tucked into the crook of the L
- brick or wood frame construction with clapboard siding
- simple, box-like massing



Gabled-El/Homestead cottage at 802 North State Street

Colonial Revival

Predominant period early 1880s to late 1950s

The Colonial Revival style draws its influence from the Georgian, Adams, and Dutch architecture of the east coast. The revival style usually strays from strict historical interpretation and tends to be eclectic, using a mixture of details (often exaggerated) from the high styles of colonial architectures and contemporary elements. Variations include Dutch Colonial and Spanish Colonial.

Identifying characteristics:

- symmetrical façade with central entrance
- slender columned porch
- door defined with fanlight and sidelights
- windows often double hung with multi-pane glazing, frequently in adjacent pairs

Examples in Waseca include:

Eighth Street SE & Third Avenue SE

110 Fourth Avenue NE

201 Third Avenue NE

601 Third Street NE

705 Third Avenue NE

822 Third Avenue SE

110 Fourth Avenue NE



610 Fourth Avenue NE is a good example of the Colonial Revival with a Gambrel roof



Colonial cottage at 601 Third Street NE

Italian Renaissance

Predominant period 1890s to late 1930s

The Italian Renaissance revival style, in the first quarter of the 20th century, recalled grand architectural forms and asserted itself as an icon of “civilized” Mediterranean style over the regional American architectural types. The style was partially popularized by Edith Wharton’s popular 1904 publication titled, *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*—illustrated by Maxfield Perish.

The style received national attention with the design of the 1883 Villard Houses in New York by the renowned architecture firm of McKim, Mead & White. The style was introduced as a strong contrast to the medieval inspired Shingle and Queen Anne styles.

Identifying characteristics:

- low pitched hipped roofs
- upper story windows less elaborate than lower windows
- upper story often followed the Italian tradition of being shorter than the first
- entrances usually accented with classical columns and/or pilasters
- second story porches over entries
- quoins may appear on building corners
- light-hued stone or brick facades



801 Third Street NE

American Foursquare

Predominant period mid-1890s to mid-1940s

The American Foursquare is not a style but rather a generic house type whose name is derived from its American invention, the interior layout of four major rooms per floor, and its nearly square footprint. As a reaction to the ornamentation of the Victorian architecture of the last half of 19th century, the foursquare was often plain with the interior displaying handcrafted woodwork more similar to Craftsman homes. Since it was not a style, the exterior had the unique ability to be rendered with simplified details of the Neoclassical, Prairie School, or Craftsman architecture. The utility of its square plan made this housing type a good fit for modest city lots.

Identifying characteristics:

- hipped, pyramidal roof
- two-and-a-half stories tall
- square, boxy design and foundation footprint
- often four major rooms per floor
- center dormer, often with dormers on all four roof slopes
- single-story porch that spans the front facade
- wide, centered porch stairs

Examples in Waseca include:

513 2nd Avenue NE

604 2nd Avenue NE



The clapboard home at 604 2nd Avenue NE shows most of the identifying characteristics of a typical American Foursquare.



The facade of 513 2nd Avenue NE displays details of the English cottage often found in Craftsman bungalows.

Neoclassical/Classical Influence

Predominant period mid-1890s to mid-1950s

The Neoclassical style and classically inspired exterior detailing were very popular in domestic building during the first half of the twentieth century. The Neoclassical style refers back to the inspiration of Roman philosophy and architecture. A resurgence of interest in this style occurred after Chicago's Columbian Exhibition of 1893 and its famous "White City." The classical style is particularly evident in the Midwest. However, with many residential designs, style definitions are not always clear cut. Classical detailing is often mixed with the Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, American Foursquare, and other building styles and compositions.

Identifying characteristics:

- portico (entry porch), sometimes two stories, is a major element of the front facade
- porch roof supported by simple columns
- windows align in vertical and horizontal rows, symmetrically balanced
- fanlights over entrance
- classical cornice, Palladian windows, and decorative urns

Examples in Waseca include:

606 Fifth Street SW

608 East Elm Avenue

615 East Elm Avenue

804 East Elm Avenue

824 East Elm Avenue



804 East Elm Avenue is a fine example of the Neoclassical style.



615 East Elm Avenue displays classical detailing with Queen Anne massing.



824 East Elm Avenue displays an exterior with classical details such as porch columns with Ionic capitals, the small centered oval window, swags on the frieze, and modillions under the eaves.

Prairie

Predominant period approximately 1900 to 1920s

The Prairie style, indigenous to America, was developed and popularized through the Chicago School of Architecture and the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. The horizontal emphasis in the banding of windows and wide overhanging eaves was a philosophical response to the prairie origin of the style. Though pure Prairie styling in an architect-designed home is relatively rare, elements of the style, including banded windows, wide front porches with massive columns, and the wide, symmetrical style, are evidenced in a number of vernacular homes of the time.

Identifying characteristics:

- low pitched hipped roofs with wide, overhanging eaves
- stucco finished walls are most common, followed by brick
- horizontal emphasis in the banding of windows
- windows are generally casement or double-hung
- an open plan, integrating all aspects of the home into a unified whole

Examples in Waseca include:

203 Ninth Street NE

204 Tenth Street NE



203 Ninth Street NE



204 Tenth Street displays a Prairie with modern influences

Craftsman Bungalow

Predominant period approximately 1905 to 1930s

The Craftsman style home was popularized in the early 1900s by magazines including *House Beautiful*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Ladies Home Journal*, which led to a plethora of pattern books. The style was developed and refined around the turn of the century by California architects and brothers Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene (“Greene and Greene.”) The Greens were influenced by the English Arts and Crafts movement, oriental aesthetics, and an interest in both wooden construction techniques and the manual arts. The vast majority of vernacular Craftsman homes were bungalows, praised for their efficient use of space.

Identifying characteristics:

- low pitched roof, usually gabled
- usually one story tall, especially in vernacular examples
- un-enclosed wide overhanging eaves, with exposed roof rafters
- decorative beams often added under gables
- front porch supported by tapered square battered columns

Examples in Waseca include:

203 Ninth Street SE

208 Ninth Avenue SE

219 Third Avenue NE

316 Third Avenue NE

331 North State Street

607 Third Avenue NE

615 North State

716 Third Avenue SE

916-1004 Third Avenue SE



615 North State



603 Third Avenue NE is an example of the Shingle style Bungalow



208 Ninth Avenue SE

English Revival Cottage—Tudor

Predominant period early 1910s to early 1930s

This style, often referred to by the layperson as “Tudor,” is a post-Victorian blend of Elizabethan and Jacobean influences. Their popularity in America is linked to an interest in the English Arts-and-Crafts movement, as well as a symbolic nostalgia for the country’s Anglo-Saxon roots. Three major styles of house make up the English Revival: English Cottage, Tudor Revival, and (the fairly rare) English Country House.

Identifying characteristics:

- steep, gabled roofs
- half-timbering
- walls of stone, stucco, or brick, often with mixed colors and materials; stone accents
- a variety of distinctive windows: bays, oriels, and paired casements
- use of arched doors, windows, and/or attached gates

Examples in Waseca include:

217 Ninth Street NE

300 Ninth Street NE

308 Ninth Avenue SE

513 Second Avenue NE

608 East Elm Avenue

610 North State Street



608 East Elm Avenue



610 North State Street



300 Ninth Street NE



*English Revival cottage at
308 Ninth Avenue SE*

Ranch

Predominant period 1945 to late 1970s

The Ranch home is a twentieth-century vernacular style that grew out of expansion of the middle-class domestic needs of America's postwar population explosion. As soldiers returned from World War II and started new families, there was a growing need for quickly constructed, simple in plan, and affordable homes.

The single-story Ranch home was influenced in style, by the Prairie School work of Midwest architect Frank Lloyd Wright, with its long, horizontal orientation, its low pitched roof, and window banding (ribbon windows). However, the Ranch often took advantage of factory made materials such as imitation stone, pressed fiber wood siding, and metal siding. Short of the vague references to Prairie School, and some use of stone, as influenced by California residential architecture, the Ranch home is generally devoid of historic stylistic detailing.

The Split Level, popular starting in the 1950s, is a variation on the one-story Ranch. The Split Level incorporated an additional story to allow for better separation of living functions, and providing interior interest to the floor plan.

Identifying characteristics:

- Single-story residence with a strong horizontal orientation
- Low pitched gable and hipped roofs
- Often an exterior attached brick fireplace stack on the gable end
- Use of a variety of exterior materials including face brick, stone, artificial stone, horizontal wood siding, particle board siding, and/or metal siding
- Window banding
- Wide use of "picture windows" with or without flanking side windows
- Often displaying a garage door at one end of the front facade

Examples in Waseca include:

108 Ninth Avenue SE

400 Ninth Street SE

413 Seventh Avenue SW

600 Ninth Street NE

813 Fourth Street SW

925 Third Avenue NE



813 Fourth Street SW



400 Ninth Street SE



108 Ninth Avenue SE

Mid-Century Modern/Modern

Predominant period 1960 to present

Remaining examples of this style are often architect-designed, high-style homes. Many evolved from the teachings and writings of modern architects such as Charles Moore and Robert Venturi, and from commercial and industrial design. These residences generally appear to be multi-faceted blocks, with architectural interest deriving from geometric shape rather than detail.

Identifying characteristics:

- roof variations: either flat (International style) or very pitched (shed style) and sometimes gabled
- little to no decorative embellishment
- extensive use of natural materials, especially wood siding, often vertical and sometimes at a diagonal
- integrated to site and landscaping
- entrances usually recessed and obscured

Example in Waseca and area are:

1205 Sixth Circle SE

36570 Clear Lake Road



36570 Clear Lake Road



*This split-level is located at
1205 Sixth Circle SE*

Residential Special Features

In addition to the main dwellings, many houses have notable special features that add to the character of the property. These features, while often not remarkable in their own right, contribute substantially to the character of the home, and should be recognized.

The most evident example of these elements are garages, carriage houses, and outbuildings. Often, these structures are not original to the home; if they are, they should be treated with special care, as they represent part of the historic fabric of the home. Even if an outbuilding was added later, it demonstrates the house's history and period of influence, and ought to be treated in a similar way to the main building.

Other examples of exterior detailing includes sidewalks, walls and fencing. Original walks are also uncommon, but should be preserved if available. Fences and walls are important because, like front porches, they mark the transition between the public streetscape and the private yard. In all of these cases, any repairs and new construction of the related elements should be compatible with the original materials and design of the home.

Another consideration that ties back to Waseca's planning history is the relationship of the street to the home. This includes elements such as streetlights, trees, other plantings, and streetscapes. Most of the public features (streetlights, paving, etc.) are new, but should be sensitively styled for the historic neighborhoods. Any original landscaping and trees should be preserved, if possible. In at least one case, on 6th Avenue NW, an original hitching post remains.

Finally, if any references to the original street naming system remain, these elements should be a preservation priority.

Multi-Family Housing

The majority of the houses in Waseca, as described above, are single-family homes. There are some duplexes and triplexes, but most are converted from single-family homes.

The Day Apartments stand out as some of the only structures in town originally built as multi-family units.

Additionally, several of the downtown commercial buildings were constructed with apartments overhead (examples of these may be seen along State Street). Often, this was a situation of convenience, where the shopkeeper lived above his store to make access and service easier. In other cases, the upstairs living quarters simply provided extra income for the landlord. Today, most of these units have been converted to offices or storage.

Property Types

Single-family homes

 Vernacular

 Architect designed

 National Register properties

 Locally designated properties

Apartments and multi-unit homes

 Apartments above storefronts

 Multi-family units

 Duplexes and triplexes

Adaptive use housing

Outbuildings
 Carriage houses
 Garages
 Sheds
 Barns
 Other outbuildings
Landscaping and gardens
Sidewalks
Fences and gates
Walls

Context Recommendations

- *The HPC should devote special attention to preserving and protecting its National Register-listed houses. These houses are excellent examples of high style, as well as telling the histories of Waseca's most influential citizens.*
- *In order to accurately assess cultural resources, and prior to initiating any historic districts, the entire residential housing stock of Waseca should be fully surveyed. This could be done as part of the CLG process.*
- *The HPC should consider doing a similar survey of related residential features such as outbuildings and street amenities; these elements could also be included in the comprehensive survey.*
- *Based on this survey, the Waseca HPC should potentially consider National Register nominations of more residences, particularly the houses that are already locally significant but not listed on the Register.*
- *The HPC should consider establishing adding properties through local nomination process, for properties that are in good condition and locally remarkable, but that do not rise to National Register standards. These homes should be documented and interpreted as above.*
- *Waseca already has good, succinct information on its distinctive historic homes, but should consider creating more outreach materials about these and other related properties. Suggestions include: a printed and/or downloadable self-guided walking tours, guided tours (especially in conjunction with the historical society), and/or podcasts.*
- *Based on the inventory research and on current knowledge, Waseca should consider designating some residential historic districts, either locally (if the process is established) or as a district designation to the National Register. Elm Avenue (and the streets directly off of it, leading to the lake) would be especially suited for such designation.*
- *The city could also investigate establishing historic conservation districts. These districts, are a unique blend of preservation and planning. Such districts generally seek to preserve a specific neighborhood's "sense of place," rather than individual structures, and make use of zoning and land use regulations to influence future development through historic patterns.*
- *The HPC should conduct outreach to city residents regarding architectural styles and preservation techniques. Such information would allow homeowners to understand their home's distinguishing features, and assist them in planning for the preservation of their property. In many cases, alterations have been made to houses (such as enclosing porches) that are easily reversible and would do much to restore the historic character of the house. Such outreach should not ignore elements such as outbuildings, landscape, fences, walks, and other details. Ideally, this process would occur through some sort of residential design guidelines, either the statewide ones currently being developed, or more effectively, through individual neighborhood guidelines. The HPC should stress that, though most of the housing stock does not rise to the level of many of the prominent historic homes, most of the city's housing stock is historic and maintains strong integrity, and should be preserved.*

Recommendations and Future Actions

General Summary

As mentioned in the Introduction, the primary purpose of historic contexts is as a framework for evaluating historic resources, a set of organizational tools for categorizing the past, as a planning tool for guiding future development while incorporating the past, and as a rallying point for educational and outreach activities. These contexts will help Waseca to “build its future from its past.” They will also grow and change as the city develops its cultural resource priorities.

Each individual context in this study contains its own list of “Recommendations and Future Actions,” which can be changed, amended, added to, or deleted as priorities change. These recommendations offer specific, context-related suggestions to further the historic preservation agenda in Waseca, particularly with regards to interpreting sites and increasing public-buy in. With a relatively new HPC, not only should the city be concerned with concrete next steps, but also building an agenda for preservation city-wide.

One important next step that the city could take would be to complete a full cultural resources survey, particularly in two areas: 1) the city-wide residential housing stock and 2) downtown businesses (especially State Street), building upon the previous SHPO survey of the early 1980s. Such an initiative is quite large and time-consuming, but some of it could be completed by a team of enthusiastic volunteers under professional leadership.

Another priority would be the commissioning of design guidelines, both for the remaining commercial buildings and for the residential areas. Such guidelines would increase public participation in the preservation process, and help property owners to leverage their resources. If this is not immediately possible, Waseca should investigate using the forthcoming state-wide commercial design guidelines, as issued by the SHPO, to encourage downtown redevelopment (see Appendix A).

Waseca has several National Register landmark properties, but has not added any for several decades. The HPC should put a high priority on designating new sites, especially those that the SHPO already considers eligible, including the EACO Mill, the Minneapolis and St. Louis Depot, and the nearby freight depot. The HPC should also consider other nominations, including the bandstand in Trowbridge Park, the Trowbridge house, and the Leuthold house. Finally, the HPC should consider a historic district nomination for the downtown core along State Street.

The new Minnesota state tax credit, as well as existing federal tax credits, allow significant deductions for historic, income-producing properties, and the HPC should encourage commercial property owners to use these to full advantage. See Appendix B for more information.

As well as suggesting National Register nominations, Waseca should develop a local nomination process. A local designation would help to identify significant resources and offer them a level of appropriate protection, while also increasing public participation. There are a number of properties that would be suitable for such designation, including but not limited to: the Krassin house, the Neidt house, the Herter house, the Guy Everett house, the Smith house, the Rinehart Miller house, the Lindell house, the “First Electric house,” Sacred Heart Church, and Tink Larson Field.

There are several natural allies for the HPC in their preservation work. These include organizations such as the Waseca County Historical Society and individuals such as Gene Miller, Tom Hagen, and other preservation-minded leaders.

Other cities have been successful in using completed context studies as a kind of training and introduction manual for new HPC members. Such a use would be an excellent way to ensure that the Commission has a standard basis of knowledge and shared goals for the future. The Waseca HPC has many strengths, including a depth of experience and a clarity of purpose. The Commission should use these advantages, as well as their strong support from city staff, to good advantage in planning for the future of preservation in the city.

Appendix I • Historic Preservation Tax Credits

Financial Incentives for Property Owners

While there are many reasons to preserve, restore, rehabilitate, and recycle older buildings, financial incentives can be the most tangible. Financial incentives for rehabilitation have been developed at the state and national levels. With the implementation in 2010 of the Minnesota rehabilitation program, improvements to historic commercial properties has never been more feasible for the property owner.

Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program Benefits

The Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program benefits the owner, the occupants, and the community by:

- Encouraging protection of landmarks through the promotion, recognition, and designation of historic structures
- Increasing the value of the rehabilitated property and returning underutilized structures to the tax rolls
- Upgrading downtowns and neighborhoods and often increasing the amount of available housing within the community.

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program

Historic Preservation Tax Credits are available to building owners interested in substantially rehabilitating historic buildings. Commercial, industrial and rent producing residential structures that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places or are a “contributing” structure within a National Register district qualify for a 20% investment tax credit. Buildings not currently on the National Register can use tax credits if they become listed.

Federal Program Provisions

To qualify for the Investment Tax Credit, a property owner must:

- Have a certified historic structure. To be certified, the building must be listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places or be a contributing part of a historic district that is either listed on the National Register or certified as eligible for the National Register
- Use the building for an income-producing purpose such as rental-residential, commercial, agricultural, or industrial
- Rehabilitate the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s “Standards for Rehabilitation” and “Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.” The National Park Service (NPS), with advice from the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, determines whether a project meets the standards.
- Spend an amount greater than the building’s adjusted basis (roughly the current depreciated value of the building not including land value) on the approved rehabilitation project
- Complete the work in a timely manner. Projects must meet the minimum expenditure test within a two-year measuring period, but applicants may take up to five years to complete a phased project if the plans and specs are approved in advance of construction.
- Pay a fee to the NPS; the fee shall be no less than \$250 and no greater than \$2,500 and shall be based upon the qualifying rehabilitation expenditures.

Minnesota Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program

In 2010 the State of Minnesota enacted a 20% historic preservation tax credit program. Minnesota's state historic preservation tax credit will allow a state income tax credit equal to 20% of the cost of rehabilitating a qualifying historic property. The program mirrors the federal rehabilitation tax credit, a provision that has been in place since 1979. Projects are eligible to claim the state credit if they are allowed the federal credit, a program which requires properties to be listed in the National Register of Historic Preservation to qualify. Minnesota currently has over 1,600 listings in the National Register representing almost 7,000 individual properties. Projects must be income-producing to use the credit, therefore, homesteaded residential projects are not eligible.

The Minnesota program allows the project proposers to choose either a certificated, refundable credit or grant option. The state grant, like the tax credit, comes at the completion of the project, and is equal to 90 percent of the allowable federal rehabilitation tax credit. The grant option may have some advantages in the syndication of tax credits, and widens the investor pool by allowing individuals, teams, and/or non-profit organizations to participate in the state program.

Minnesota Program Provisions

The state provisions are the same as the federal provisions, with the exception that the tax credit would be available for a property that is any of the following:

- Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Certified as a contributing element of a National Register Historic District.
- Certified as historic by local heritage preservation commission or Certified Local Government.

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- EACO Mill (proposed 1981 but not added due to owner opposition)
 - Waseca County Courthouse (added 1982)
 - W.J. Armstrong Company, Wholesale Grocers (added 1982)
 - W. J. Aughenbaugh House (added 1982)
 - W.R. Wolf House (added 1982)
 - R. Percy Ward House (added 1982)
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