

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination FormSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received MAY 14 1986
date entered 6-13-86**1. Name**

historic Breier Building

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 631-633 Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Lewiston N/A vicinity of

state Idaho code 016 county Nez Perce code 069

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☐ district	☐ public	☐ occupied	☐ agriculture
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☒ unoccupied	☒ commercial
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☐ object	N/A in process	☐ yes: restricted	☐ government
	N/A being considered	☒ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☐ no	☐ military
			☐ museum
			☐ park
			☐ private residence
			☐ religious
			☐ scientific
			☐ transportation
			☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Breier Building Partnership, c/o Wells and Company

street & number E. 911 20th Avenue

city, town Spokane N/A vicinity of state Washington 99203

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Nez Perce County Courthouse

street & number Main and Thirteenth streets

city, town Lewiston state Idaho 83501

6. Representation in Existing Surveystitle Idaho State Historic Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate 1982 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Idaho State Historical Society

city, town Boise state Idaho

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☒ original site	
☐ good	☐ ruins	☒ altered	N/A moved	date N/A
☒ fair	☐ unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Breier Building, a five-story red brick-veneered commercial and office structure, is located in the main business district of downtown Lewiston, Idaho. The building is constructed of steel, concrete, and brick. It occupies most of corner Lots 4 and 5 and a portion of Lot 3, on the northwest corner of Seventh and Main streets, with its nine-bay facade facing Main Street. At the rear of the building is a small parking lot facing "D" Street. It has not been significantly altered on the exterior. Like several other buildings in downtown Lewiston, the Breier Building has a quadrilateral plan with none of its exterior walls parallel.

A simply decorated and handsome structure, the Breier Building is an example of the Chicago School Commercial style. Typical characteristics of this style are masonry clad exteriors and a higher proportion of windows to wall space than was used in previous styles. While geometric and foliate adornment are more typical of earlier-period Chicago School Commercial-style buildings, later examples like the Breier Building are more stark and stripped of ornament. The invention of the elevator and the development of structural steel framing brought about the construction of taller buildings, the "skyscrapers." Although the Breier Building has only five stories, it towers above the bulk of the remaining buildings in the business district, which are only two to three stories in height. (Early occupants of the building refer to the top floor as the sixth floor. There are actually only five full floors, plus a mezzanine level, which is frequently referred to as the second floor.)

The flat-roofed building has a low parapet wall at the roofline, capped with a concrete course. The entablature is simple, with a concrete cornice and a frieze of three dropped concrete band courses, the third band course forming a shallow arch. Concrete projecting brackets are located at the ends of the arches. In the center of the building, above the entablature, the name "C. J. Breier" is set in concrete lettering. A small rectangular ventilation window is centered below each arch. The facade is symmetrical, with four rows of nine one-over-one double-hung windows on the front. A concrete belt course runs around three sides of the building at each floor level, giving a horizontal look to the structure. The rear of the building is plain and has a wrought iron fire escape fastened to it. At the front of the mezzanine level of the building, which used to house a coffee shop, are double rows of eight small casement windows, in three defined bays. These windows are presently masked with corrugated metal. Glassed storefronts are set back under the mezzanine.

When the building was completed in 1923, the Lewiston Tribune newspaper proudly reported: "Approximately 300,000 pounds of structural steel was fabricated and used for the placing of more than 400,000 cement brick and 75,000 clay brick in the Breier Building. The cement brick were made on the premises. It [the building] cost \$150,000."¹ Interest in the future of the building has not waned over the years, as evidenced by the many newspaper articles concerning its possible fate. The size and scale of the building

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400-1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500-1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600-1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700-1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☐ 1800-1899	☐ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☒ 1900-	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates 1923 **Builder/Architect** James H. Nave

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Breier Building is architecturally significant as a representative of 1920's commercial architecture in Lewiston and as an example of the late work of Lewiston architect James H. Nave, who designed many important local buildings in the 1900's. Located on the corner of Seventh and Main streets, the Breier Building is the tallest office building in the downtown area and one of the few examples in Lewiston of the Chicago School Commercial style of architecture. When it was completed in 1923, the building was the largest and most modern building in Lewiston; it still dominates the business district, which is largely composed of two- and three-story buildings. It was built by Claus J. Breier, a clothing merchant who began his business in Lewiston in 1904. He expanded his operation until it included a chain of some fifty-two stores located in small towns throughout Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. Lewiston was headquarters for the chain for many years.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Clarkston

Quadrangle scale 7.5 minute

UTM References

A

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4	9	8	6	4	0
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5	1	4	0	1	6	7	0
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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A

code N/A

county N/A

code N/A

state N/A

code N/A

county N/A

code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Nancy Gale Compau, Historian

organization N/A

date November 24, 1985

street & number 424 West Jefferson Court

telephone (509) 624-4927

city or town Spokane

state Washington 99203

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national

 state

X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Merle Wells

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 8 May 1986

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

6-13-86

for Alloria Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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relative to other Main Street buildings testify to its prominence and importance.

1. Lewiston Tribune. Golden Anniversary Edition, n.d. On file at Lewiston Tribune office, Lewiston, Idaho.

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By 1920 downtown Lewiston had acquired most of the one- to five-story brick buildings that now form the historic streetscapes of the Lewiston Historic District. During the 1920's a few infill buildings were constructed among the earlier buildings, but most 1920s construction occurred as the downtown expanded east of Sixth Street (outside the historic district). Many of the buildings in that area have since been modified to the extent that a historic district no longer exists in the area, although restoration of key buildings could change that fact.

Commercial construction in Lewiston during the 1920's consisted chiefly of modest one-story buildings. The larger, more elaborate 1920's buildings were built as infill in the older part of town west of Sixth. They include the five-story Neoclassical Pacific Northwest Bell Building, the two-story Neoclassical/Art Deco John and Ella Davis Building, and a two-story Commercial-style building at 520/528 Main, all part of the Lewiston Historic District. The five-story Commercial-style Breier Building joins those buildings as the most ambitious 1920's construction projects in the town. It is paralleled in size and scale only by the Lewis-Clark Hotel (designed in a different style). It is the town's most fully developed example of the Commercial Style.

On the exterior the building retains most of its original fabric, including red brick veneer, decorative concrete courses, and fenestration. The mezzanine lights are extant, but they are masked with corrugated metal, a reversible alteration. The storefronts are set back in a manner similar to their original configuration, but modern materials replace or mask the original storefronts. Original storefronts are so rare in Lewiston's commercial architecture as to make these alterations of minor importance in comparison to the integrity of the building's intact upper stories, which clearly represent 1920's style.

The Breier Building also represents the late design work of prominent Lewiston architect James H. Nave. Nave came to Lewiston from Iola, Kansas, in 1903. During the first decades of the early twentieth century Lewiston was expanding rapidly, and several competent architectural firms in Lewiston and in the nearby regional center of Spokane, Washington, competed to design the major public buildings, commercial blocks, and large houses that define Lewiston's streetscapes today. Nave was successful in obtaining many of those commissions. Ninety-four commissions are attributed to his firm between 1903 and 1923, equally divided among houses, commercial buildings, and institutional buildings.

Nave established his local reputation with a series of imposing residential designs and a few key commercial and institutional buildings: the Bollinger Hotel (1903), the Means Building (1905), the Kettenbach Building (1906), and St. Stanislaus Church (1905). His early residential designs were drawn up

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for the prominent businessmen who were settling in Blanchard Heights and elsewhere on Normal Hill.

Between the years 1903 and 1915, Nave produced a few commercial and institutional designs each year. This work accelerated between 1909 and 1912, at about the same time that his residential work tapered off. Especially in his commercial and institutional work, Nave's influence reached outside Lewiston to the Camas Prairie and Clearwater Valley region. Many of the small towns in the region have a school, library, church, or commercial block designed by Nave. Nave's institutional buildings were elegant but conservative renditions of Georgian Revival motifs in frame, brick, or stone. His commercial work was similarly conservative in its use of motifs from the standard period styles, Romanesque and Renaissance Revival. Eight of Nave's thirty-four commercial commissions are known to be extant. Only three buildings designed after 1915 are attributed to Nave: the Woodman Building, the Morris Block, and the Breier Building, all in Lewiston. Of these later buildings, only the Breier Building is standing.

Lewiston, Idaho, was founded in 1861 on the site of Indian camping grounds at the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater rivers. When Idaho Territory was formed out of what was originally Oregon Territory, Lewiston was the first territorial capital. In the 1860's, it was a major outfitting center for the Orofino gold fields. After the initial mining boom of the 1860's and that of the 1880's, Lewiston's role as a mining supply town began to diminish, but it soon re-established itself as a center for grain, live-stock, lumber, and fruit. The Clearwater Timber Company, predecessor firm of Potlatch Forests, Inc., built a sawmill and one of the largest pulp mills in the nation at Lewiston. The Union Pacific and Northern Pacific operated a joint railroad to the timber stands of Idaho. Lewiston became a jobbing center for wholesale firms; there were flour mills, foundries, machine shops, canneries, and a box factory. The state normal school, now Lewis-Clark State College, opened its doors in 1896.

When the town began expanding, Claus J. Breier, who had been established as a clothing merchant for years, decided to build a substantial new edifice in the growing commercial center. Breier was a German immigrant who came to this country when he was seventeen. He lived in Helena, Montana, and Spokane, Washington, before settling in Lewiston. His clothing-store chain closed in the 1930's and he moved to Seattle, Washington, where he purchased downtown business buildings and apartments. He continued to manage his various properties until his death at age 88 in 1958. While in Lewiston, Mr. Breier had been instrumental in the efforts to build the community-financed Lewis-Clark Hotel, which opened in 1922. His son Claus was a graduate of Stanford University and very prominent in Lewiston: an Idaho state senator, Lewiston postmaster, city councilman, park commissioner, and president of Lions. After the senior Breier's move to Seattle, Claus, Jr.,

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who was the treasurer of the company, and his brother Earl continued to manage the store in Lewiston there until it closed. He died in 1963. Other family members still live in Lewiston.

Through the years the Breier Building remained a focal point of activity for Lewiston. Clearwater Timber Company moved its executive and general offices into the second floor of the building when the company began business in Lewiston in 1926. They remained in the building until 1950, when a new office building was constructed at the plant site. Other early tenants were doctors, dentists, lawyers, real-estate firms, and the Northern Pacific and Union Pacific. The main floor was the Breier's clothing store. After the closure of the Breier stores, Falk's Department Store occupied the main floor until 1947, and a department store has continued to occupy that location until very recently. North Idaho Medical Service Bureau was a major tenant later. The building was sold in 1969 but was regained because of faulty payments and sold again by the Breier family members in 1976. It has been closed since then, except for occasional occupants in the main-floor area. The new purchasers (1985) plan to rehabilitate the building.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Hawley, James H., Editor. History of Idaho. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1920. Volume 1, pp. 737-738.

Title Records, Land-Title Company, Lewiston, Idaho.

Lewiston Tribune: Golden Anniversary Edition, n.d.; May 31, 1958; October 30, 1958; September 8, 1963; July 2, 1969; October 24-25, 1975; May 22, 1977; January 17, 1978; August 7, 1985. On file at Lewiston Tribune, Lewiston, Idaho.

Nez Perce County Assessor's Records for LeFrancois Addition, Block H, lots 3, 4, 5. On file at Nez Perce County Courthouse, Lewiston, Idaho.

Nez Perce County Historical Society vertical file. Lewiston, Idaho.

R. L. Polk & Company: Idaho Gazatteer & Business Directory. St. Paul, Minn.: R. L. Polk & Company, 1910-1911, 1912-1913, 1914, 1916.

Spokane Daily Chronicle, June 4, 1976.

Spokesman-Review, May 22, 1932.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

The nomination includes the Breier Building and the property on which it stands, Lots 4 and 5 of Block H, LeFrancois Tract to the City of Lewiston, Idaho, and that part of Lot 3, Block 20, of the City of Lewiston, Idaho, described as follows: Beginning at the southeast corner of Lot 3, Block 20; thence northeasterly on the east line of Lot 3, 165.3 feet; thence southwesterly 157.4 feet to the north line of Main Street, 29 feet westerly from the point of beginning; thence easterly along the north line of Main Street 29 feet to the place of beginning.



Breier Building
631-633 Main Street
Lewiston, Nez Perce County, Idaho

Photograph by Bob Delasmutt
February 1986

Negative on file at the Lewiston Tribune,
Lewiston, Idaho

View from southeast

Photograph 1 of 1