



The Boyne City Central Historic District contains 75 buildings and one site (Sunset Park) that distill economic and social trends and architectural styles in northern Michigan during the early 1900s. The small city feel of the district is emphasized by the consistency of scale and setback realized by the buildings comprising the primary commercial corridors, Water Street and Lake Street, and adjacent blocks. The historic district presents a streetscape characteristic of small northern Michigan cities during the period of rapid industrial and economic growth at the turn-of-the-twentieth century. It anchors the city and includes all of the historic central business district as well as an adjacent residential neighborhood that was home to many of the community's industrial and commercial elite. The historic district represents a cross section of the commercial and residential styles popular at the time in northwest Michigan and across the nation.

Boyne City's Central Historic District represents the development of the city from ca. 1890 through 1940 but best reflects its boom economic period, from 1900 to 1910. The architecture illustrates both the rapid development during these years and its function as a commercial market and industrial service center. It also expresses the influence of both the lake and railroad that fostered its growth, prosperity and evolution at the turn of the twentieth century. The buildings constructed during this period ranged from modest to substantial and were constructed of brick and wood, symbols of both optimism and success.

The commercial blocks in the Boyne City Historic District provide material expression of the city's aspirations during this period. The substantial business blocks demonstrate the success and status of Boyne City's commercial interests, and quality of life is realized through the elaborate buildings housing fraternal halls and a substantial state-of-the-art hotel, while a high style Depression-era post office embodies public architecture in the district. The residential block, while expressing eclectic architectural influences, reveals a consistency in form and detail related to its conception and completion within a decade. The character of the district is established by the type and style of the buildings. In general, many individual buildings comprising this district retain a degree of their original architectural character, while others have received façade improvements that complement the streetscape.

Commercial architecture ranges from turn-of-the-twentieth century one-part and two-part commercial blocks representing terminal Late Victorian commercial style. Later types, such as the enframed window wall, are also represented and are associated with early twentieth century automobile-related design. A number of buildings have been renovated, incorporating Victorian Revival details to blend with others in the district. Pearl Street residential architecture primarily references the Queen Anne style, but dwellings are generally eclectic and also illustrate inspiration from Colonial Revival, and perhaps Stick Style. The vast majority of the historic district predates 1920, although several commercial structures date to the post-World War II period. Sunset Park, anchoring the west end of the district at the confluence of the Boyne River and Lake Charlevoix, has been open space and in use by the general public since the early 1900s.

Pearl Street forms the eastern, residential portion of the historic district, essentially continuing along the Boyne River and extending the axis of Water Street, the city's primary commercial artery. These residences are an integral component of the district, illustrating the development of the city during the first decade of the twentieth century, when it achieved its maximum size and prosperity. It was platted by and for those who were responsible for the economic growth of the city and the commercial success of its business district. White & Co.'s 1902 Plat of Part of Section 35, in which Pearl Street was constructed as the only thoroughfare, was one of the city's early residential subdivisions. Its proponent was the city's primary economic catalyst, W.H. White, who built its first house on Lot 1, the gateway to the plat. His house, with its commanding view of the central business district, by design or other means became the anchor of the subdivision in which family members and close business associates clustered, constructing homes that occupied all the platted lots over the next decade.

The Boyne City Central Historic District is generally bounded to the east by the rear lot lines of houses on Pearl Street and to the north, by the Boyne River and rear property lines of the parcels along the north side of East Water Street and Pearl Street. It is bounded to the west by Lake Charlevoix and Front Street as it conforms to the rear lot lines of parcels along South Lake Street. To the south the district is defined by the rear property lines of parcels from 102 through 114 East Main Street, the east line of the property at 114 East Main Street, the rear property lines of the buildings in the 200 block of South Lake Street, Ray Street, the south and rear property lines of 113 South Park Street, the rear property lines of the parcels from 224 through 232 East Water Street, the center line of South East Street, the rear and east property lines of 300 East Water Street, the south line of Boyne Avenue, the rear property line of 417 Boyne Avenue, and the rear property lines of the houses along Pearl Street.

The streets comprising the core of Boyne City reflect the economic forces that created the city. Initially established to take advantage of its lakeside setting and lake transport, the city's first primary commercial artery, Lake Street, paralleled the shore. In the community's early years, sawmills clustered along the west side of Lake Street along the lakeshore, and the business district grew up directly to the east, primarily south of the Boyne River. As the city grew and transportation developed, it expanded eastward perpendicular to Lake Street. Water Street generally paralleled the Boyne River and became a commercial venue rivaling and then surpassing Lake Street, while Main Street, at the south edge of the business district, also developed as an important commercial street. Much of what is now the central east-west street in the district, Ray Street, midway between Water and Main Streets, was originally occupied by the right-of-way of the Boyne City, Gaylord & Alpena Railroad line, which ran through the center of town to the industry along the lakeshore. Rather than a continuous streetscape of commercial blocks common to other streets, Sanborn maps reveal that Ray Street was occupied by the railroad's passenger and freight depots and otherwise by livery stables, small factories, warehouses and garages. Its character therefore differed significantly from the other streets in the business district. Finally, as the city grew east from the lake and south from the Boyne River, additional lots were platted along north-south cross streets: Park and East Streets.

West of Lake Street and the historic district, the shore of Pine Lake was occupied by a continuous wall of industry – the historic industrial heart of Boyne City. Huge buildings commenced south of the end of Main Street with the Wigle & White sawmill (later replaced by the Boyne City Lumber Co. mill), the Boyne City and Alpena Railroad shops and foundry, continuing through the White and Co. Mill #1 (“big mill”) that extended from south of the end of Water Street across the mouth of the Boyne River past North Street, and on to the Von Platen mill complex to a point north of Vogel Street north of the Boyne River. During prime mill operations stacks of milled lumber awaiting transport entirely blocked any view of the lake from town. None of these

complexes survive today, and the lakeshore has been redeveloped into condominiums, marinas and parks. Front Street, which runs along the lakeshore west of Lake Street, has been extended north from Main Street along the former railroad right-of-way, providing access to these developments, and has also been developed with recently constructed Neo-Victorian buildings into a mixed-use retail district.

When this industrial core collapsed due to the exhaustion of the region's forest resources, the former mill buildings were abandoned and eventually burned or were demolished. In tandem, the frenetic early twentieth century growth of Boyne City that depended on this industry ceased, and reversed. As explained later, the population of the city crashed from well over 5,000 residents to about half that number within a ten-year period between 1920 and 1930. Thereafter the city's population remained fairly stable at about 3,000 residents for nearly half a century, with a slow recovery associated with an economy based on recreation and tourism that really began to develop in the 1930s but has accelerated since the 1980s. While an extremely difficult situation and relatively weak economy challenged Boyne City residents for decades, the reality is that this state of affairs served to aid in preservation of the many old buildings comprising the modern streetscape in the historic district. Lacking a vibrant economy that would have resulted in replacement of what may have been viewed as obsolete buildings, the original architecture of the community survived. While many individual buildings have been altered in an unsympathetic manner, the entire composition still provides the ability to experience what the city was like during its boom times, and continues to provide Boyne City residents with a true sense of place.

The Boyne City Central Historic District is predominantly commercial in composition, with residential properties (some of which are income-producing) confined to the Pearl Street houses and a few apartments in the upper stories of several of the buildings. The oldest buildings in this district date to the late nineteenth century, but the majority were built between 1900 and 1910, when they replaced most of the initial wave of modest frame buildings comprising the business district. The earlier buildings either burned or were demolished as prosperity encouraged construction of the current more substantial masonry structures. However, several buildings in the district are of frame construction. The buildings are generally one or two stories in height, the exceptions being the IOOF Temple, and the three-story Wolverine Hotel that, with the post office across the street, forms the gateway to the eastern end of the commercial district. With the exception of a house constructed of glazed tile, all the Pearl Street residential buildings are of frame construction. Sunset Park, anchoring the west end of the district with the log Chamber of Commerce building, lacks structures but contains park benches and signage.

The scale and continuity of the buildings in the business blocks present a consistent streetscape with common setbacks that foster a solid commercial character. Typical of urban plats, the lots are narrow, but are not of consistent width. In the original 1876 Boyne Village Plat that extends to Water Street in the historic district, the lots on Lake Street are 57 feet wide, and those on the north side of Water are 66 feet, the same width as those on Main Street in the 1879 South Boyne Plat. Beardsley's Second Addition in 1888 most commonly platted lots of 24-foot width on both sides of Lake Street and the south side of Water Street, but they range up to 72 feet wide east of Park Street and generally are 66 and 99 feet wide along Ray Street. As described above, the narrowest platting occurred and is today realized in the streetscape of the 100 blocks of both Water and Lake Streets - the storefronts present from 104 through 116 East Water Street and from 108 through 116 South Lake Street. Wider lots and buildings occur in the 200 blocks of each street and along Main Street.

Similarly, the dwellings in the residential blocks extending east from the business district also conform to a common setback, with the exception of the W.H. White House at 417 Boyne

(formerly East Water), that is sited dramatically on its triangular lot. While these lots vary in depth, they are uniformly 50 feet in width, with the exception of the one containing White's house, which is approximately 140 feet wide at the base with frontage over 210 feet on both Water and Pearl Streets. The houses on these lots are also constructed within a similar range of scale and massing.

About 90% of the historic district buildings are of brick or masonry construction. The vast majority of the buildings in the district are two-story, two-part brick commercial blocks, restrained in architectural expression. Style, when referenced, is confined to elements associated with the cornice, with motifs revealing vague affinities to the Classical or Colonial Revival. Essentially they are terminal Late Victorian buildings that, at most, confined ornamentation to bracketed metal cornices and window hoods. Some of these stamped sheet metal cornices and window caps may be products of George L. Mesker & Co. of Evansville, Indiana, one of the most prolific producers of this type of architectural ornamentation during the late nineteenth century.

There are two examples of high style architecture in the historic district. The Renaissance Revival style, represented by a single imposing building, the IOOF Temple at 214 East Water Street, is recognized through the use of arched openings, walls executed in both masonry and brick, symmetrical fenestration, balconet and balustrade, and details such as classical ornamentation and use of wrought iron. The Classical Revival style, represented by the U.S. Post Office at 301 East Water Street, is recognizable through the rigid symmetry, projecting entrance portico, and classically-inspired ornamentation.