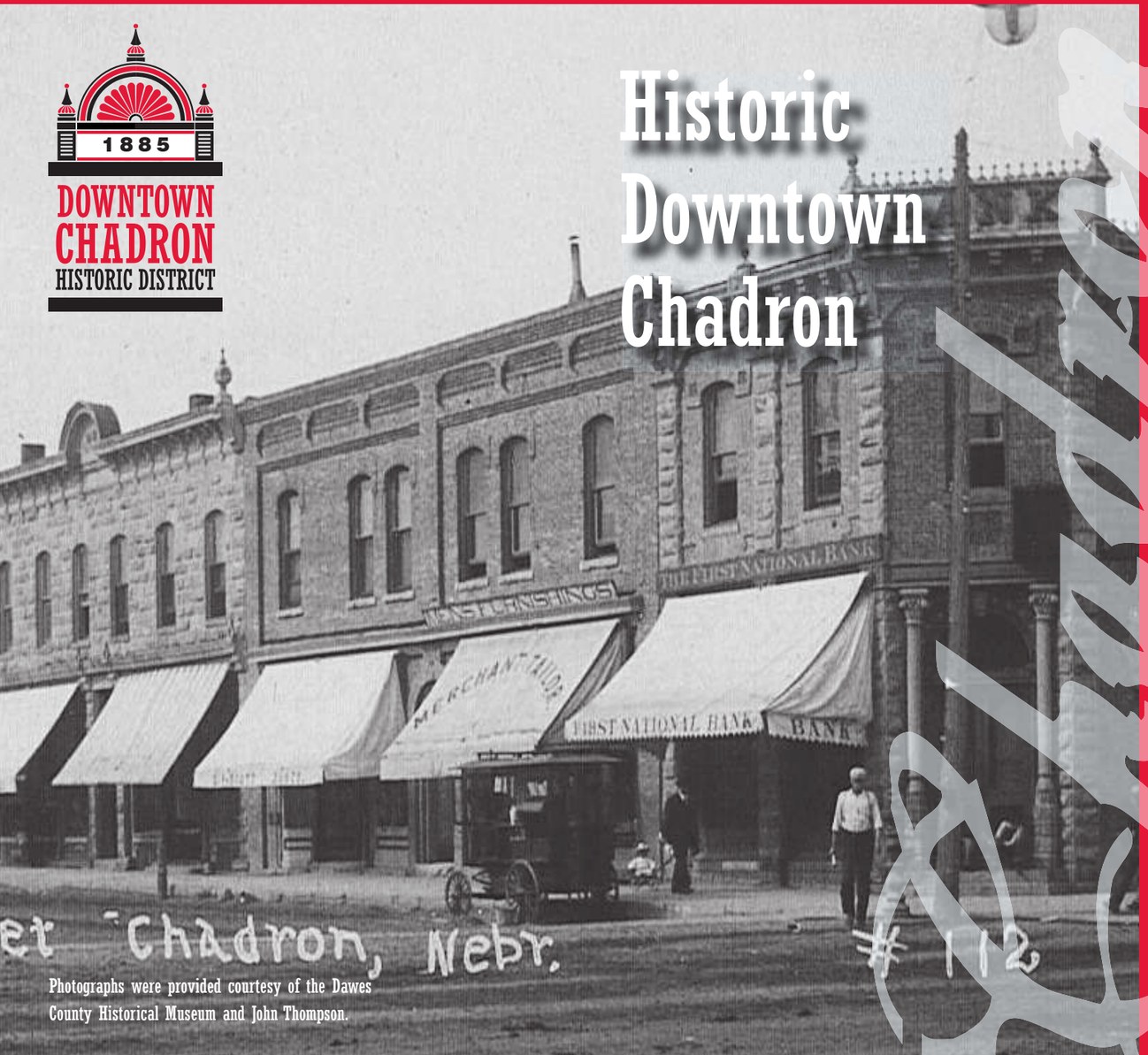
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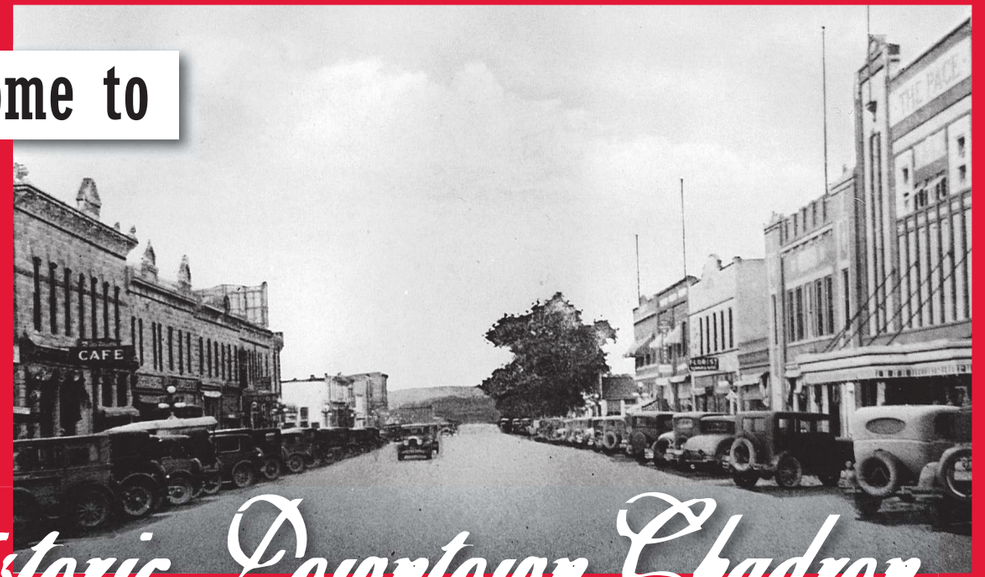
DOWNTOWN CHADRON HISTORIC DISTRICT

Historic Downtown Chadron



Photographs were provided courtesy of the Dawes County Historical Museum and John Thompson.

Welcome to



Historic Downtown Chadron

As the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley (FE&MV) Railroad steamed west, its Pioneer Townsite Company established Chadron in 1885. With the railroad came the homesteaders, the professionals and the merchants and Chadron's population grew to 5,500 people by 1893. Droughts, along with the Panic of 1893 reduced the population by 1902 to 1,700 people. It rebounded as the town claimed a new state college to 3,800 in 1917, and survived the ups and downs of World War I, grasshoppers, the Great Depression, and World War II. Its success and stability is due to a broad based economy. Today, Chadron maintains many of the historic structures which tell the story of Chadron's establishment and evolution.

Because of the architectural integrity of downtown Chadron, on March 27, 2007 the Chadron Commercial Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Historic Downtown Chadron tour walks you through this historic district and introduces you to the story of our community. It evokes the sense of time and place of historic downtown Chadron and the role this commercial center played in promoting commerce and capitalism, and sustaining those through the region from 1885 to 1950.

Downtown Architecture

Relative to the "high-style" architecture found in more populated cities, the architecture of Chadron is comparatively modest. However, the influence of these styles is clearly evident in the vernacular buildings of downtown Chadron.

Victorian Era

During the Victorian Era the industrial revolution was in full force which led to the availability of affordable mass produced hardware and building components via the railroad. In Chadron, Victorian Era commercial buildings are made mostly of local brick or stone with manufactured metal cornices, cast iron columns and other decorative components. Storefronts featured glass display windows from the bulkhead to the ceiling and recessed entrances.

Romantic Revivals

Through the centuries, architects and builders have looked to the past for inspiration. In downtown Chadron, some buildings were inspired by southwest Mission, Classical and Romanesque architecture. Derived from the ancient Greeks, Classical Revival design was often used for public buildings because it represented democracy.

Prairie School

After WWI, architects in the western world rejected historic styles and designed buildings that were unique to their region. These included Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan who were the fathers of the Prairie School.

Early 20th-Century Commercial

In protest to the manufacturing exuberance of the Victorian Era, architects designed buildings that were more restrained and required greater craftsmanship. In Chadron, elaborate manufactured components were eliminated and local masons crafted buildings using primarily dark textured brick accented with limestone or glazed brick.

Modern Era

During the Modern Era, architects sought to create a rational architecture appropriate for the new machine age. Architecture became much simpler with greater emphasis on function over ornamentation. Blond brick and simple facades characterize this building style in Chadron.

Glossary of Architectural Terms

Balustrade: A series of balusters or spindles.

Bulkhead: The portion of the storefront directly below the display windows.

Coping: A water-resistant covering on top of a wall.

Corbel: Stepped masonry usually supporting a cornice or arch; may be structural or decorative

Cornice: A projecting molding usually forming the top portion of a wall or window.

Cresting: Decorative ironwork located atop a parapet wall or roof ridge.

Dentils: Rows of raised stone or brick below a cornice that have the appearance of teeth.

Facade: The exterior face of a building; particularly the front face.

Fenestration: Window and door openings in a wall.

Finial: A pointed ornament.

Header: An architectural element above a window or door.

Hood: A decorative molding over a window that projects to protect the window from rain.

Keystone: A wedge-shaped shaped stone placed at the top of a masonry arch.

Parapet: The portion of a wall that extends above the roof.

Pediment: A triangular or arched-shaped roof element.

Pilaster: A rectangular column that is attached to a wall and projects one third or less the width of the column; may be structural or decorative.

Soldier: A brick placed vertically with its narrowest face exposed.

Stretcher: A brick placed with its end exposed and horizontally oriented.

Rowlock: A brick placed with its end exposed and vertically oriented.

Transom: A window located above a door or another window.

Historic Downtown Chadron Walking Tour

Key to National Register of Historic Places Designation

C Contributes to the character of the historic district.

NC Does not contribute to the character of the historic district.

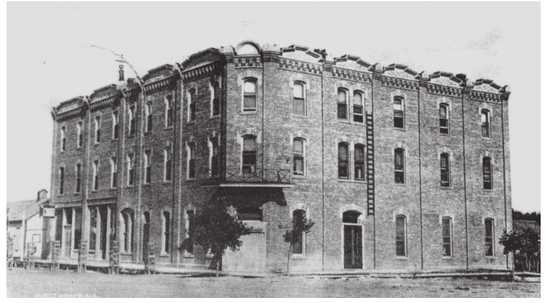
Key to Architectural Style Influence

- Victorian Era
- Romantic Revival
- Prairie School
- Early 20th-Century Commercial
- Modern Era
- No distinct style

Your walking tour begins at the Historic Blaine Hotel on the northwest corner of 2nd & Bordeaux Streets.

Blaine Hotel (1889) C

Beneath the white paint of this three-story edifice is Chadron's most notorious historic structure. In 1889 this was the site of the Hotel Hoyt, but three years later the Blaine Hotel was in operation and boasted a ballroom, grand banquet room, billiards room and barbershop. The red brick building features arched windows, a chamfered entrance and a decorative metal cornice which was articulated to correspond to the bays that are defined by pilasters. It was from a small balcony above the entrance that a gun was fired to start the "Great Cowboy Race" from Chadron to Chicago. The race began as a hoax, but ended at the 1893 Chicago World Fair and featured a number of dubious characters.



Walk to Main Street and south on east side of Main.

First National Bank; 202 Main St. (1917) C

First National Bank has been a fixture in Chadron from the community's humble beginning. Its first wooden edifice was located on the northwest corner of 2nd and Main Streets. In 1895 it moved across the street south to a new brick and stone building. Five years later, Charles Franklin Coffee, a successful Western Nebraska cattle rancher, struck a deal with Bartlett Richards; 2,000 head of cattle with calves at side in exchange for Richard's controlling share of First National Bank and the finest home in Chadron. In 1917, Coffee, in cooperation with P.F. Pitman, constructed a new concrete and brick banking facility on the southeast corner of 2nd and Main Streets. The bank occupied the north half of the new building and O.S. Renfro Co., a women's clothing store, operated in the south side. After 45 years, the Coffee family substantially remodelled the building; expanding its operation to the entire first floor which was completely redesigned in the style of the Modern Era.



214 Main St. (1914) C

This building is constructed of dark textured brick with geometric accents of white glazed brick. A dance and music hall was located on the second floor as late as 1928. Businesses that once occupied this building include Schaeffer's Clothing, Reitz & Lenington Hardware, Reeds Hardware, Erlwine Furniture and Economy Furniture.

Old Masonic Lodge; 218 Main St. (1914) C

Inscribed under the arched parapet are the letters "AF & AM" representing the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons. The upper floor of this buff brick building housed the Masonic Lodge and the ground floor was occupied by hardware or grocery establishments including Spalding Hardware and Variety, Hested's Variety and Hansen's Coast-to-Coast stores.

224 Main Street (c. 1914) C

This modest one-story structure housed a bakery until at least 1928, Bach's Hardware in 1947 and Chadron Greenhouse Supply in the 1950s. A decorative parapet panel has subsequently been removed.

Municipal Building; 234 Main St. (1917) C

The Municipal Building was constructed on the lots where the first city government building had stood. Like most city buildings of this era, the fire department was located on the first floor. Unfortunately, the first level features, including the fire truck garage door, have been removed. In the center of the facade is a horizontal bank of five windows above which is a stone cornice and five pairs of corbels. The unique geometric ornamentation and the interplay of horizontal and vertical elements are characteristic of Prairie School architecture.

The Pace (Eagle) Theater; 244 Main St. (1924) NC

Behind the blue metal of The Eagle lies the brick and limestone façade of the second Pace Theater. Originally located at 141 Main Street, historic photos of the Pace show a handsome brick and limestone façade influenced by both Prairie School and Classical Refvival design. The existing canopy is original to the building, but portions of the parapet have been removed. Awning windows on the facade provided for cooling of the projection booth.



U.S. Post Office; 278 Main Street (1918) C

Chadron's U.S. Post office was designed in the Classical Revival style. Many civic buildings are designed in this style because it represents ideals of democracy. Of note architecturally is the parapet that has stone balustrades that alternate with solid brick panels. A stone surround and hood moulding emphasizes the door. The brick is laid in a Flemish bond pattern rather than the more typical common bond. Above the multi-light windows, the original transoms have been covered. There was a gentlemen's toilet on the top floor, but the ladies had to climb a stair to the roof where there was an outhouse type structure.

Cross the street and walk north along the west side of Main.

273 Main St. (c. 1950) C

The original aluminium storefront windows of this simple Modern Era building have not been altered. The parapet is topped off with a soldier course below a projecting rowlock course. A soldier course also forms a header above the storefront windows. The Frock Shop was located here in the 1950s and 60s and OK Barber in the 1970s and later.

265 Main St. (c. 1900 w/ c. 1925 addition) C

Behind this oddly proportioned brick facade is a much older wood frame building which can be seen from the narrow alley just north of it. The 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance map indicates this building was used as a hospital and by 1928 the brick facade had been added. Thompson Drug and Howard's Jewelry were both long time occupants here.

261 Main St. (c. 1930) C

The gracefully arched parapet of this single-story, orange brick storefront is an influence of Mission Revival architecture. Also notable is the decorative brickwork of contrasting red brick and the glass block transom. L.B. Murphy's was located here before constructing the building next door in 1963.

249 Main St. (c. 1923) C

Note the elaborate brickwork on this otherwise modest building. Soldiers, rowlocks and dentals are incorporated into the dark multi-colored brick facade with diamonds and squares of limestone. White bricks alternate in geometric patterns. This was the original home of the Western Auto hardware store and later became F&M Bootery.

245 Main St. (c. 1950) C

This simple building, which was influenced by Modern Era design, has buff brick veneer laid in a stacked bond pattern. Since at least 1918, a bakery has been located on this site, the most recent of which was Byerly's Bakery.

Scott's Shoes; 241 Main St. (c. 1914) C

A curiosity of this building is the asymmetrical fenestration on the upper level. Originally, the entire facade was brick with a picture window on the south and a door on the north of both floors. A wooden balcony projected over the street, the supporting brackets of which are now located on the M.E. Smith building at the corner of 2nd & Chadron Avenue. The first level was eventually converted to a storefront and was home to Scott's Shoes, which later became Kendall's Shoes, for many decades.



239 Main St. (c. 1914) C

This eclectic building illustrates the transition between Victorian Era aesthetics and Early 20th-Century Commercial architecture. Like the buildings to the south, there are rough-cut stone headers over the windows, but also white brick accents like at 241 Main Street. The storefront originally had a prismatic glass transom and served as the Post Office before the current one was constructed.

Nelson Opera Block; 229 Main St. (1888) C

With his name embossed on the metal cornice, Peter G. Nelson constructed the Opera Block of a mix of red and buff Buffalo Gap sandstone cut into rusticated blocks. The second floor of this structure provided a proper entertainment venue for travelling troupes, theater groups, musicians, and community activities as well as an apartment where the Nelson family lived. With spaces for two stores, the original storefronts featured recessed double-doors flanked by large sandstone columns. Between the two storefronts was the arched entrance to the Opera House and box office. Capping the lower level was a smaller tin cornice. These storefront features have subsequently been removed. Nellie Woodard Dry Goods was one of the early businesses in the Nelson Block.



Weber Bros. Block; 225 Main St. (1888) C

A curious aspect of Weber Bros. Block is the horseshoe which is carved in the stone. Above a building entrance, Germans placed a worn out horseshoe to pour good luck over those who passed through the doors. Like the Nelson Opera Block, the storefront featured a recessed entrance and large columns. The Weber Block was also constructed of the same Buffalo Gap sandstone, but incorporated keystones over the segmented arched windows and metal cresting on the tin cornice. Weber Bros. Grocery was originally located here.

223 Main St. (1888) C

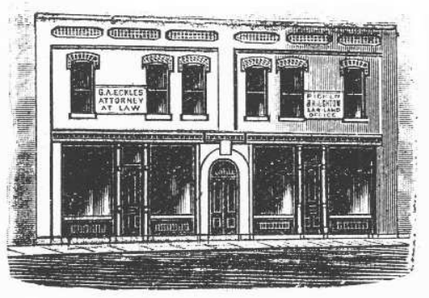
This building has cornice elements that match the Weber Bros. Block. Though not yet installed, the matching pediment has been restored and the creasting recreated. However, the face of this building is clad with rough-cut limestone rather than sandstone. The Eagle Store was located here in 1932 as was the very fashionable Style Shop until 1967.

215-219 Main St. (1888) C

Like the building to the south, this building is also clad with limestone. Limestone is harder than sandstone and is more durable to weathering. Originally, there were large finials atop either end of the metal cornice. Stores which have been located in this building include Munkres Grocery, Engle Pharmacy, Service Drug, Gamble's Hardware and Ben Franklin's.

Lincoln Block; 207-211 Main St. (1887) C

The oldest brick building on Main Street was originally named the Lincoln Block and constructed for around $14,000. On the ground level are three storefronts, the north ones of which still have their original recessed doorway and metal cornice above the windows. A full brick arch highlights the central doorway that leads to the second level. The first U.S. Post Office in the district once occupied this building as did F&M bootery, Snow Hat Shop, Cuckler's Barber Shop and Lunn's Shoe Service.



201 Main St. (1888, c. 1970 remodel) NC

This modest structure was originally two two-story Victorian Era buildings; First National Bank and the Central Block. A fire destroyed the upper level of these buildings after which the remaining single-story was "modernized." However, the half-circle window over the entrance and interior tin ceiling are original. After First National Bank moved across the street in 1917, businesses that occupied this building include Chadron Drug Co., Hennessy's Book Shop and The Chef's Inn.



Walk west to Chadron Avenue and turn south.

210 Chadron Ave. (c. 1930) C

The facade of this modest building is distinctive for the three different brick colors which were used. It is topped off with a concrete coping on the parapet.

218 & 220 Chadron Ave. (c. 1930) C

The brickwork in these two buildings is remarkably similar to 210 Chadron Avenue. The north building was originally used as a machine shop and appliance store.

221 Chadron Ave. (c. 1948) C

This building incorporates the use of glass block on the side walls which are constructed of hollow clay tile. These tiles are made of thin-walled terra cotta blocks and were desirable because they were strong and lightweight.

Walk west along the south side of 2nd Street.

M.E. Smith & Co. (1890) C

The original owner of this structure, Mary E. Smith Hayward, left her mark on the Chadron community as well as the building. A faded advertisement for M.E. Smith & Co. Drygoods can be seen on the east wall. Although she married before moving to Chadron, interestingly it is her maiden name embossed on the cornice. Ms. Smith was a strong advocate for women's suffrage and the humane treatment of animals. She was adamantly opposed to the Chadron to Chicago horse race. She also worked to beautify Chadron and the courthouse square. Of note architecturally, the storefront and exterior stair are both constructed of cast iron. Within the locally-produced brick walls are three round windows.

211 W. 2nd St. (c. 1925) C

This modest building has a facade of textured brick accented with concrete squares. Portions of the building not seen from the street were constructed of salvaged red brick from the old Dawes County Courthouse. This building was likely constructed by W.W. Pascoe Tinner who operated here since at least 1923. The business became Metal Products Co. in 1946.

225 & 231 W. 2nd St. (c. 1915) C

These two brick buildings are remarkably similar, but limestone has been incorporated on the facade of the west building. Autos were sold, stored, or repaired here since 1923 by Chadron Battery Service, Chicoine Motor Company, and Ford Sales and Service.



301 W. 2nd St. (1889) C

The west storefront of this building still features its original cast iron columns, large display windows and metal cornices. The local brick is accented with Buffalo Gap sandstone at the arched window headers. This same window detail can be seen in other brick buildings downtown. Historically, Studebaker wagons were sold here and a church was on the second floor. Later, this was Studebaker Sales and Service, and Saunders Furniture. The I.O.O.F Hall was also on the second floor.

Cross the street and walk east along the north side of 2nd Street.

306 West 2nd St. (c. 1923) C

This building uniquely combines local brick with accents of textured and white bricks that were fashionable when this building was constructed. Also notable is the stepped parapet with a brick coping and the center recessed panel which is flanked by original light fixtures. The original storefront windows and transom also remain intact. Historically, tractors and implements were sold and serviced here.

300 W. 2nd St. (c. 1938) C

The facade of this two-story brick building represents a late 1930s lumber outlet; however, the rest of the building may be much older. Beginning as early as 1887 at least four lumberyards operated from this site. The wood frame building with bracketed eaves north of the alleyway was the lumber warehouse as were the other buildings on this lot.

248 W. 2nd St. (1888) C

Behind the stucco of the Chadron Record is one of Chadron's oldest brick buildings. In the early part of the decade, Chadron Furniture Company operated from the first floor with embalming and undertaking in the basement. Urban legend has it that the second floor "sleeping rooms" were actually occupied by Chadron's working women and their male clients.

228 W. 2nd St. (c. 1890) C

Most early wood frame buildings were eventually replaced with more substantial brick structures. However, this one survived and even retains its old wavy glass windows. The second level was originally sided with wood clapboard and the west 1/3 of the building was an early addition. Both a printing business and novelty shop once operated here and the upper floor was a residence.





226 W. 2nd St. (c. 1900) C

This Victorian Era structure features local red brick construction with four chimneys integrated into the west wall. The second level retains its metal cornice and window hoods. Early occupant Nichols Grocery was one of several grocery stores in the commercial district during the early 20th-century. Chadron Auto Supply operated here for over 30 years and remodelled the storefront with aluminium cladding. Mar-Bow Music has been here for over 40 years.

218 W. 2nd St. (c. 1945) C

This modest building originally had a large window west of the garage door to display Packard automobiles which featured "Ultramatic Drive." Ewen Motor Company also repaired automobiles from this building in the early 1950s. Like many buildings of this era, a mezzanine office space was located on the second-floor which featured small windows overlooking the street. Projecting rowlocks and stretchers frame the second floor window and top off the parapet.

Citizens State Bank; 216 W. 2nd St. (c. 1895) NC

This is a unique example of the influence of Romanesque Revival architecture in Chadron. Characteristic of this style is the use of dark brick and stone forming large graceful arches. The original facade featured a steep gable-form parapet over the entrance under which there was the sign of its original occupant. Although the parapet has been removed, the shadow of "Citizens State Bank" is still legible. The use of smooth red brick and sandstone with matching red mortar joints creates a flat effect which is accented with a small checkerboard pattern framing the arches and four panels above the windows. The Citizens State Bank moved to the corner of the block in 1912 after which this building served as the telephone exchange until at least 1928.



ABC Electric; 210 W. 2nd St. (1946) C

This building was constructed immediately following World War II and was influenced by Modern Era design including the use of blond brick and glass block. This is the only building in the district that, until recently, still had its original storefront, sign and business; ABC Electric.

Mildred Block; 202 W. 2nd St. (1912) C

Constructed of a dark brick with thin mortar joints, the limestone geometric ornaments atop the corner piers are influence by the Prairie School. It has a stone coping and cornice with dentils. The prismatic glass transoms were designed to refract light to the back of the interior. John Pritzuse contracted with an Omaha company to construct this building and named it for his wife Mildred. This was the second home to the Citizens State Bank which occupied the east storefront. Although the bank eventually failed, on August 7, 1925 it was reported to be "the finest place in the northwest. No other bank in this neck of the woods can boast of such a classy banking room." The first floor still features its original mosaic tile floor and tin ceiling. A grocery was located in the west storefront and there were offices for local professionals on the upper floor. After the bank failed, Federal offices were located here and the National Guard used the basement for a shooting gallery.

120 W. 2nd St. (c. 1948) C

Longtime home to the "120 Bar", this simple commercial vernacular brick building features an entrance that is recessed and flanked by large display windows. The brick pattern is simpler than most buildings of the same vintage.

Lownethal Clothier; 116 W. 2nd St. (1886) C

As advertised on the east wall, this building was originally home to Lowenthal Clothiers, "The Man's Store." The Lowenthal family moved their business from O'Linn to Chadron and constructed this building in 1886. Their store was located on the first floor and a fraternal lodge occupied the second floor from 1891 to 1948. Constructed of locally produced brick, there are red sandstone accents in the arched window heads. There was also a metal cornice above the storefront which has been removed.

Chadron State Bank; 100 W. 2nd St. (1916) C

This white glazed brick building was designed in the Classical Revival style and features two fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals supporting a cornice. The original entrance was centered on the east façade between the pilasters over which was constructed a triangular pediment. Two diamond-shaped terra cotta ornaments are also distinctive elements on this façade. This lot was the first to be sold in the new town of Chadron. First National Bank occupied a wood building on this lot and Chadron State Bank was located in the new brick and stone building across the street south. After the fire of 1916 destroyed First National Bank, it moved into the space occupied by Chadron State Bank and Chadron State Bank constructed this brick building which was locally referred to as the "White Bank." Like the Citizens State Bank, Chadron State Bank also failed during the Great Depression.

Old Safeway; 159 Main St. (c. 1930) C

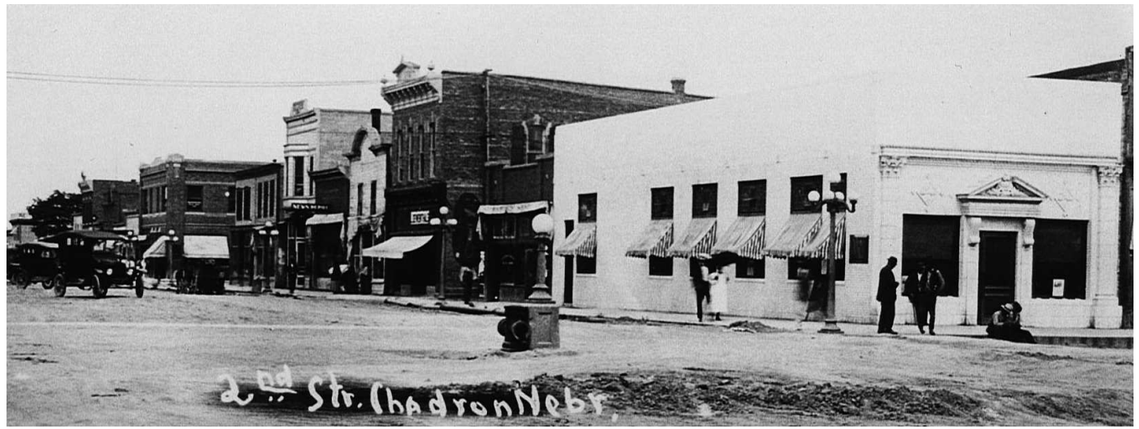
This address was originally two distinct buildings; 161 and 157 Main Street. 157 Main Street was the original location of Safeway grocery while the building to the south served as a retail outlet. Both of these relatively simple buildings were influenced by Early 20th-Century Commercial architecture.

Dub's Favorite Bar; 149 Main St. (c. 1900) NC

This wood frame building with its clapboard false front dates to the turn-of-the-century or earlier. This establishment was purchased in 1946 by Dub Miller who once played for the Chicago Bears. He renamed it Dub's Favorite Bar and turned it into one of Chadron's finest drinking establishments. The interior still features a Victorian bar that predates Dub Miller as well as the old tin ceiling. Other post WWII features include the bar stools, Coca-Cola cooler and booths. This is Chadron's oldest bar.

Old Pace Theater; 141 Main St. (1916) C

Named for the Pace family who owned the theater, this building is uniquely constructed of gray concrete block moulded to look like stone. The Pace Theater was a trademark of Paramount Studio and originally had a seating capacity of 475. This included a horseshoe-shaped balcony. Film and live entertainment were both offered at this venue. The movie theater moved one block south in 1924 and this building was converted to a skating rink and dance hall.



Chadron Journal; 139 Main St. (c. 1917) C

Recent removal of metal and stucco cladding revealed this Early 20th-Century Commercial brick facade which originally housed the Chadron Record newspaper office. The Chadron Journal and Chadron Chronicle combined in 1943 to form the Chadron Record.

Hotel Chadron/YMCA (1890) C

This three-story structure features a metal cornice at the parapet. The windows have segmented arches at the headers and limestone sills. There are also limestone bands delineating the second and thirds floors. Note the yellowish diagonal firing marks on the bricks which are typical of Chadron's local brick. For the first ten years this building was known as the Hotel Chadron. In 1890 General Nelson A. Miles made the hotel headquarters while investigating the Massacre at Wounded Knee. In 1903 the building was converted to housing for railroad workers and YMCA with a tennis court, bowling alley, boxing ring, wrestling facilities and basketball court. By 1931 it once again served as a hotel and has recently been restored. It is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Old Standard Oil Red Crown Service Station (c. 1925) C

Diagonal orientation of this small building allowed easy drive-through access from Main and 1st Streets when originally constructed as a Standard Oil Red Crown Service Station. The northeast third of the building, which is now enclosed and sheathed with stucco, was the drive-through canopy. Likewise, the remaining stucco panels were once large multi-pane windows. An identical service station in nearly original condition can be seen in Ogallala, Nebraska and is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Other Area Sites

Wilson Park

By planting trees and carrying water to each of them, in 1912 E.P. Wilson transformed a ravine into one of the City's show places.

Chadron State College

Established in 1911 as a state normal school, the campus of CSC has many historic buildings of interest and cultural offerings. (308.432.6000)

Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center and C.F. Coffee Gallery

Located in the old library building on the Chadron State College campus, this museum provides exhibits and repositories depicting the development of the region's cattle industry and the homestead era. (308.432.6000)

Museum of the Fur Trade

Just four miles east on Highway 20 is a world-class exhibitor and resource center of the Fur Trade era. The site includes the reconstructed trading post which was established by James Bordeaux in the winter of 1837-38. Bordeaux maintained this post until 1872 and carried on a successful trade with the Brule Sioux Indians. (308.432.3843)

Dawes County Historical Museum

Located three miles south on Highway 385, the Dawes County Historical Museum maintains a significant repository of historic documents and artifacts. (308.432.4999)

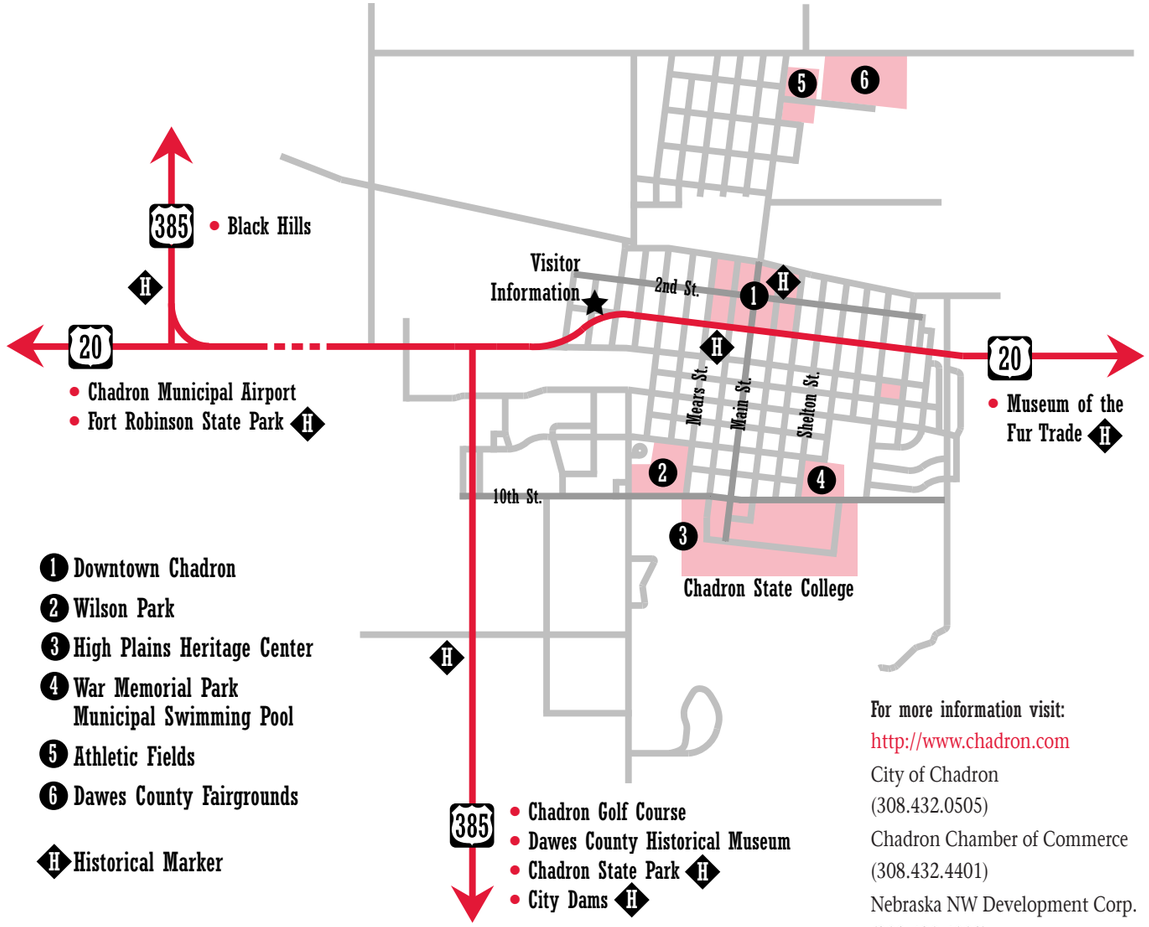
Chadron State Park

Eight miles south on Highway 385 is scenic Chadron State Park. This was Nebraska's first state park established in 1921. (308.432.6167)

Fort Robinson State Park

Historic Fort Robinson is located 28 miles west of Chadron on Highway 20. The fort was established in 1874 to protect the nearby Red Cloud Indian Agency. It was a cavalry post until 1919 and after World War I provided horses for the U.S. Army. In 1942 a war dog reception and training center was added; a prisoner of war camp was located at Fort Robinson from 1943 to 1946. It now boasts 49 historic buildings. (308.665.2900)

Chadron Vicinty



For more information visit:
http://www.chadron.com
City of Chadron
(308.432.0505)
Chadron Chamber of Commerce
(308.432.4401)
Nebraska NW Development Corp.
(308.432.4023)