

DRAFT STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT

U. S. POST OFFICE HISTORIC DISTRICT
A RESOURCE WITHIN
THE ADRIAN HISTORIC COMMERCIAL DISTRICT
ADRIAN, MICHIGAN

Submitted by Martha Burczyk
Cultural Resource Management
November 25, 2008
mburczyk@msn.com

Introduction

Much of the descriptive information in this report is a compilation of Above-Ground Surveys, an historic inventory of the property, the National Register Nomination in 1985, and a result of some of the author's own research. Some of the more critical facts are cited; the full bibliographies are available on the aforementioned reports.

Charge of the Committee

The Historic Districts Study Committee was initially appointed by the Historic District Commission on June 19, 2007, and later by the Adrian City Commission on November 5, 2007, pursuant to the Adrian Code of Ordinances, Chapter 34. The study committee is a permanent committee charged with conducting the following duties and activities on a continuing basis: inventory, research, preparation of preliminary historic district study committee reports, and review of nominations for local historic district status for proposed resources within the current historic district.

Composition of Committee Membership

Clark Baldwin, Chair, Historic District Commission, Attorney at Law with offices in the historic Burnham Building and residence in the historic district

Peter Barr, Ph.D., Chair, Study Committee Report, Professor of Art History, Siena Heights University, Art Historian, Gallery Director

Kara Lennard, Architect and Board Member, Lenawee County Historical Society

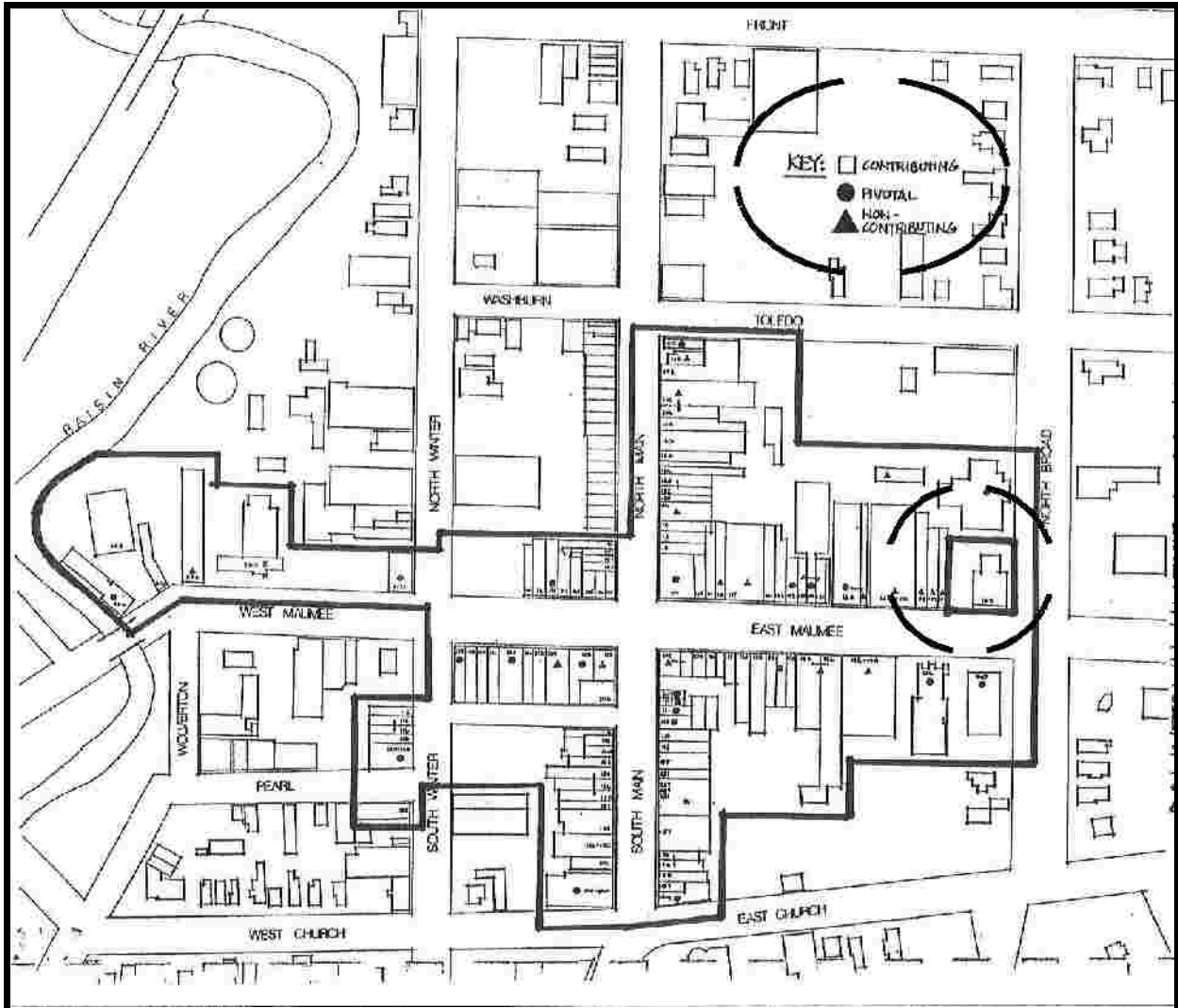
Dr. William DeMots, MD, residence in historic district

Inventory

A photographic inventory of the proposed district was conducted in 2005 as part of the City of Adrian Downtown Historic Commercial District Survey. Copies of the inventories are located at the City of Adrian Planning Department, Eastern Michigan University as authors of the survey, and the State Historic Preservation Office. A National Register Nomination was submitted in 1985 and will be used as an additional source.

Description of the District

The Downtown Historic Commercial District was established in 1985 through National Register application. The proposed resource is within the district and is boldly outlined along with district boundaries on Map A (following page). The Historic Commercial District encompasses the original plat of the Village, then City, of Adrian platted in 1828. An expanded plan is dated 1836 adding many more streets and lots, but the only lots from that plat in the Historic District are the eastern- and western-most lots along Maumee Street. Included are lots 126 and 127, on which the U.S. Post Office was eventually built.



MAP A
 Downtown Historic Commercial District
 Adrian, Michigan September 1985
(Appendix, National Register Nomination 1985)

The single property that is the focus of this report is located at 159 East Maumee Street and is boldly outlined on Map A as shown on the previous page. The key on Map A indicates that this is a significant, contributing structure within the Adrian Downtown Historic Commercial District. The map is part of the appendix to the 1985 National Register Nomination.

The structure on this property is currently used as an Adult Education Center, originally the U.S. Post Office in downtown Adrian. Single district status is being sought for the protection of the exterior and associated incentives related to project development.

The proposed name for this district is the “U.S. Post Office Historic District”.

Boundary Description

The Adrian Adult Education Center at 159 East Maumee Street occupies parcel # XA0-000-0126-00. The legal description is as follows:

“BEGINNING AT THE INTERSECTION OF THE WEST RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF BROAD STREET WITH THE NORTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF MAUMEE STREET, THENCE 126.0 FEET NORTHEASTERLY ALONG THE WEST RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF BROAD STREET TO A POINT, THENCE 122.5 FEET NORTHWESTERLY TO A POINT ON A LINE WHICH FORMS AN INTERIOR ANGLE OF 89 DEGREES 49' WITH THE PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED LINE, THENCE 126.0 FEET SOUTHWESTERNLY TO A POINT ON A LINE WHICH FORMS AN INTERIOR ANGLE OF 90 DEGREES 11' WITH THE PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED LINE INTERSECTING THE NORTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE AT MAUMEE STREET, THENCE 122.5 FEET SOUTHEASTERLY ALONG THE RIGHT OF WAY LINE AT MAUMEE STREET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. CONTAINING 15,434.921 SQUARE FEET OR .3534 ACRES.”

Figure 1 shows the corner location with parcel numbers and addresses.



Figure 1

CORNER PROPERTY
159 East Maumee Street
With addresses to the west
(Aerial View 2008, Courtesy:
Adrian Tax Assessor's Office)

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Commercial Historic District are in keeping with the original plat of 1828 for the Village of Adrian, with the addition of the eastern-most and western-most lots which were part of an expanded plat dated 1836. There were many more streets and lots added in 1836 but there are only a few lots added to the Historic District, with pivotal structures anchoring the boundaries to the east and west. Lots 126 and 127 are the focus of this report and the post office is determined to be a contributing structure. As Map A also indicates, the post office is situated between two pivotal structures – the Baptist Church to the north and the Masonic Temple to the south. Together, these three buildings anchor the eastern-most boundary of the Commercial Historic District.

Description of the Resource

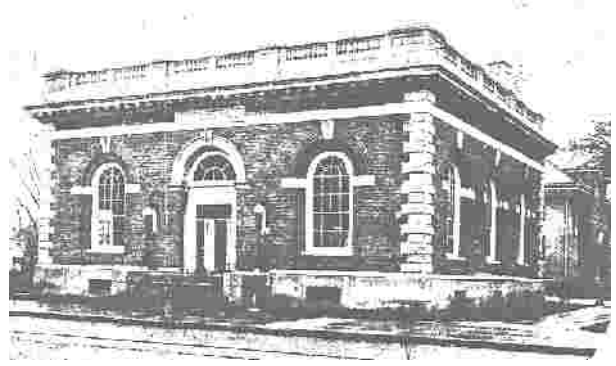
The United States Post Office building (now the Adrian Adult Education center), is listed on the National Register Nomination as a government building of 1-1/2 stories with a basement. It is located at 159 East Maumee Street, and occupies Lots 126 and 127 at the northwest corner of East Maumee and Broad Streets.

The brick building is a Colonial Revival style with 1-1/2 stories and a basement. This free-standing structure had eight-over-eight double-hung sash windows with fan lights above. The main entrance faces Broad Street, with sidewalks and street lamps to the south and east portions of the property. Vehicles enter from Broad Street north of the building, to public parking directly to the west of the building. The architect is unknown.

The U.S. Post Office building is a square mass of brick, terra cotta and limestone. Several steps lead to the main entrance. Windows are arched with fan lights, accentuated with brick hoods and flat stone ends and keystones. Marking the main entrance is a more intricate hood of terra cotta with a guilloche motif and a scroll for the keystone in the center.

Just above the scroll a terra cotta band spans the breadth of the building. Brick coursing sits between the band above the door and a frieze with modillions, dentils and fretwork below a parapet that is an intricate stone balustrade. The frieze and balustrade give the building the perception of added power and stability, as do the rusticated stone quoins on the corners.

Above the keystone of the entrance door is a stone piece with the name of the building: “U.S. Post Office”. The date of construction is between the door and fanlight in Roman numerals, “MCMIV”, 1904. (*Figures 2 and 3*)



Figures 2 and 3

Left to right: The nearly completed U.S. Post Office, 1904. Notice the door boarded up. Because there is no addition added in 1927, it is thought that this component was the last detail before opening for business. On the right, the completed door, fan light and door surround.

Source: Ebay.com and Lenawee County Historical Society (LCHS) respectively

The building has had many changes. There is also a brick addition to the back of the building, indicated on a 1927 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. The addition has 1/1 double hung sash windows. An aerial photograph taken in 1949 shows the balustrade on the building but a Michigan Above-Ground Survey reports that this was removed some time in the 1970s and replaced with a brick parapet and heightened roof line. The brick is lighter in color than the original brick. A current photo shows these changes along with fan lights covered and only one half of the original 8/8 window showing. Also, a scroll keystone is visible on the window to the left of the door (*Figure 4*).



Figure 4

As seen today with covered fan lights, brick parapet and raised roof line, and scroll keystone on window to the left of the main entrance.

Courtesy: Noel Carter, September 2004