

# Site Inventory Form

State Historical Society of Iowa

(December 1, 1999)

State Inventory No. 22-01374

New  Supplemental

Part of a district with known boundaries (enter inventory no.) 22-01381

Relationship:  Contributing  Noncontributing

Contributes to a potential district with yet unknown boundaries

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 W.H. Walch & Sons Building

other names/site number Fire Farm, Inc.

## 2. Location

street & number 104 First Street SW

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) 8

Lot(s) LOTS 1 & 2

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

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

## 5. Classification

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Noncontributing

1

—

—

—

1

—

—

—

—

—

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)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

02E01 Auto Showroom

10A02 Factory

14907 Gas Station

\_\_\_\_\_

14D09 Automotive Service and Repair

\_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

09F02 Broad Front

foundation 16 Clay Tile

08A Moderne

walls 03 Brick

\_\_\_\_\_

roof 08B 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  
City Elkader

Address 104 First Street SW

Site Number 22-01374  
District Number 22-01381

**Criteria Considerations**

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

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

05 COMMERCE

02 ARCHITECTURE

**Significant Dates**

Construction date

1947

check if circa or estimated date

Other dates

**Significant Person**

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Architect

Uecker, Milton and Walch, W.H.

Builder

Costigan, J.C.

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Bibliography  See continuation sheet for citations of the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form

**10. Geographic Data**

**UTM References (OPTIONAL)**

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	_____	_____	2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

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**

- Map:** showing the property's location in a town/city or township.
- Site plan:** showing position of buildings and structures on the site in relation to public road(s).
- 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**

- Farmstead & District:** (List of structures and buildings, known or estimated year built, and contributing or non-contributing status)
- Barn:**
  - A sketch of the frame/truss configuration in the form of drawing a typical middle bent of the barn.
  - A photograph of the loft showing the frame configuration along one side.
  - 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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W.H. Walch & Sons Building	Clayton
Name of Property	County
104 First Street SW	Elkader
Address	City

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## 7. Description:

According to the Clayton County Assessor, this building is estimated to have been built in 1947. Sanborn maps from 1930 and 1951 show a building with the same footprint erected sometime between these dates. A January 15, 1948 account in the *Clayton County Register* identifies the completion of construction of the building with the celebration of a two-day open house.

The W.H. Walch & Sons Building at 104 First Street SW is an example of a Moderne Style building built using the Broad Front commercial building form. The original 1-story building measured 66 by 114 feet with a 2,000 square foot showroom and 5,525 square foot service garage. It has a flat cement roof supported by a steel truss roof support system that eliminates pillars and allows for large clear floor areas. The front has a streamlined, curved corner with continuous plate glass windows (eight wide glass sections and one narrow one at the corner; along the east and north facades of the showroom. The building has a concrete slab floor and block walls with mottled light-brown colored brick veneer on the east and north facades. Decorative brick patternwork includes three distinct bands of dark reddish-brown brick along the parapet laid in courses of header brick with tan soldier brick set beneath two of the reddish brown courses. The same darker brick is used as a contrasting color for the brick set above the overhead door openings.

## 8. Significance:

The W.H. Walch & Sons Building at 104 First Street SW is an good example of a Moderne Style Broad Front commercial building form used for automobile dealerships and garages in the years before and after World War II. The building is eligible for the National Register both individually and as a contributing resource in the Elkader Downtown Historic District under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, it was one of the first automobile related businesses to locate along the West Bridge Street auto group. The historic 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. The building is also eligible under Criterion C, as a contributing resource because of the Moderne Style Broad Front commercial form it represents.

### *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.

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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 W.H. Walch & Sons Building at 104 First Street SW:*

The W.H. Walch & Sons Building at 104 First Street SW was built in 1947 by William H. Walch. His sons joined him in the business following World War II with Thomas Walch as general manager and

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David Walch as head of new and used car sales. The building was designed and drafted by W.H. Walch and Milton Uecker. General contractor for the project was J.C. Costigan; plumbing and heating was completed by Howard P. Danaher; J.F. Anderson Lumber Co. provided cement, brick, lumber and millwork; and steel was supplied by Clinton Bridge Works.

# WANTED!

## 5,000 Bushels of Corn

Why wait longer to purchase your used car or truck? We will allow up to 45c per bushel "delivered," to be applied toward the purchase of any Used Car or Truck in our stock at present prices.

We list below a few cars we have in stock on which you can apply your corn as down payment or the entire purchase price on some models.

1937 CHEVROLET COACH, color brown, good rubber - heater - a No. 1 car throughout. <b>300 BUSHEL DOWN PAYMENT</b>	Drive this Coupe home for only 90 Bushels. 1930 FORD A COUPE—A lot of transportation in this coupe.
1936 GRAHAM SEDAN, color, gray; good tires and heater — a nice clean car. <b>200 BUSHEL DOWN PAYMENT</b>	1929 CHEVROLET SEDAN—Green; runs very good; good upholstery. <b>80 BUSHEL DOWN PAYMENT</b>
1938 FORD LONG-WHEELBASE TRUCK—Extra good. <b>300 BUSHEL DOWN PAYMENT</b>	1929 A TUDOR—Black; a nice clean car; runs very good. <b>80 BUSHEL DOWN PAYMENT</b>
1935 INTERNATIONAL TRUCK—Body and Stock Rack. <b>125 BUSHEL DOWN PAYMENT</b>	Drive this one home for only 95 bushels. 1936 CHEVROLET COACH — Black; runs good; good body.

ALSO OTHERS

# W. H. WALCH

The history of Walch's Ford dealership dated back to the 1920s. W.H. Walch started his automobile business in 1922 when he acquired the Ford dealership in Elkader from his brother, L.A. Walch. L.A. began the Ford business in 1912 in Elkader and owned five dealerships in Clayton County at one time. The building previously occupied by the Ford dealership on North Main Street was not sold by his brother to W.H. Walch so for some years, the Ford dealership was operated out of a storefront at 111 or 115 North Main Street. During the 1930s the business was hurt by the economy and W.H. Walch employed clever advertising to attract business. The advertisement from the *Elkader Register* shown here was designed to attract farmers who had more corn than cash. W.H. Walch also had a farm and needed feed for his livestock so the incentive worked for both parties.

Hard times continued for the Ford dealership during World War II when new automobiles were impossible to procure for sale. However, Walch kept in business with parts and repair work as well as the sale of used vehicles. At the end of the war

with his sons heading for home, Walch made plans for constructing a new building to house his dealership. Temporary measures in 1945 included the display of the 1946 Ford at Joe's Texaco Station. His new dealership was completed during 1947 and opened to the public at a two-day open house in January 1948. The interest of buyers in new cars following the war was strong once manufacturing fully resumed. Approximately 1,300 persons viewed the 1949 Ford on the two-day promotion W.H. Walch and Sons held in June 1948.

In 1952, Bill Walch turned over the business to his sons, Tom and Dave, and focused his time on farming. In 1972, W.H. Walch's 50 years as a Ford dealer were acknowledged by Ford Motor Company. Eight years later in 1980 both Tom and Dave retired and the Ford dealership was sold to Brown's Sales

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and Leasing in Elkader. In 1980 Jeff Walch, Dave's son, joined with Earl Lembke to form a small curb-side take-out fast-food business on the Walch property. Known as "2 Mit Burgers" the seasonal restaurant-on-wheels developed a steady trade and loyal customers.

In 2005 Adam Polloch purchased the Walch Building to house design and manufacturing space for his architectural and artistic lighting business, Fire Farm, Inc. In 2011 the businesses continues in operation as well as nearby buildings at 107 and 109 West Bridge Street.

### 9. Major Sources:

- 1984 History of Clayton County.* Clayton County Genealogical Society, Elkader, Iowa: Griffith Press, 1984.
- Anderson, David C. *Reconnaissance Survey of Elkader Clayton County, Iowa.* Clayton County Historic Preservation Commission and Main Street Elkader, March 1, 1994.
- Andreas, A.T. *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa.* Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co., 1875.
- Appraisal Records for Elkader Downtown Properties, Clayton County Assessor's Office, 1949 – 1965.
- "Bird's Eye View Map, Elkader, Iowa, 1871." Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Doniat and Zastrow.
- Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum research file for 104 First Street SW; files focusing on downtown Elkader buildings, businesses, civic leaders and related information. 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.
- 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 Business Questionnaires completed by property/business owners, 2010.
- Downtown Elkader Individual Property Site Maps compiled by Eli Garms, Clayton County GIS, Engineer's Office, Elkader, November 2010.
- Elkader Building Survey (62 surveyed buildings). Main Street Elkader, 1994-1996.

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Elkader Historic Photograph Collection (digital). Elkader Public Library, Elkader. Digital files loaned to Marlys Svendsen, December 2008.

"Elkader, Iowa 1846-1971, the Past, the Present the Future." 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, *The Clayton County Register*, Elkader, Iowa, July 21, 1971.

Elkader Telephone Directories, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1932, 1933, 1960 and 1966.

Gottfried, Herbert and Jan Jennings. *American Vernacular Design, 1870-1940*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1985.

Griffith, Katherine. "Elkader Opera House." Elkader, Iowa: Elkader Main Street, ca. 1992.

Insurance Maps for Elkader. New York: The Sanborn Company, 1895, 1902, 1913, 1930, and 1951.

"Keystone Bridge Centennial Edition." *The Clayton County Register*, Elkader, Iowa, July 26, 1989.

Olson, Edward W. *Look What you Started Mr. Davis...Elkader, Iowa: History, Facts and Folklore about Elkader, Iowa U.S.A.*, ca. 2010.

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

"Plat of Elkader, June 22, 1846." Recorder's Office, Clayton County, Court House, Elkader, Iowa,.

Powell, Harry. "The Elkader Story." unpublished first draft, December 1980; copy available at Elkader Public Library.

Price, Realto E., editor. *History of Clayton County, Iowa from the Earliest historical Times Down to the Present, Volumes I and II*. Chicago: Robert O. Law Company, 1916.

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.

Shank, Wesley I. *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary*. Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1999.

*Standard Atlas of Clayton County, Iowa*. Chicago: George A. Ogle & Co., 1902.

United States Census, 1850-2010. (population figures provided by State Library of Iowa, January 2011 and City of Elkader, March 2011).

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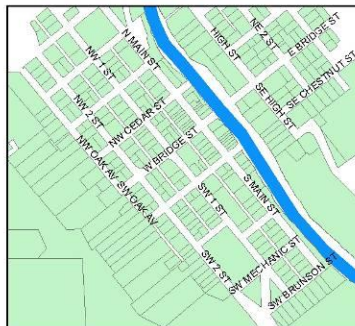
W.H. Walch & Sons Building  
Name of Property  
104 First Street SW  
Address

Clayton  
County  
Elkader  
City

**Additional Information**

Legal Description: Original Town, LOTS 1 & 2 BLK 8.

**Address: 104 First St SW**



Map Created By:  
Eli Garms  
Clayton County GIS  
2010

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"Walch Opens New Building, Celebrates Quarter Century," *Clayton County Register*, January 15, 1948.

A two-day open house celebrating the completion of their new building will be held Friday and Saturday, Jan. 16 and 17, by W. H. Walch and Sons, Ford dealers in Elkader. The event will also celebrate Mr. Walch's quarter century of business in Elkader, and will include the announcement of the 1948 line of Ford trucks. On display will be one of the new trucks, together with four different body types of 1948 Ford V-8 cars.

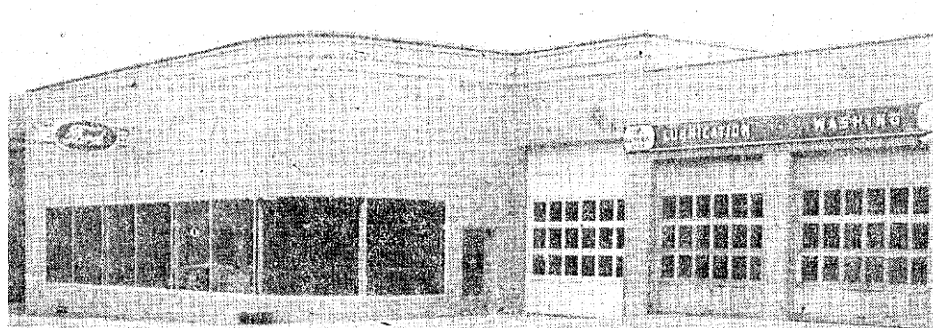
The 66 by 114 foot building, designed and drafted by Milton Uecker and W. H. Walch, contains a showroom of 2,000 square feet, and a shop of 5,525 square feet. Construction contractor was J. C. Costigan of Elkader. Features of the new building are its steel truss roof support construction, which eliminates pillars and provides large areas of clear floor space, its block walls, and its cement slab roof covered with insulating materials and tar. No wood was used in the entire building, aside from furnishings. The front is finished in brick veneer and has large show windows, along both the street and the driveway entrance. The heating system is steam, automatically controlled through the use of blowers.

Mr. Walch purchased the business from his brother, L. A. Walch, in January, 1922. At that time, he had a choice of Ford dealerships in Cascade, Elkader, Bellevue, or in Stockton, Ill. "I chose Elkader," Mr. Walch said last week, "because I thought it was the best community, and I still do."

The first car delivered after Mr. Walch purchased the business was a Model T roadster, to Walter Turner of Elkader, Feb. 14, 1922. Mrs. A. L. Eckheart, also of Elkader, purchased the first Model A Ford which was delivered April 7, 1928. John Kulper was the purchaser of the first V-8 Mr. Walch sold. This was a pickup, and was sold Feb. 4, 1932. Clayton county purchased the latest ~~one~~ sold, a station wagon, last week, for use of the county engineers.

The firm name became W. H. Walch and Sons last year, following the return of Mr. Walch's sons, Thomas and David, from the armed services.

Present personnel is as follows: W. H. Walch, general manager; Thomas Walch, new and used cars and office; David Walch, head of the tractor and implement department; Joe Larson, sales; Eldo Meyer, who has been in Mr. Walch's employ for 25 years, shop foreman in the tractor department; Jack Waltz, service manager; Jake Moore, Richard Kuehl, and Ted Helmann, mechanics; Roy Harnack, body and fender work; and Julian Koons, lubrication.



Front view of the new W. H. Walch and Sons in Elkader. Shown are the glassed front of the garage, opening of which is being celebrated with an open house Jan. 16 and 17, together with the anniversary of Mr. Walch's 25 years in business

—Register Staff Photo  
display room, the service entrance, and the doors of the grease rack.

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**Photographs:** 104 First Street SW, looking southwest (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer).



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**Photographs:** 104 First Street SW, showroom, looking west; 2-Mit Burgers trailer, looking west; street view, looking southwest (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 10/29/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer).

