

DOWNTOWN MARION

2019 Historic Resources Survey



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Chapter 1 Introduction

Methodology

The principal objective of the Historic Survey of Downtown Marion (HPF 2019-006) was to update and create historic survey records for approximately forty-five (45) buildings in Marion’s commercial business district. Prior to this project, there had been no organized survey effort in Marion since the Kansas SHPO surveyed a sampling of Marion buildings in 1971.

After receiving a Historic Preservation Fund Grant from the Kansas SHPO, the City of Marion solicited proposals. After reviewing the proposals, the City of Marion contracted with Ben Moore Studio for the project on July 29, 2019. Randy Collett of the City of Marion, Kristy Johnson of Ben Moore Studio, and Christy Davis of Davis Preservation (advisor), met with the SHPO staff for a kickoff meeting on August 14.

Following the kickoff meeting – in late August and early September - Johnson and Davis initiated survey work with research at the Kansas Historical Society and Marion Historical Museum. In the absence of city directories and secondary sources, the team relied heavily on primary documents, including Sanborn Maps, newspaper articles, and, where necessary, deeds and property tax records.

The City of Marion assisted by collecting and sharing historic photos of downtown buildings. By the time of the first public meeting on September 9, 2019, the team had completed photography, architectural descriptions, and histories of the first twenty-five buildings in the survey. The meeting’s main objective was to explain the survey process to the public and share early findings.

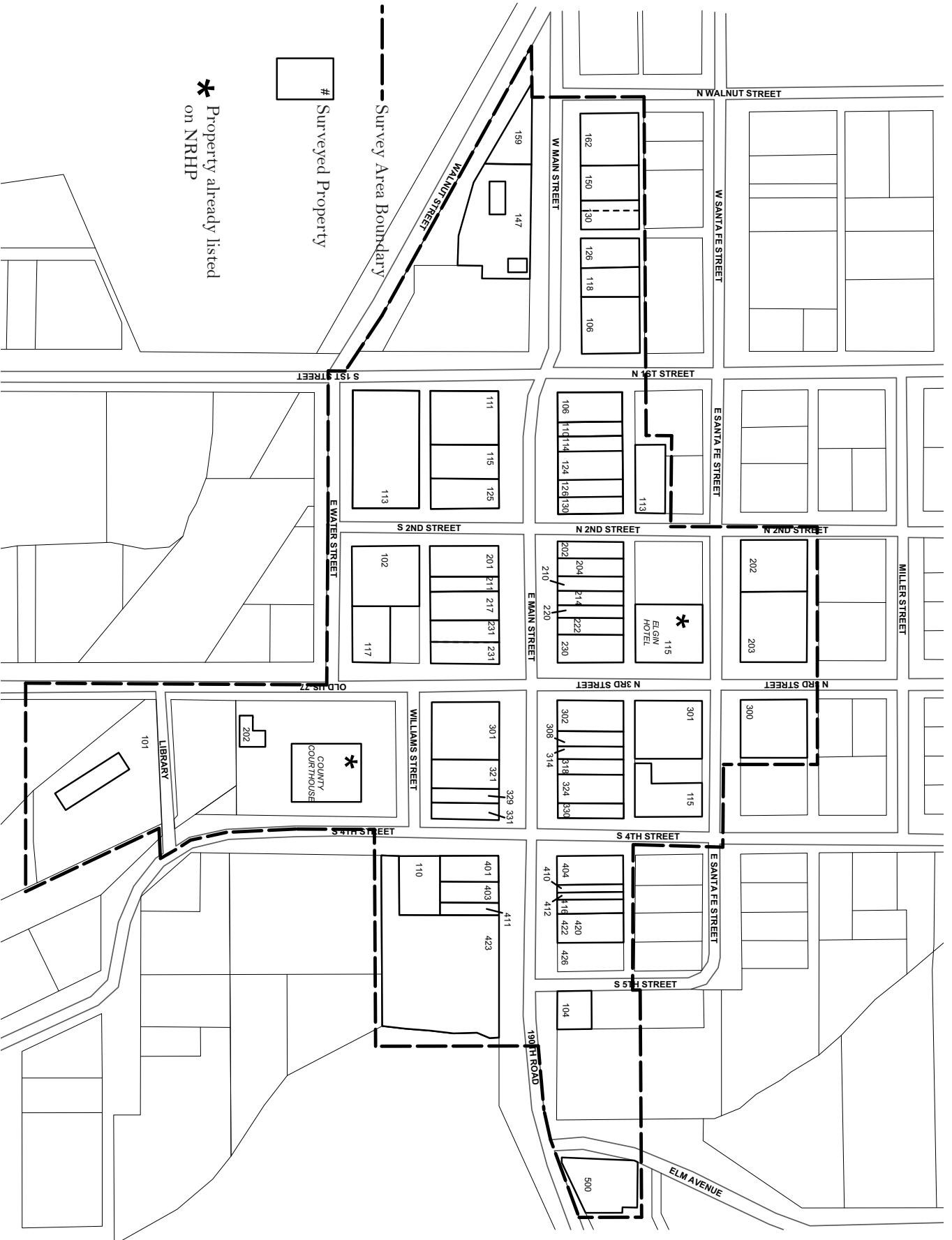
The team submitted a draft report of its findings to the Kansas SHPO on November 4, 2019, more than one month before the project deadline. The SHPO provided comments on December 6. The

team shared its findings at a second public meeting on December 11. Because there were many in attendance that had not been at the September 9 meeting, the team reviewed the survey process, summarized the history of downtown Marion, and discussed next steps and recommendations.

Survey Process

On the following page is a survey boundary map. These boundaries were established by the City of Marion before the onset of the project as being the primary urban area of Marion. A few outlying properties were surveyed in addition to those identified by the City due to their relationship and contribution to downtown as inferred by the consultants. Criterion for establishing potential contributors vs. non-contributors, properties identified as such and recommendations are discussed in Chapter 4.

MARION DOWNTOWN HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY



Survey Area Map

Chapter 2 Architectural Styles Within the Survey Boundaries

Architectural Analysis

There are multiple predominant architectural styles in the survey area, reflecting the multiple ages of prosperity and development in Marion. The west end of Main Street developed first and this development moved eastward over time.

Below is a description of the architectural styles found in the survey area and their predominance within the survey boundaries.

Italianate

The properties built in this style in downtown Marion exhibit arched windows with highly ornamented stone lintels and jamb surrounds. Many of the buildings have ornate stone cornices and quoins exemplifying the Italianate Style. There are ten (10) Italianate buildings in the survey area.



Italianate Storefront at 308 E Main partially modified

Commercial Style

The Commercial Style, an offshoot of Chicago Style skyscrapers of the late nineteenth century, came to prominence in Marion between the years of 1905 and 1925. A number of nineteenth-century buildings were remodeled in the Commercial Style during subsequent periods of development. Commercial Style generally features brick or concrete block as the primary- façade material, glass storefronts with leaded transoms and brick ornamented, flat cornices. There are twenty (20) Commercial Style properties in the survey area.



Commercial Style at 314 E Main

MARION DOWNTOWN HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

6

Modern/Modern Movement

In 1951, the first of the Modern Movement buildings came to Marion at 324 E Main. There are fifteen (15) buildings in the survey area of the Modern Style. Many of them have flat roofs, minimalistic ornamentation and horizontally-oriented characteristics. Though built of limestone like many of their classical neighbors, the coursing became shorter and longer, contrasting with the massive stones of the Italianate Style, as an example.



Modern Building at 324 E Main

Late 19th Century/Early 20th Century Classical Revival

Within the survey area, there are four (4) buildings of the Late 19th Century/Early 20th Century Classical Revival. These buildings often draw inspiration from multiple preceding styles. They are characterized by masonry construction, ornamented cornices and large masonry openings.



Late 19th Century/Early 20th Century Classical Revival - Post Office Building

Mission/Spanish Eclectic

There are two (2) examples of the Mission Style within this survey area. The Santa Fe Depot is an excellent representation of this style, with Mission insignia and corbelled overhangs. The second building at 331 E Main Street has brick ornament and an arched section of its parapet wall, exemplifying the Mission Style.



Mission Style Building at 331 E Main

**MARION DOWNTOWN
HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY**



Municipal Building in the Art Deco Style

Art Deco

One (1) building in the survey area is an example of this style. The Municipal Building, owned by the City, was a WPA project built in 1938. The style was made popular in the late 1920s and was prevalent up until the 1940s. It is characterized by smooth surfaces, vertical lines and bold geometric forms.



Postmodern Building

Postmodern

Only one (1) property exhibits the Postmodern Style at 217 E Main Street. This pair of two buildings has many faux elements and is ornamented with EIFS shapes.

Residential Styles

There are four (4) residences in the survey area. Three are wood-framed and one is of masonry construction.



Italianate - 202 E Santa Fe

Italianate – The masonry Kellison House at 202 E Santa Fe is the only Italianate residence in the survey area. The limestone home has ornate cut-stone window sills and lintels and limestone quoins, characteristic of the Italianate Style.



Stick - 301 Santa Fe

Stick - Two (2) of the wood-framed residences (110 S Fourth Street and 301 E Santa Fe) are classified as Stick Style. Characteristic details include false gables, extended brackets, embellished trusses, and picket fence patterns.



Queen Anne - 115 N 4th

Queen Anne –The wood-framed residence in the survey area (115 N Fourth Street) was built in the Queen Anne Style (Free Classic). Character-defining features are its asymmetrical form, projecting bays, and gable ornament. Free Classic is represented by the classical columns and dentils on the porch.

Chapter 3 Introduction

Historical Summary

There's something magical about towns in the American West. They sprang up overnight – rising from dreams, prairie, and paper to take shape in wood, brick and stone. Town companies would choose a place along a commercial artery - like the Santa Fe Trail – in hopes that a rail line would follow the same route. Then, they would prime the pump of success with the trappings of Victorian refinement – an imposing courthouse, a multi-story schoolhouse, a stately opera house. And if they were lucky, they might attain the golden triumvirate: a county seat, a railroad, and the attention of eastern investors.

This is the story of one such town – a town that, like many in pioneer Kansas, placed its bets on the promise of the American West. But like many of the thousands of towns the railroads and Gilded-Aged capitalists left in their wake, Marion, Kansas encountered its share of victories and defeats. The buildings in Marion's downtown tell a complex story of its rises and falls – from the doe-eyed optimism of its founders, to the profit-driven delusions of eastern capitalists, to the persistent steadfastness of the families who have made lives here over generations.

The history of downtown Marion, Kansas can be divided into many periods of development. First, was the platting of the town and settlement by its pioneers. In 1879, after twenty years of work, the community saw the arrival of its first rail line – a branch of the Santa Fe. There was a major economic boom that accompanied the arrival of the Rock Island Railroad in 1886. Following the bust of the 1890s, there was a rebuilding and retooling that came with a period of agricultural dominance, the automobile revolution, and Progressive-Era idealism. When commodities prices plunged in the years after World War I – followed by the Great Depression and World War II, there was little private investment for nearly three decades. But Marion had the connections and wherewithal to benefit from federal aid – and, although rural Kansas was greatly changed in the

1940s, private investment resumed in the years immediately following World War II.

Founding

It is telling that both Marion County and the City of Marion were named after Revolutionary War Hero Francis Marion. They called him “The Swamp Fox” for his cunning and scrappy use of guerilla warfare to defeat the British. Surviving the nineteenth century would require Marion’s founders to employ a brand of resilience and creativity Francis Marion might have appreciated.

Marion County was established by the Kansas Territorial Legislature in 1855. But the county didn’t take its current shape until after the Civil War. The first white settlers lay claim to the junction of the Cottonwood River and Mud Creek in 1860. For most of the decade that followed, however, Marion County encompassed the entire southwest corner of the state. In anticipation of the establishment of counties in all but the western fourth of the state, pioneers platted Marion Centre, the county’s first town, with the aim of securing county seat status.¹

Marion Centre had a slow but promising start. In 1863, there were still “but few settlers in the county.” But, glowing accounts of this “handsome” place predicted that “the time is not distant, when the advantages, and beauties of this country will be known, and it will become densely populated.”² In early 1864, the Junction City newspaper noted that a few families had begun experimenting with farming in Marion County two years before – and “met with good success.” “Others have taken claims until they now number about seventy-five families.”³ By May 1865, Congress had established a post road that connected Marion Centre to Fort Riley – and by November 1866, there was a state road connecting Cottonwood Falls to Marion Centre.⁴

Like most western towns, Marion pulled out all the stops to attract families and capital. In 1868, the people of Marion passed bonds to construct a stone

two-story schoolhouse, a “first class inducement [sic] for settlers.”⁵ In Spring 1869, the town’s population increased by an estimated 500 families – and by late 1869, boosters had ambitious predictions of welcoming an additional thousand families the following year.⁶ “Marion Centre, our county seat, is a fine young town, is building up rapidly, and for this reason is just the place for capitalist [sic] to invest.”⁷

On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe

Marion’s swamp-fox founders knew that the key to their community’s survival, the one thing that would attract the attention of capitalists, was the railroad. “If we expect to compete ... in business, merchandise, mechanism, schools, churches, or in any wise as to the refinements and luxuries of life,” admitted Marion leaders in early 1870, “we must have railroads, express offices and telegraphs.” “The future development of Southwestern Kansas depends almost entirely on the building of the contemplated railroads.”⁸

As the only town in a county through which the Santa Fe Trail had passed, Marion Centre had a rightful claim to any railroad that would connect the northeast and southwest. But when it came to luring the Santa Fe Railway, they weren’t taking any chances. On May 1, 1870, Marion’s boosters pronounced in the Topeka Daily Commonwealth that “if they run their line via Middle creek and Marion Centre they will be voted a hundred thousand dollars, in bonds...”⁹

¹ William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883).

² “On a Scout,” *Council Grove Press*, 1 June 1863.

³ *Smoky Hill and Republican Union* (Junction City), 2 January 1864.

⁴ *Manhattan Nationalist* (Manhattan, Kansas), 3 November 1866.

⁵ *Junction City Weekly Union*, 11 January 1868.

⁶ *Smoky Hill and Republican Union* (Junction City), 2 January 1864.

⁷ *Kansas Weekly Commonwealth* (Topeka), 23 December 1869.

⁸ *Junction City Weekly Union*, 12 February 1870.

⁹ *Daily Commonwealth* (Topeka), 1 May 1870.

MARION DOWNTOWN HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

10

But by the time the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad began its survey of lands west of Emporia two weeks later, the die had been cast. The line had already deviated from the path of the Santa Fe Trail, bypassing long-standing landmarks like Council Grove in favor of a southern route. Former Governor Samuel Crawford and his associates, including Alex Johnson (of Johnson County), established a town at the mouth of Doyle Creek, where, the politicians learned, the Santa Fe would cross the Cottonwood River. The rail line surprised everyone – except for perhaps the politically well-connected Florence Town Company – when it snubbed established communities like Cottonwood Falls and Marion in favor of the “paper towns” like Florence and, later, Peabody.¹⁰

In August, after it became clear that the Santa Fe would bypass Marion Centre, the town held another public meeting, resolving to give “\$150,000 in county bonds to the first railroad company that shall build a road through our county making the county seat the point of the road.”¹¹ Marion’s status as a county seat was on the line. By the time the Santa Fe was laying track west of Emporia, there were three towns in

the county – Marion Centre, Florence and Coneburg (near present-day Peabody). “Marion Centre,” puffed one editorial, “at present, is the county seat, and I presume will remain so until the portion of the country can outvote it, when it will be removed.”¹²

But Marion would not give up without a fight. While scrambling behind the scenes to attract a rail line, Marion boosters remained publicly optimistic. They conceded that “The A. T. & S. F. R. R. has been located on the South line of the county,” but, one local source assured “it will not affect the growth and prosperity of our town.”¹³

As competition stiffened among a growing number of towns in the county, Marion somehow managed to hang on as county seat – even without a permanent courthouse. In 1875, the year both Florence and Marion were both designated cities of the third class¹⁴, Marion’s city fathers met to discuss a new opportunity to court a railroad. Santa Fe had decided to connect its main line at Florence to the resourceful and ambitious city of McPherson. Marion’s citizens held their breath until 1879 when the Santa Fe finally reached the county seat. When the first engine steamed into town, Marion, noted the Wichita newspapers, was “as proud as a boy with a red, white and blue kite.”

The new Marion and McPherson Railway Company would connect the Flint Hills cattle country with the growing wheat markets to the west – including the flat prairies surrounding Hillsboro, where Mennonite farmers had helped develop winter wheat as a cash crop. Amidst growing competition for county-seat status, Marion wouldn’t have much time to celebrate the rail line’s arrival. The community was on edge until April 1881, when Marion County voters gave Marion the majority (Marion received 1165 and Hillsboro 745). Voters’ subsequent support of an allocation of \$5000 for a courthouse finally set Marion’s county seat status in stone.

The community celebrated its victory with a building



¹⁰ *Leavenworth Times*, 7 April 1871.

¹¹ *Kansas State Record* (Topeka), 13 August 1870.

¹² *Leavenworth Times*, 7 April 1871.

¹³ *Daily Commonwealth* (Topeka), 18 December 1869.

¹⁴ Marion became a second class city in 1882.

boom. Before 1880, there were a handful of two-story limestone buildings downtown – including a two-story grocery store now at 114 E. Main and the Park Hotel now at 130 W. Main. But the early 1880s brought the construction of several major projects including the new courthouse (1880), National Bank Block at Third and Main (1882), 800-seat Opera House (1884), and a large skating rink (1884). These projects, most of them refined limestone Italianate buildings, “justly [gave] the town the appellation of ‘Stone City.’”¹⁵

Rock Island and/or Bust

Time marched quickly in the 1880s. By mid-decade, the National Bank Block, an early 1880s triumph, would be known as the “Old National Bank,” the papers would belittle the celebrated Santa Fe line to Marion as a “very small splinter,” and the Marion Register would predict that “Marion Will Be the Metropolis of Central Kansas in Two Years.”

If the Santa Fe Railroad brought stability to Marion, the Rock Island brought delusions of grandeur.¹⁶

In 1879, the Rock Island Railway reached Kansas City with plans for a line west to Denver – and southwest through Topeka and Herington to Wichita, then on through Indian Territory. Marion jumped on the Rock Island train, with the local newspapers taking the lead: “The Register will boom the Rock Island road for all its worth.”¹⁷

Marion County voters enticed the line with an offer of \$150,000, no small sum considering the budding metropolis of Wichita offered \$250,000. By 1886, the Rock Island was nearing Marion and the Record proclaimed, “With the great Santa Fe already here, the great Rock Island rapidly coming, and the great Gould system coming, Marion will boom from this

time on as it has never boomed before.”¹⁸

By late 1886, even before the Rock Island Railroad arrived, the boom was in full swing. A great railroad town deserved a great hotel. And the town’s business leaders would stop at nothing to get it. When an incentives package failed to lure outside investors, the community created a stock company of local investors to build a first-class hotel. In 1885, an “eastern architect” had completed plans and specifications for the “big new hotel.” By the time of its completion in 1886, the stockholders had invested \$20,000 in the project – a small price to pay, they thought, to lasso the Rock Island.

Soon, nothing was too good for Marion. There was a new grocery store at the Bowron Building (1886) and the state’s first YMCA (1887-1888). And the Old National Bank Building had been eclipsed by a sleek modern one – the Donaldson and Hosmer Building (1887). The city’s 1880s buildings ranged in style from Italianate (holdovers from the 1870s), Richardsonian Romanesque (YMCA), and Eclectic (Donaldson and Hosmer). With the help of the promised eastern capital, Marion’s population ballooned from 857 to 2047 between 1880 and 1890.¹⁹

“Our city has taken unto itself a new impetus in the ‘boom’ fever and our people are correspondingly happy. Eastern capitalists are already beginning to inquire about investing in Marion real estate and say they were only waiting for the successful termination of the bond election before investing. Marion has always been a thriving place without any connection with the outside commercial world except through a very small ‘splinter’ of the Santa Fe, but in one year from the present date when will have completed three more of the grandest railroad systems in the world – The Rock Island, Missouri Pacific and The Frisco. ... Real estate has advanced in price in the last two days at least 75”

-Marion Register - 15 December 1886

¹⁵ William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883).

¹⁶ *Marion Register*, 15 December 1886.

¹⁷ *Marion Register*, 28 January 1886.

¹⁸ *Marion Record*, 15 October 1886.

¹⁹ U.S. Census, 1880; 1890.

At first, the primed Rock Island pump produced gushing results. In 1888, the Marion Headlight reported that the \$20,000 in taxes paid by the Rock Island was “eight or nine thousand more than the interest on the bonds voted them.”²⁰ But the railroads had over-expanded on the backs of the communities they promised to boost. By 1892, many Kansans were blaming eastern capitalists, bankers, and the railroads for their troubles. In Kansas, the populists gained control of the Governor’s office, state’s congressional delegation, and the statehouse. The situation only got worse in 1893 when the money from large eastern banks, greatly affected by an international financial crisis, stopped flowing. Marion’s First National Bank busted; many Kansans left for greener pastures in newly opened Oklahoma; and those who remained were left to lick their wounds. It was a humbling experience that would forever shape Kansas culture. From this point forward, they vowed, pragmatic Kansans would choose thrift and community over greed.

“Progressive Marion”

If the nineteenth century was about railroads and robber barons, the early twentieth was about the common good. Populism gave way to the less-extreme Progressivism, which Emporia editor William Allen White called “Populism with a clean shirt.” In order to compete in the new century, a progressive community needed a reliable water supply, good roads, sanitary sewers, and lighting. And these were things that communities could no longer trust to private enterprise. Now that they had finally paid off their railroad bonds, the community would invest in its own infrastructure.

Marion had a reason to see itself as the ideal progressive city. They had a man in the Governor’s mansion. Edward Wallis Hoch was a farmer-turned-newspaper editor, who purchased the Marion Record in 1874. He served in the state legislature during the hard times of the 1890s and served two two-year terms as governor (1905-1909). Although his progressive agenda, which included food safety, child labor and banking regulation

legislation, was not universally appreciated in his home county, which he failed to win in 1906. Still, as editor of the Marion Record for a half century until his death in 1925, Hoch had enormous impact. Immediately after returning from the Governor’s mansion in 1909, Hoch focused much of his energy touting improvements in his hometown. Hoch put his money where his mouth was – returning from Topeka to his hometown and constructing a modern printing complex for the Marion Record (directly across the street from the new courthouse) in 1910.²¹

If there was one project that symbolized Marion in the Progressive Era it was the waterworks. In 1907, Marion voters approved a bond measure that allowed for the City to purchase the water plant from the company that held the license from the city. It would take nearly three years of deal making – but the water plant showed that Marion could work toward sustainable growth – rather than boomtime frenzy.

The energy of this time is evident in puff pieces in Hoch’s Marion Record. The following piece, which appeared on April 29, 1909, conjures images of The Music Man:

*The people of the county are talking about Marion. There’s no mistake about it. Things are doing in this here town. And it’s not A Boom either. Nothing wide-eyed about it. No rash speculation. Just fine, healthy business activity. The spirit of public improvement getting in its work. Property values going up to where they belong. Boosters in the saddle ... New business buildings in progress ... Stores putting in bigger and better stocks than ever before. And everybody talking Progress. There’s no mistake about it. Things are doing in this here town.*²²

²⁰ Marion Headlight, 22 November 1888.

²¹ William Connelly, *A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1918); Marvin Harder, *A Governor of Kansas: An Analysis of Decision-Making Opportunities, Constraints, and Resources* (Topeka: Capitol Complex Center, 1980); Homer Socolofsky, *Kansas Governors* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990).

²² “Get in the Push,” *Marion Record*, 29 April 1909.

MARION DOWNTOWN HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

13

By the end of the first decade of the new century, Marion had seen a return to prosperity. In addition to new waterworks and sewer system, there were cement sidewalks, downtown lighting, and brick streets. Marion County could boast one of the nicest courthouses (1906) in the state. And, as hoped, there was private investment as well. The construction of the concrete-block Dean Building in 1905 coincided with the construction of the new Marion County Courthouse. Three other major downtown buildings – the Marion Record, Masonic Hall, and the Wheeler Building – which would house the community’s first modern hospital – were all completed in 1910. Most of the commercial buildings from this time period were Commercial Style buildings, streamlined modern brick buildings that drew inspiration from Progressive efforts, including attempts to prevent and suppress fires that had devastating effects on buildings like New York’s Triangle Shirtwaist Factory (1911).

Of course, for all its municipal aspirations, Marion was, like most rural Kansas communities, a farm town. When the Marion Record routinely rattled off a list of the town’s successes, it included “Two big flouring mills. Creamery that does a wholesale business. Best equipped Veterinary Hospital in Central Kansas. Alfalfa Meal Mill. [and] Two wholesale poultry and produce houses.” These ag-related businesses gravitated to the rail-adjacent properties on the west and south ends of downtown.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, all successful cities, farms and ranches required one major element of infrastructure – good roads. In Marion, this meant jumping on the bandwagon for the National Old Trails Road. Established in 1912, the road followed along the route of the Santa Fe Trail – connecting Council Grove, Herington, Marion, McPherson, Great Bend and Dodge City. Over time, this would come to be the route of

Highway 56. In Marion, livery stables gave way to a slew of automobile-related businesses – including communal garages where a growing number of drivers could store and repair their automobiles.

The period of agricultural dominance continued through World War I. Much of the rural Kansas economy was dependent on agriculture – and during the war, Kansas was feeding the world with cash crops, particularly wheat. Although Marion did not witness the same oil boom that neighboring towns

“Why are the travelling men all spreading the joy talk about Marion? Well, for instance: Complete Sewer System. Electric Light Plant. Twenty-four hour service. New Water-works System. Masonic Temple just completed. Cost fifteen thousand dollars. Finest small-city print-shop in Kansas just finished. At least sixty thousand dollars worth of buildings in the past year. High School with five teachers. Domestic Science and Normal Departments. One of the finest parks in the state, in the very heart of the town. Concrete bridge, never-failing spring, giant trees, fountain and all the trimmings. A Summer-Chautauqua started last year. A great success. An ideal place for holding it. Two hospitals, with modern equipment. Two big flouring mills. Creamery that does a wholesale business. Best equipped Veterinary Hospital in Central Kansas. Alfalfa Meal Mill. Two wholesale poultry and produce houses. Splendid Auditorium. One of the best Court Houses in Kansas. Two fine garages, equipped for repair work. A city of trees, beautiful residences. Only cement sidewalks permitted, and miles and miles of that. Bill Booster is on the job. And old Cy Knocker is on the run. Also – Watch Marion, Kansas, U. S. A. in 1911!”

”

like Peabody saw, the economy remained steady through the second decade of the twentieth century.

The Great Depression

Whereas many cities experienced economic booms in the roaring 1920s, rural Kansas communities had already struggled for a decade before the 1929 stock market crash. Plummeting commodities prices – particularly wheat and oil – affected most Kansas towns. In fact, the populations of Peabody and Florence would never again top their peak populations in 1920. Between 1920 and 1926, more than 200 state and federally regulated banks in Kansas failed. Although Marion banks were spared this first round of the crisis, land values in the county tanked by as much as 30%. Somehow, Marion was able to stem the tide.

With a stable population and a tradition of progressive politics, Marion was surprisingly well poised for the Great Depression. Although Edward Hoch, the former Kansas Governor, had died in 1925, the community continued to produce leaders who served at the highest levels. Edward Hoch's son Homer Hoch, who edited the Marion Record from 1909-1919, represented Kansas's Fourth District from 1919-1933. By the early 1930s, voters were questioning the effectiveness of long-term leaders. Hoch lost his Congressional seat – but Marion didn't lose its influence in Washington. It was local attorney, farmer and war hero Randolph Carpenter, a Democrat, who took Hoch's seat by a narrow 700-vote margin.

Although Carpenter would serve only two terms in Congress, his terms represented a critical time for federal aid. In 1934, the U. S. Government declared Marion County a drought area, qualifying it for water conservation funds. This opened the floodgates for federal funding that would support enduring projects, like the construction of the Marion County Park and Lake. A CCC crew began construction of an earth dam in 1936. On May 26, 1940, more than 10,000 people from eight states attended its dedication.

Federal funding also made possible the construction of two major downtown buildings. The Marion Post Office, was built in 1937 from plans by architect Louis Simon. The building, which occupied a lot that had once housed a 600-seat auditorium, destroyed by fire in 1917, (and, later, the City Fire Department) is unique as an example of non-residential Georgian Revival Style made popular in part by the restoration/reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg beginning in the late 1920s. The handsome Art Deco Municipal Building – which has housed an auditorium and municipal offices for eight decades, was made possible by \$25,000 from the Public Works Administration.

Although Marion was able to stem the tide during the 1920s and 1930s, it was not impervious to depression-era dangers. In 1941, the State Bank of Commerce, successor to the First National Bank, liquidated voluntarily.

World War II and Aftermath

It could be argued that its political influence gave Marion an edge over surrounding communities. Whereas the populations of Florence and Peabody peaked in 1920, the population of Marion peaked in 1940. Ironically, the coming war that would finally bring economic relief to Kansas and the nation, would abruptly change the trajectory of the state's small towns. Randolph Carpenter, the Marion farmer and attorney who served in Congress from 1933-1937, chose to return to his Marion law practice. The seat went to Emporia Republican Edward Herbert Rees, who remained in office until 1960.

World War II further punctuated the differences among the towns of Marion County – and would affect patterns of growth, and decline, for many decades to come. Mennonite farmers populated much of the western reaches of the county. And, as pacifists and conscientious objectors, they served in non-combatant roles. With farm labor in short supply, Mennonite families continued to farm. In

contrast, non-Mennonites in Marion left their farms, families and hometown to fight overseas. When the war was over, many of these folks went to school on the GI Bill and moved to cities where their professional training translated into higher wages.

There were exceptions, however. For instance, Case and Son Insurance, which traced its history back to the founding of Marion, maintained its presence in downtown Marion. When a 1968 fire destroyed the firm's original building, Case and Son built its current one-story modern building in its place. The American Legion, whose membership ballooned after World War II, built a modern limestone building downtown in 1951. Other mid-century additions including the building occupied by Western Associates and Shelter Insurance (1966).

Other businesses and institutions left downtown altogether in the years following the war. In 1954, the YMCA Building (1888), which had housed a furniture store for decades, was lost to fire. The Elgin Hotel closed the same year and remained vacant for nearly two decades before it was converted to low-rent apartments. The hospital, which had occupied the second floor of the Wheeler Building since 1910, moved out of downtown to a new building built for a hospital now known as St. Luke's.

The population of Marion has remained relatively steady for more than a century. Although the population has seen dips since 1940, it hovers at nearly 2000. Although some of Marion's great downtown buildings – including the Jex Building, Opera House, Wolf Creamery and YMCA – have been lost, others – including the Elgin Hotel - have been lovingly preserved. And there are plans for more.

Chapter 4

Findings and Recommendations

A Note on Historic Status

In the KHRI, properties surveyed in this project are placed into three categories: 1) eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places (Yes), 2) not eligible for listing (No), or 3) would contribute to a potential national register historic district (Contributing). In the spreadsheet on the following page, the status is abbreviated as Listed “date listed”, NC and C.

A building’s potential to contribute to a national register district does not mean that it is located in a geographic area that qualifies as a historic district. A historic district is a geographically definable area that includes a concentration of buildings, structures or objects that have significance.

In order to be designated as a potential contributor to a potential historic district, a property must be at least 50 years old and possess historic integrity. The following is a list of reasons a property may have been designated above as a non-contributor to a potential historic district:

1. The building was built fewer than 50 years ago. Example: Marion National Bank (KHRI #115-947; 302 E Main Street)
2. The building has been covered with non-original siding, such as steel, vinyl, EIFS, or wood. Example: Lanning Health Mart Pharmacy (KHRI #115-971; 217 E Main Street)
3. The storefront, which is integral in interpreting a commercial building, has been enclosed. Example: Napa Auto Parts (KHRI #115-975; 115 E Main Street)

Exception – An enclosed storefront will not render a building non-contributing when the building’s second floor retains a high level of architectural integrity.

**MARION DOWNTOWN
HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY**

Inventory Number	Address Number	Historic Name	C/NC
115-3540-00004	318 E Main Street	Donaldson & Hosmer Building	C
115-981	202 S 3rd Street	Extension Office	C
115-3540-00001	308 E Main Street	First National Bank	C
115-949	314 E Main Street	First National Bank	C
115-897	422-424 E Main Street	C. B. Wheeler Block	C
115-945	222 E Main Street	Case and Son Insurance	C
115-944	220 E Main Street	Case and Son Insurance	C
115-968	301 E Main Street	Dean Building	C
115-3540-00012	115 N 3rd Street	Elgin Hotel	Listed 1978
115-3540-00010	130 E Main Street	J. C. Mehl Building	C
115-978	113 S 2nd Street	J.F. Carter Lumberyard	NC
115-928	130 W Main Street	Park Hotel	C
115-983	301 E Santa Fe Street	Spence House	C
115-3540-00006	202 E Santa Fe Street	Kellison House	N/A*
115-3540-00002	200 S 3rd Street	Marion County Courthouse	Listed 1976
115-3540-00018	117 S 3rd Street	Marion County Record	C
115-956	416 E Main Street	Marion Headlight Newspaper	C
115-980	115 S 3rd Street	Marion Record	C
115-3540-00016	101 Library Street	Marion Santa Fe Depot	C
115-953	404 E Main Street	Masonic Hall	C
115-893	203 N 3rd Street	Municipal Building	C
115-937	124 E Main Street	Hardware Store	C
115-979	102 S 2nd Street	Hoch Publishing	NC
115-3540-00008	230 E Main Street	J. Bowron Building	C
115-932	106 W Main Street		NC
115-933	106 W Main Street		NC
115-934	106 E Main Street		C
115-935	110 E Main Street		C
115-951	324 E Main Street		C
115-954	410 E Main Street		C
115-955	412 E Main Street		C
115-958	426 E Main Street		NC
115-959	104 5th Street		NC
115-938	126 E Main Street		C
115-941	204 E Main Street		C
115-942	210 E Main Street		C
115-943	214 E Main Street		C
115-947	302 E Main Street		NC
115-961	423 E Main Street	US Post Office	C
115-985	300 E Santa Fe Street	Valley United Methodist Church	C
115-929	130 W Main Street	Wholesale Produce	NC
115-931	118 W Main Street		C
115-976	147 W Main Street		NC
115-977	147 W Main Street		C
115-982	110 S 4th Street		C
115-984	115 N 4th Street		C
115-986	113 N 2nd Street		C
115-930	126 W Main Street		NC
115-927	150 W Main Street		C
115-960	500 E Main Street		NC
115-962	411 E Main Street		NC
115-963	403 E Main Street		NC
115-964	401 E Main Street		C
115-965	331 E Main Street		C
115-966	329 E Main Street		C
115-967	321 E Main Street		C
115-969	231 E Main Street		C
115-970	231 E Main Street		NC
115-971	217 E Main Street		NC
115-972	211 E Main Street		C
115-973	125 E Main Street		C
115-974	115 E Main Street		C
115-975	115 E Main Street		NC
115-926	162 W Main Street		NC
115-898	202 E Main Street		C
115-987	159 W Main Street		N/A*
115-3540-00007	114 E Main Street		C
115-3540-00009	330 E Main Street		C

*SHPO recommends a PSIQ for individual nomination

**MARION DOWNTOWN
HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY**

Historic status, contributing or non-contributing, is identified in the enclosed maps. The recommendations related to contributing/non-contributing status of properties are the professional opinions of Ben Moore Studio and Davis Preservation.

Please note that only the State Historic Preservation Office and National Park Service make final recommendations as to historic status and the existence of potential historic districts.

There are two properties within the survey boundaries that are already individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These include the Marion County Courthouse (KHRI # 115-3540-00002; 200 S 3rd Street) and the Elgin Hotel (KHRI #115-3540-00012; 115 N 3rd Street). Based upon the consultant's recommendations, an additional three (3) properties appear to be eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places. These include the Marion Santa Fe Depot (KHRI #115-3540-00016; 101 Library Street), Marion County Record (KHRI #115-3540-00018; 117 S 3rd Street), and Donaldson and Hosmer Building (KHRI #115-3540-0004; 318 E Main Street). A National Register nomination for the Donaldson Hosmer Building has been submitted to the SHPO for review and will be considered by the Historic Sites Board of Review on February 1, 2020.

Including the formerly designated properties and those that appear to be eligible for individual listing, 48 (71%) of the sixty-eight (68) properties in the survey area are identified as "Contributing."

Within the recommended historic district area, 48 (81%) of the fifty-nine (59) properties within the district area are identified as "Contributing".

Recommendations

Based on the high percentage of potential contributors, the team recommends that the City proceed with nominating a downtown historic district. The following gives a more detailed description of this recommendation among others.

1. Nominate a National Register District for Downtown Marion

The following page includes a map of proposed boundaries for a proposed historic district for downtown Marion. This project would qualify for a Historic Preservation Fund Grant, which requires that the city match 40% of the project. However, in order for property owners to qualify for incentives, the City may want to proceed with this project outside of the HPF grant round.

2. Host a Property Owner Workshop

As part of the district nomination process, the City of Marion should host a workshop for downtown property owners to educate them about funding sources for historic preservation, including Heritage Trust Fund grants and historic tax credits. On the same day of the workshop, property owners could request a one-on-one consultation with Ben Moore Studio to explore potential projects.

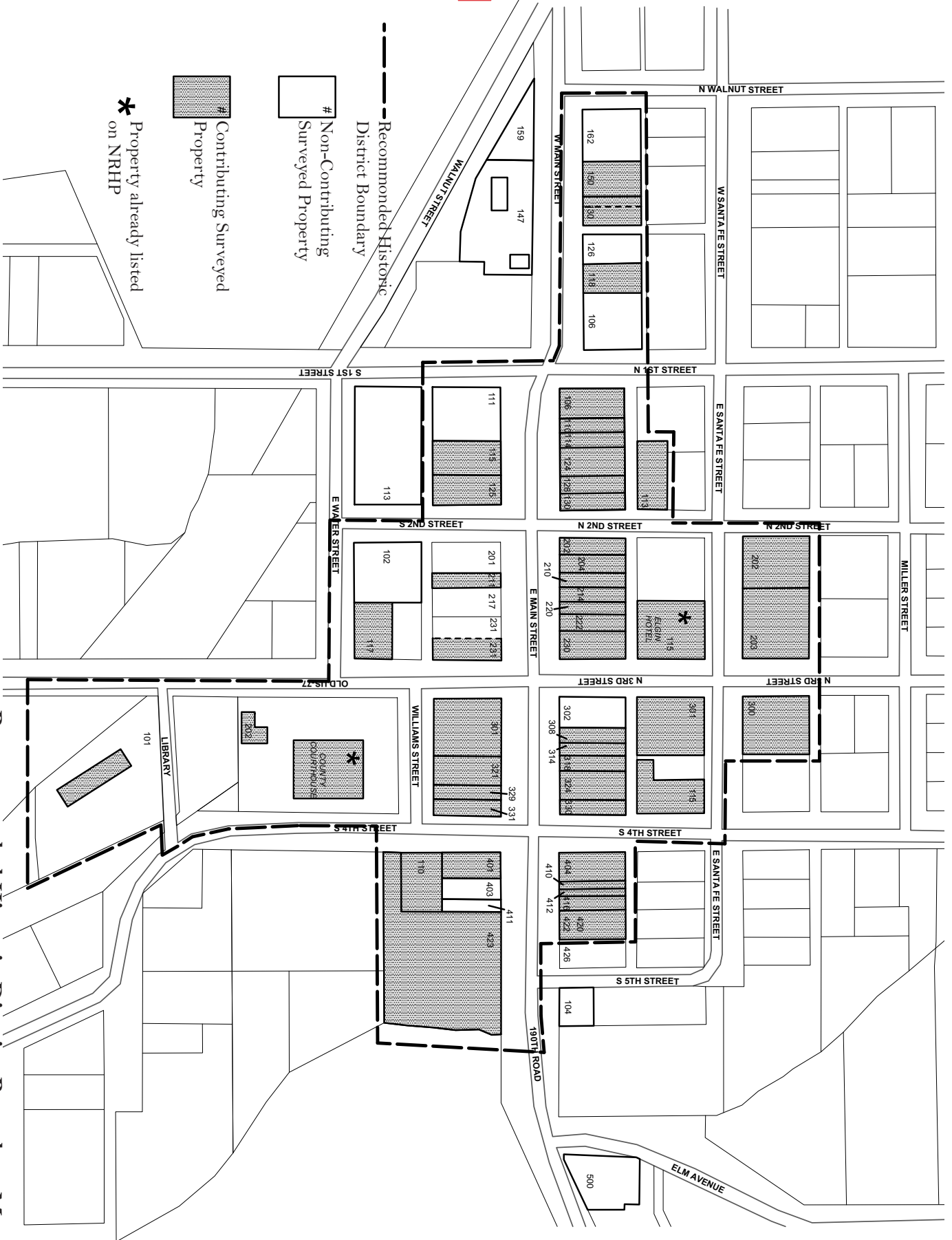
3. Develop Design Guidelines for Downtown

In order to qualify for historic preservation funding, projects must meet historic preservation standards. One way to translate these standards into practical guidance for property owners is through Design Guidelines. It is our recommendation that any design guidelines for downtown Marion be recommendations only - meaning they would not be mandatory unless tied to local incentives. Alternatively, because this is a small district, the City of Marion may want to apply for grant (HPF or other) to create storefront recommendations for each historic downtown commercial building. The City may want to establish incentives for property owners to undertake proposed work. ****show examples of sketchup and offer an estimate***

4. Downtown Master Plan

A Downtown Master Plan would be a great way to identify ways to improve the viability of Downtown Marion. For instance, how can the commercial business district be better connected to the county courthouse and depot (library)? What are the district's preservation priorities and how should they be funded? What community needs could be met in downtown? Is there a need for upper-story housing? and, if so, what incentives can facilitate it? How can city infrastructure (streetscape, parks, etc.) create a more coherent downtown?

MARION DOWNTOWN HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY



Recommended Historic District Boundary Map