**Site Inventory Form**

**State Inventory No. 22-01356**
- ☒ New  ☐ Supplemental
- ☒ Part of a district with known boundaries (enter inventory no.) 22-01381
- ☐ National Register Status: (any that apply) ☐ Listed  ☐ De-listed  ☐ NHL  ☐ DOE
- 9-Digit SHPO Review & Compliance Number ________
- ☐ Non-Extant (enter year) ________

### 1. Name of Property

- **Historic name**: Molumby Block (north half)
- **Other names/site number**: Theis Clothing; Mac’s Clothing; The Back Stitch/Schnell Apartments

### 2. Location

- **Street & Number**: 108-114 South Main Street
- **City or Town**: Elkader 
- **Vicinity, County**: Clayton

#### Legal Description:
- **(If Rural)**
  - **Township Name**
  - **Township No.**
  - **Range No.**
  - **Section**
  - **Quarter of Quarter**
- **(If Urban)**
  - **Subdivision**
  - **Original Town**
  - **Block(s)**
  - **Lot(s)**
  - **N. 2/3 LOT 2**

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification [Skip this Section]

### 4. National Park Service Certification [Skip this Section]

### 5. Classification

#### Category of Property
- ☒ Building(s)
- ☐ District
- ☐ Site
- ☐ Structure
- ☐ Object

**Number of Resources within Property**
- If Non-Eligible Property
  - Enter number of:
  - Buildings: ________
  - Sites: ________
  - Structures: ________
  - Objects: ________
  - Total: ________

- If Eligible Property, enter number of:
  - Contributing Buildings: ________
  - Contributing Sites: ________
  - Contributing Structures: ________
  - Contributing Objects: ________
  - Noncontributing Buildings: ________
  - Noncontributing Sites: ________
  - Noncontributing Structures: ________
  - Noncontributing Objects: ________
  - Total: ________

#### Name of related project report or multiple property study
(Enter “N/A” if the property is not part of a multiple property examination).
- **Title**: Arch. & Hist. Resources of the Elkader Downtown Historic District MPD
- **Historical Architectural Data Base Number**: 22-030

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
- 02E03 Drygoods (Clothing Store)
- 02E05 Hardware Store

#### Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
- 02E Specialty Store
- 01B02 Apartment Building

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
- 09F05 Brick Front
- 05B Italianate

#### Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
- Foundation: 04 Stone
- Walls: 03 Brick; 04 Stone
- Roof: 08 Asphalt
- Other

**Narrative Description**
(☐ SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED)

### 8. Statement of Significance

**Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark “X” representing your opinion of eligibility after applying relevant National Register criteria)
- ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ More Research Recommended
  - A  Property is associated with significant events.
- ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ More Research Recommended
  - B  Property is associated with the lives of significant persons.
- ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ More Research Recommended
  - C  Property has distinctive architectural characteristics.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ More Research Recommended
  - D  Property yields significant information in archaeology or history.
County: Clayton
Address: 108-114 South Main Street
City: Elkader
Site Number: 22-01356
District Number: 22-01381

Criteria Considerations

- A: Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- E: A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- B: Removed from its original location.
- F: A commemoratory property.
- C: A birthplace or grave.
- G: Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

02 ARCHITECTURE
05 COMMERCE

Significant Person

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)

Architect/Builder

Architect

Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (☐ SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED)

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographic Data

UTM References (OPTIONAL)

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☐ See continuation sheet for additional UTM references or comments

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Marlys Svendsen, Svendsen Tyler, Inc.
organization: City of Elkader
date: 7/2011
street & number: N3834 Deep Lake Road
telephone: 715/469-3300

city or town: Sarona
state: WI
zip code: 54870

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION (Submit the following items with the completed form)

FOR ALL PROPERTIES

1. Map: showing the property’s location in a town/city or township.
2. Site plan: showing position of buildings and structures on the site in relation to public road(s).
3. Photographs: representative black and white photos. If the photos are taken as part of a survey for which the Society is to be curator of the negatives or color slides, a photo/catalog sheet needs to be included with the negatives/slides and the following needs to be provided below on this particular inventory site:

   Roll/slide sheet # Frame/slot # Date Taken
   Roll/slide sheet # Frame/slot # Date Taken
   Roll/slide sheet # Frame/slot # Date Taken

☐ See continuation sheet or attached photo & slide catalog sheet for list of photo roll or slide entries.
Photos/illustrations without negatives are also in this site inventory file.

FOR CERTAIN KINDS OF PROPERTIES, INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING AS WELL

1. Farmstead & District: (List of structures and buildings, known or estimated year built, and contributing or non-contributing status)
2. Barn:
   a. A sketch of the frame/truss configuration in the form of drawing a typical middle bent of the barn.
   b. A photograph of the loft showing the frame configuration along one side.
   c. A sketch floor plan of the interior space arrangements along with the barn’s exterior dimensions in feet.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Use Only Below This Line

Concur with above survey opinion on National Register eligibility: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ More Research Recommended
☐ This is a locally designated property or part of a locally designated district.

Comments:

Evaluated by (name/title): __________________________ Date: __________________________
7. Description:

This building is estimated by the Clayton County Assessor to have been built in 1890. This date is in error as the building is well-documented in newspaper accounts as having been constructed in 1898 following a fire that destroyed several frame buildings previously on this site and the adjacent lots north and south. These accounts date the building to 1898.

The section of the Molumby Block at 108-114 South Main Street constitutes the separately owned north half of a building that was originally constructed with four shop spaces in the entire building. It was originally built as an Italianate Style 3-story commercial building with a symmetrical, wide front façade. The third floor of the building was substantially damaged in the 1958 tornado and removed. The balance of the building was retained with the storefronts redesigned to restore some of the detailing of the 1898 appearance. The horizontal I-beam has been exposed, a simulated transom level installed and display windows set to either side of the three center doors leading to the upper flats (center) and two shop space doors to either side. The original stacked stone block support on the south end of the north half was retained in place.

The upper level window openings were retained but the sash changed from 1/1 double-hung to a single-light sash with infill panels above. The original wall surface was retained - mottled reddish-brown brick walls with dressed stone sills and rock-faced lintels and banding stones. The sills of the third floor windows that were removed when the tornado damaged top level was removed, became part of a retained horizontal band of stone set about 4 feet below the top of the parapet walls. It appears that the original brick and stone coping were salvaged and reused for the rebuilt, shortened height parapet and coping.

8. Significance:

The Molumby Block (north half) at 108-114 South Main Street was built in 1898 as a 3-story Italianate Style commercial block with shop space and two levels of flats. Following the tornado of 1958, the third floor was destroyed but the balance of the building was retained. Though the building has lost its three-level height it continues to retain much of its original brick and stone fabric, the general design of the storefront level, and the rhythm of the multiple shop spaces at street level. It demonstrates a successful rebuilding effort following the tornado and a subsequent storefront redesign that more closely matches the original appearance. The district derives significance under both Criteria A and C. Under these criteria, the district’s commercial buildings are associated with the historic contexts developed for the downtown in the "Architectural and Historical Resources of the Elkader Downtown Historic District" Multiple Property Documentation form covering the years 1846 to 1960.

Elkader Downtown Historic District Background:

The town of Elkader was laid out in 1846 along the banks of the Turkey River approximately 16 miles upstream from the Turkey River’s confluence with the Mississippi River. The town was surveyed and laid out in 1846 with the Original Town Plat filed in June 22, 1846 by Timothy Davis, Chester Sage and John Thompson, friends and business partners, who began operating a sawmill on North Front (Main) Street in 1845 before the town was even platted. By 1849 they had a successful flour mill in operation.
The new town was named for Abd el-Kader, an Algerian freedom fighter and world figure who was admired by Davis. The principal building stimulating development in the 1840s and 1850s was the Elkader Mill. After 1860 when the Clayton County voters selected Elkader as the permanent county seat, the downtown saw a variety of merchants set up shops, several hotels open, a number of newspapers begin publication, and small manufacturing concerns get underway in the city center. Elkader numbered 440 residents in 1860.

The new county court house saw its first section completed in 1869 opposite the downtown. New limestone buildings were erected along both North and South Main Street with public halls frequently located on upper floors. During the 1870s and 1880s 2-story brick buildings began replacing frame business houses. A permanent railroad connection was completed by the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul RR in 1886 but service remained poor as Elkader was located at the end of a spur rather than along a main line route. A more important transportation improvement during the 1880s was the completion of the Keystone Bridge across the Turkey River in 1880. Its completion prompted a period of economic vitality and community investment. The community was officially incorporated two years later in 1891 and a new waterworks system and city well were completed in 1896. Electricity was rejected by locals until the end of the decade in 1900, however. In the meantime, new churches were built in 1897 for the Congregationalists on the east side of the river and in 1897-1899 for the Catholics on the west side of the river. Coupled with a series of major fires during the 1890s, the downtown saw a period of rebuilding with a new hotel and bank at the entrance to the business district at the turn of the century. The new opera house was completed on North Main Street while other 2 and 3-story brick blocks appeared both north and south of Bridge Street.

By 1900, Elkader’s population stood at its peak of 1,321 – an increase of 77 percent during the decade of the 1890s. Development continued in the downtown before and after World War I but at a much slower pace. Floods and fires damaged the Elkader Mill in 1902, 1906 and 1908, but it was nevertheless rebuilt by Schmidt Brothers & Co., retaining a key employer and anchor for Elkader’s downtown. The business district began to extend to the west before and after the war with the principal changes seen along West Bridge Street. Here livery stables and wagon shops were replaced by automobile dealerships, implement companies and filling stations. Five stations eventually located along West Bridge with a sixth one block to the south along First Street SW. The national economic depression of the 1930s was coupled by the closing of the Elkader Mill in 1939 following a major fire. Natural disasters after World War I included major floods in 1922, 1947, and 1958 with a tornado destroying section of South Main Street in 1958 as well.

Despite these natural and human made disasters, Elkader saw steady but modest population growth from 1,223 in 1920 to 1,526 in 1960. The impact of the automobile was seen in traffic patterns, parking patterns, and traffic signs and the introduction of electricity saw several generations of street lighting come and go. The popularity of the opera house waned and the first floor became the municipal fire station while two movie houses came and one stayed in the downtown drawing evening crowds for entertainment and shopping. As many as 130 people resided in downtown flats during this period. A good system of inter and intra-state highways connected Elkader and its downtown to other parts of the state and country in a way that railroads had never served the community. By 1960, downtown Elkader was well-established as one of several geographically dispersed retail centers serving Clayton County. Virtually every storefront was filled with start-up businesses or multi-generational family stores as Elkader’s downtown achieved a stable and healthy status for local and countywide residents.
**Historic Background for the Molumby Block (north half) at 108-114 South Main Street:**

The four original frame buildings built between 1865 and 1866 by Tiffany (Otto Kleinpel’s harness shop), J.K. Molumby (The Golden Rule), J.G. Hagensick (residence), and Friend (residence) were destroyed in a disastrous fire that destroyed the Boardman-Clark House at the southwest corner of the intersection of Main Street and Bridge Street on March 12, 1896. The four buildings were replaced by a new commercial building with four shop spaces. The front half of the building had three stories and the rear half was only two stories in height. The entire Molumby Block was built for a cost of $14,000 in 1897-1898 under the single ownership of John K. Molumby. Prior to the fire, Molumby owned the second frame building at 114 South Main Street, which was occupied as a millinery store by F. Landon, known as “The Golden Rule.” Mr. Molumby received only $300 insurance on his building loss but by June 1897 had consolidated ownership of the lots of the four previous buildings for the erection of the new “Molumby Block.” When it was completed, the December 15, 1898 issue of the *Elkader Register* wrote the following: “The Molumby block erected by John Molumby, is situated on Front Street [Main Street] next to the Bayless and consists of four fine stores eight feet deep with offices and flats on the second floor. The third floor contains a fine hall. The block is entirely occupied.” The north half of the Molumby Block in subsequent years held several clothing stores including E.C. Fitzpatrick and Fitzpatrick Brothers beginning before World War I followed by Becker Clothing Store and managed by Earl B. Becker beginning in the late 1920s.

By the late 1930s, an office space in the Molumby Block became a branch office of the National Re-employment Service, a government effort to assist unemployed workers find positions with farmers and other private employers. A local newspaper story discussing the new employment service on March 31, 1937 noted that “in no way [is the service] connected with the county relief set-up, and persons need not be on relief or eligible to relief to sign up there for work.”

Other businesses in the north half of the Molumby Block during the 1940s and 1950s included Walke Hardware operated by D.H. Walke from 1945 to 1968 in one shop space and Mac’s Clothing Store operated by the MacCauley brothers beginning in 1947. In 1950, Macs was taken over by Theis Clothing Co., which in 1968 took over the hardware store space to make a single, expanded retail space for Theis Clothing, a men’s and boy’s clothing and shoe store. During the 1960s, the following newspaper account in the *Clayton County Register* appeared:

> "The Elkader Merchant of the Week series passes the halfway mark this week and comes up with honor merchant number 16…Theis Clothing Company, located at 108 S. Main Street.

Theis Clothing of Elkader is one of two stores that bear the Theis name. The other store is located in Webster City. The Elkader store is operated by Emmett Whalen, partner in the firm.

Whalen and his family moved to Elkader in February, 1950, when the firm purchased the store from the MacCauley brothers, who operated it for several years as Mac’s Clothing Store. Emmett Whalen came to Elkader with plenty of experience in that field from the operating a clothing store in Riceville and before that, in his hometown.
of Waukon. He and his wife, Lee, have five children, John, Ellen, Charles, Mike and Ray. John is now working part time in the store.

The Theis Clothing Company of Elkader has experienced a great deal of growth since 1950 and has earned the reputation of being one of the largest and most complete men's and boys' stores in the northeastern Iowa area. Progressive management and good merchandise continue to make the store achieve added growth each year.

In addition to Whalen, there are three full time and four part time employees at the store. Full time employees are Floyd Possehl, Mabel Larson and Sharon Halverson. The list of part time employees includes the names of Alice Monlux, Grace Wheeler and John and Lee Whalen.”

In 1989, Emmett Whalen retired and Floyd Possehl, a 25 year veteran with the firm, took over as manager. New owners were Floyd and Janice Possehl and Bob and Sharon Halverson. Theis Clothing continued in business into the late 1990s. In 2011 the north half of the Molumby Block is owned by Schnell Holmpes Rentals LLC with The Backstich store occupying the combined shop space and flats above.

9. Major Sources:


Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum research files focusing on downtown Elkader buildings, businesses, civic leaders and related information and research file for 108-114 South Main Street. Compiled by Marge Costigan and other museum volunteers. Research files contain hundreds of historic photos, newspaper articles, publication transcriptions, property ownership records, and information from interviews. Digital copies of some research files were loaned to Marlys Svendsen, October 2010 and others were made available in March 2011 for duplication.

Census of State of Iowa for the years 1856, 1867, 1875, 1885, 1895, 1905, 1915, and 1925 as printed by various State Printers.
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*Clayton County, Iowa, Memories & Heritage from the Photo Albums of Clayton County.* Elkader, Iowa: The Clayton County Register, 1997.

Downtown Building Survey (73 surveyed buildings) records including survey questionnaires, draft Iowa Site Inventory Forms and digital photographs. Main Street Elkader, 2009.


Downtown Elkader Individual Property Site Maps compiled by Eli Garms, Clayton County GIS, Engineer’s Office, Elkader, November 2010.


“Kleinpell’s Hardware.” *The Elkader Register*, September 10, 1925.


*Plat Book of Clayton County, Iowa,* Minneapolis: Warner & Foote, 1886.

“Pages from the Past”, *Clayton County Register*, June 19, 2001

“Plat of Elkader, June 22, 1846.” Recorder’s Office, Clayton County, Court House, Elkader, Iowa.


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</table>

Property Transfer Records for Blocks 3 – 10 and Fractional Blocks 3-6 in Town of Elkader, Clayton County Auditor’s Office and Recorder’s Office, Clayton County Court House, Elkader, Iowa.


United States Census, 1850-2010, provided by State Library of Iowa and the City of Elkader.
Iowa Site Inventory Form
Continuation Sheet

Page 7

Molumby Block (north half)
Name of Property
108-114 South Main Street
Address

Clayton
County
Elkader
City

Additional Information:

Full Legal Description: Original Town of Elkader, N. 2/3 LOT 2 BLK 5.

Address: 108 – 114 South Main

Map Created By:
Bill Gant
Clayton County GIS
2010
Molumby Block (north half)  Clayton
Name of Property  County
108-114 South Main Street  Elkader
Address  City

Photographs: Historic view of 100 block, west side of South Main Street, ca. 1900, with the Molumby Block in the middle of the block, looking northwest (Elkader Historic Photograph Collection (digital), Elkader Public Library).
Molumby Block (north half)

Name of Property
108-114 South Main Street

Address

County
Elkader

City

Molumby Block (north half) | Clayton
Name of Property | County
108-114 South Main Street | Elkader
Address | City

**Photographs:** 108-114 South Main Street, looking west and street view, looking southwest (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)
Molumby Block (north half) | Clayton
---|---
Name of Property | County
108-114 South Main Street | Elkader
Address | City

**Photographs:** 108-114 South Main Street, storefront detail, north bay, looking west (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer)