

Local Landmark Designation Nomination Form

1. Name

Historic Stone Stable

and/or common _____

2. Location

street & number 301 W. Whitewater Street

city, town Whitewater

congressional district 1

state Wisconsin

zip code 53190

county Walworth

3. Classification

Category

- district
 building(s)
 structure
 site
 object

Ownership

- public
 private
 both

Public Acquisition

- in process
 being considered

Status

- occupied
 unoccupied
 work in progress

Accessible

- yes: restricted
 yes: unrestricted
 no

Present Use

- agriculture
 commercial
 educational
 entertainment
 government
 industrial
 military

- museum
 park
 private residence
 religious
 scientific
 transportation
 other:

4. Owner of Property

Name City of Whitewater

street & number 312 W. Whitewater Street

city, town Whitewater

vicinity of _____

state Wisconsin

zip 53190

5. Location of Legal Description

(In County Courthouse)

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds

street & number 100 W. Walworth Street

city, town Elkhorn

state Wisconsin

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Title Stone Stable

Date 2007 (reconstructed)

federal state county local

depository for survey records 312 W. Whitewater Street

city, town Whitewater

state Wisconsin

7. Description

Condition

- excellent
- good

- deteriorated
- ruins

Check One

- unaltered
- altered

Check one

- original site
- moved (if so, date moved 2007)

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance ATTACHED

8. Significance

(Continue on separate sheets if necessary)

Period

- prehistoric
- 1400-1499
- 1500-1599
- 1600-1699
- 1700-1799
- 1800-1899
- 1900-

Areas of Significance-Check and justify below

- archeology-prehistoric
- archeology-historic
- agriculture
- architecture
- art
- commerce
- communications

- community planning
- conservation
- economics
- education
- engineering
- exploration/settlement
- industry
- invention

- landscape architecture
- law
- literature
- military
- music
- philosophy
- politics/government

- religion
- science
- sculpture
- social/
- humanitarian
- theater
- transportation
- other (specify)

Specific dates CIRCA 1845 **Builder/Architect** GEORGE DANN/NELSON COMB

Statement of Significance (Give specific sources for all statements of fact.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

ATTACHED

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property NA

Quadrangle name NA

Quadrangle scale NA

UMT References (Optional)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A			
C			
E			
G			

	Zone	Easting	Northing
B			
D			
F			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification THE STONE STABLE IS LOCATED ON CITY PROPERTY ADJACENT TO THE MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT (3), ANCHORED BY THE WHITEWATER DEPOT ON THE EAST SIDE AND THE STONE STABLE ON THE WEST OF THE PARKING LOT.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia Blackmer
organization Chair of the Landmarks Commission **date** April 20, 2026
street & number 445 W. Center Street **telephone** 262-721-7621
city or town Whitewater **state** Wisconsin

12. Municipal Data

Zoning District: 5 Aldermanic District: 3
Parcel Number: Lot 3, /A267400003, CMS2674

Commission Actions

Hearing Approved: _____ Hearing Date Set: _____

Landmark Designated (Date): _____ Number: _____

Certified By: _____

Commission Chairman

Date: _____

The Stone Stable

By Carol Lohry Cartwright*



Stone Stable. *Image courtesy of Carol Lohry Cartwright*

The Stone Stable is an artifact from Whitewater's earliest history. Located behind the First English Lutheran Church, it was removed and reassembled next to the Whitewater Historical Society's Depot Museum of Local History in 2007. The historical society is charged with its interpretation to the public.

When the Stone Stable was moved, it had an interior outfitted with stalls, suggesting it was used as a horse barn in its most recent history. However, its appearance suggests that if it was built as a horse barn, it would have been an unusual example of this type of outbuilding. Many nineteenth century homes had carriage houses, with almost all of them constructed of wood, not stone. And, few families actually kept their own horses because of the expense and trouble. Instead, they relied on livery stables to provide horses when needed, which was not as frequently as we now use automobiles. People in nineteenth century communities got around primarily by walking.

The first task in uncovering the history of the building was to look at its architecture. Its stone construction suggests it was built for a much heavier, perhaps industrial, use. The second task was to determine what building the stone stable was actually related to, as it was only owned by the First English Lutheran Church in more recent years. To start this research, historic maps were used.

Old fire insurance maps dating to the early 1900s showed that the building was part of the lot attached to the house at 404 Center Street. This house was actually built between 1912 and 1924, but it replaced an older house on this site, a house that dated back to the 1850s. Looking at tax assessment records for the period between 1849 and 1851, the earliest years these records are available, showed that a man named N. Combs paid the taxes on this property during those years. A deed search revealed that while Combs paid the taxes on this property in 1849, he actually did not get a deed for the parcel until 1850. Records also show that Combs owned the lot facing Main Street, where the church is now located, as well.

Looking at records in the mid-nineteenth century can be very confusing and often ownership and dates of building construction cannot be definitively determined. But, Whitewater is lucky in that pioneer resident Prosper Cravath wrote a detailed history of comings and goings in Whitewater for the years 1837 to 1857, a volume that was updated to 1867 by Spencer Steele.

This volume, *Early Annals of Whitewater*, was published by the Whitewater Federation of Women's Clubs in 1906 and Cravath's entries for 1845 through 1847 help sort out Combs' history in Whitewater.

In 1845, Cravath reports that Nelson Coombs (sic), a wagon-maker, came to Whitewater and shortly thereafter, built a small house (not extant) on Lot 3, Block 5 of Whitewater's original plat, the lot that faces Main Street at the site of the church. In 1847, Cravath reports that Combs also built a house on Lot 3, Block 11, the lot with the current address of 404 Center Street. Because the deeds do not show that Combs actually owned these lots, but paid taxes on them, suggests that he had an arrangement with the actual land owner to improve these lots, perhaps as part of a land contract agreement. Unfortunately, no information is available on outbuildings constructed on either of these lots that would account for the stone stable. But, given the building's mid-nineteenth century appearance, it is likely that the building would have been constructed between 1845 and 1847.

There is little information about Combs in the 1840s, but he does show up in the 1850 census. The census indicates that he was 35 years old and a native of Canada. His occupation was listed as a wagon-maker and he was married to 25-year-old Hannah Combs, a native of New York State. In 1850, the Combs had three children, ages seven, five, and three. The two oldest had been born in New York State, while the youngest was born in Wisconsin (Whitewater). From this information, some assumptions about the Combs family can be made.

The Combs family was typical of people who came to Wisconsin from the eastern part of the United States. Known as "Yankees," they came to Wisconsin during the state's pioneer era (1836-1860) to better their lives. Even though Nelson Combs was originally from Canada, he had obviously spent time in New York State, since his wife and two of his children were born there. Many of Wisconsin's Yankee immigrants were from New York State. The fact that Combs was a wagon-maker is also typical of many Yankee immigrants who came to Wisconsin with education or a skill and probably some funds to buy land or establish a business.

Nelson Combs' fate in Whitewater was also typical. In 1850, he did acquire the deeds to the two lots he had improved in Whitewater, but in 1852, he sold both parcels of land and moved away. Where he moved to is not known, but it was common for early Yankee immigrants to keep moving west in the hope that they would find better opportunities in new frontier communities.

Nelson Combs' occupation as a wagon-maker can also give us a clue as to what the stone stable might have been originally used for. It is possible that Combs built the structure as a wagon shop. Small shops like blacksmith shops, cabinet shops, harness making shops and other shops making essential goods were common in pioneer communities. Because they had an "industrial" purpose, they were often housed in more sturdy buildings of brick or stone.

Complicating the story is the citation in the *Early Annals of Whitewater* found as this author was doing additional research in 2020 on barrel-making in the community. She found a reference that stated "George Dann started the first cooper shop in 1845 on Fourth Street, back of the Baptist Church. From this site, the business was transferred, after a year or two, to the east side

of the creek near the residence since known as the George Dann place.” This citation gives several clues about the stone stable.

The location of the stone stable before it was moved to its current spot near the depot was near Fourth Street between Main and Center Streets. The *Annals* also state it was behind the “Baptist Church.” The Baptist Church today is the First English Lutheran Church, the eventual owner of the stone stable. When the *Annals* were printed in 1906, the church was still used by the Baptists, who had built it in the 1880s.

The appearance of the stone stable matches that of a cooperage as much as an early wagon shop. So, it is possible that Combs could have built the structure and leased it to Dann, or Dann leased the land and built the structure. In any event, it was no longer used as a cooper shop since the *Annals* indicate that Dann moved his business to the east side of Whitewater only a couple of years after 1845.

Either as a wagon shop or a cooperage, the building had a short life. Combs and his family left Whitewater in 1852 and the stone stable was sold with the house at 404 Center Street to Alexander Graham, one of Whitewater’s pioneer businessmen. Graham was also a Yankee immigrant and in 1855, he and A. H. Scoville founded an early private banking house later called the Merchants’ and Mechanics’ Bank. Banking in the 1850s was risky and largely unregulated, so it was not surprising that in 1858, the bank closed, probably due to the financial panic (depression) of 1857. Graham recovered, though, and became a contractor. In 1860, he was contracted to build a railroad in Cuba and spent several years there. He died in 1866.

During the later nineteenth century, Mrs. Susan Webster and H. N. Inman owned the house at 404 Center Street, along with the stable. Not much is known about Mrs. Webster, but Inman was a local grocery store owner. What is interesting about the stone stable during this time is that a frame-constructed addition was made to the west wall of the stone building and two large partial barns with overhangs were built immediately east of the stable. According to records, these barns were owned by 12 different people and it is thought that the barns were built to house the horses and carriages for people attending the nearby Congregational Church. Between 1892 and 1904, an annex was built between one of the barns and the stable. It is likely that the stable owner was “renting” out this building to this group for their use. All of the additions to the stable and the barns were gone by 1924, suggesting that the church-goers now had automobiles instead of horse-drawn carriages. But, the stone stable lived on, a testament to its sturdy construction and usefulness as an outbuilding.

The most important and longest owner of the property at 404 Center Street was Joseph E. Fuller, who acquired the house and stable in 1902. He was the son of Yankee immigrants in nearby Hebron in Jefferson County and came to Whitewater as a young man. He operated a mail and stage line between Whitewater and Fort Atkinson. In 1902, he became one of the first rural mail carriers in the area and operated Rural Route 5 for many years. In 1916, he was listed in the city directory as a carpenter and around that time he must have used his carpentry skills to replace the old house at 404 Center Street with a newer home. Fuller died in 1950.

It is probable that the stone stable eventually became property of the First English Lutheran Church when they developed their parking lot behind the building. The lots on Main and Center Street were fairly long, so the church may have purchased back portions of lots on Center Street for the purposes of creating a parking area. The church retained the stone stable for many years, using it for a living nativity at Christmas. It was only around 2005 that, due to a desire to put on an addition on the church, the stable had to be removed for additional parking space.

At that time, a community effort was organized to save the building. It was taken apart piece by piece and stored until funds could be raised for reconstruction and an appropriate site acquired. It was felt that the best place for the building would be near the depot so that the Whitewater Historical Society could use and interpret the building. In 2007, the stable was successfully reconstructed and is an artifact that is officially owned by the City of Whitewater, but maintained and interpreted by the Whitewater Historical Society.

Bibliography

Cravath, Prosper and Spencer Steele. *Early Annals of Whitewater*. Whitewater: Whitewater Federation of Women's Clubs, 1906.

History of Walworth County, Wisconsin. Chicago: Western Publishing Company, 1882.

Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps, 1904-1924. On file in the Archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

"Services Held for Joseph Fuller Monday," *Whitewater Register*, 10 August 1950, p. 1.

Whitewater Census for 1850. On file in the Irvin Young Library, Whitewater, Wisconsin.

Whitewater Tax Assessment Rolls. On file in the Area Research Center of the Anderson Library, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Whitewater, Wisconsin.

*If using this article, please cite, Carol Lohry Cartwright, "The Stone Stable," 2006, Whitewater Historical Society website, Whitewater, WI.

LEASE AGREEMENT

This lease agreement made and entered into this 25th day of May, 2008, by and between the City of Whitewater, a municipal corporation acting by and through its duly constituted officers hereinafter referred to as the Lessor, and the Whitewater Historical Society, Inc., acting through its duly constituted officers hereinafter referred to as the Lessee.

Whereas, the Lessor is a municipal corporation owning certain real estate known as the railroad depot building and the stone stable building, and

Whereas, the Lessee is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the preservation of community history, and

Whereas, the Lessee desires to lease from the Lessor the railroad depot building and the stone stable building, and

Whereas, Lessor deems it advantageous to the community to grant and lease to the Lessee said railroad depot building and the stone stable building, together with the rights, licenses, and privileges as herein set forth, now, therefore,

1. **Premises.** Lessor in consideration of the compensation and covenants and agreements set forth herein to be kept and performed by Lessee, does hereby demise and lease onto Lessee upon the conditions hereinafter set forth, all of which Lessee accepts, the railroad depot building, located at the intersection of Whitewater Street and Fremont Street, in the City of Whitewater, Wisconsin, said property being more particularly described as follows:

Commencing at the intersection of the southerly line of Whitewater Street and the westerly line of Fremont Street (formerly Depot Street) said point being the northerly corner of Block 6 Depot block of Tripp's Addition to the Village (now city) of Whitewater, Walworth County, Wisconsin also the Place of beginning of the lands herinafter described to-wit: Thence S38 45'40" E 100.57 feet, thence S 50 23'40" W 109.97 feet; thence N 38 45'40" W 104.99 feet to the southerly line of Whitewater Street; thence N 52 42' E along said Street line 110.00 feet to the Place of Beginning. Containing 11,302 square feet of land, more or less.

For the purposes of operating a museum, open for public use, to the citizens of the City of Whitewater and other interested persons.

And, the Lessor in consideration of the compensation and covenants and agreements set forth herein to be kept and performed by Lessee, does hereby demise and lease onto Lessee upon the conditions hereinafter set forth, all of which Lessee accepts, the stone stable building (building only), located at 403 W. Whitewater Street, in the City of Whitewater, Wisconsin, and ingress and egress for the general public to the Stone Stable building from City property to the building.

For the purposes of interpreting the historic structure and using it as deemed appropriate by the Lessee as an auxiliary exhibition and programming space, open for public use whenever feasible, to the citizens of the City of Whitewater and other interested persons.

2. Term. The term of this lease shall commence on [May 20, 2008] and terminate on [May 20, 2072], provided that said lease shall lapse if the Whitewater Historical Society, Inc. ceases to exist or use the premises for purposes set forth herein, in which case the demised premises shall revert to the City of Whitewater upon 30 days written notice as provided herein.
3. Rent. It is understood and agreed that no rental payments shall be made by Lessee to Lessor, provided however that Lessee shall pay for gas and electric utilities used in said premises.
4. Maintenance and Repair. In addition, thereto, the Lessee shall take care of all custodial duties and pay one-half of all building maintenance and repair costs. Maintenance and repairs are herein described as work necessary to preserve the everyday functionality of the buildings such as re-roofing, painting, plumbing work, and furnace repair and/or replacement, etc.; Lessor shall be responsible for maintenance of grounds surrounding the railroad depot building and the stone stable, such as snow removal, grass cutting and shrubbery tending, etc.
5. Improvements. The Lessee shall be responsible for one-half of all costs related to any major improvements to the premises and accepts the premises as is. Major improvements are herein described as upgrades to the existing facilities such as a new addition, rewiring, internet and WiFi access, new bathroom facilities, permanent outdoor signage, etc. Any major improvement shall be subject to all applicable municipal ordinances, and the approval of the Lessor. It is expressly agreed and understood that Lessor shall pay one-half (1/2) of the cost of any such improvements and all such improvements shall become the City of Whitewater's property should this lease be terminated or expire pursuant to its terms.
6. Management. Lessee shall appoint a manager to supervise and control the operation of the facilities, it being understood and agreed that the railroad depot building shall be used as a museum only, and the stone stable building shall be interpreted as an historic structure and used as deemed appropriate by the Lessee as an auxiliary programming and

exhibition space only. The Lessee shall be responsible for the proper supervision of the facilities including appointing agents to maintain supervision of the premises whenever the facilities are open in order to maintain proper security and to safeguard the premises.

7. Indemnity. The Lessee does hereby covenant and agree to indemnify and save harmless the Lessor from all fines, suits, claims, demands, and actions of any kind and nature by reason of any and all of its operations hereunder and does hereby agree to assume all the risk in the operation of its affairs hereunder and shall be solely responsible and answerable in damages for any and all accidents or injuries to persons or property.

Lessee shall purchase and furnish a policy copy to Lessor a liability insurance policy with liability policy limits of at least \$100,000 and shall have the City of Whitewater named as an additional insured on said policy. All premiums shall be paid by the Lessee.

8. Assignment and Subletting. The Lessee shall not assign, transfer, sublet, pledge, surrender or otherwise encumber or dispose of this lease or any lease therein; or permit any person or persons, company, or corporation to occupy the premises without the written consent of the Lessor.
9. Fire Insurance, Damage or Destruction of the Premises. The Lessor shall keep in force and effect, a policy of fire and casualty insurance on the demised premises. In the event the demised premises or a part thereof shall be damaged or destroyed by fire or other casualty, the Lessor shall apply insurance proceeds to restoration of the buildings unless restoration costs shall exceed insurance proceeds by \$500.00, in which case the City shall not be obligated to repair the same.
10. Redelivery. Lessee will make no unlawful or offensive use of the said premises and will at the expiration of the term hereof or upon any proper termination thereof, without notice, quit and deliver up said premises to the Lessor peaceably, quietly and in as good order and condition, reasonable use and wear thereof excepted.
11. Holding Over. In the event Lessee shall hold over and remain in possession of the premises herein leased after the expiration of this agreement without any written renewal thereof, such holding over shall not be deemed to operate as a renewal or extension of this agreement but shall only create a tenancy from month to month which may be terminated at any time by the Lessor at any time.
12. Notices. Notices to Lessor provided herein shall be sufficient by certified mail postage pre-paid addressed to the City Manager, City Hall, 312 West Whitewater Street, Whitewater, Wisconsin; and notices to Lessee if sent by registered mail, postage pre-paid, addressed to the Whitewater Historical Society, Inc., c/o Ellen S. Penwell, President, 417 N. Fremont Street, Whitewater, Wisconsin or her successor at such address as is provided by said successor. The Lessee shall provide the Lessor with the name and address of any successor within 10 days for purposes of notice.

13. Railroad Lease. It is expressly understood by and between the parties hereto that a portion of the demised premises overhangs the boundary line of the premises owned by the Lessor as described hereinbefore, and that said overhang is subject to Lease No 78927, a copy annexed hereto and Lessee fully agrees to be bound by the terms of said lease insofar as the lessor is bound with respect to occupancy of that portion of the premises and Lessor agrees to sub-let said portion of the premises to Lessee as part of this agreement and without further consideration.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have caused this agreement to be signed by their duly constituted officers:

CITY OF WHITEWATER

By: Kevin Brunner Date 5/20/08
Kevin Brunner, City Manager

By: Michele R. Smith Date 5-20-08
Michele R. Smith, City Clerk

WHITEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

By: Ellen S. Penwell Date 6-12-08
Ellen S. Penwell, President

By: _____ Date _____