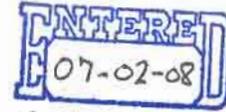


CHPO

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



Refnum 08000622

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name South Main Street Historic District

Other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

Street & Number 156-222 S. Main St., 153-279 S. Main St.  Not for Publication

City or Town Akron  Vicinity

State Ohio Code OH County Summit Code 153 Zip 44308

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara Powell Dept. Head, Inventory & Registration  
Signature of certifying official

May 19, 2008  
Date

Ohio Historic Preservation Office, Ohio Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
- See continuation sheet.

- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
14	6	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
14	6	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

2

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- COMMERCE/TRADE: business
- COMMERCE/TRADE: professional
- COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution
- COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store
- COMMERCE/TRADE: department store
- COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant
- RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater 1
- SOCIAL: meeting hall
- DOMESTIC: hotel
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE/TRADE: business
- COMMERCE/TRADE: professional
- COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution
- COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store
- COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant
- GOVERNMENT: government office
- EDUCATION: college
- RECREATION AND CULTURE: theate
- LANDSCAPE: park r
- VACANT/NOT IN USE
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Commercial Style
- Italian Renaissance
- Classical Revival
- Moderne
- Art Deco
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Foundation | STONE; CONCRETE                            |
| walls      | BRICK; STONE; TERRA COTTA                  |
| roof       | WOOD; ASPHALT; CERAMIC TILE;<br>SYNTHETICS |
| other      | METAL                                      |

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**See Attached.**

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- Criteria A, B, C, D, E, F, G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

- Previous documentation on file (NPS)
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # OH-2262; OH-2472

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- ARCHITECTURE
COMMERCE
TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

c.1900-1957

Significant Dates

c.1900; c.1903; c.1905; c.1910; 1911; c.1913; c.1915; 1916; c.1919; 1920; 1923; 1926; 1928; 1929; 1930; 1931; c.1933; c.1935; c.1937

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

George B. Post & Sons (New York, NY)
Harpster & Bliss
Alfred Hopkins (New York, NY)
John Ebersson (New York, NY)
Graham, Anderson, Probst & White (Chicago, IL)
Starret & Van Vleck (New York, NY)
Carmichael Construction (Contractor)

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University

Other

Name of repository: Akron-Summit County Public  
Library; Summit County Historical Society; University of  
Akron Archives

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 18 Acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
1 <u>17 456266 4547746</u>	3 <u>17 456302 4547277</u>
2 <u>17 456099 4547395</u>	4 <u>17 456498 4547649</u>

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

See continuation sheet.

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Peter Ketter and Martina Takac

organization Sandvick Architects, Inc. date 09-30-07

street & number 1265 W. Sixth Street telephone 216-621-8055

city or town Cleveland state Ohio zip code 44113

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Multiple Owners – See Attached List

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Continuation Sheet

South Main Street Historic District  
Akron, Summit County, Ohio

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**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION - SUMMARY**

The South Main Street Historic District encompasses an area of downtown Akron, Ohio that was developed from the 1910s through the early 1930s as an extension and reorientation of the city's older commercial center to the north. It includes a stretch of South Main Street – Akron's primary commercial artery – that retains a concentration of historic buildings, now bounded on the north and south by more recent development and surface parking lots. The district is primarily comprised of narrow, deep commercial buildings four stories or fewer in height, anchored by a few substantial mid-rise buildings and one 16-story tower that represent some of Akron's most significant buildings from the period. A range of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century architectural styles are represented, with notable examples of Classical Revival, Renaissance Revival, and Art Deco design dispersed among more common Commercial Style buildings. Many of the buildings have experienced some level of alteration, and others have been demolished in favor of open space or more recent construction, but overall the district retains its historic character and integrity.

**PROPERTY LIST**

- |   |   |                         |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | 156-160 S. Main St.<br><b><u>Akron Savings &amp; Loan</u></b><br>1923, altered 1980s<br>Architect: Alfred Hopkins<br>Builder: Carmichael Construction |                         |
| 2 | <b><u>164 S. Main St.</u></b><br>c.1910, altered 1970s<br>Architect: unknown  | <b>NON-CONTRIBUTING</b> |
| 3 | 168 S. Main St.<br><b><u>Osterman Co.</u></b><br>c.1910, altered 1920s, 1980s<br>Architect: unknown   |                         |
| 4 | <b><u>172 S. Main St.</u></b><br>c.1915, altered 1970s<br>Architect: unknown  |                         |
| 5 | 174 S. Main St.<br><b><u>Standard Savings Bank</u></b><br>c.1920, altered 1970s<br>Architect: unknown   | <b>NON-CONTRIBUTING</b> |
| 6 | 176-180 S. Main St.<br><b><u>Whitelaw Building</u></b><br>c.1903, altered 1970s<br>Architect: unknown   |                         |

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South Main Street Historic District  
Akron, Summit County, Ohio

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- 7 182 S. Main St.  
**Loew's Theatre (NR 1973)**  
1929, 2001 addition  
Architect: John Ebersson
- 8 **184-186 S. Main St.**  
1920, altered 1970s  
Architect: unknown
- 9 222 S. Main St.  
**O'Neil's Department Store (NR 1990)**  
1928, altered 1999  
Architect: Graham, Anderson, Probst & White  
Builder: Carmichael Construction
- 10 **275-279 S. Main St.**  
c.1913, altered 1970s  
Architect: unknown
- 11 **271 S. Main St.**  
c.1920, altered 1980s  
Architect: unknown
- 12 265 S. Main St.  
**Sears Roebuck & Co.**  
c.1928, altered c.1950  
Architect: unknown
- 13 263 S. Main St.  
**Mayflower Hotel**  
1931  
Architect: Graham, Anderson, Probst & White  
Builder: Carmichael Construction
- 14 227 S. Main St.  
**A. Polsky Co.**  
1930, c.1945 addition  
Architect: Starrett & Van Vleck  
Builder: Carmichael Construction
- 15 209 S. Main St.  
**Akron Furniture Co.**  
1937, altered 1949  
Architect: unknown

**NON-CONTRIBUTING**

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- |        |   |                         |
|--------|---|-------------------------|
| 16     | 207 S. Main St.<br><b><u>Stone's Grill</u></b><br>c.1933, altered<br>Architect: unknown   | <b>NON-CONTRIBUTING</b> |
| 17     | <b><u>203-205 S. Main St.</u></b><br>c.1935, altered 1980s<br>Architect: unknown  | <b>NON-CONTRIBUTING</b> |
| 18     | 201 S. Main St.<br><b><u>Carlton's Clothes</u></b><br>c. 1900, altered c.1937<br>Architect: unknown   |                         |
| 19     | <b><u>195 S. Main St.</u></b><br>c.1966<br>Architect: unknown   | <b>NON-CONTRIBUTING</b> |
| 20     | 191 S. Main St.<br><b><u>The Bankers Co.</u></b><br>1926, c.1955 addition, altered 1990s<br>Architect: unknown  |                         |
| 21a, b | 171-189 S. Main St.<br><b><u>The Ohio Building and Annex</u></b><br>1916, c.1990 addition<br>Architect: Harpster & Bliss  |                         |
| 22     | 153-165 S. Main St.<br><b><u>Second National Bank Building</u></b><br>1911, altered 1990s<br>Architect: George B. Post & Sons<br>Builder: Carmichael Construction |                         |

**INDIVIDUAL DESCRIPTIONS**

**1. 156-160 S. Main St. – Akron Savings and Loan**

Akron Savings and Loan is a 12-story Classical Revival building constructed in 1923 at the corner of S. Main St. and W. Bowery. Designed by New York architect Alfred Hopkins, it features a stone base with 2-story colossal composite columns, a decorative frieze and applied stone ornamentation. The intermediate stories are sheathed in beige brick, with 6 bays across the east façade and 7 across the north. A denticulated beltcourse separates the intermediate levels from the top two stories, where the bays are divided by Ionic pilasters. The

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building is capped by a substantial cornice with small rectangular brackets. All of the building's windows have been replaced with non-historic aluminum windows, but the historic fenestration pattern remains intact. The windows in the central bays on the upper two stories have also been altered to project out slightly from the façade, where they originally were recessed. No other significant exterior alterations have occurred, however, and the building retains a high degree of integrity. The interior has experienced a number of alterations over time, but several significant historic features remain. Marble sheathing, classically detailed pilasters and a decorative vaulted ceiling all remain in the entry lobby. Although the space configuration and most finishes in the first-floor banking hall have been modified, the elaborate decorative plaster ceilings remain.

**2. 164 S. Main St. (Non-Contributing)**

164 S. Main St. is a 4-story commercial building constructed c.1910. The building's façade features a wide recessed center section that extends from the second to the fourth floor, where it terminates with a segmental arched top. Groups of four windows span the recess at each floor, separated by undecorated spandrels. The façade was historically exposed masonry and included decorative spandrel panels and applied ornamentation (Figure 2). Most surfaces have since been covered with stucco, however, and much of the ornamentation has been obscured or removed. All of the windows have also been replaced, and the ground floor – sheathed largely in grey granite – appears to have been altered as well. Although historic fabric may remain behind the more modern materials, in its current state the building does not retain sufficient historic integrity and is a non-contributing resource in the district.

**3. 168 S. Main St. – Osterman Co.**

Osterman Co. is a 5-story commercial building constructed c.1910. The Commercial Style façade is sheathed in brown brick and includes 3 bays separated by pilasters. On the second through fourth floors, each bay includes one large window opening with a continuous stone sill. Each opening now houses a group of four multi-pane windows with transoms, but the existing windows are modern replacements. On the fifth floor, each bay includes three individual 1/1 windows, though they also share a continuous stone sill. Each window has a stone lintel with a decorative keystone. The building originally included a decorative cornice, but it has been removed, leaving the beige brick parapet exposed. A stucco coating that includes a pattern of inset rectangular panels has been applied between the storefront openings and the second-floor windows, and on the two central pilasters at the second floor. The ground floor has also experienced some alterations and is now sheathed in brick, with large storefront openings and recessed entries at each end of the façade. The building does retain substantial integrity, however, and continues to clearly express its historic character.

**4. 172 S. Main St.**

172 S. Main St. is a 2-story commercial building constructed c.1915. The upper portion of the façade is sheathed in orange-red brick and features a decorative parapet with a central pediment. The building is 3-bays wide, with the central bay approximately twice as wide as the outer two. Each bay includes a single, second-story window opening with a decorative panel above that includes patterned brick work and applied stone ornament. A simple stone ledge projects from the building above the windows, with large decorative brackets at each end pilaster and small simple brackets spaced across the remainder of the façade. The building's second-floor windows have all been replaced, but no other significant changes have occurred on the upper portion of the façade. The ground level storefronts have been substantially altered and little to no evidence of the historic materials or configuration appears to remain. The design of the building suggests that it was originally conceived as a 2-part commercial block, however, with a clear distinction between the upper and

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lower sections. The alterations to the ground floor have therefore had a less significant impact on the building's appearance, and it retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic character.

**5. 174 S. Main St. – Standard Savings Bank (Non-Contributing)**

Standard Savings Bank is a 3-story Neoclassical commercial building constructed c.1920. The original design featured a 2-story rusticated stone base with a tall arched opening in the central bay and a decorative beltcourse above (Figure 1). The ground floor has been altered, however, and the second story has been covered by metal panels, so the third story is the only portion of the historic design that is currently visible. It is sheathed entirely in stone and includes pilasters separating a wide central bay from a narrower bay on each side. The central bay houses three tall rectangular 1/1 windows, with a single window in each outer bay. The entablature above the windows includes a frieze with applied stone ornament, and a cornice that features decorative patterning in its face. The building originally included a decorative roof balustrade at the parapet, but it is now missing. Although the building is currently a non-contributing resource due to its lack of integrity, substantial historic fabric may remain concealed behind the metal façade panels and non-historic ground-floor alterations. If so, it is possible that uncovering the remaining historic fabric and sensitively rehabilitating the building could render it contributing.

**6. 176-180 S. Main St. – Whitelaw Building**

The Whitelaw Building, constructed c.1903, is the oldest building in the district to retain its original appearance (Figures 1 and 2). The building's 2-story façade is sheathed in orange brick and features a decorative stepped parapet. A string of 6, 1/1 windows is spaced across the second story, with a narrow stone band forming a continuous sill and a thick, rough stone lintel that is also continuous across the façade. Decorative brickwork defines the upper portion of the façade, with a recessed rectangular brick panel above each window, and a pattern of small square recesses on each side of a large stone sign, which reads 'Whitelaw,' centered in the parapet. Simple brick corbelling and stone coping accents the top of the parapet, which includes a taller section across the center and small towers at each end. The ground floor storefronts have been modified several times, and little to no fabric remains from the original configuration. The upper portion of the façade - clearly the focus of the historic design - remains entirely intact, however, and lends substantial integrity to the building.

**7. 182 S. Main St. – Lowe's Theatre (NR 1973)**

Lowe's Theatre is one of two buildings in the district that are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Constructed in 1929, the building includes a narrow façade on Main Street that serves as the primary entrance, with an enclosed bridge over the Ohio Canal behind it leading to the main theatre block. The 3-story stone façade features Italian Renaissance Revival detailing, including polychromed carvings, round arched third-story windows in rusticated stone surrounds, and a projecting bracketed cornice with a red tile roof. The ground floor features recessed entries on each side of a central, semi-octagonal ticket booth. The original marquee has been replaced with a similar design, but no other significant changes have been made to the façade and it retains a remarkable degree of historic integrity (Figure 1). The main block of the theatre and the enclosed connecting bridge are sheathed in red brick. A limited number of door openings exist in the south elevation, with fire escapes leading down to ground level, but no other openings are present. A new beige brick addition was added on the northwest corner of the main theatre block in 2001, as part of a substantial rehabilitation effort. The addition had no effect on the primary façade, however, and the building still retains an overall high degree of integrity.

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**8. 184-186 S. Main St.**

184-186 S. Main St. is a 4-story commercial building constructed in 1920 (Figure 1). The upper two floors of the façade are sheathed in brick, with decorative brick patterning and inlaid stone in the parapet. All of the brick and stone is currently painted white. The façade is divided into two wide bays, with large window openings at the third and fourth floors separated by spandrels. The building has experienced several modifications. The ground floor has an aluminum and glass storefront with polished black granite at the corner piers and bulkhead, installed c.1955. In 1989, stucco was applied between the storefront and the third floor windows, as well as on the spandrels separating the third and fourth floors. All of the existing windows were replaced at the same time, with the second-floor window openings modified from their original configuration. The 1989 modifications have compromised the building's historic integrity, but the upper portion of the façade that includes the brick and stone ornamentation remains intact. This ornament is the most significant element of the building's design, and the other alterations do not significantly impact the overall appearance, so it is included as a contributing resource to the district.

**9. 222 S. Main St. – O'Neil's Department Store (NR 1990)**

O'Neil's Department Store, the second building in the district that is individually listed on the National Register, sits at the corner of S. Main St. and W. State St. – forming the south boundary of the historic district on the west side of Main St. Constructed in 1928, the 6-story building features stone and terra cotta façades facing Main and State, with beige brick on the secondary elevations (Figure 7). Designed by the noted Chicago architecture firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, the Renaissance Revival building features a three-part vertical division. The 2-story base is sheathed in stone and features ground-level storefronts with large multi-pane transoms above. A bullnose forms the sill for the second floor windows, with single openings in terra cotta surrounds at each end and paired windows in the remaining bays. Inset terra cotta relief panels decorate each pier at the second floor. A substantial terra cotta beltcourse that incorporates small projecting balconets at the end bays defines the separation between the base and the three intermediate levels. The intermediate levels are sheathed entirely in terra cotta, with continuous pilasters separating paired windows in each bay and decorative spandrels dividing each story. A denticulated terra cotta beltcourse forms the base for the building's 1-story crown, which includes decorative relief panels in each pilaster. A substantial denticulated cornice, topped with ornamental terra cotta cresting, adorns the parapet. Modifications to the building have been limited, including changes to the storefronts and replacement of all of the 1/1 windows, both of which were done in a sympathetic manner. A projecting non-historic canopy supported by columns has also been added at the central entry of the Main St. façade. The most significant change, however, was the 1999 demolition of a portion of the rear of the building to accommodate the addition of a 4-story parking garage extending west along State St. The brick and concrete garage is set back from State St., however, and does not significantly impact the appearance or historic character of the building, which retains an overall high degree of integrity.

**10. 275-279 S. Main St.**

275-279 S. Main St., between State St. and Buchtel Ave., forms the south boundary of the district on the east side of Main – abutted to the south by a large surface parking lot. The 3-story commercial building, constructed c.1913, has a red brick façade with stone accents. Each of the 6 bays includes a single 1/1 window on the second and third floors, with a continuous stone band forming the sill at the second story and individual stone sills at the third level. The second floor windows also include stone keystones. The parapet features decorative brick patterning in rectangular panels framed by stone bands and rectangular blocks, with inlaid stone diamonds centered in the patterned brick. The storefronts have been altered multiple times, and the windows

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appear to have been replaced, but no other significant changes have been made to the building and it still retains a good deal of its historic integrity.

**11. 271 S. Main St. (Non-Contributing)**

271 S. Main St. is a historic building, constructed c.1920, but it has been heavily altered. Much of the 2-story red brick façade has been covered with stucco, and a shed and gabled roof structure has been added above the first floor. The ground floor has also been substantially altered, and overall the building's historic integrity has been severely compromised.

**12. 265 S. Main St. – Sears Roebuck & Co.**

Sears, Roebuck & Co. is a 3-story commercial building constructed c.1928 at 265 S. Main St. The façade is vertically divided, with the first two stories visually distinguished from the third. The first and second stories are sheathed in stone and arranged in four bays, with large windows placed between continuous pilasters and recessed stone spandrel panels separating the two levels. The main entrance, in the northernmost bay of the ground floor, has a recessed entrance with a corbelled stone surround and a decorative panel above the door. The third floor is sheathed entirely in terra cotta, with a terra cotta beltcourse at the base and a simple cornice with a row of polychromed decorative panels across the parapet. It is arranged in six bays, with a single window in each. All of the windows have been replaced, but few other changes have been made to the building since the end of the period of significance. The building originally had one large opening across the second floor, which was likely sheathed in terra cotta, and storefronts at ground level, but a c.1955 depicts the building in its current configuration, so the changes occurred within the period of significance (Figure 8). The building therefore retains sufficient integrity to be counted as a contributing resource to the district.

**13. 263 S. Main St. – Mayflower Hotel**

The 16-story Mayflower Hotel, at the corner of S. Main St. and E. State St., is the tallest building in the historic district and one of the most significant. Designed by Graham, Anderson, Probst & White and completed in 1931, is an excellent example of Art Deco architecture as applied to a tall building. A 1932 postcard shows the building as originally constructed (Figure 6). The building's 3-story base is sheathed in granite and limestone, with tall narrow window openings and limited use of applied ornamentation. The transitional 4<sup>th</sup> story is sheathed in beige brick but includes terra cotta window surrounds and a terra cotta beltcourse above the lintels. The building's north façade is divided into two matching towers above the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, creating a U-shaped plan. The 5<sup>th</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup> floors are consistent in their design, with the beige brick façade punctuated by continuous vertical bands of dark green terra cotta creating window surrounds and spandrels in some bays. The remaining bays include cream colored terra cotta window sills and a limited number of decorative terra cotta balconets at the 14<sup>th</sup> story. The 16<sup>th</sup> floor is slightly recessed and has angled corners. The green terra cotta bands continue up but widen considerably around the 16<sup>th</sup> floor windows, which include cream colored terra cotta ornaments above each lintel and similarly styled balconets below each sill. The parapet includes horizontal bands of matching green terra cotta, with a stepped, cream colored terra cotta cap. All of the building's existing windows are more recent replacements, but the fenestration pattern remains intact and no other significant changes have been made to the original building, which retains a remarkable degree of its historic integrity and character.

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**14. 227 S. Main St. – A. Polsky Co.**

A. Polsky Co. was another of Akron's largest and most significant historic department stores, and stretches from E. State St. to University Ave. (formerly E. Center St.) along S. Main St. – directly across from O'Neil's Department Store. The 1930 building was designed by the New York architectural firm of Starrett & Van Vleck, and is an excellent example of Art Deco architecture. A c.1930 postcard depicts the building soon after its original construction (Figure 5). The main façade of the 5-story building faces Main St., but it also wraps around angled bays at each corner and continues down State St. and University Ave. Nearly the entire building above ground level is sheathed in decorative yellowish terra cotta, with a stylized organic design extending up each pilaster, which are continuous from the second floor to their termination just above the parapet. Each bay includes a pair of windows at each floor, with grey terra cotta spandrels at the third and fourth levels and tan terra cotta lining the sides of each bay along its full height. The top floor windows are surrounded by yellowish and tan terra cotta arranged in a decorative pattern similar to that used on the pilasters. A distinct fenestration pattern and more elaborate ornamentation define the two center bays on the Main St. façade, where the pilasters and parapet also extend slightly above the typical height. Elaborate terra cotta ornamentation is also used across all façades just above the ground floor storefronts. The storefronts themselves are surrounded by granite and topped with decorative metal panels. All of the building's existing windows and storefronts are non-historic replacements, and the ground level canopies have been modified, but no other significant alterations have occurred on the original building. The original building included a 1-story parking garage at the rear, extending the building east to High Street. Three additional stories of store space were added to the garage in 1941, but similar materials and features were used to make the addition highly compatible. An elevator tower has also been added on the State St. elevation more recently. The alteration that has had the most impact on the building, however, was the addition of overhead walkways on the State St. and University Ave. elevations, connecting the 1941 addition to adjacent buildings. The State St. walkway appears to have been constructed c.1970 and predates the c.1990 garage to which it attaches. The University Ave. walkway is the most recent in Akron, constructed in 2000, and connects to a parking deck constructed in 1977-1978. As neither walkway was constructed in conjunction with the adjacent building to which it connects, neither of the adjacent buildings are counted as additions. Although the walkways do impact the appearance of the building, their effect is limited by their location toward the rear of the building and the fact that they do not touch the original building. This has left intact the main façades, which retain a remarkable degree of integrity, and the building still clearly conveys its historic appearance and character.

**15. 209 S. Main St. – Akron Furniture Co.**

Akron Furniture Co. is a historic building at 209 S. Main St., constructed in 1937. The original architectural drawings show the 8-story building featuring a stone façade with a vertical strip of glass block down the center. Simple Art Moderne detailing included narrow vertical bands of recessed stone, a stepped parapet, and porcelain moldings framing a large sign at the second floor. The design appears to have been altered before construction, however, as a c.1937 photograph shows the façade with horizontal bands of windows in the south half of the building (Figure 3). The windows were originally glass block, but they were replaced with aluminum fixed sash in 1949, when black granite facing was also added to the south portion of the façade. The ground floor has been altered more recently, including the 1979 addition of a projecting canopy and sign panel covered in metal siding. Also, in 1978, a small enclosure was added at the fourth floor on the rear of the building, to tie into an existing overhead walkway running through the alley behind it. As the walkway was constructed first and only later connected to the building, it is not considered an addition to Akron Furniture Co.

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The most significant changes to the building occurred within the period of significance, and later changes have not substantially compromised the building's historic integrity.

**16. 207 S. Main St. – Stone's Grill (Non-Contributing)**

Stone's Grill is a narrow 1-story building constructed c.1933 at 207 S. Main St. A c.1940 photograph shows the building's original Art Deco façade, with smooth black facing and streamlined signage and ornamentation (Figure 4). Piers at each end of the building curved in to a recessed ground level, with a more deeply recessed entry slightly off center and rectangular windows on each side. The building has since undergone substantial modifications and now resembles an English Tudor cottage or tavern. Elements of the original design remain – including the recessed ground level, off-center entry and window openings – but the appearance has been completely altered. The ground floor is faced in rustic stone, and diamond patterned stained glass windows have been added. The upper portion of the wall, supported by small wood brackets above the recessed central section, features decorative half-timbering and includes another stained glass window. The parapet is sloped and sheathed in shingles to create a faux side gable, with a steeply pitched, half-timbered cross gable above the entrance. The date of these changes is unknown, as no historic documentation of the work can be found. It appears that the changes occurred after the end of the period of significance, however, so the building is counted as non-contributing to the district.

**17. 203-205 S. Main St. (Non-Contributing)**

203-205 S. Main St., constructed c.1935, historically consisted of two separate buildings with a shared façade. A c.1940 photograph shows the buildings' Art Deco façade, with distinct signs and storefronts distinguishing the much wider south building from the narrow north building (Figure 4). More recently, the two buildings have been combined on the interior and the façade has been substantially altered. The building now includes a pair of similar brick facades, with a contemporary aluminum and glass atrium carved out between them. The significant alterations to the building have compromised its historic integrity and character, and it is counted as a non-contributing resource.

**18. 201 S. Main St. – Carlton's Clothes**

Carlton's Clothes, 201 S. Main St., is a historic commercial building constructed c.1900. Its original appearance is unknown, but the current metal façade was added c.1937, when it also included two horizontal and one vertical projecting signs (Figures 3 and 4). All remnants of the original façade have been lost or modified, and it now reads as a c.1937 building. The ground floor appears to have been altered more recently, although it is currently covered by plywood panels, and a non-historic awning has been installed. The ground-floor alterations have not significantly affected the building's historic character, however. As the c.1937 façade alterations occurred within the period of significance, the building is counted as a contributing resource.

**19. 195 S. Main St. (Non-Contributing)**

195 S. Main St. is a 4-story brick commercial office building, one of only two in the district that were constructed outside the period of significance. Tax records indicate that it was built c.1966, but the exterior appears to have been altered even more recently. The façade includes narrow strips at each end that angle back to a recessed central section, which features a curtain wall system installed in a large masonry opening. The building also includes a stone base, two thin stone bands, and decorative stucco banding above the first and fourth floors, with inlaid stucco panels in the arched parapet. The building has been connected to the

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overhead walkway running through the alley behind it, but like Akron Furniture Co. the connection was created after construction of the walkway so it is not considered an addition to the building.

**20. 191 S. Main St. – The Bankers Co.**

The Bankers Co. is a 4-story commercial building constructed in 1926. Originally a 3-story building, the design featured a 2-story Neoclassical stone façade above a more typical commercial storefront at ground level. The façade's 5 bays are separated by fluted pilasters and topped by a simple frieze and bracketed cornice. Each bay includes paired casement windows, with transoms at the second floor, and decorative spandrel panels with applied medallions and a dentil course below the third-story window sills. The windows were originally multi-paned but have been replaced with single lights. The fourth floor was added c.1955, a sympathetic addition that continues the façade's stone facing, 5-bay division, and casement windows, but with simpler detailing that clearly identifies it as non-original. The ground floor of the building has been altered more recently, with stucco piers dividing tall narrow storefront windows and entry doors. The building's design has always distinguished the ground level from the remainder of the façade, however, so the changes do not significantly affect the building's historic character. No other significant alterations have been made since the end of the period of significance, and the building retains sufficient historic integrity and character to be included as a contributing resource in the district. Although now connected on the interior with the Ohio Building and Annex (Building 21a & 21b), the Bankers Co. was originally constructed as a separate building and was connected after the construction of the Annex, so it is counted as a separate resource.

**21a & 21b. 171-189 S. Main St. – The Ohio Building and Annex**

The Ohio Building, an 8-story building constructed in 1916 at 171-179 S. Main St., is one of downtown Akron's most significant historic office buildings. A 4-story addition – here referred to as the Ohio Building Annex – was constructed c.1990 at 181-189 S. Main St., replacing an earlier 2-story addition. The Ohio Building, designed by noted Akron architecture firm Harpster & Bliss, occupies the corner of S. Main St. and Church St. with white terra cotta façades facing each street. Pilasters separate each bay, with decorative spandrel panels spanning between them at each floor. The typical bay features a pair of window openings separated by a central terra cotta jamb, but alternating bays on the second floor have a triple window in a single opening. The central bay on the S. Main façade is slightly narrower than the others and features a double window in a single opening on each level, with distinct ornament in the spandrels. A terra cotta cornice above the sixth-floor windows marks the intended height of the building when first designed – the two additional stories were added during construction to address additional demand for space in the building. The upper two stories closely follow the design of the lower portion, but with pier bases and capitols adorning the pilasters. The entablature above is now relatively plain, but it appears that a portion of the cornice has been removed. The ground floor of the Ohio Building has been modified, including changes to the configuration of the openings and the covering of all surfaces with stucco. The Ohio Building Annex is similar in appearance to the modified ground floor, with recessed openings set between stucco piers and simple stucco bands above the first and third floors, as well as capping the parapet. The smaller scale and distinct character of the addition visually separates it from the original portion of the Ohio Building and minimizes its effect on the overall historic character. Other changes to the Ohio Building include coating the secondary south elevation in stucco, above the Annex, where some non-historic window openings were also added. The building's windows have also been replaced. The Annex connects to the same rear overhead walkway as 195 S. Main St. and Akron Furniture Co., also through a separate enclosure constructed after the walkway was in place. The Ohio Building is connected to one of Akron's oldest sections of overhead walkway, constructed c.1962, which extends across Church St. to the

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Second National Bank Building and the Municipal Building and also connects to the adjacent walkway and the 1977-78 parking garage to the east. As none of the adjacent buildings were constructed in conjunction with the overhead walkway, none are considered additions to the Ohio Building and Annex. Given the scale of the Ohio Building, the Annex addition, overhead walkways and other alterations have not significantly impacted the building's overall character, and it retains a good degree of historic integrity.

**22. 153-165 S. Main St. – Second National Bank Building**

The Second National Bank Building occupies a short block on S. Main St. between Church St. and E. Bowery, at the north end of the historic district and directly across from Akron Savings and Loan. The 10-story building, designed by George B. Post & Sons and constructed in 1911, is a fine example of a Renaissance Revival mid-rise office building. The design is consistent on all four elevations, with a 2-story base, continuous pilasters that stretch from the third to the eighth stories, topped by the 2-story crown of the building. The building is sheathed primarily in beige brick, with stone accents including beltcourses, sills and lintels, pilaster capitals, and a prominent denticulated cornice. Typical bays in the intermediate stories include paired 1/1 windows in a single opening, while those at the base and crown feature two windows divided by a brick jamb. The tenth-floor windows have round arched tops and include decorative keystones. The ground floor of the building has been altered on the S. Main and Bowery elevations, including the addition of red brick piers and modifications to the pattern of openings. The building is connected at the rear to the same c.1962 overhead walkway that extends across Church St. to the Ohio Building and also connects to the adjacent Municipal Building. The walkway has very little impact on the appearance or character of the building, however, due to its rear location. Alterations to the building have been relatively minimal, and it still retains a high degree of its historic integrity and character.

**INTEGRITY**

Most buildings in the South Main Historic District have experienced some level of alteration, but the majority retain sufficient integrity of design and materials to convey their historic significance and character – yielding a strong ratio of contributing to non-contributing resources. The district as a whole also retains much of its historic character, including its dense development pattern and the distribution of iconic, large scale landmarks among clusters of vernacular low-rise commercial buildings. The most significant change to the district's setting since the end of the period of significance was the removal of buildings between 184-186 S. Main St. and O'Neil's Department Store to create a public park. Although certainly a significant loss of historic fabric, the framing of the park by a dense cluster of historic buildings on one side and a highly significant landmark building on the other helps retain the district's dense feeling and urban character, diminishing the impact of the demolition. The district's setting has also been impacted by the addition of overhead walkways connecting to some buildings, but all of the walkways are on the edges of the district and set back from the primary elevations along Main Street, minimizing their effect on the appearance and character of the district. The district is anchored on each end by some of the most significant buildings in downtown Akron from the 1910s through the early 1930s, which lends it strong integrity of association with that period of rapid growth and the accompanying southward shift of the city's primary commercial district. The South Main Street Historic District is the most representative and intact physical record of those significant trends in the history of Akron and therefore warrants the recognition of National Register designation.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The South Main Street Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for significance in the areas of commerce and transportation, and under Criterion C in the area of architecture. The significance of commerce in the development of the proposed district is because South Main Street evolved from the commercial success of the expanding rubber industry. The significance of transportation in the development of the proposed district stems from the building booms experienced by Akron during the automobile era of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The demand in automobiles increased the production of tires and contributed to the expansion of rubber related industries. The significance of architecture is because the buildings within the proposed district were built by prominent national and local architects and reflect the predominant architectural styles of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century during Akron's two building booms from 1915-1920 and 1925-1929. Significant architectural styles in the proposed district are Art Deco, Classical Revival, Renaissance Revival, and Commercial. There are two properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the proposed district: Loew's Theatre (NR 1973) and O'Neil's Department Store (NR1990). Loew's Theatre was designed by John Eberson, one of the leading movie theatre designers of the period, and well-known for his atmospheric theatres. O'Neil's Department Store and the Mayflower Hotel were designed by the prominent Chicago architectural firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst, & White, formerly Burnham & Root. The Akron Savings & Loan Building was designed by the well known New York architect Alfred Hopkins. The prominent New York architectural firm of George B. Post & Sons designed the Second National Bank Building. The Ohio Building was designed by the noted Akron architectural firm Harpster & Bliss. The South Main Street Historic District includes 16 contributing resources, including the 2 buildings previously listed on the National Register, and 6 non-contributing buildings in the proposed district. The period of significance begins c.1900, the date of construction for the oldest remaining building in the district (201 S. Main St.). The period of significance ends in 1957, the year Quaker Oats announced it would close its downtown plant and offices – an event that marks the beginning of a new era of development in downtown Akron, characterized by large-scale urban renewal projects and other efforts to revitalize what had become a struggling commercial district. As such, it also marks the end of the growth and commercial dominance of downtown Akron during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – the period represented in the South Main Street Historic District.

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**Early Evolution of Main Street**

The origins of Akron's Main Street are tied to the early development of the city's canal system. In 1831, Dr. Eliakim Crosby, constructed the Cascade Mill Race (a small hydraulic canal) through Main Street to provide water power for future mills on the canal. The North Village of Akron, the original town plat created in 1833, was once called the Cascade Village after the Cascade Mill Race. Main Street was originally named Race Avenue and later known as Water Avenue when the town was replatted in 1835. In 1836, North and South Akron became incorporated as one town. At that time, Water Avenue was renamed Main Street. Warehouses and mills once lined the east side of Main Street during the Canal Era. In 1840, the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal opened, but was made obsolete within four decades due to the railroads. New architecture replaced the old Main Street (Howard Street and East Market Street) with commercial blocks, hotels and banks. In 1884, an underground hydraulic canal was built to replace the barely used canal which was later filled in. Main Street was paved with bricks after 1892.<sup>1</sup>

**Commercial Growth and Prosperity - (1900-1945)**

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, rapid growth in the U.S. transportation industry fed the economic growth of the rubber industry in Akron, which would come to be known as the "Rubber Capital of the World." The city's rubber industry was founded in 1870 by Dr. Benjamin Franklin Goodrich, who created the B.F. Goodrich Company (Goodrich, Tew and Company) - the first rubber industry in the city. The rubber industry was supported by turn-of-the-century tire making machines. In 1916, B.F. Goodrich was the first company to manufacture single tube tires for bicycles in the country, and provided pneumatic tires to the first American automobile manufactured in Cleveland by Alexander Winton.<sup>2</sup> The company also provided tires for Charles Lindbergh's plane on its transatlantic flight in 1927. Other rubber companies emerged soon after the creation of B.F. Goodrich and provided competition: Frank A. Seiberling founded Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company (named in honor of Charles Goodyear, who developed vulcanized rubber) in 1898 and later also founded Seiberling Rubber Company in 1921; Harvey S. Firestone founded Firestone Tire and Rubber Company in 1900; and Michael and William O'Neil founded General Tire and Rubber Company in 1916.<sup>3</sup> When Goodyear was first founded, the company produced bicycle and carriage tires, horseshoe pads and poker chips. In the early 1900s, Firestone and Goodyear tires were used by the Ford Motor Company, and by 1916 the Goodyear company had become the world's largest tire company.

Between 1910 and 1920, the rubber industry's demand for employees increased Akron's population by over 200%, reaching a total of 208,000 people. Much of this growth occurred between 1915 and 1920, when World War I added significant military demand for rubber to the already rapidly growing automobile industry. Akron's established rubber companies were well poised to supply both. Goodyear was also the only company prepared to supply the war efforts with balloons, observation balloons, and dirigibles, while Firestone pursued innovations in tire design and involvement in automobile racing and service stations. With their substantial

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<sup>1</sup> NRN, *Main-Market Historic District, 2003, Description, 16-17.*

<sup>2</sup> NRN, *Main-Market Historic District, 2003, Statement of Significance, 8.*

<sup>3</sup> *Summit County Look Back Through 100 Years: An Historical Review of Akron and Summit County: 1840-1940, A Pageant of Heritage Sponsored by the Fifty Year Club (Akron, OH: Fifty Year Club, 1940), 30.*

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labor needs, the rubber industry brought a diverse population of European immigrants and migrants from the Appalachian region and other states to Akron. These factors combined to make 1915-1920 the “Magic Years” for Akron, characterized by significant economic, population and building growth. This 5-year period generated nearly \$70 million in construction activity, including the mammoth year of 1919, in which 6,894 buildings were constructed at a cost of \$27,219,436.<sup>4</sup> Significant portions of this growth were concentrated in the city’s commercial district, which continued to expand to the south, with new offices, hotels, residential and retail establishments constructed along North and South Main Streets.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to this period of growth, the South Main Street Historic District was relatively sparsely developed and characterized by a mix of small dwellings and light industrial uses, as shown in the 1892 Sanborn Maps (Figure 9). The city’s primary commercial district was further north on Main Street, around its intersection with Market Street, with additional businesses still occupying an even earlier district along Howard Street. As those districts became fully developed around the turn of the century, businesses began to move south along Main. By 1916, this trend was clearly well underway, with the west side of South Main Street fully developed from Quarry (now Bowery) to Buchtel. The east side of the street remained less dense, however, with a number of earlier dwellings and other small businesses remaining (Figure 10). The existing character of the South Main Street Historic District was, nevertheless, beginning to take shape.

Nine buildings in the South Main Street Historic District were constructed between 1910 and 1920, including two of the most prominent in the district – the Second National Bank Building and the Ohio Building, which occupy the northeast and southeast corners of Main and Church Street at the north end of the district. The Second National Bank Building was designed by the prominent New York architectural firm George B. Post & Sons and constructed in 1911, with four additional floors added to the originally 7-story building in 1919. Post is known for urban business and commercial structures, and for developing the modern hotel design. The firm had a Cleveland office from 1907-1929. Most notable Cleveland buildings include the 1908 Cleveland Trust Building (NR 1973) and the 1912 Statler Hotel (NR 1998).<sup>6</sup>

The Ohio Building was constructed in 1916 by Michael O’Neil, president of Akron’s leading department store (O’Neil’s Department Store) and co-founder of General Tire and Rubber. The building was designed by architect Fred Harpster of noted Akron architectural firm, Harpster & Bliss. Harpster & Bliss designed prominent commercial and institutional buildings in Akron between 1907-1925, including one of the most significant buildings in the historic Main-Market District (NR 2003) - the 1917 Masonic Temple. The firm also designed dwellings outside the commercial business district for industrialists like Harvey S. Firestone.<sup>7</sup> Originally conceived as a 5-story building, three additional floors were added to house the Akron City Club. The Akron City Club, incorporated in 1915, was located at the Ohio Building from 1916 to 1981, and during that time survived several fires and a roof collapse. In 1916, the club had 400 prominent business and professional members with a membership limit of 450. Within a few years, there were 700 members with a waiting list of 300. Some of Akron’s most influential members included Harvey S. Firestone, Michael O’Neil, Abraham

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<sup>4</sup> Karl H. Grismer, *Akron and Summit County* (Akron: Summit County Historical Society, 1952), 428.

<sup>5</sup> NRN, *Main-Market Historic District, 2003, Statement of Significance*, 12.

<sup>6</sup> David D. Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 470.

<sup>7</sup> NRN, *Main-Market Historic District, 2003, Statement of Significance*, 20.

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Polsky, and F.A. Seiberling. The sixth floor of the Ohio Building featured a lobby with dark woodwork, a “banquet hall, ladies’ private dining room, kitchen and lounging areas. The seventh floor had a gymnasium with three bowling alleys, two handball courts, billiards, exercise equipment and showers. The gym also doubled as a ballroom. The eighth floor served as a dormitory with 25 bedrooms “done in walnut of the style in the Queen Anne period.” The masculine seventh floor had fireplaces, wooden desks and leather furniture. The grill room had a “quarry tile floor, metalized oak woodwork and hammered brass lamp shades...flemish oak tables” for seating and a “frieze with historical scenes of Summit County.”<sup>8</sup> In 1981, the club relocated to the top floor of the Murdoch Building at 50 South Main Street.<sup>9</sup>

Following the end of World War I, consumers were anxious to spend and the automobile industry was booming, continuing to feed the demand for tires from Akron’s rubber factories. In the summer of 1920, however, a short but sharp national depression had a significant impact on the city’s rubber industry.<sup>10</sup> This setback was reflected in downtown’s construction activity, which slowed considerably. As such, only one building in the South Main Street Historic District was constructed between 1920 and 1925, although it would have a significant impact on the street.

The Akron Savings & Loan Building was designed by Alfred Hopkins (1870-1941) of New York and constructed in 1923. The architectural firm of Alfred Hopkins and Associates was best known for designing penitentiaries and corrective institutions, but Hopkins also designed several business structures such as the State Loan and Building Company in Columbus, Ohio.<sup>11</sup> Akron’s astounding economic growth is reflected in the bank’s assets as it increased from \$44,582 to \$6,309,412 during the company’s 36 years of existence.

Completion of the Akron Savings and Loan Building signaled the end of Akron’s brief lull in economic growth and building construction, and the city came roaring back in the second half of the 1920s. In fact, the city’s second major building boom – from 1925 to 1929 – would prove even larger than the first, with 28,417 structures constructed at a cost of \$93,078,903.<sup>12</sup> By the end of the boom, four more buildings had been erected in the South Main Historic District and two additional buildings were under construction. These six buildings include some of the most significant in the district – O’Neil’s Department Store, Loew’s Theatre, A. Polsky Co., and the Mayflower Hotel – and would significantly transform the appearance and character of the district, as South Main Street developed into the primary center of Akron’s commercial activity.

The Bankers Guarantee Title & Trust Company moved into the new Bankers Company Building in 1926, after fifteen years in the Second National Bank Building. The Akron Builders’ Bulletin describes the Bankers Building as “handsome” and “of modern design and construction.”<sup>13</sup> No other building in Akron featured “the battery of high powered search lights across the street by which the building will be flooded light at night.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Mark J. Price, “For Members Only,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, 3 November 2003, E1-E2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, E2.

<sup>10</sup> George W. Knepper, *Akron: City at the Summit* (Tulsa, OK: Continental Heritage Press, 1981), 115.

<sup>11</sup> Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*. (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970), 299.

<sup>12</sup> *Grismer*, 428.

<sup>13</sup> “Handsome New Building,” *Akron Builders’ Bulletin* December 1926, 4-5.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

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The Bankers Company, incorporated in 1911, occupied the first and second floors of the original three-story building. The company's largest real estate deals included the site for the O'Neil's Department Store's (9) \$3M department store at South Main and State Streets. The new building and opening of a branch office in Youngstown reflects The Bankers Company's growth during this period.<sup>15</sup>

It was the construction of a new building for O'Neil's Department Store (NR 1990) in 1928, however, that perhaps had the greatest impact on the development of South Main Street. O'Neil's was Akron's largest department store chain and the first significant retail building constructed in the district. The company began in 1877 as a small dry goods store known as O'Neil and Dyas, after Michael O'Neil and Isaac J. Dyas. In 1889, the business had outgrown their original store in the Howard-Market area, and relocated to the southwest corner of Market and Main Streets. The name of the firm was changed to O'Neil's Department Store in 1890 after the passing of Dyas. O'Neil's became the largest department store in Ohio with several locations in Northeastern Ohio. O'Neil and the success of the company was influential in developing Main Street as a commercial street and moving the business section further south to its current location.<sup>16</sup> The old business section to the north was overcrowded and could no longer accommodate the increasing number of shoppers in automobiles due to lack of parking lots. The O'Neil Company led the shift in the reorientation of the business center to the south. Other merchants soon followed such as the A. Polsky Company, an equally famous department store. The O'Neil building and its contemporaries like the Polsky building created the anchor for this end of the central business district. The O'Neil department store, built on the former site of the Merrill Pottery, is a six-story building that once covered an entire block extending back over the Ohio Canal.<sup>17</sup> The prominent Chicago architectural firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst, & White, formerly Burnham & Root, designed the building.<sup>18</sup> Graham, Anderson, Probst & White developed a style of architecture called "Commercial Classicism," designing large office buildings, department stores, banks, and train stations in every major American city. In Cleveland, the firm designed the 1912 May Company Department Store, the 1902 Union Station and the 1930 Terminal Tower Building.<sup>19</sup> In 1989, the O'Neil's name retired when the main department store in Akron closed and its remaining locations merged with May Company Ohio. The building has since been rehabilitated and now houses a restaurant and offices.

Loew's Theatre (NR 1973) was Akron's second new theatre built during the boom.<sup>20</sup> The building's location, south of Main and Bowery, further solidified the southward movement of Akron's main business district due to expanding economic and population growth. The atmospheric and opulent theatre was designed in 1929 by John Eberson (1875-1964), one of the leading movie theatre designers of the period. The atmospheric or stars-clouds theatre was a new genre of theatre architecture popularized by Eberson. The interior structure integrates Moorish and Mediterranean design. The theatre is the last of the 11 theatres opened by founder Marcus Loew that is still standing. Other designed theatre's for Loew include Valencia and Paradise in New York. The Akron Civic Theatre is the first movie house in America built with sound equipment originally installed, and the first in Akron with an air cooling system. The theatre's Wurlitzer grand organ is of superlative

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> HABS No. OH-2262, M. O'Neil Company (O'Neil's Department Store), 2-3.

<sup>17</sup> Grismer, 430.

<sup>18</sup> HABS No. OH-2262, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Withey, 246.

<sup>20</sup> Grismer, 429.

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quality. Big name entertainers included Cab Calloway, Ted Lewis, Kate Smith, Buddy Rogers and Sophie Tucker.<sup>21</sup> In 1965, Loew's was renamed the Civic. The Akron Civic Theatre is part of the partially built Hippodrome Theatre that was begun in 1918. Construction of the Hippodrome ended at the double doors to the grand lobby when the owners ran out of money.<sup>22</sup> The Akron Civic Theatre's entrance lobby extends over the Ohio and Erie Canal.

Meanwhile, the development of the south end of the district was continuing, with the construction of two more large, prominent buildings at the corner of Main and State Streets. The first was A. Polsky Company, another significant department store that constructed its own new building in 1930, directly across the street from O'Neil's – its primary competitor. After operating small stores in Youngstown and Orrwell, Ohio, Abraham Polsky and his business partner, Sam Myers, moved to Akron in 1885 and opened a store at 165 S. Howard Street. The firm name was changed in 1892 to the A. Polsky Company, and in 1913 the store expanded to include a site on Main Street. Abraham's sons, Bert A. and Harry O. Polsky, took over the business when he died in 1915. Following the lead of O'Neil's, the current site at South Main and State Streets was purchased in 1928, and the new store opened to the public on September 16, 1930. The building was designed by the prestigious New York City architectural firm of Starrett & Van Vleck, known for their designs of skyscrapers and department stores, including the famous Lord & Taylor and Saks Fifth Avenue department stores.<sup>23</sup> The presence of both O'Neil's and Polsky's created a significant draw for the city's other merchants, and by the early 1930s the business section extended on South Main Street from Market to Exchange.<sup>24</sup> A. Polsky Co. remained in operation at this location until its closing in 1978.<sup>25</sup> The former department store was later acquired by the University of Akron and converted to classroom and administrative space.

The third major building constructed at Main and State – after O'Neil's and A. Polsky Co. – was the Mayflower Hotel, built in 1931 on the southeast corner of the intersection, the former site of the YMCA building. The 16-story hotel is the tallest building in the South Main Street Historic District, and one of the earliest high-rise buildings in downtown Akron. (The 26-story FirstMerit Tower, located at Main and Mill Streets and also constructed in 1931, is considered Akron's first skyscraper.) Earlier attempts by leading businessmen to construct a hotel on other sites had failed during the Big Boom, but the Mayflower would benefit from its location at the emerging heart of Akron's commercial district. Owners Charles Herberich and Jerome Dauby, of Main-State Holding Company, had the building constructed by Carmichael Construction Company. Like O'Neil's, it was designed by the prominent Chicago architectural firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst, & White and is an excellent example of high-rise Art Deco design. With 450 guest rooms, the 16-story building would remain Akron's premier hotel for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup> Famous guests of the Mayflower Hotel included Katherine Hepburn, Bud Abbott and Lou Costello.<sup>27</sup> The building has since been converted to senior housing and is now known as the Mayflower Manor Apartments.

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<sup>21</sup> NRN, *Loew's Theatre, 1973, Statement of Significance, 3.*

<sup>22</sup> <http://downtownakron.com/pages/about06/news-releases/DSS2.html>

<sup>23</sup> *Withey, 567.*

<sup>24</sup> *Grismer., 431.*

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.uakron.edu/colleges/faa/schools/sslpa/phys.php>

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid., 432.*

<sup>27</sup> <http://downtownakron.com/pages/about06/news-releases/DSS2.html>

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From 1920 to 1930, the population of Akron increased by 46,605 to 255,040, although some of this growth can be attributed to the 1928 annexation of Kenmore, a thriving town of approximately 20,000, and additional extension of the city limits to east and west.<sup>28</sup> The 1920s had been a decade of endless optimism in Akron, but by the end of 1929, however, the stock market had crashed and the booming mood in Akron would rapidly change. Buildings like the Mayflower Hotel were able to be constructed during the early years of the Great Depression primarily because the project was funded before the stock market crash, but the depression would take its toll on Akron. By the end of 1930, the city's rubber companies had laid off 14,200 workers, and with the City of Akron's tax taxes reduced substantially, it would default on bond payments by January 1934 – remaining in that position for over two years.<sup>29</sup> Two small buildings – the c.1933 Stone's Grill and c.1935 203-205 S. Main St. – were constructed in the South Main Street Historic District during this period, but significant construction efforts effectively came to a halt. This trend continued through the remainder of the decade, as the 1937 Akron Furniture Co. was the only building in the district constructed between 1935 and 1940.

The onset of World War II, however, would bring sharp increases in demand for the products of Akron's industry and quickly revive the city's sluggish economy. Goodyear, for instance, grew even more rapidly than it had in the World War I era, and at one point employed over 35,000 workers.<sup>30</sup> The again booming companies drew tens of thousands of people to Akron from around the country, especially the rural south. Although no new buildings were constructed in the South Main Street Historic District, the existing downtown businesses were thriving once again, and a number of buildings were remodeled or expanded – including a sizable addition to A. Polsky Co. constructed c.1945. The district was once again vibrant and thriving.

**Post-War Decline – 1946-1957**

Several factors combined to continue Akron's economic prosperity in the post-war years, but these same forces would also lead to the commercial decline of downtown Akron and the South Main Street Historic District. As millions of service men and women returned home, many families had accumulated considerable savings from the prosperous war years and were eager to catch-up with large scale purchases that had been deferred – with automobiles being one of the primary items on such lists. This, coupled with the baby boom, stimulated consumer spending across the country and made the transition for Akron's industry's back to civilian production a rather seamless one.<sup>31</sup>

The end of the war also released an enormous pent-up demand for housing, and new developments emerged everywhere – spurred by the federal GI loans offered to veterans. In Akron, as in much of the country, these developments were concentrated in nearby suburbs. A new expressway system made these suburbs easily accessible and enabled housing developments further and further from downtown Akron. Retail businesses quickly followed this population shift, and shopping malls sprang up to serve the new subdivisions, with entertainment establishments like restaurants and movie theatres following closely behind.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Grismer, 435.

<sup>29</sup> Knepper, 132.

<sup>30</sup> Knepper, 144.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

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Larger downtown retail businesses opened branches in these new shopping malls, while keeping their downtown locations open, and many survived into the 1960s and 1970s. The outward trend was undeniable, however, and by the late 1950s, downtown was no longer the city's primary commercial center. In 1957, Quaker Oats announced that it would be closing its plant and offices at Mill and Howard Streets, which to many signaled the end to downtown's reign as Akron's commercial hub.<sup>33</sup> Rather than let the vacant buildings create a large hole in the city center, the City of Akron would eventually use federal grants and new tax levies to purchase the property for a new large-scale development that would become know as Cascade Plaza. This marks a significant shift in the development of downtown, characterized by publicly subsidized urban renewal projects intended to revitalize the central city. This shift also formally marks the end of the prominence of downtown and South Main Street, and therefore the end of the historic district's period of significance.

**Conclusion**

The South Main Street Historic District reflects the development of downtown Akron during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with remaining historic buildings connected to the evolving commercial, economic and architectural growth of the city during the building booms of that period. Fed by the rapid economic growth of the city's rubber industry during the automobile era, Akron's commercial district expanded beyond its earlier boundaries, extending southward along Main Street. Through the construction of several of downtown's most significant 20<sup>th</sup>-century buildings – the Second National Bank Building, the Ohio Building, Akron Savings and Loan, O'Neil's Department Store, Loew's Theatre, A. Polsky Co., and the Mayflower Hotel – South Main Street developed into the heart of Akron's commercial district. Because of its associations with these trends in commerce – much of which was tied to the transportation industry – the South Main Street Historic District is being nominated to the National Register under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Transportation. The district also reflects significant architectural trends of its era. During the city's building booms, new methods of construction changed Akron's skyline. The district evolved from narrow, deep commercial buildings four or fewer stories in height to include large-scale mid-rise buildings and one 16-story tower. The district's buildings include several examples of vernacular commercial style buildings from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as high-style Art Deco, Classical Revival and Renaissance Revival buildings designed by prominent local and national architects. The South Main Street Historic District is, therefore, also nominated to the National Register under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The district's period of significance begins c.1900, the date of the earliest remaining building, as well as the point in which South Main Street began to develop its existing character. The period of significance ends in 1957, the date of the closing of downtown Akron's Quaker Oats plant and offices, which marks the beginning of a new era of downtown development focused on urban renewal and central city revitalization.

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<sup>33</sup> *Kenneth Nichols, Yesterday's Akron: The First 150 Years (Miami: E.A. Seemann Publishing, 1976), 116.*

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OHI Forms: SUM-285-16; SUM-287-16; SUM-397-16; SUM-398-16; SUM-399-16; SUM-400-16

Loew's Theatre: NRN, 1973.

O'Neil's Department Store: NRN, 1990.

Main-Market Historic District: NRN, 2003.

HABS No. OH-2262, O'Neil's Department Store, Compiled after 1933.

HABS No. OH-2472, Loew's Theatre, Compiled after 1933.

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**Additional Records**

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Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of Akron, Ohio: 1886, 1892, 1916, 1940, 1950.

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<http://megatron.summitoh.net/summit/html/webintg.html>

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The South Main Street Historic District, in Akron, Summit County, Ohio, is bounded on the north by south curblines along Bowery Street. The west boundary runs between West Bowery and West State Streets, perpendicular to South Main Street, immediately behind the rear additions to O'Neil's Department Store and Loew's Theatre. The district's south boundary is formed by north curblines along State Street to the west of South Main, extending further south on the east side of Main to a mid-block point immediately south of 275-279 S. Main St. The east boundary of the district is formed by an unnamed alley mid-way between South Main and South High Streets, except between East State Street and University Avenue, where the east boundary extends to the west curblines along South High Street.

**Boundary Justification**

The district boundary is defined on all sides by adjacent non-historic construction and vacant lots, which delineates the concentration of historic buildings within the district.

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Figure 1: 186-174 South Main Street, c.1930.

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Figure 2: West side of South Main Street between Bowery and State Streets, c.1940. (Francis, *Images of America/Akron*)

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Figure 3: East side of South Main Street, c.1937. (Francis, *Images of America/Akron*)

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Figure 4: 201-207 South Main Street, c.1940. (Francis, *Images of America/Akron*)

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Figure 5: A. Polsky Co., c.1930 postcard. (Ayers, *Celebrating Akron's History in Picture Postcards*)

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Figure 6: Mayflower Hotel, 1932 postcard. (Ayers, *Celebrating Akron's History in Picture Postcards*)

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Figure 7: O'Neil's Department Store, 1946 postcard. (Ayers, *Celebrating Akron's History in Picture Postcards*)

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Figure 8: South Main Street, looking north, c. 1955 postcard. (Ayers, *Celebrating Akron's History in Picture Postcards*)

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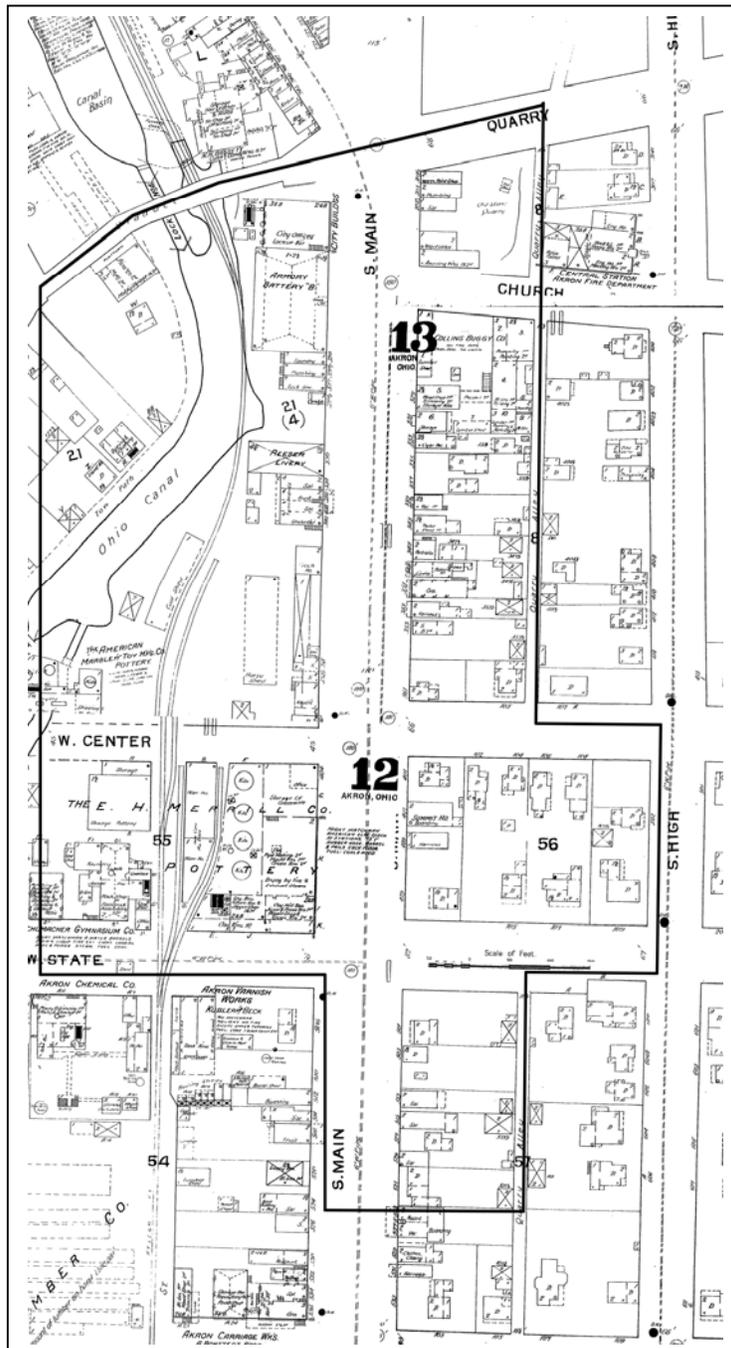


Figure 9: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1892. Portions of Sheets 11, 12, 13 consolidated by author. Outline indicates approximate boundary of South Main Street Historic District.

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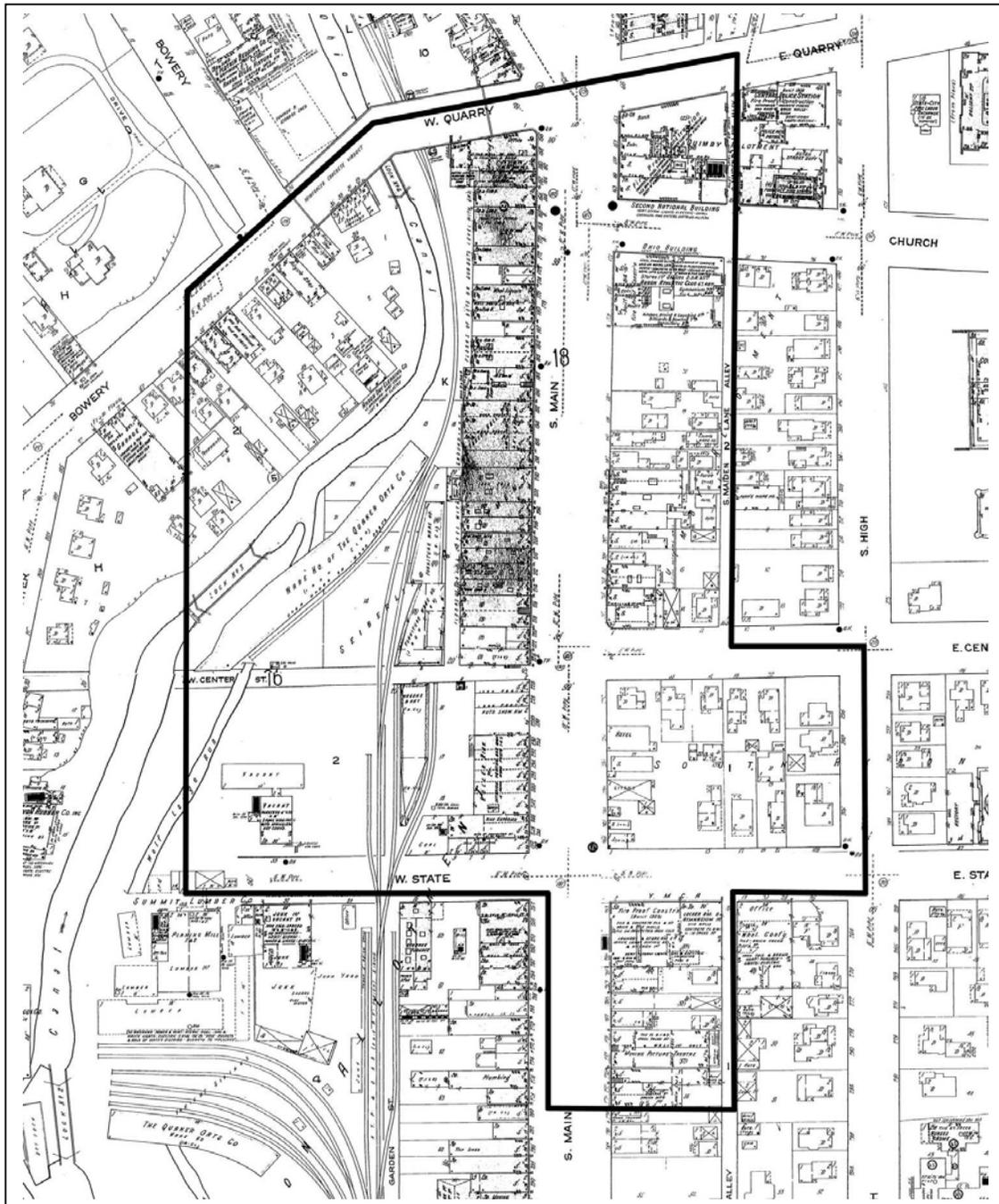


Figure 10: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1916. Portions of Sheets 16, 17, 18, 21, 22 consolidated by author. Outline indicates approximate boundary of South Main Street Historic District.

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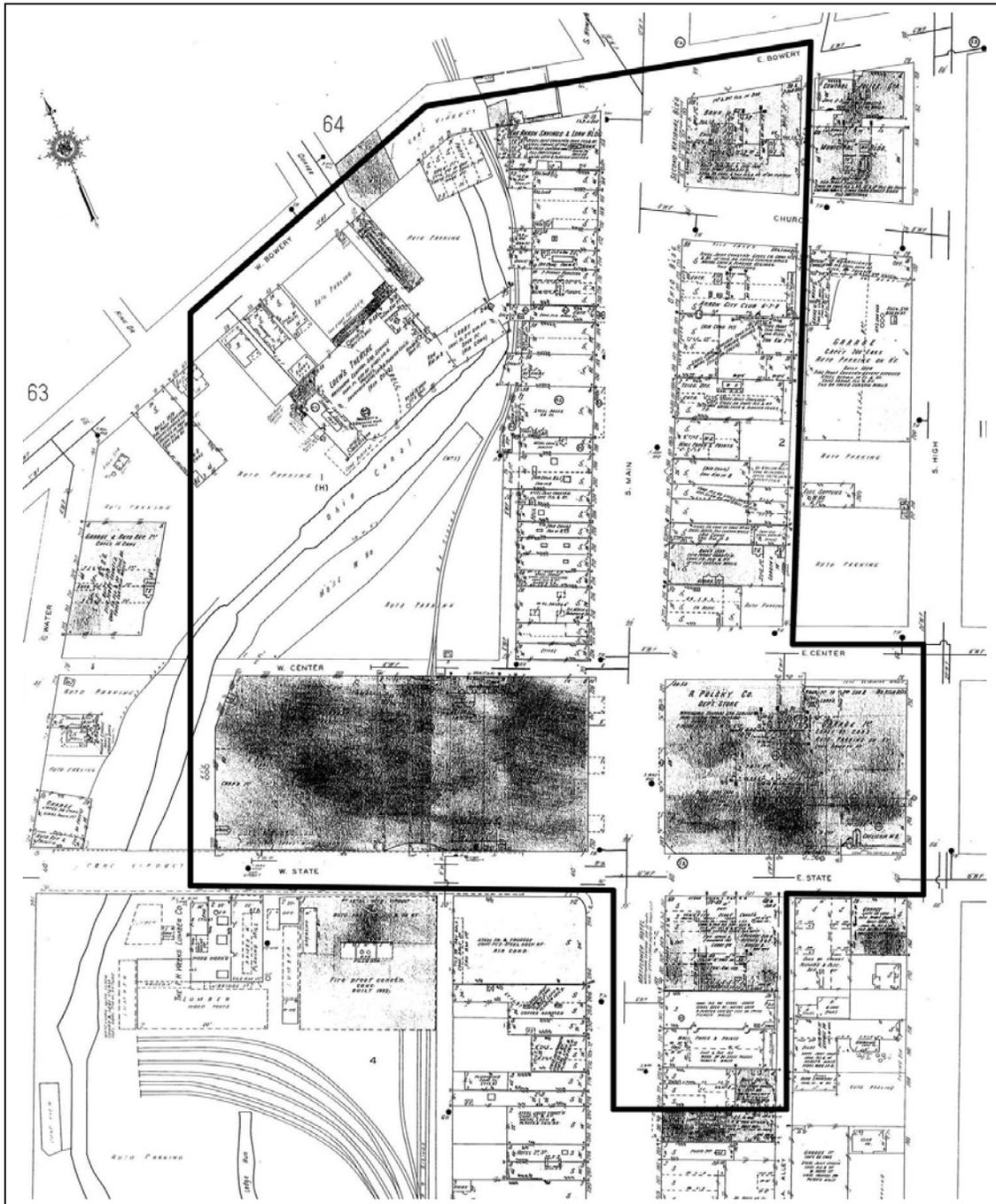


Figure 11: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1940. Portions of Sheets 9, 10, 14, 15 consolidated by author. Outline indicates approximate boundary of South Main Street Historic District.

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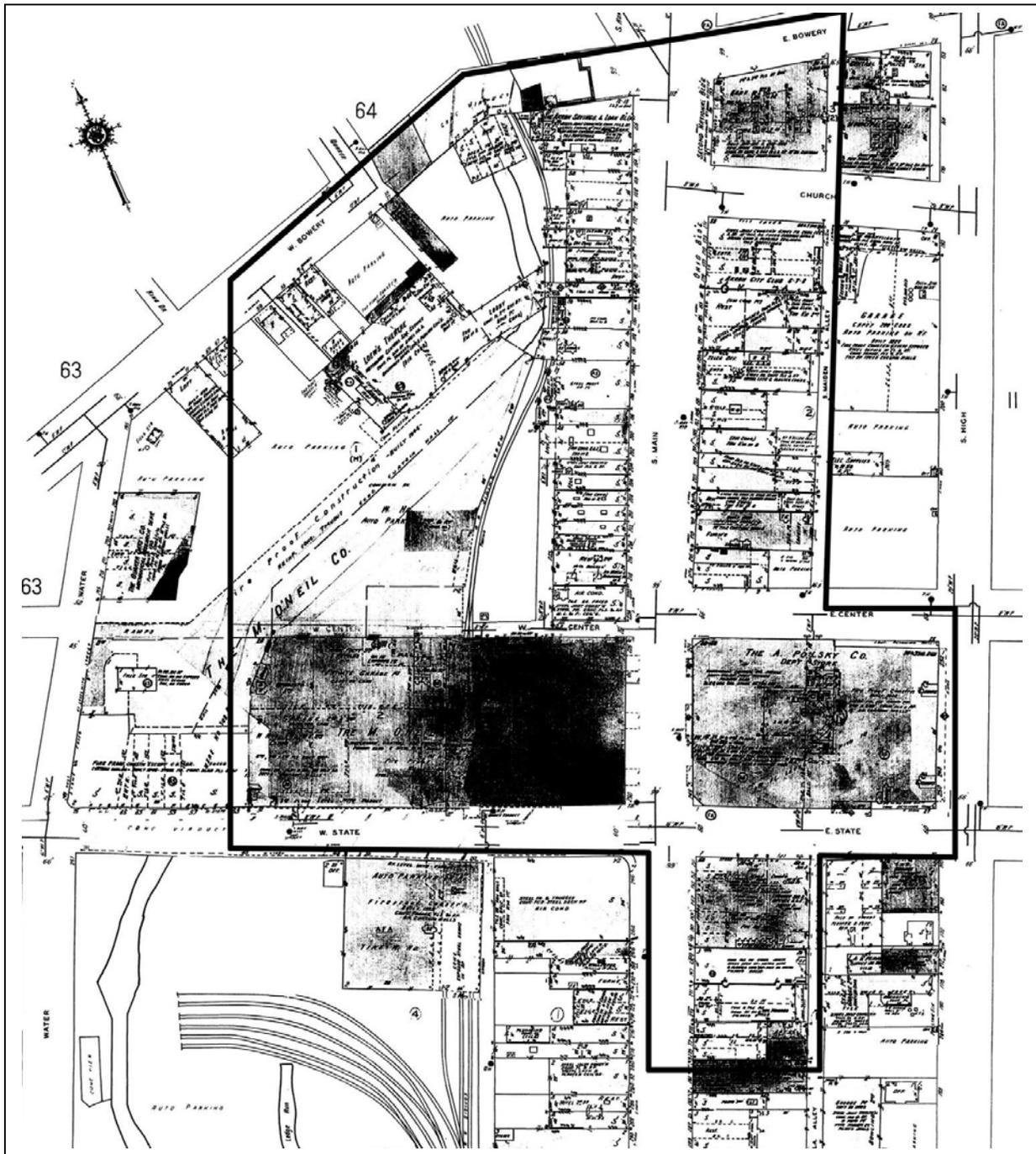


Figure 12: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1950. Portions of Sheets 9, 10, 14, 15 consolidated by author. Outline indicates approximate boundary of South Main Street Historic District.

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**PHOTOGRAPH LIST**

**All Photographs:**

South Main Street Historic District  
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Photographed by Martina Takac  
July 2007

**Photo 1**

West side of S. Main between Bowery and State  
Camera facing southwest

**Photo 2**

West side of S. Main between University and Bowery  
Camera facing northwest

**Photo 3**

East side of S. Main between Buchtel and State  
Camera facing northeast

**Photo 4**

153-189 S. Main St.  
Camera facing northeast

**Photo 5**

Akron Savings and Loan Building (156-160 S. Main St.)  
Camera facing northwest

**Photo 6**

164 S. Main St.  
Camera facing northwest

**Photo 7**

168-174 S. Main St.  
Camera facing west

**Photo 8**

176-186 S. Main St.  
Camera facing southwest

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**Photo 9**

O'Neil's Department Store (222 S. Main St.); north elevation and garage addition  
Camera facing southwest

**Photo 10**

O'Neil's Department Store (222 S. Main St.); northeast oblique  
Camera facing southwest

**Photo 11**

275-279 S. Main St.  
Camera facing east

**Photo 12**

Sears Roebuck & Co. (265 S. Main St.)  
Camera facing east

**Photo 13**

Mayflower Hotel (263 S. Main St.); northwest oblique  
Camera facing southeast

**Photo 14**

A. Polsky Co. (227 S. Main St.); southwest oblique  
Camera facing northeast

**Photo 15**

Akron Furniture Co. (209 S. Main St.)  
Camera facing southeast

**Photo 16**

Stone's Grill (207 S. Main St.)  
Camera facing east

**Photo 17**

203-205 S. Main St.  
Camera facing east

**Photo 18**

Carlton's Clothes (201 S. Main St.)  
Camera facing east

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**Photo 19**

195 S. Main St.  
Camera facing east

**Photo 20**

The Bankers Co. (191 S. Main St.)  
Camera facing east

**Photo 21**

Overhead walkway across Church St., between Ohio Building and Second National Bank  
Camera facing east

**Photo 22**

Second National Bank Building (153-165 S. Main St.); northwest oblique  
Camera facing southeast

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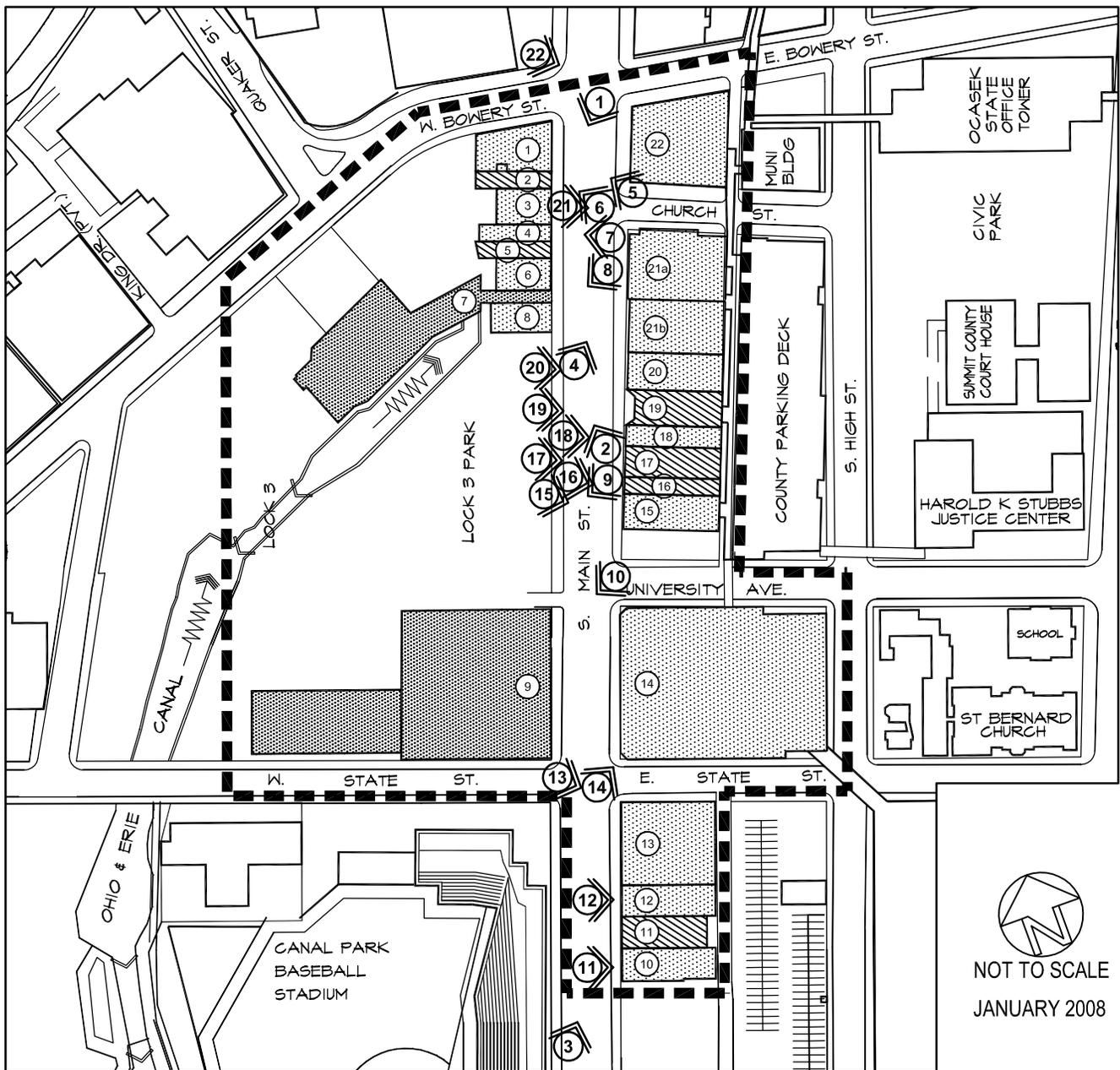
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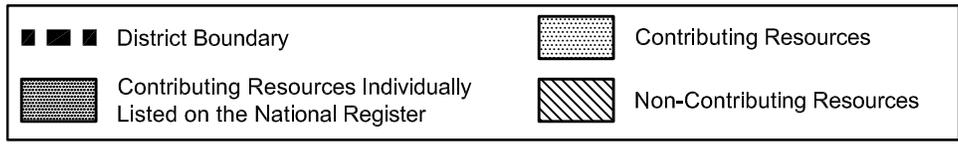
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# PHOTO KEY PLAN



NOT TO SCALE  
JANUARY 2008

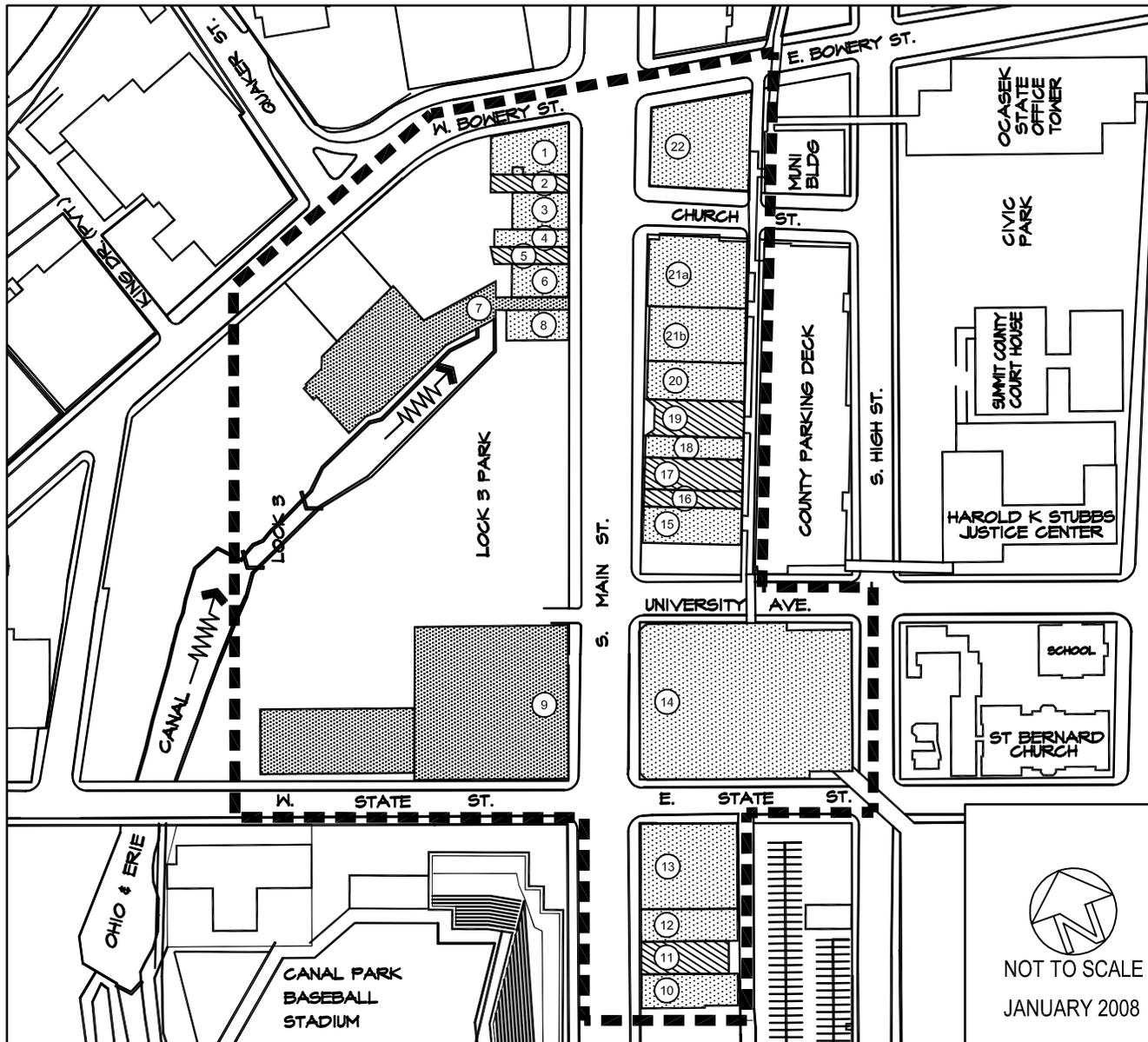


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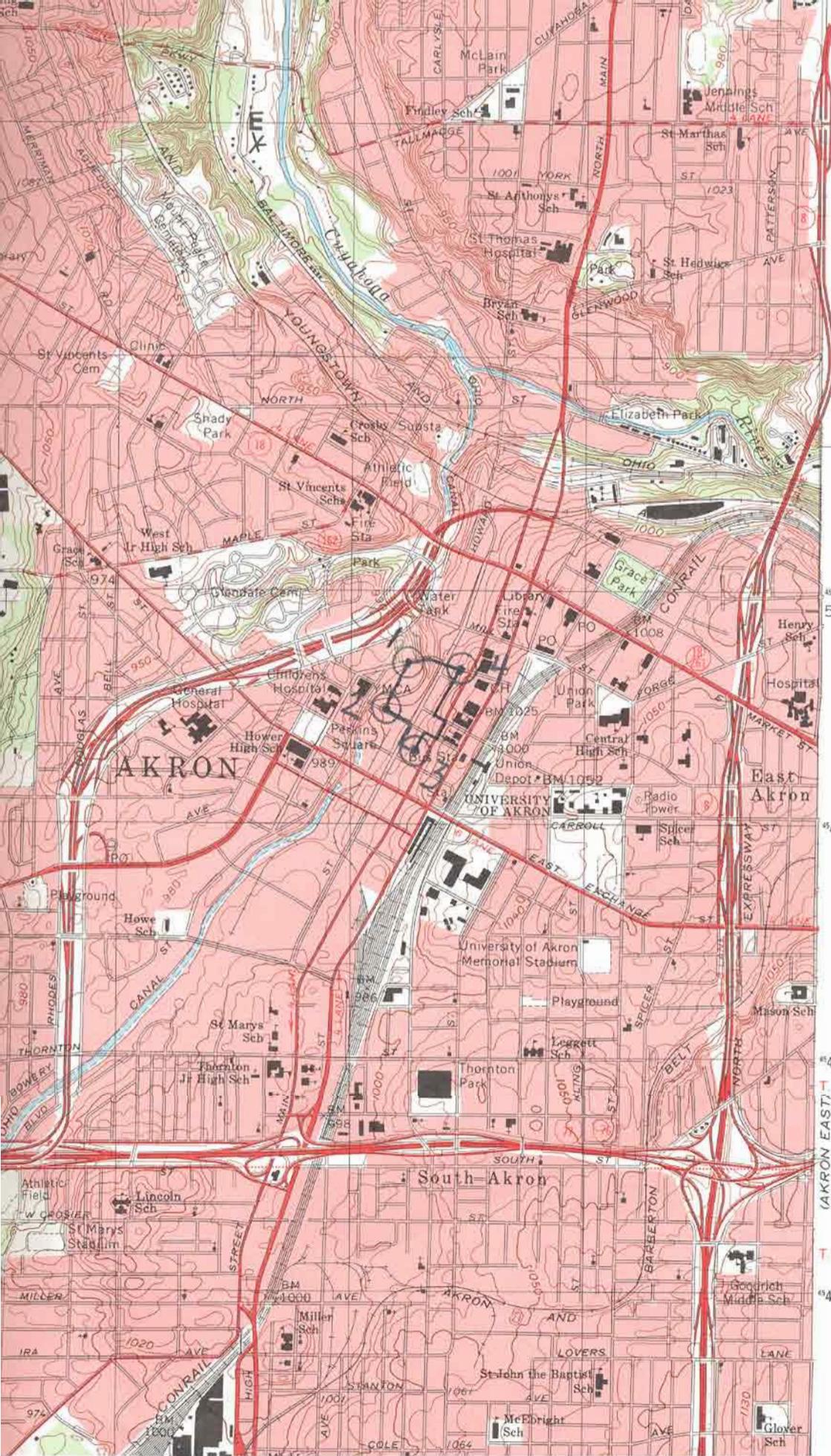
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NOT TO SCALE  
JANUARY 2008

District Boundary	Contributing Resources
Contributing Resources Individually Listed on the National Register	Non-Contributing Resources

- |                          |                             |                       |                                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| ① Akron Savings and Loan | ⑦ Loew's Theatre            | ⑬ Mayflower Hotel     | ⑰ 195 S. Main St.               |
| ② 164 S. Main St.        | ⑧ 184-186 S. Main St.       | ⑭ A. Polsky Co.       | ⑱ The Bankers Co.               |
| ③ Osterman Co.           | ⑨ O'Neil's Department Store | ⑮ 209 S. Main St.     | ⑳ Ohio Building                 |
| ④ 172 S. Main St.        | ⑩ 275-279 S. Main St.       | ⑯ Stone's Grill       | ㉑ Ohio Building Annex           |
| ⑤ Standard Savings Bank  | ⑪ 271 S. Main St.           | ⑰ 203-205 S. Main St. | ㉒ Second National Bank Building |
| ⑥ Whitelaw Building      | ⑫ Sears Roebuck & Co.       | ⑱ 201 S. Main St.     |                                 |



SOUTH MAIN STREET  
HISTORIC DISTRICT  
AKRON, SUMMIT COUNTY,  
OH

- UTM:  
 1. 17/456232/4547684  
 2. 17/456461/4547659  
 3. 17/456263/4547311  
 4. 17/456133/4547486

48  
51  
47  
46  
T 2 N  
4766 111 SW  
T 1 N  
45