

## 3.0 ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXTS

From tiny structures to soaring commercial towers, the architectural styles of the City of Jackson's downtown span more than 150 years. While not every building is an example of an identifiable architectural style, many are. To assist the reader in understanding the variety of architectural forms found within the project area, the more prevalent and most distinctive forms are defined and illustrated below.

### 3.1 ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

#### 3.1.1 Italianate

Although the Italianate style experienced its greatest popularity between 1850 and 1880, almost every city across the country boasts at least one commercial building in this style (Blumenson 1983:37). Italianate commercial buildings utilized many of the architectural forms and details of the residential architecture developed at the same time. Among the most familiar elements associated with the style are the bracketed cornice, tall heavily molded doors, and round or segmental arched windows with hoodmolds (Gordon 1992:86). Advances in technology also furthered the popularity of the Italianate style through developments in cast iron and pressed metal technology. This allowed merchants to have inexpensive ornamentation rather than the traditional carved stone (Poppeliers et al. 1981:20). Examples of the Italianate style can be found at 105 E. Michigan and 225 N. Jackson (Figures 3.1.1-1 and 3.1.1-2).

#### 3.1.2 Romanesque Revival

Inspiration for a number of the architectural styles of the nineteenth century were drawn from the historic buildings of Europe. In the mid-nineteenth century, architects turned to the medieval round-arched style known as Romanesque for inspiration. The resulting Romanesque Revival style was popular in the United States from as early as 1840 through 1900 (Blumenson 1983:43; Gordon 1992:81). Typically featuring masonry construction, the style was most often utilized in the construction of churches, public buildings, and a few industrial buildings. Elements commonly associated with the Romanesque Revival style include the repetitive use of rounded arches to form windows, entrances, and corbel tables (Godfrey 1986:2-9). The horizontal divisions of the buildings were denoted by the placement of belt courses and water tables, while towers, often constructed at differing heights, added vertical elements to the buildings. The First Congregational Church constructed in 1859 is an excellent example of the style (Figure 3.1.2-1).

#### 3.1.3 Late Gothic Revival

The Gothic Revival style experienced several periods of popularity in the United States. The initial popularity occurred from 1850 to 1880 (Godfrey 1986:2-5). Based on English examples, the style spread across the country through the plan books and publications of Andrew Jackson Downing (Poppeliers et al. 1981:18). During this period, Gothic Revival style was applied to everything from

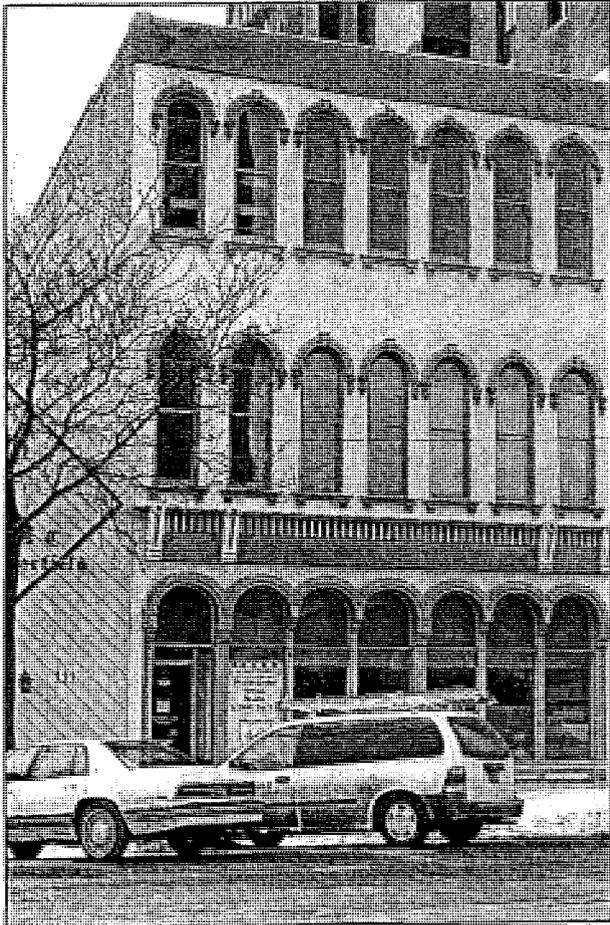


Figure 3.1.1-1. Italianate Style Commercial Building, 105 E. Michigan

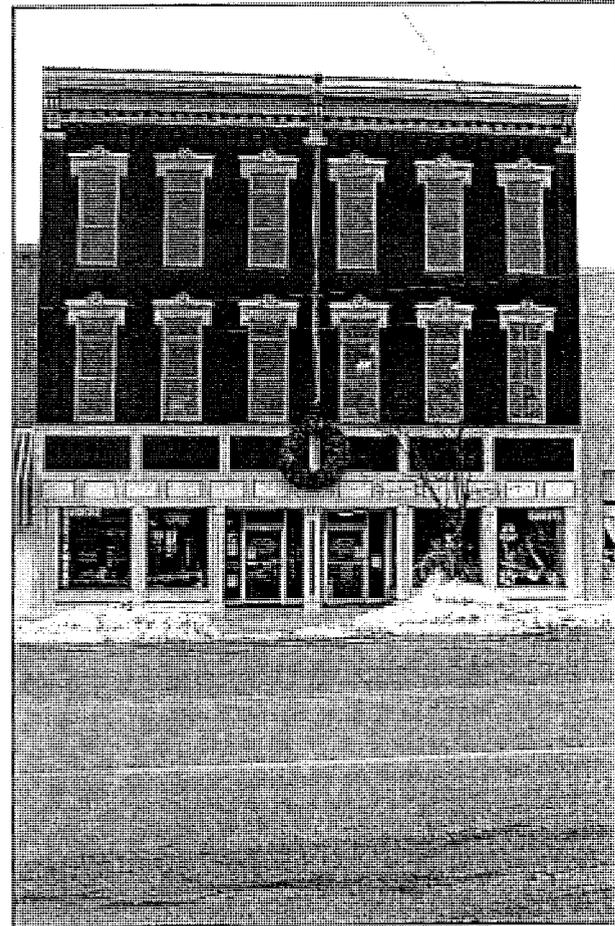


Figure 3.1.1-2. Italianate Style Commercial Block, 225 N. Jackson



Figure 3.1.2-1. Romanesque Revival Style, 120 N. Jackson

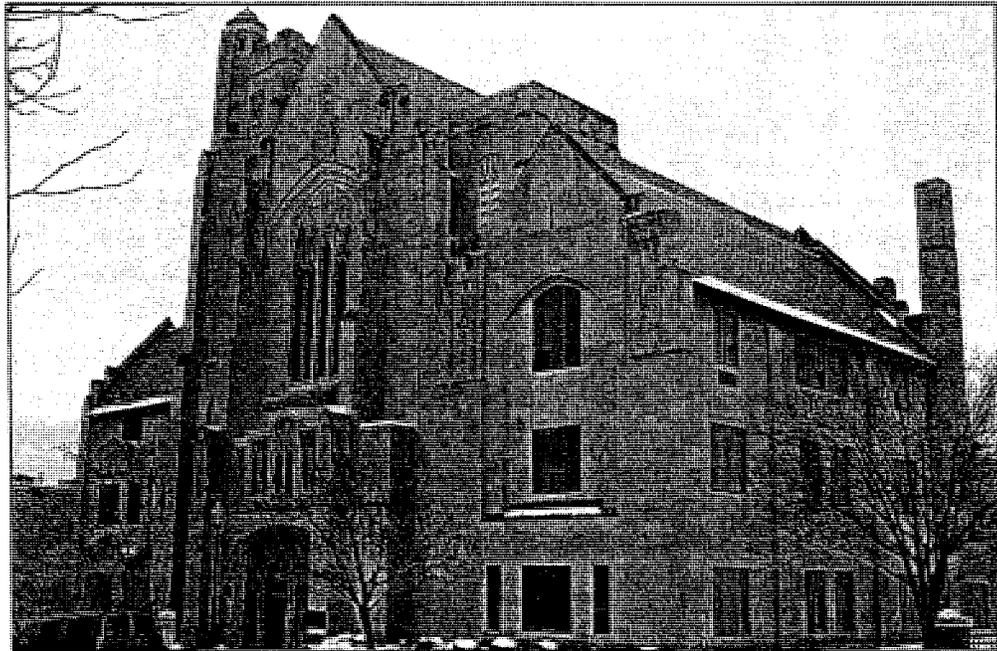


Figure 3.1.3-1. Late Gothic Revival Style, 275 W. Michigan

picturesque cottages to stone castles, but in the later phase of the style (1900-1930) it was applied primarily to ecclesiastical, educational, and commercial buildings (Blumenson 1983:31; Gordon 1992:105). In the Late Gothic Revival period, buildings tended to be larger than the earlier buildings, but were also more historically correct in their application. Features associated with this architectural style include the use of smooth brick or ashlar stone walls that are pierced by lancet windows and accented with stone tracery. The later incarnation of the style retained such early Gothic elements as finials and stone buttresses, but the use of detail was restrained (Gordon 1992:105). Pointed stained glass windows were also a popular feature, particularly on the large number of churches constructed in the style. Remodeled in the 1920s, the First United Methodist Church, 275 W. Michigan, is an excellent example of the architectural style (Figure 3.1.3-1).

### **3.1.4 Richardson Romanesque**

Popular in the later years of the nineteenth century, the Richardson Romanesque style follows the examples of Boston architect H. H. Richardson (Gordon 1992:94). Typically of masonry construction, buildings in this style often feature broad roof planes and a select distribution of windows that emphasizes the mass, volume, and scale of the structure (Blumenson 1983:47). Features associated with Richardson Romanesque buildings include heavy rounded arches; rugged masonry construction, either utilizing dark red pressed brick, or rock-faced stone with battered (tapered) lower walls and mortar tinted dark red; thick walls resulting in deep window reveals and cavernous door openings; rock-faced stone piers with cushioned and foliated capitals; short, robust columns; belt courses that emphasize the horizontality of the building; windows with a one-over-one configuration frequently featuring transoms and stone mullions, often placed in pairs or sets of three (Gordon 1992:94; Blumenson 1983:47). An excellent example of the Richardson Romanesque style is found in the Bloomfield Building at 236-244 S. Mechanic (Figure 3.1.4-1).

### **3.1.5 Neo-Classical Revival**

The success of the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago and the 1901 Pan-American Exhibition in San Francisco popularized the Neo-Classical Revival style in the United States (Blumenson 1983:69). Typically the style is based on the post and lintel Grecian forms rather than the arches and vaulted forms associated with Roman architecture, although an eclectic mix of both influences is not uncommon (Gordon 1992:99). Tending toward the large and pretentious, the Neo-Classical Revival style was frequently utilized in public buildings and banks, where the preferred construction material of stone further emphasized the connection to classic building influences. Typical features associated with the style include a basic symmetry and order to the fenestration; use of columns, pilasters and pedimented doorways; full porticos with either Ionic or Corinthian columns and trabeated (using post and lintel construction, often with a full entablature) openings (Gordon 1992:99). The 1907 Masonic Temple located at 157 W. Cortland, designed by noted Jackson architect Claire Allen, is an example of the Neo-Classical Revival form (Figure 3.1.5-1).

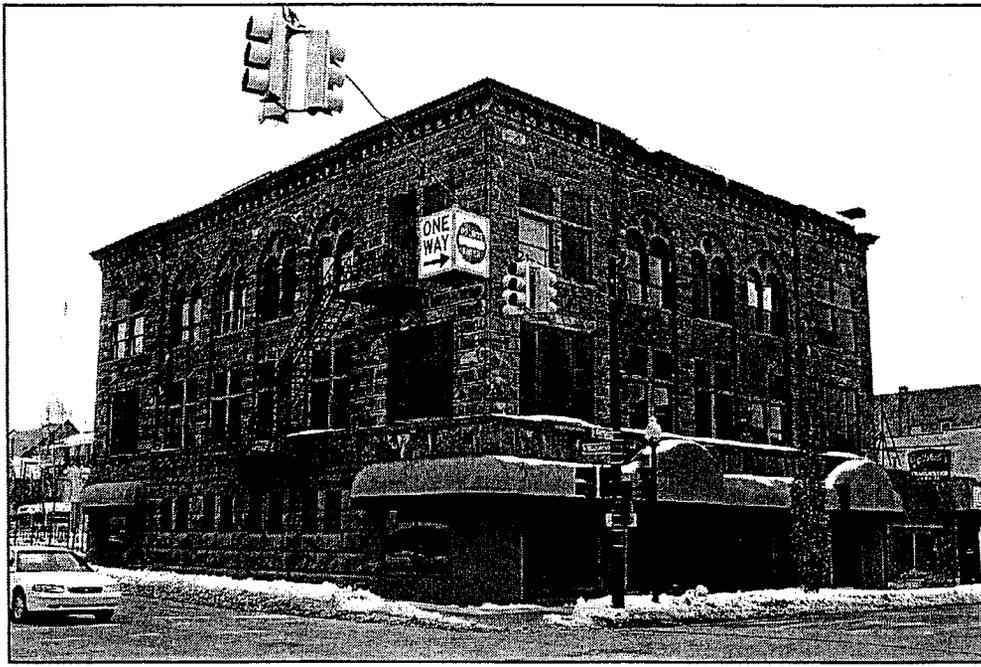


Figure 3.1.4-1. Richardson Romanesque Revival Style, 236-244 S. Mechanic



Figure 3.1.5-1. Neo-Classic Revival Style, 157 W. Cortland

### **3.1.6 Beaux Arts**

One of the most recognizable of commercial architectural styles, Beaux Arts, had incredible popularity among elite American architects. A select few who had studied at France's premier design school, the École des Beaux-Arts, passed this design aesthetic on to domestic design schools (Poppliers et al. 1983:66). According to Gordon, it is a formal and academic style "based on principles well suited to the monumental buildings of the early twentieth century, particularly libraries, train stations, and mansions" (Gordon 1992:97). The Beaux Arts style emphasized balance, order, and a progressive hierarchy of spaces with an architectural vocabulary rooted in ancient Greece and Rome. Elements such as arches, cartouches, barrel vaulting, and pastoral scenes are common (McAlester and McAlester 1985:380).

Popularly utilized on public and commercial buildings, the Beaux Arts form is characterized by exuberant embellishment, grandiose scale, and a variety of labor-intensive finishes and often features stone construction and a full portico with either Ionic or Corinthian columns (Blumenson 1983:69). In addition to the grand scale commercial buildings, the style is in evidence in upper class houses across the country. An excellent example of the Beaux-Arts style in downtown Jackson, is the building at 156 W. Michigan, constructed in 1894 to house the Jackson City Bank (Figure 3.1.6-1).

### **3.1.7 Chicago School**

Popular for tall office buildings constructed between 1890 and 1910, the buildings in this style took advantage of technological advances in construction technology (Gordon 1992:96; Poppeliers et al. 1981:33). Constructed with a steel skeleton, these buildings did not rely on the support of thick masonry walls, freeing their architects to design tall structures whose walls were dominated by the windows. Another common feature of Chicago Style buildings is a three-part division of the height, following the base, shaft, and capital configuration of classical order columns (Figure 3.1.7-1) (Gordon 1992:96). Windows of the Chicago School were of two distinctive forms, either projecting as a bay or oriel or in the form identified as the Chicago window (Poppeliers et al. 1981:34). Chicago windows feature a large fixed central pane flanked by two narrow casements for ventilation (Figure 3.1.7-2).

### **3.1.8 Art Deco/Art Moderne**

Art Deco and Art Moderne styles emerged in the early twentieth century in an effort to distinguish modern American architecture from all styles that preceded it. While high forms of both styles were developed separately, design elements of both were borrowed and incorporated into vernacular interpretations. In the Midwest, Art Moderne coincided with and eventually replaced Art Deco in its popularity, creating a functional blend that was most readily applied to public and commercial buildings (Gordon 1992:114). Design elements include sweptback, curved corners; banded windows of structural glass block; smooth stucco, tile, or masonry wall surfaces; and flat roofs. Details of both styles were also emulated with stylized ornament or lettering and the use of stainless steel or alloy doors. Examples of the Art Deco style can be found in both the 1922 F. W. Woolworth Co. building (American 1 Credit Union/Economy Art and Framing) at 143-145 W. Michigan and the

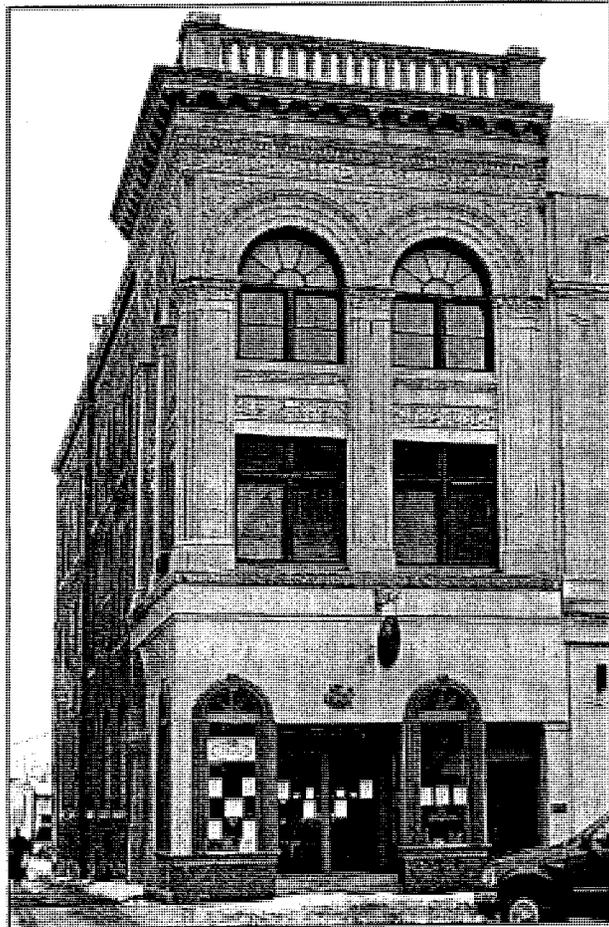


Figure 3.1.6-1. Beaux-Arts Style, 156 W.  
Michigan

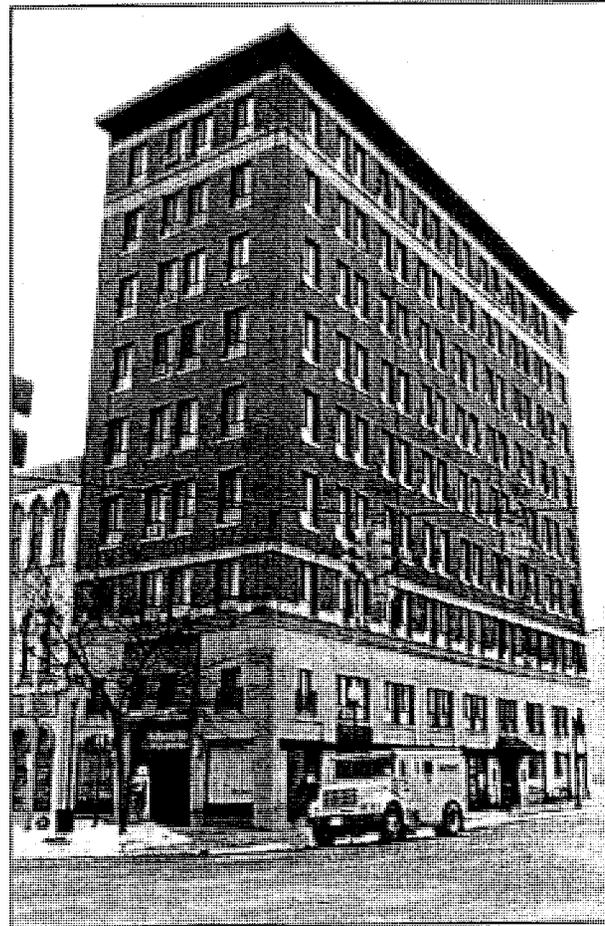


Figure 3.1.7-1. Chicago School Style (Tripartite  
Construction), 101 E. Michigan

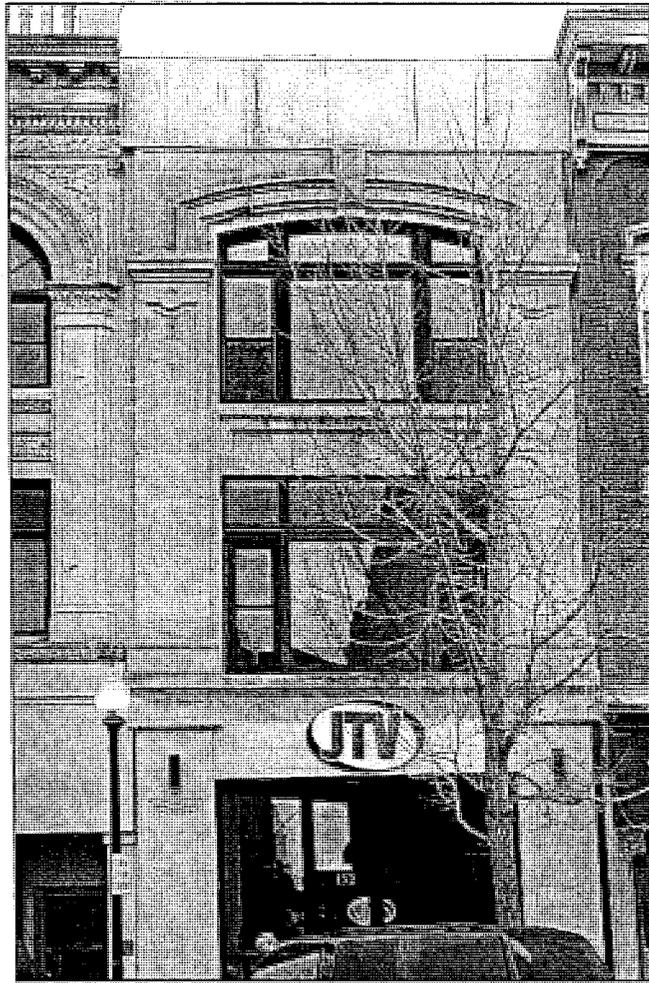


Figure 3.1.7-2. Chicago School Style, 152 W. Michigan



Figure 3.1.8-1. Art Deco Style, 143-145 W. Michigan

1938 Woolworth building (Friend of the Court), at 165 W. Michigan (Figure 3.1.8-1 and 3.1.8-2). The North Construction building at 401 N. Jackson is an example of the Art Moderne style (Figure 3.1.8-3).

### 3.1.9 Vernacular Commercial Forms

Like residential architecture, commercial buildings frequently can not be assigned style names. These structures tend to be astylistic and lack any discernable features to link the building with an identified style. Unfortunately, no known body of work identifies commercial buildings based on form. As a result, vernacular vocabulary similar to that developed over time for residential and farm structures, is lacking.

For the purposes of this survey, buildings that lack stylistic features are noted as “commercial” and attributed a time period of construction. Thus, the term “late nineteenth century commercial” indicates a simply constructed building built in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. In Jackson’s commercial district, these buildings are predominately of masonry construction, although frame examples are located in the outlying areas of the community. Examples of the late nineteenth century commercial can be seen in Figure 3.1.9-1 with early twentieth century commercial shown in Figure 3.1.9-2.

In a few instances, the building has had a skin of material applied to the surface of the original building, hiding any identifying historic features. These buildings are referred to in this report as Unknown. An example of this circumstance is found on the building located at 111 E. Michigan Avenue (Figure 3.1.9-3).

## 3.2 ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS

Unfortunately little information is known about most of the architects or builders for many of the early downtown Jackson buildings. In 1856, only one firm in Jackson, Hubbell and Langdon, recorded their business in the *State of Michigan Gazetteer and Business Directory* as builders and contractors (Lee and Sutherland 1856:134-136). No listing was found for an architect, but four listings for building trades were identified. These firms included a dealer in lumber, Joseph Beebe; painters and glaziers, Ossian Cobb and Guy Cobb; and J. E. Hayes, mason (Lee and Sutherland 1856:134-135).

Just four years later, the number of individuals involved in the building trades had grown. John George was listed as the owner of a brick yard, with B. Carson, T. E. Hayes, and B. Mosher each noted as either bricklayers or masons (Hawes 1860:201-205). Two lumber yards were located in the city under the ownership of Haight & Wells and I. L. Harrison. J. R. Lewis owned a planing mill, sash, door and blind factory, as well as working as a carpenter and builder. Others listed as carpenter and builders were William Green, N. Hubbell, and Isaac Osgood (Hawes 1860:201-205). By 1880, federal census records indicate that Isaac Osgood was calling himself an architect and builder, which is collaborated by the fact that the 1885 Reynolds Block is credited to him as architect (Ancestry.com 2004).



Figure 3.1.8-2. Art Deco Style, 165 W. Michigan

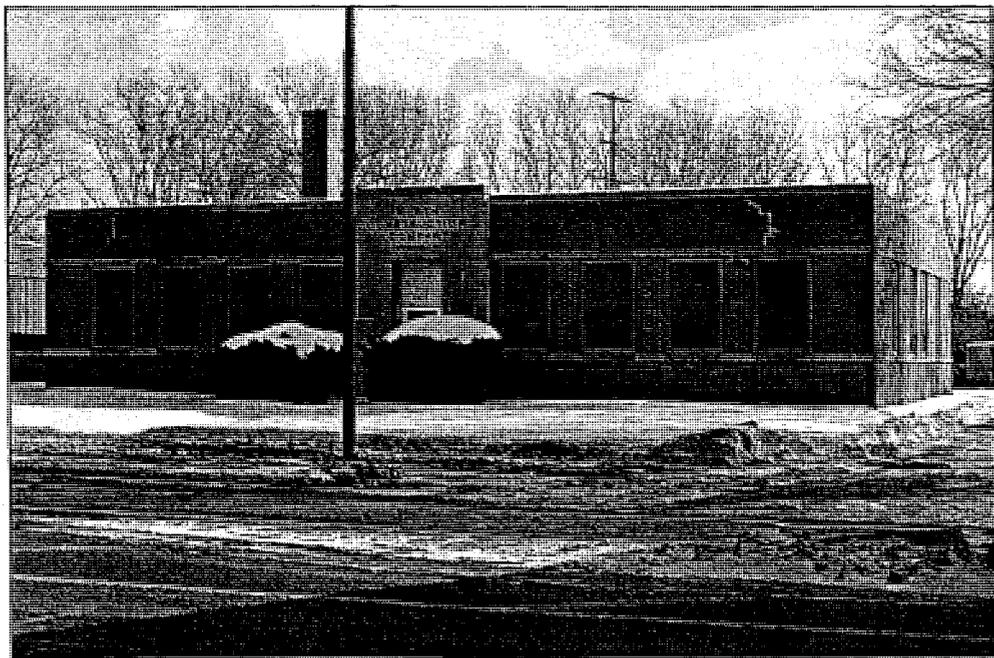


Figure 3.1.8-3. Art Moderne Style, 401 N. Jackson



Figure 3.1.9-1. Late Nineteenth Century Commercial, 101 W. Michigan

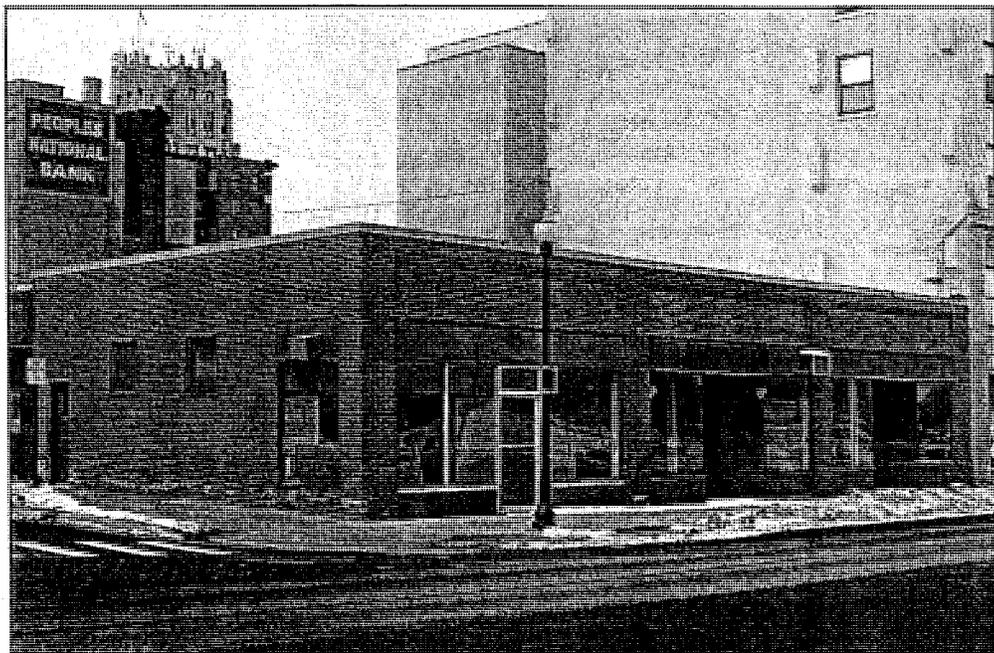


Figure 3.1.9-2. Early Twentieth Century Commercial, 136-138 Francis



Figure 3.1.9-3. Unknown Architectural Style,  
111 E. Michigan

Several noted architects and builders did work in Jackson during the twentieth century. Both Claire Allen, of Jackson, and Detroit-based Albert Kahn have at least one building within the project area attributed to them. More prolific was North Construction, the company responsible for a number of the buildings in Jackson, including the downtown area.

### 3.2.1 Claire Allen, Architect

Among the most prolific of Michigan architects has to be Claire Allen (Figure 3.2.1-1). In 1940, when the School of Architecture at the University of Michigan was compiling a history of Michigan architecture, they approached Allen for a list of his work to be included in the volume. By his own admission, Allen indicated that he had done “so many buildings throughout the United States that he couldn’t begin to remember them all, nor enumerate them” (Abbott 1996).

Born in Pontiac, Michigan in 1853, Allen and his family moved several times during his childhood. At the age of 11, Allen and his family settled on a farm near Ionia (Abbott 1996). At the age of 18 Allen designed and took on the construction of the family home at Berlin, Michigan. This job was finished when he was 21 years old, and launched his career as a contractor and builder. Among these early projects undertaken in the early part of his career were the construction of the Ionia County Court House; a school in Dexter, Michigan; the Belding Brothers silk mills; as well as numerous houses in Belding and Ionia (Abbott 1996).

In 1890 Allen was approached by several wealthy business men, and asked to move to Jackson and open architectural offices. Once the move to Jackson was complete, Allen’s career took on an entirely new scope, moving from local projects to those around the state and country. Allen summarized his career saying:

I have designed a good many court houses, jails, Carnegie libraries, hotels, office buildings, large residence, many factories. I was Architect for Belding Brothers building, some ten large ones, three of them silk mills, a hotel, a large refrigerator factory, etc. Designed many school buildings, one at Calfax Stat of Washington fifty years ago. A large building in Fort Madison for Bank-Post Office, stores and Masonic Temple also three large residences at the same place of these residences of marble. Designed the Glazier office building, also the Armory at Ann Arbor (Abbott 1996).

Constructed in a variety of architectural styles, Jackson Historic District Commission member John Schaub once noted that the buildings designed by Allen are characterized by their “unusually fine and unusually detailed architecture” (Overeiner 1996:A-3). While only a few buildings include written verification of their association with Claire Allen, a number of Jackson buildings have been attributed as his work. Among those buildings designed by Allen are the old post office (now part of the new Consumers Energy complex); the Ionia Building, townhouses on Michigan Avenue; the

Source: Michigan Central Railroad 1895



Figure 3.2.1-1. Architect, Claire Allen

Jackson City Bank building (now known as the Perlos Building at 156 W. Michigan; Figure 3.1.6-1), Trinity United Methodist Church, Greenwood Avenue; and the former Masonic Temple on W. Cortland Street (Figure 3.1.5-1; Abbott 1996).

### **3.2.2 Albert Kahn, Architect**

Born in Rhaunen, Germany, Kahn was the eldest child in his large family. His father, a rabbi, hoped for a better life in the new world and moved his entire family to Detroit in 1880 (Ferry 1970:8). Albert dreamed of a life as an artist, but due to partial color-blindness, this avenue seemed closed to him. Through a series of fortunate circumstances, Kahn was trained by some of the leading architects and artists practicing in Detroit in the late nineteenth century, including John Scott, Julius Melchers, and the architectural office of Mason and Rice (Ferry 1970:8).

Albert left Mason and Rice in 1896, and after a few years as a partner in a small architectural firm, began his solo career in 1902 (Ferry 1970:10). Over the next forty years, Kahn developed a reputation as an innovative architect able to work with classic designs as well as produce buildings that utilized the latest technological advances. Residential, institutional, public, and industrial buildings were all products of his prolific office. Included in Kahn's portfolio are such notable buildings as the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House in Grosse Pointe Shores; Hill Auditorium, University of Michigan; Casino, Belle Island Park, Detroit; and the Dodge Half-Ton Truck Plant, Warren, Michigan (Eckert 1993:116, 145, 109, and 176). In Jackson, Kahn was responsible for the designs of the 1927 Consumers Energy Building at 212-222 W. Michigan (the original brick building was subsequently covered with a stone skin), the Reynolds Building (Blake Building) at 180 W. Michigan, and the Union and Peoples National Bank (Jackson County Building) at 120 W. Michigan (Figures 3.2.2-1, 3.2.2-2, 3.2.2-3 and 3.2.2-4).

### **3.2.3 North Construction Company, Builders**

One of the most prolific building firms in Michigan, North Construction, is centered in Jackson. Established in 1885 by George M. North Sr., the firm operated for over 100 years, entirely as a family owned business (North Construction Company 1985). Adding the name of major business partners, the firm has operated variously as North Radcliffe Co., North Bradshaw, North Griffin Co., and North Moller Co. Although the name of the firm has varied, the company has never strayed from its stress on construction and engineering excellence, never failing to complete a construction project. Most of the North Construction Co. projects were centered in Jackson and south-central Michigan, however, they also undertook projects in Traverse City, Saline, Ann Arbor, Three Rivers, Chelsea, and Dexter. Post Office buildings were constructed by them in Jackson and Port Huron, Michigan; and also locations as far away as Lawrenceville, Illinois; Trenton, Missouri; and Merced and Redlands, California.

Typically architects' names tend to be associated with buildings, however, the North Construction Company was responsible for many of Jackson's landmarks. The company undertook a variety of projects such as school buildings, shopping centers, and retail stores; restaurants, office buildings, hospitals and nursing homes; public buildings and institutions; sewage plants and factory complexes,

Source: Photograph Collection, Carnegie Branch, Jackson  
District Library, Jackson, Michigan



Figure 3.2.2-1. Consumers Power Building in 1927, 212-222 W. Michigan



Figure 3.2.2-2. Consumers Power Building in 2004, 212-222 W. Michigan

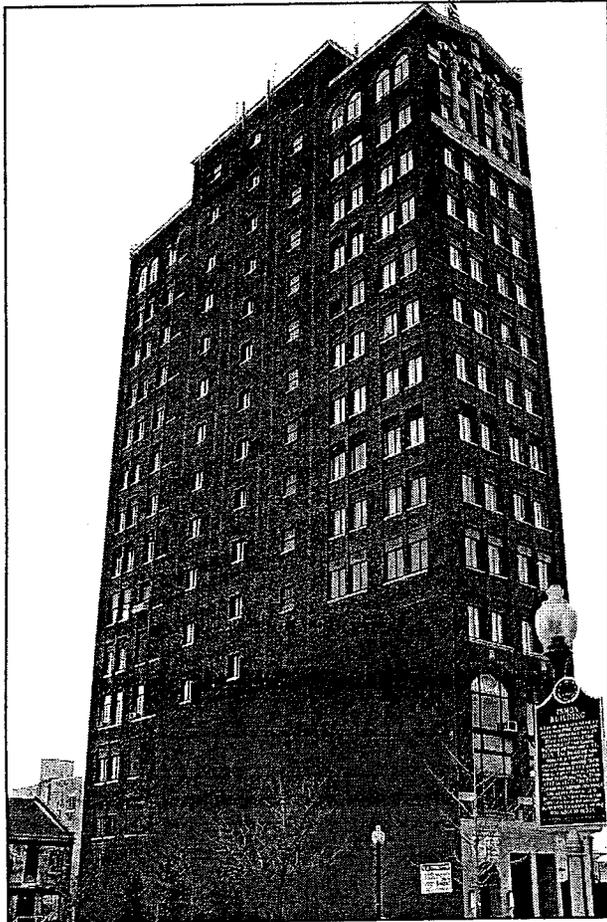


Figure 3.2.2-3. Reynolds Building (Blake Building), 180 W. Michigan

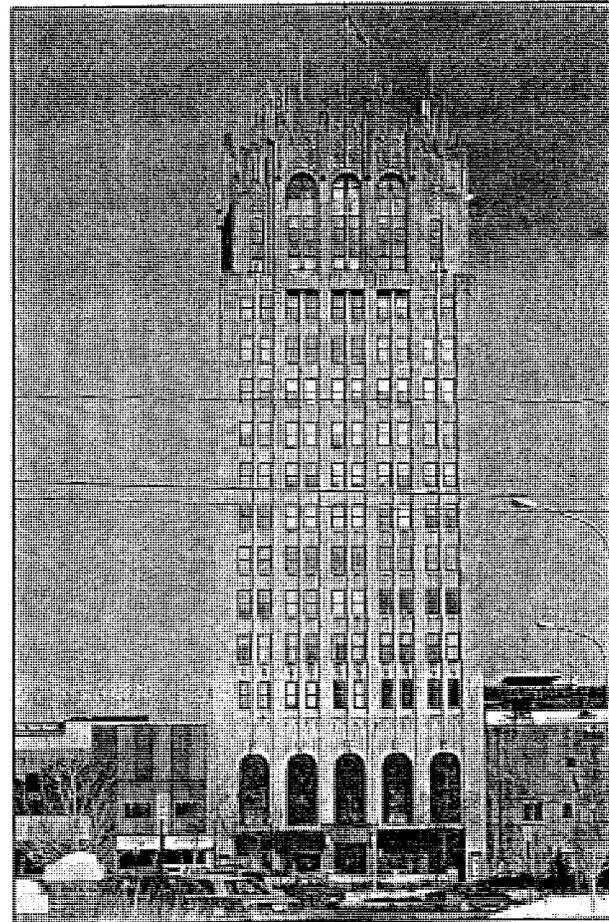


Figure 3.2.2-4. Union and Peoples National Bank, 120 W. Michigan

and luxury homes (North Construction Company 1985). Among their City of Jackson projects are the Michigan Theatre (Figure 3.2.3-1), Jackson Citizen Patriot building, Union and People's National Bank of Jackson (now Jackson County Building), Jackson Elks Club (now Jackson County Court House), Otsego Hotel, Sparks Foundation Cascades, Sparks Cascades Club House, Queens Church and Elementary School, and Adams Hotel (Figure 3.2.3-2).



Figure 3.2.3-1. Michigan Theatre, 124 N. Mechanic



Figure 3.2.3-2. Adams Hotel, 212-216 S. Mechanic

