

Site Inventory Form
State Historical Society of Iowa
 (December 1, 1999)

State Inventory No. 70-00527 New Supplemental
 Part of a district with known boundaries (enter inventory no.) _____
 Relationship: Contributing Noncontributing
 Contributes to a potential district with yet unknown boundaries
 National Register Status: (any that apply) Listed De-listed NHL DOE
 Review & Compliance No. _____
 Non-Extant (enter year) _____

1. Name of Property

historic name Citizens Electric Light and Power Company
 other names/site number Peerless Button; Iowa Pearl Button; J&K Button, Field Site #: FS-002

2. Location

street & number 315-317 West Mississippi Drive
 city or town Muscatine vicinity, county Muscatine
 Legal Description: (If Rural) Township Name _____ Township No. _____ Range No. _____ Section _____ Quarter of Quarter _____
 (If Urban) Subdivision Original Town Block(s) 9 Lot(s) Lot 3 and east 25ft of Lot 2

3. State/Federal Agency Certification [Skip this Section]

4. National Park Service Certification [Skip this Section]

5. Classification

Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property		
	If Non-Eligible Property	If Eligible Property, enter number of:	
	Enter number of:	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	_____ buildings	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____ sites	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____ structures	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____ objects	_____	_____ objects
<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____ Total	<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related project report or multiple property study (Enter "N/A" if the property is not part of a multiple property examination).
 Title _____ Historical Architectural Data Base Number _____

Historical and Architectural Survey and Evaluation of the Downtown Commercial District 70-013

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>10D02: Industry / Energy Facility / Power plant</u>	<u>10A02: Industry / Manufacturing Facility / Factory</u>
<u>10A02: Industry / Manufacturing Facility / Factory</u>	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>09F05: Commercial/ Brick Front</u>	foundation <u>03: Brick</u>
_____	walls <u>03: Brick</u>
_____	roof <u>08B: Asphalt/ Rolled</u>
_____	other <u>10A: Concrete/Block</u>

Narrative Description (SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" representing your opinion of eligibility after applying relevant National Register criteria)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	A	Property is associated with significant events.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	B	Property is associated with the lives of significant persons.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	C	Property has distinctive architectural characteristics.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	D	Property yields significant information in archaeology or history.

County Muscatine
City Muscatine

Address 315-317 West Mississippi Drive

Site Number 70-00527
District Number _____

Criteria Considerations

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B Removed from its original location.
- C A birthplace or grave.
- D A cemetery.
- E A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F A commemorative property.
- G Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

17: Industry

05: Commerce

Significant Dates

Construction date

1890 check if circa or estimated date

Other dates

Additions : c.1899;c.1900;c.1915;c.1925;c.1930;c.1960

Significant Person

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)

Architect/Builder

Architect

Unknown _____

Builder

Unknown _____

Narrative Statement of Significance SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography See continuation sheet for citations of the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form

10. Geographic Data

UTM References (OPTIONAL)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	_____	_____	2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet for additional UTM references or comments

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Devin Pettit, Vice Chairman M.H.P.C. (R.L. McCarley, consultant)

organization Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission date August 14, 2004

street & number 215 Sycamore Street telephone (563) 264-1550

city or town Muscatine state Iowa zip code 52761

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION (Submit the following items with the completed form)

FOR ALL PROPERTIES

- Map:** showing the property's location in a town/city or township.
- Site plan:** showing position of buildings and structures on the site in relation to public road(s).
- Photographs:** representative black and white photos. If the photos are taken as part of a survey for which the Society is to be curator of the negatives or color slides, a photo/catalog sheet needs to be included with the negatives/slides and the following needs to be provided below on this particular inventory site:

Roll/slide sheet # _____	Frame/slot # _____	Date Taken _____
Roll/slide sheet # _____	Frame/slot # _____	Date Taken _____
Roll/slide sheet # _____	Frame/slot # _____	Date Taken _____

- See continuation sheet or attached **photo & slide catalog sheet** for list of photo roll or slide entries.
- Photos/illustrations without negatives are also in this site inventory file.

FOR CERTAIN KINDS OF PROPERTIES, INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING AS WELL

- Farmstead & District:** (List of structures and buildings, known or estimated year built, and contributing or non-contributing status)
- Barn:**
 - A sketch of the frame/truss configuration in the form of drawing a typical middle bent of the barn.
 - A photograph of the loft showing the frame configuration along one side.
 - A sketch floor plan of the interior space arrangements along with the barn's exterior dimensions in feet.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Use Only Below This Line

Concur with above survey opinion on National Register eligibility: Yes No More Research Recommended

This is a locally designated property or part of a locally designated district.

Comments: _____

Evaluated by (name/title): _____ Date: _____

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<u>Citizens Electric Light & Power Company</u> Name of Property	<u>Muscatine</u> County
<u>315-317 West Mississippi Drive</u> Address	<u>Muscatine</u> City

7. Narrative Description

This is a two-story, five-bay, painted brick building built in 1890 with several additions. Most of the additions are linked to the changing use of the structure. The Citizens Electric Light and Power Company operated here from 1890-1892. It first became associated with the button industry in 1899 when the Peerless Button Company (later McKee & Bliven, then the current McKee Button Company) moved to this location. They moved out around 1910, and the structure served a few small companies until the Iowa Pearl Button Company began operations here in 1919. They continued to operate in this location until 1955 when the J&K Button Company moved in, which continues to operate in this location.

This original building, among a series of additions, is constructed of common bond brick. The original five-bay first story included a central entry with a segmental arch lintel. There are two windows with segmental arch lintels on either side of the entry. These openings have been mostly filled in with brick, with some smaller windows and vents incorporated into the openings. The eastern-most window has been converted into a modern entry. The second story of the façade includes five windows with segmental arch lintels. These windows appear to retain their original two-over-two-light double-hung sashes. The cornice has corbelling and a dogtooth course. The roof is covered in rolled asphalt. The remaining visible portion of the east elevation includes one segmental arch window that has been filled-in and a modern entry on the first story, and two-over-two-light double-hung wood windows with segmental arch lintels the second story. There is a non-historic metal staircase along the east elevation leading to the roof of one of the additions of this building.

The addition to the north (rear) of the original building was built c.1900 for the Peerless Button Company. The 1905 Sanborn map specifies functions of soaking, cutting, sorting, and finishing in this section, with sawing, sorting, and finishing in the original building. A shell pile is located immediately to the west of this rear addition. Most of the additions were constructed in the first decade after the Iowa Pearl Button Company began operations at this site. To the west of the original building is an addition that appears to have been rebuilt around 1919 when the Iowa Pearl Button Company moved to this site. Previously, another structure was on this site (used as a dwelling on the 1899 Sanborn, then storage on the 1905 Sanborn, and dwelling again in 1912). The current structure has wire-cut brick and windows with plain lintels, as would be common in the 1920's. The façade on the first story includes four historic single-over-single light double-hung wood windows and a single door entry. The second story includes three single-over-single light double hung historic windows. The west elevation includes six windows, five of them filled in with glass block and one rectangular fixed window. There is also a stepped parapet on the west elevation of this addition. The 1919, 1928, and 1946 Sanborn maps show that the Iowa Pearl Button Company used this portion of this structure as their offices.

An addition to the west of the c.1900 rear addition on the former site of the shell pile was built around 1925 according to the Sanborn maps. This was another addition built for the Iowa Pearl Button Company. It is constructed of common bond brick, which is painted on the east elevation and unpainted on the north, south, and west elevations. This addition is built on a hill, on three different levels. The highest part of the building, on the west side, includes eight windows on each story. All of these windows have non-historic metal sashes, with segmented arched lintels. The south elevation includes four metal

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Citizens Electric Light & Power Company
Name of Property

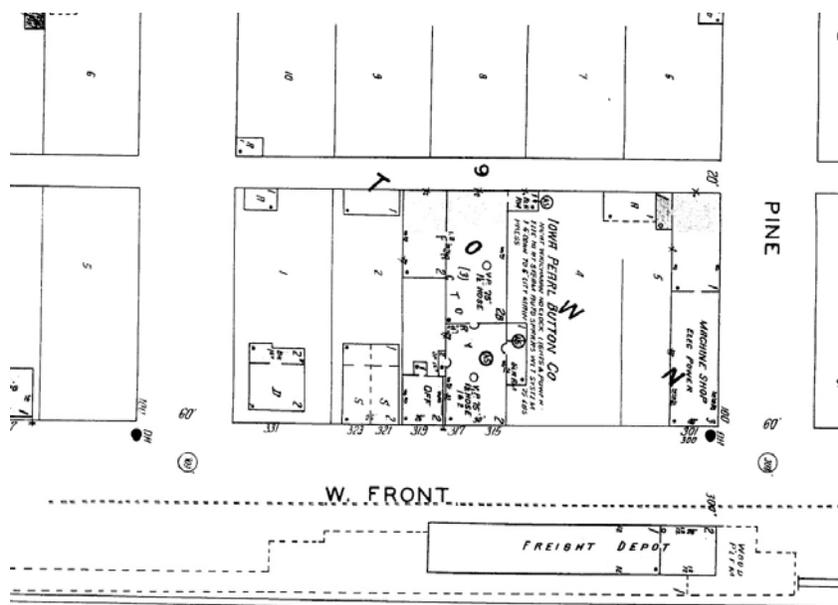
Muscatine
County

315-317 West Mississippi Drive
Address

Muscatine
City

windows (two on each floor). On the first floor there is an arched window, and the other is square. Both windows on the second floor are arched windows. Four windows (two on each floor) have been filled-in with cement block. The middle building on the west elevation includes a basement elevation with two windows filled-in with brick. The first story has three apparently historic arched windows. The second story includes two non-historic windows; one large rectangular metal window, and a smaller square metal window. The lower part of the addition includes a window filled-in with a porch structure. The second story includes one window half-filled-in with plywood. The east elevation includes alternating rectangular and arched windows (on the exposed second story), all apparently historic, with wooden sashes and sills. There are also two chimneys and metal tracing along the cornice. The rear elevation is unpainted. The first story includes a total of four windows. One window is arched, with segmented arched lentils, like all the arched windows at this site; historic or not. This first window is a three-over-three-light double-hung window. There is a rectangular wood window, apparently historic, with two-over-two-light double-hung sashes. The other two windows are arched, but have been filled-in with cement block. There is also a large wood entry that appears to be historic. There is also a metal platform extending to a wood second-story loading window, which appears historic. The second story includes seven windows. One window is an apparently historic three-over-three-light double-hung window. There are also two arch two-over-two-light double-hung wood windows. There are also two non-historic arch two-over-two-light double-hung windows replaced by metal. There is also one arch window that has been filled in with plywood, and another arch window filled in with cement block.

The next addition on the east side was built circa 1925, according to the Sanborn maps. It is two-story and constructed of concrete block. The first story includes four small rectangular windows with one



1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

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<u>Citizens Electric Light & Power Company</u> Name of Property	<u>Muscatine</u> County
<u>315-317 West Mississippi Drive</u> Address	<u>Muscatine</u> City

window containing an exhaust fan on the east elevation. The second story also contains four small rectangular windows. The roof is rolled asphalt. There is a loading dock on the east side of the addition that includes a small metal roof above.

The last addition was constructed around 1960 for the J&K Button Company. It is on the east elevation of the original building and south (front) elevation of the 1920s concrete block addition. This concrete block addition has a garage door and one non-historic double-door metal entry on the façade. There is also a modern entry on the north side. A metal staircase leads from the sidewalk to the roof of this structure, which is also rolled asphalt.

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The Citizens Electric Light and Power Company Building appears to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. Additionally, it appears to be a contributing structure on the west edge of a potential downtown historic district.

The Citizens Electric Light and Power Company Building appears to be historically significant under Criterion A for its association with the electric company and the button industry. This is the first power company listed in the city directories, and it appears to be the first place where large-scale electric generation occurred. It also appears to be the only 19th century electric generation building still standing. Although the building's historic name relates to power generation, the vast majority of its history has been with the production of buttons, and it is the oldest building left that historically has made buttons. The integrity of the building and its additions appear fairly good. The additions occurred during the adaptation and expansion of the button factories in this structure, particularly the Iowa Pearl Button Company, and they are historically significant as well. Overall, the greatest alteration is the windows, some of which have been filled in or replaced. It continues to retain some two-over-two-light double-hung windows in the original building. Most of the other details of the building appear generally unaltered. Thus, the building appears to retain enough integrity to convey its significance for its association with the electric company and button industry.

Additionally, the Citizens Electric Light and Power Company Building appears to be a contributing building on the west edge of a potential downtown historic district. It falls within three contexts identified for the district: "Pearl Button Center of the World," "19th century Business and Industry," and "20th century Business and Industry." While its history as an electric company contributes to the district, the association with the button industry is particularly significant. This building represents one of the earliest button companies in Muscatine, and its additions occurred as the industry changed. The building continues to serve as one of only three remaining button companies in Muscatine.

The building was constructed in 1890; it first appeared in the city directories in 1891 and on the Sanborn Map in 1892. This building first served as the Citizens Electric Light and Power Company. It appears this may have been the site of the first large-scale electric generation in the city of Muscatine. This is the first time a city directory (1891), mentions a power company in its listings. The power company did not last

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<u>Citizens Electric Light & Power Company</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Name of Property	County
<u>315-317 West Mississippi Drive</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Address	City

long at this location however; as a fire on August 19, 1892, broke out in the S.G. Stein Lumberyard immediately behind this building (Van Wey 2003: 114). This plant moved to a couple of other locations according to city directories, before disappearing altogether in the 1920s with the advent of the city owned utility at that time. The last location of the Citizens Electric Light and Power Company was at Front (Mississippi) Drive and Oak Street. This building was torn down in 2004, thus leaving the original location at 315-317 West Mississippi Drive, as the only extant structure associated with the power plant.

No listings appear again for this address until 1900, when the Peerless Button Company is listed in the city directory. The Sanborn Map of August 1899 shows the Peerless Button Company was here by this time. The Peerless Button Company was started in 1895 by James McKee and William E. Bliven (Richman 1911: 118). Information on James McKee is limited to his involvement with this company. Information on William E. Bliven is not much better, but he is mentioned in the *History of Muscatine County*. William E. Bliven was involved in the clothing business before getting involved in the button industry with Mr. McKee. In 1898 Mr. Bliven went to Tacoma, Washington to engage in the banking business. While out in Washington state, he became president of a bank and treasurer of a lumber company. Mr. Bliven came back to Muscatine in 1906 to work with Mr. McKee at the head of the button company and to be president of Muscatine State Bank (Richman 1911: 118). The first location for the Peerless Button Company was 401 West Front (Mississippi) Drive, according to the city directory. This building is no longer extant. In 1899 they moved the button company to this location. In an article in the *Muscatine Journal* not long after the move to this location, they mention that this was the second button company to form in Muscatine after Mr. Boepple's, the originator of this industry in Muscatine. This article also mentions that this factory was unique in town in that it had its own electric power plant. The plant had enough power to turn all of the wheels for the machinery and the 150 lights in the plant. The *Journal* also mentions that there were about forty cutters and seventy to seventy-five employees in the finishing department, with an output of about three thousand gross of finished buttons a week (Carlson 1991: 39-40). According to the city directory, the company changed its name in 1904 to McKee and Bliven Button Company. By 1910 the company moved to 1000 Hershey Avenue, where it remains to this day, but known today as just the McKee Button Company.

After 1910 the building remained empty until 1913, when Pearl City Produce moved here, followed in 1916 by F.C. Jahnke and Company Vermin Trap Factory. In 1919 the Iowa Pearl Button Company began their operations here. The Iowa Pearl Button Company was founded in 1919 and lasted at this location through 1954, and by 1956 had moved to 604 East 3rd Street and lasting there until 1961, when it disappears from the directories. During the years the Iowa Pearl Button Company was here there were a few additions to the complex of buildings.

In 1954, the J & K Button Company was formed and moved into this structure. From the beginning, they have produced polyester buttons at this site, and they continue to today. Since J & K Button has moved in there has been the small one-story addition to the building around 1960. J & K Button is one of three button companies still operating in Muscatine.

Department of Cultural Affairs
State Historical Society of Iowa
**Iowa Site Inventory Form
Continuation Sheet**

Site Number 70-00527
Related District Number _____

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Citizens Electric Light & Power Company	Muscatine
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315-317 West Mississippi Drive	Muscatine
Address	City

9. Major Bibliographical References

City Directories, Muscatine. Various publishers, 1891-1956. Available at the Musser Public Library.

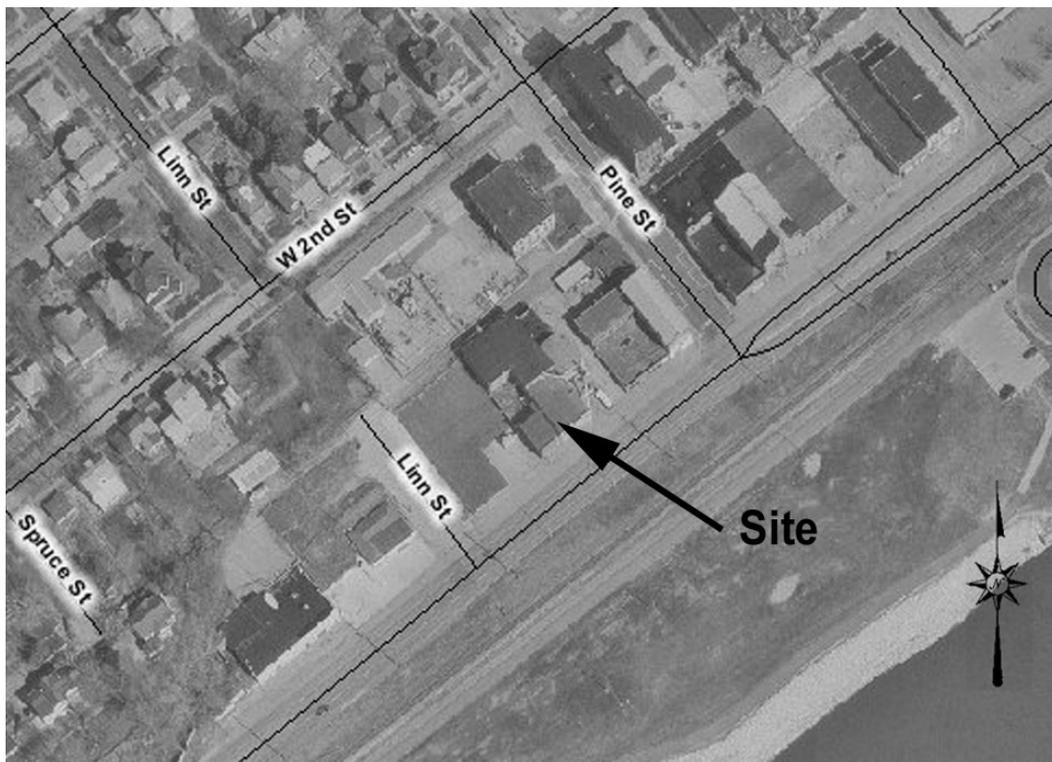
Carlson, JoAnn, ed. *More History of Muscatine County, Iowa*. Muscatine: Musser Public Library, 1991. Reprint of article: "Peerless Button Company," *Muscatine Journal*, December 9, 1899.

Richman, Irving B. *History of Muscatine County*. Volume 2. Chicago, Illinois: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1911.

Sanborn Map Company. "Muscatine Iowa", Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Pelham, N.Y. : Sanborn Map Company, 1883, 1888, 1892, 1899, 1905, 1912, 1919, 1928, 1946. Accessed online at: sanborn. Umi.com.

Van Wey, Mike. *Muscatine Fire Department: 128 Years of Dedication*. Muscatine: Fire Department, 2003.

Location Map



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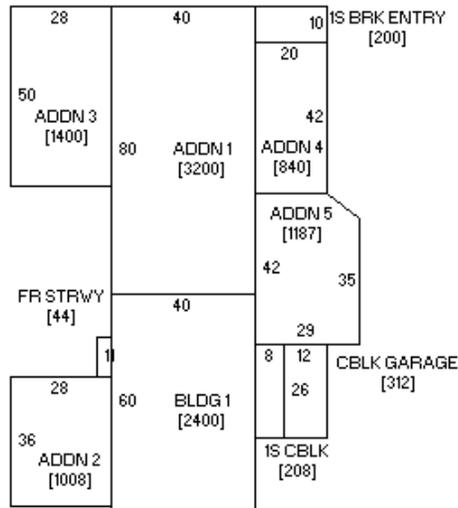
Citizens Electric Light & Power Company
Name of Property

Muscatine
County

315-317 West Mississippi Drive
Address

Muscatine
City

Plan (from assessor's office)



(front)

Photograph of building (digital image)

