



### #15 Intermountain Institute

#### Paddock Avenue

The Intermountain Institute northwest of town stands as a testament to its founder, Rev. Edward A. Paddock, the faculty, and the over 2,000 students who lent their hand to build the structures. The school's motto was "An education and trade for every boy and girl who is willing to work for them." In that spirit, students attended classes and worked five hours a day to pay for part of their tuition, room and board.

The five major buildings, Billings Gymnasium, Slocum Hall, Hooker Hall, Beardsley Hall, and Carnegie Library, are all built of reinforced concrete walls which are scored to imitate block.

The Institute thrived partly through generous donations Paddock secured from his Eastern connections until the Great Depression when it was forced to close its doors. In 1939 the property was deeded to the public schools and used as a vocational training school under the National Youth Administration. It later housed Weiser High School until 1967 when the new school was built. Today the buildings are privately owned, and Hooker Hall is the home of the Snake River Heritage Center.\*

\*Listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

\*\*Eligible for listing in the National Register.

Brochure Produced by:

City of Weiser Historical Preservation Commission.

Printed by Weiser Signal American.

Information for the tour taken from the publications, Hibbard, Don, *Weiser, a look at Idaho Architecture*, 1978 and Derig, Betty, *Weiser, The Way It Was*, 1987. Photos courtesy of Betty Derig and Snake River Heritage Center.

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~ A TOUR ~

# HISTORIC WEISER

## BUSINESS DISTRICT



Weiser's downtown grew north on State Street from the Oregon Short Line depot after a disastrous 1890 fire wiped out nearly all of the old downtown, located about two miles to the east. The OSL Railroad had built a wood-frame depot near the present depot's location in 1886, and speculators laid out property lines radiating from it. Developers gradually filled in the town map with substantial brick buildings between 1890 and 1920, giving the town its present shape. The six-block stretch along central State Street from the depot marked the heart of a prosperous and elegant new community that dreamed of growth still to come.



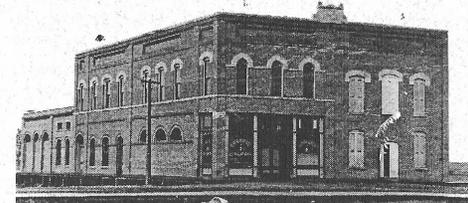
### #1 Oregon Short Line Depot

Most early visitors to Weiser were introduced to the community from the depot. Built in 1906-1907, this Queen Anne-style structure of brick with rusticated concrete-block trim, was similar in design to the now demolished Payette depot. It provided an imposing anchor for the south end of State Street and gave visitors to the town an impressive gateway to the city. Originally a fanlight was above the main doors and dormers graced the roof. This building was saved from demolition in 1987 and, along with the grounds, has been restored to its original condition.\*\*

### #2 Matthews Grain & Storage

135 E. Commercial St.

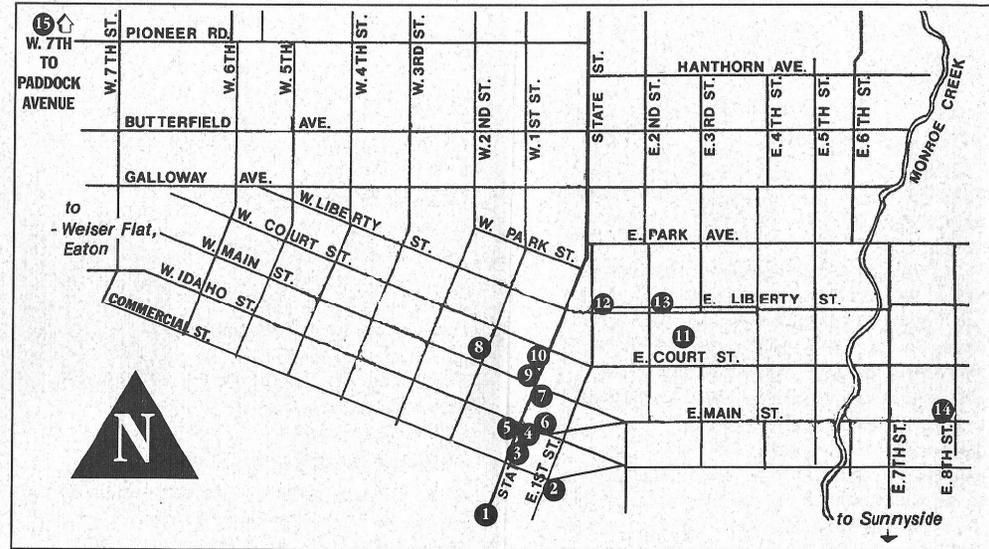
Among the earliest brick buildings on the new west side of town was the Werneth Building built in 1879. It was home of the Weiser Brewery & Saloon that was said to supply beer "as clear as crystal" and ice cold thanks to their sawdust ice house they stocked with ice cut from the Weiser River. The massive, two-story complex included a hotel upstairs. In the 1930s the



upstairs took on a new business, The Clinton Rooms, a brothel that operated until 1949. The employees resided in the spacious rooms on the south side of the building and conducted business in the many small rooms flanking a long hallway on the north side. In 1965 the Werneth's son took over the business that later went bankrupt. In 1977 Seth Matthews purchased the historic building that now houses Matthews Grain & Storage on the ground floor.\*\*

### #3 The Star Theater

"Moving pictures" came to Weiser about the same time as the automobile. In 1910 the Star Theater advertised "Illustrated Songs," these included popular songs recorded on Edison's new disk played simultaneously with the pictures. For 10 cents, an evening's entertainment might include the illustrated songs and several "up to date" motion pictures. A.C. Gordon purchased the Star Theater in 1916, a time of picture-show craze. By the 1920s, Gordon, the former owner of the



Weiser Brick Company, and his sons operated a chain of theaters in Weiser, Nampa and Boise. In 1940 the Star Theater underwent a make-over that expanded its seating capacity to 600, making it the second largest in the state at the time. The Star Theater was sold to Bob and Marge Cooper in 1964 and then to Dr. Edward and Madeline Wheeler in 1987. In 1998 the old Star, which was once recognized as one of the state's most grand theaters, showed its last picture show. Now the home of the OnionSkin Players, entertainment continues via this popular Treasure Valley melodramatic production group.\*

**#4 Bank Building 348 State St.**

The brick and stucco building served Weiser's financial needs for many years. First as a local bank, the Idaho First National occupied the building until the late 1950s. Attorney and professional offices were traditionally located on the second floor.\*\*

**#5 Oddfellows Hall 339 State St.**

Built in 1886, this lodge was one of the original buildings on State Street. It features stained-glass windows and a pressed-tin ceiling in the upstairs hall. The lower floor housed the popular Metropole restaurant, where people met to enjoy a soda or to eat lunch at the fancy counter. Since the late 1950s, the Weiser Newsstand occupied the business space that became Stark's in the 1970s. In 1999, Clarence and Anna Stark purchased the historic building from the Oddfellows.\*\*

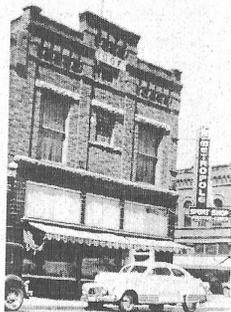
**#6 Pythian Castle**

30 East Idaho St.

Weiser's major architectural landmark, the Pythian Castle, was constructed in 1904 for \$9,000. The design of Tourtellotte & Company of Boise was built with stone quarried at Sand Hollow, approximately 10 miles upstream on the Weiser River near the Galloway diversion dam. The sandstone was hauled by wagon to town where it was hand cut and laid by Hamilton and Reader of Weiser. The richly textured and sculptured stone work exhibits a high degree of craftsmanship.

The interior remains intact and the 24-foot high, arched, pressed tin ceiling installed in 1911. Notice the beautiful stained-glass window in the large, second-story Tudor archway.

The ground level housed many types of businesses over the years from an undertaker to the home of the Star Theater and a



second-hand store.

The fraternal Knights of the Pythias donated the building to the Weiser Architectural Preservation Committee in late 1999. While sifting through the remaining articles of the organization, volunteers literally found skeletons in the Pythian's closet. Three skeletons, two adults and a child, were uncovered. Apparently skeletal remains were commonly used in the fraternity's ritual to remind the members that they were "mere mortals."\*

**#7 Washington Square**

444 State St.

Morrie Reinhaus, member of a long-time Weiser business family, initiated efforts to restore and redevelop the north half of this central business block in the late 1970s. Included in this effort was the site of the Washington Hotel that took up the northeast quarter of the block until it was destroyed by fire in 1973. The Fuller Block filled the corner of State & East Main and was built in 1904. It featured elegant corner towers, a Tourtellotte trademark, at either end on State Street. The top half of the building was removed after a fire in the mid 1980s. The little brick building in the middle of the block on East Main housed Weiser's first telephone office, keeping up to half a dozen switchboard operators busy at any one time, until dial phones came to town in 1958.

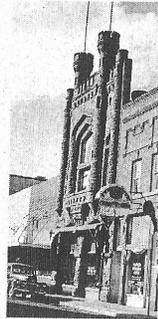
**#8 Weiser Post Office**

106 W. Main St.

Constructed in 1933 for \$90,000, this 12,398 sq. ft. federal building housed the post office as well as the US Forest Service, FBI and Selective Service in the past. The structure retains most of its original features, from the round writing stands on the mail floor to the marble restrooms in the basement.\*

**#9 Haas Hardware 525 State St.**

The Haas family opened one of the first businesses in Weiser to cater to the miners of the 1880s. The Seven Devils mineral belt, which stretched for 100 miles along the east side of the



Snake River, brought many of the first permanent settlers to Washington County. By 1909 Herman Haas was ready to settle into more permanent quarters than a freight wagon, and built a hardware store on the northeast corner of State & Main. Harry Wulf continued the tradition of his uncle, Herman Haas, in stocking one of the largest hardware and implement stores in Idaho. The second floor contained spacious apartments, abandoned when the substantial brick building's facade was covered over in the 1940s by the new occupant, a department store called The Merc. Fortunately, this building's original beauty remains essentially intact, awaiting rediscovery.

Next door to Haas Hardware (pictured above) was Wheaton Theatre that hosted the popular vaudeville and musical acts of the time. The theatre building burned in 1933.

**#10 Montgomery Ward Store**

529 N. State St.

Business was booming in Weiser prior to the stock market crash of 1929. Completed for and occupied by Montgomery Ward in 1930, this brick building included a full basement, mezzanine and second floor, all used for display merchandise. In 1954, Western Auto Supply moved in, reducing the sale floor space to its current configuration. Clausen's Ace Hardware is the third owner/occupant. The building retains its original distinctive terra cotta cameo in the cornice.\*\*

**#11 Washington County Courthouse**

256 E. Court St.

Dedicated on December 1, 1939, the Washington County Courthouse was designed by Tourtellotte and Hummel and is constructed of poured concrete. As stated in a newspaper article of the time: "The structure, with its equipment represents an investment of approximately \$90,000. It is absolutely fireproof, and is so strong and substantially constructed that it should last for fully 100 years."

In the early 1990s, a new building was constructed for the Washington County Sheriff's office and jail that formerly occupied the basement of the courthouse. In the late 1990s the

courthouse received a complete renovation updating the offices and refurbishing the exterior of the county landmark.\*

**Historic Churches**

**#12 St. Luke's Episcopal Church  
Corner East First & Liberty**

Constructed in 1892 under the supervision of Rev. Charles Snavely of Wyoming, the building is a modest Gothic style. The bowed, triangular window above the entrance is unique; the gable ornaments and open belfry lend a touch of simple beauty. The attractive nineteenth-century interior with its open trussed ceiling and arched chancel remains intact. The design was also used for the St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Blackfoot.\*

**#13 St. Agnes Catholic Church  
Corner East Second & Liberty**

Designed by H.W. Bond in 1911, this brick church — with its imposing bell tower and cruciform plan — is one of the most substantial church buildings rendered in the Western Colonial style. The round-arched stained-glass windows derive from the renaissance tradition, while the roofline-with its overhanging eaves, exposed rafters and figure-four brackets-conveys a western colonial-bungalow spirit. It is an extremely original and powerful adaptation of vernacular and traditional images. Its spacious interior also incorporates the two styles.\*

**#14 Advent Christian Church  
Corner East Eighth & Main**

The oldest church building in Weiser, this place of worship was built in 1885 by the Baptist congregation. It was originally located further to the east, near the heart of the pre-fire business district. In 1894, when it became obvious that the new town was to be a permanent part of the landscape, the church was moved to its present site.

There are very few surviving churches in Idaho from the 1880s. This structure is even more rare, having a Queen Anne rather than Gothic spirit. The belfry roof, old windows with their colored-glass upper panes and etched-glass lower panes, and the bracketed shed hoods over the windows all contribute to a charmingly unique architectural statement. The sunburst designs on the front hood and over the entry are noteworthy as are the corner blocks in the door and window frames.

In 1910 the expanding Baptist congregation traded the building to the Advent Christians for a new building site.\*

