

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

State Inventory No. 70-00988 **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 Leu's Ice Cream Shop and Chrome Room
 other names/site number Field Site #: FS-061

2. Location

street & number 312-314-316 Sycamore Street
 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) 6, 7, 8, 9 & E1/2 of Lot 10

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:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Enter number of:	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____ buildings	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____ sites	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____ structures	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____ objects	_____	_____ objects
	_____ 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>02E: Commerce/Trade/Specialty Store (ice cream mgf. & retail)</u>	<u>02E: Commerce/Trade/Specialty Store (credit bureau)</u>
_____	<u>02E08: Commerce/Trade/Specialty Store/Barber</u>
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>07E: Early 20th Century Movements / Craftsman</u>	foundation <u>10B: Concrete/Poured</u>
_____	walls <u>03: Brick</u>
_____	roof <u>15C: Rubber</u>
_____	other _____

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input 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 Address 312-314-316 Sycamore Street Site Number 70-00988
City Muscatine 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)

02: Architecture
05: Commerce

Significant Dates

Construction date
1922 check if circa or estimated date
Other dates
1935 – one-story addition (316)

Significant Person

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)

Architect/Builder

Architect _____
Builder _____

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 Jim Rudisill, Planning & Community Development Coordinator (R.L. McCarley, Consultant)
organization City of Muscatine date January 18, 2005
street & number 215 Sycamore telephone 563-264-1554
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: _____

Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 3

<u>Leu's Ice Cream Shop and Chrome Room</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Name of Property	County
<u>312-314-316 Sycamore Street</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Address	City

7. Narrative Description

The two-story, brick commercial structure at 312-314 Sycamore was constructed by the Leu family as the new location for its ice cream manufacturing and retail business around 1922. Before building the new structure, the business had its store at 215 E. 2nd and prior to that a site on West Second. This building is an excellent example of a 20th century commercial building with Craftsman influence. It includes two wide side bays flanking a narrower middle bay. A small projecting, one-story wing on the south elevation possibly was used as an outdoor walk-up customer service window. A separate, one-story, brick structure at 316 Sycamore adjoins the original structure along its north elevation. This c. 1935 building and a subsequent renovation was known as the Chrome Room, a private party and catering facility, which the Leu family operated as part of their wholesale and retail ice cream business. In a later renovation, a doorway was apparently installed between the original building and the Chrome room, which was then used to handle additional customers for the ice cream retail shop. The owner of the Cutting Edge, which now occupies the building at 316 Sycamore, reported several of her customers recall coming to the Chrome Room to sit and eat ice cream after school (Hintermeister 2004).

The original structure is built into a sloping lot so that its first floor is completely below the grade at the building's rear. The foundation for 312-314 is poured concrete, which is assumed to be the foundation material also for 316 Sycamore, which does not have a basement. The façade of 312-314 is roughly symmetrical on the upper stories. The middle bay of this building is considerably narrower than either side bay, with a centered entry as the primary access for two upstairs apartments. The non-historic single-door entry to the upper story is centered on the façade, with paired single-over-single-light double-hung wood windows above it. Each is the same height, but about half the width of the other second story windows. The smaller windows provide natural light for the interior stairway and second floor hall off which the two apartments are accessed.

The storefront of the north (right) section of the façade has a non-historic flush-mounted, single glass door (approximately 30" x 78") with a 30" x 30" glass transom. A six-inch-wide, segmented non-historic sidelight is located to the left of the door and transom. Continuing to the left are two, matching, 4' x 6' plate glass fixed windows within original openings. The second story of the north section's façade contains a single row of six, three-over-single-light, double-hung wood windows. These units appear to be original.

While there are a few differences between the south (left) section and the north section, the two sections basically have the same arrangement. The non-historic storefront glass door with transom is located in the south corner, and its sidelight is located to the right of the door. Two plate glass, fixed windows are located to the right side of the door, but these windows are approximately 4' x 8', considerably larger than the windows in the north section. Finally, a short wing extends from the south bay's south wall, which possibly was used as an outdoor customer service window. The six three-over-single-light, double-hung wood windows on the second story are also arranged in a single row and are the same type and size as on the other portion of the façade.

Simple brick lintels span all the window and entry openings. Similar four-foot-wide metal awnings are fastened to the buildings over each door facing Sycamore Street. A parapet extends around the perimeter of the 312-314 building. It includes a single castellation that extends above the parapet at the edge of each bay. Two eight-foot-wide, slightly arched pediments are also located on the front parapet. Each pediment is centrally located above the north and south bays. The north elevation parapet of 312-314 is stepped with four equal segments, while the south elevation has five segments.

Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 4

<u>Leu's Ice Cream Shop and Chrome Room</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Name of Property	County
<u>312-314-316 Sycamore Street</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Address	City

The second floor fenestration of 312-314's north elevation includes 11 four-over-single-light, double-hung wood windows (approximately 28" x 60") and a wood door (36" x 78") at the west end that provides back access to the second floor. The first floor on this elevation is covered by 316 Sycamore. The second floor fenestration on the south elevation of 312-314 is the same as on the north. The first floor however is exposed here and the fenestration includes a set of three, four-over-single-light double-hung wood windows in the stub wing's south wall. These units appear to be the same size as the second floor windows in the rest of the building. Immediately to the left of the wing is a single four-over-one double-hung wood window (same size). To the left of this window are two single-over-single-light double-hung units that are about half the size of the other double-hung windows. Both of these are located in the upper part of the first story wall. To the left of these windows is a metal door with a single light. A wood deck with stairs and railing is located to the left of this door and extends west to the end of the building. A metal door with no light is located at deck height at the top of the steps. The final first floor fenestration is a set of single-over-single-light double-hung windows (similar size as others) at the far west end of the building. There is no first floor fenestration in the back of 312-314 Sycamore because that portion of the building is located below the grade of the lot. The second floor fenestration, however, includes four sets of two windows each that are equally spaced across the back. Each window is a four-over-single-light double-hung wood unit.

The first floor interiors are basically open, and the connection between the two buildings has also been closed in. There has been some remodeling into offices completed in 312-314 Sycamore. The original wholesale and retail space in this building has been divided into separate main rooms for the Credit Bureau of Muscatine. Several other workrooms have been constructed in this area. While the first story has been remodeled the basement is a different story. When the Leu family constructed the new building, it apparently was still manufacturing its own ice cream. The basement appears to have been the primary manufacturing and storage facility. The area is divided into eight separate rooms. Each room is basically built of reinforced cement, including a cement floor and ceiling. The cement ceiling doubles as the cement floor for the first floor retail/wholesale area. The basement rooms vary in size from approximately 24' x 15' down to one room that is about 5' x 5'. There are two service hallways in the basement. One is a 10-foot-wide hall that runs the full 48-foot width of the basement from the foot of the stairs. The other is a four-foot-wide hall that extends east from the alleyway to the end of the building and sets about three feet to the north of the building's center. There are two rooms (each approximately 24' x 15') that are located on the west side of the larger alleyway. The remaining portion of the basement is east of the alleyway. A four-foot-wide hall extends east from the main alleyway down the remaining length of the building. The hall is off-center, with two rooms on the north side of this feature. One room is approximately 15' x 20', while the second is about 15' x 15'. A partitioned-off toilet is located at the end of the hall. On the south side of the hall the basement is divided into four additional rooms. The far east room, which is estimated to be about 25' x 12', is accessed through the 5' x 5' room off the small hallway. The next room west is accessed directly from the small hallway and measures about 12' x 12'. This is the last room accessed off the small hallway. The final basement room is located between the last room off the small hallway and the stairs. It is accessed off the main alleyway and measures around 18" x 12'. Because of the vault-like condition of these rooms, it appears likely they were used for cold storage and manufacture.

The second floor apartment units do not appear to have been significantly altered since the building's construction. Each unit sets over one of the two larger bays, with the central access hallway located over the narrower, middle bay. Each apartment has a second hallway running parallel to this access hallway. Each apartment is lineally arranged along its individual hallway, with the living room looking out over Sycamore Street. Three bedrooms then run towards the back, with the kitchen the last room in the row. The bathroom is located at the end of the apartment hallway and adjacent to the kitchen. In addition to the hallway, each room, except for the bathroom, is also accessible from the other by a connecting door. The apartments generally lack any decorative detail, but all the woodwork appears to be original.

Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 5

<u>Leu's Ice Cream Shop and Chrome Room</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Name of Property	County
<u>312-314-316 Sycamore Street</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
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Around 1935, the Leu's constructed a separate one-story addition to their main facility to the north of the original building. The brick is slightly redder than the c.1922 building, but the detailing reflects a desire to make a connection between the two structures. The non-historic single door entry is centered on this building with a large storefront window on either side approximately the same size as the north section of 312-314 Sycamore. A similar awning is also above this entry. The openings have simple brick lintels and sills. The tall parapet wall is more simply executed than the one on 312-314, but it is clearly reflective. Rectangular brick detailing is centered on the parapet wall, and the wall appears to be capped with concrete. The north side elevation includes a row of small fixed windows running most of the length of the side. Each of the windows has a small brick lintel, and several of the openings towards the rear of the building have been bricked up. A small iron stairway provides access to the roof. An iron rail runs around the back portion of the roof, indicating it might have been used for yard area. Because of the sloping nature of the lot, the rear of the building is only about four feet above the grade. No windows are present. The interior of the addition is generally open, with the connection between the two buildings closed off. Overall, it does not appear to have been substantially altered.

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

Leu's Ice Cream and Chrome Room appears individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C for its association with the Leu business and as an excellent example of a Craftsman commercial building. It does not appear to be within the boundary for a potential downtown historic district.

While the individual family members do not appear to have played a significant role in Muscatine's history, the structures associated with Leu and Sons, however, are architecturally significant and important for the impact they made on the social and commercial development of the community. The two buildings' architecture provides a perspective into a unique manufacturing and retail business that flourished during the turn of the 20th century. The site is one of the few remaining in Muscatine that can show a basement room arrangement and construction method that describes a small, family-run ice cream production facility. Also, the exterior of the building has not been extensively altered from its original condition. While the manufacturing machinery and retail equipment is no longer on-site, the building's architectural features make this a unique and significant resource for the community. Thus, Leu's Ice Cream Shop and Chrome Room appears to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C.

The Leu family operated an ice cream wholesale and retail business in the community for nearly 75 years. Fred Leu had been in the ice cream business in Philadelphia and Rock Island prior to coming to Muscatine and establishing his store in 1881. The business was first located on W. 2nd and then moved to 215 E. 2nd in 1890. Fred Leu retired in 1904 and his sons, Harry and Rob, took the business over. Leu and Sons' draw extended throughout the community because it also provided home delivery of its products, which in a 1915 Muscatine Journal ad was claimed to be "fit for a king" (Journal 1915; Centennial Edition, Muscatine Journal 1940). Ice cream shops were an important social gathering spot for families and young people in the latter portion of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. Many of these manufactured their own ice cream. Almost half-dozen of the shops were operating in the 1880s when Fred Leu started his business. The high point for these shops was in the early 1900s, when as many as a dozen shops and local manufacturers were treating Muscatine's sweet tooth.

A new building was built on Sycamore Street to house Leu and Sons in 1922. In 1935, Harry Leu established the Chrome Room in conjunction with his retail and wholesale ice cream business, constructed the small one-story addition. Over 40 years after closing its doors, local residents still recall coming to the Chrome Room after school for a soda or ice cream treat (Hintermeister 2004). The Leu name was so associated with the ice cream shop at

Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 6

<u>Leu's Ice Cream Shop and Chrome Room</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Name of Property	County
<u>312-314-316 Sycamore Street</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
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this location that even after others purchased the retail portion of the business in the early 1950s, they continued to call it Leu and Sons until it closed in the late 1950s. The manufacturing portion of the business also changed hands, only in this case a new name, Sidwell Ice Cream, was established in 1946. It also operated until the late 1950s, finally closing its doors in 1959. Only one other locally owned ice cream manufacturing plant operated in Muscatine after the Leu (Sidwell) plant closed.

Although Leu and Sons was described in the 1899 Muscatine County Atlas Landowners publication as a leading Muscatine business, this importance apparently did not extend to its founder. Fred Leu was a 23-year-old German immigrant who came to this country in 1867. He died at his home on East Seventh Street on October 9, 1932 after a long illness. Fred Leu, Sr. was a member of the Knights of Pythias lodge, but apparently did not participate in other fraternal or public service efforts. His sons, who had assumed management of the company after Fred, Sr. retired in 1905, continued to carry on the family business for over 30 years after he passed away. Like their father, the sons also do not appear to have participated in a large number of civic activities.

Only one ice cream manufacturer survived Leu and Sons. The Wintermute Ice Cream manufacturing plant was located at 227 Mulberry, Although that structure apparently still exists, its exterior has been substantially altered. In addition, industry expansion has eliminated nearly all of the surrounding structures in the neighborhood, creating an appearance that would be drastically changed from its original. Leu and Sons not only retains its original look, but remains in the minds of local residents as one of Muscatine's premier ice cream shops.

9. Major Bibliographical References

City Directories, Muscatine. Various publishers, 1856-present. Available at the Musser Public Library.

Hintermeister, Rhonda, owner of the Cutting Edge (former Chrome Room). Interview by Jim Rudisill, January 12, 2004, Muscatine, IA.

Fred Leu advertisement, *Muscatine Journal*, July 14, 1915, p. 8.

"Fred Leu, Sr. Dies After Long Illness," *Muscatine Journal*, October 10, 1932, p. 1.

"Leu & Son Ice Cream Manufacturers," *Centennial Edition of Muscatine Journal*, May 31, 1940, p. 6.

Sanborn Map Company. "Muscatine, Iowa," Sanborn fire insurance maps. Pelham, NY: Sanborn Map Company, 1883, 1888, 1892, 1899, 1905, 1912, 1919, 1928, 1946. Accessed online at: <http://www.sanborn.umi.com>.

Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 7

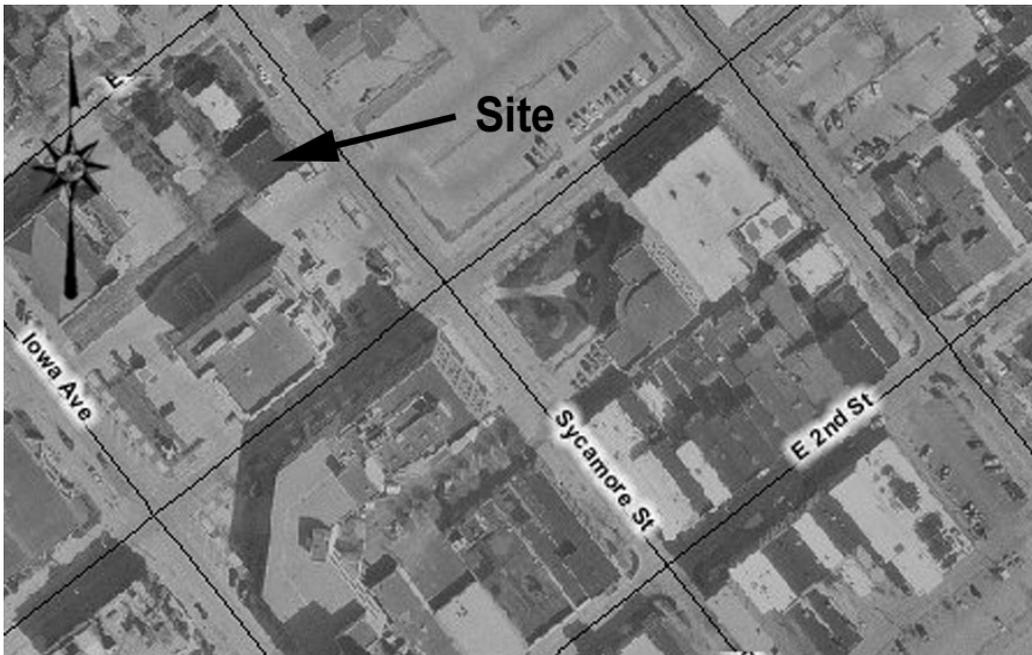
Leu's Ice Cream Shop and Chrome Room
Name of Property

Muscatine
County

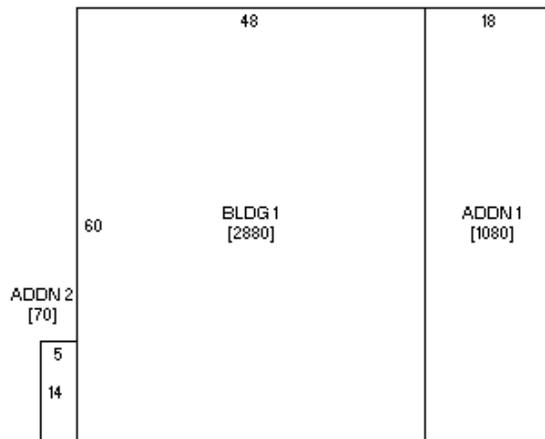
312-314-316 Sycamore Street
Address

Muscatine
City

Location Map



Plan (from assessor's office)



(front – Sycamore St.)

Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 8

Leu's Ice Cream Shop and Chrome Room
Name of Property

Muscatine
County

312-314-316 Sycamore Street
Address

Muscatine
City

Photograph of building (digital image)

