

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

State Inventory No. 70-00971 **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 George M. Wittich Funeral Home
 other names/site number Field Site #: FS-082

2. Location

street & number 210 Cedar 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) 32 Lot(s) S42' Lot 6

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)	_____	Contributing <u>1</u> Noncontributing _____
<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
	_____ Total	_____ 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>07C02: Funerary / Funeral Home</u>	<u>70: Vacant</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>07E: Early 20th Century / Craftsman</u>	foundation <u>10B: Poured Concrete</u>
_____	walls <u>03: Brick</u>
_____	roof <u>08B: Asphalt / Rolled</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
City Muscatine

Address 210 Cedar Street

Site Number 70-00971
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

1923 check if circa or estimated date

Other dates _____

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 Maryrose and John Peterschmidt (Member and Volunteer) (R.L. McCarley, consultant)

organization Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission date January 13, 2005

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>George M. Wittich Funeral Home</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Name of Property	County
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Address	City

7. Narrative Description

The building at 210 Cedar Street is a brick two story structure that has elements of the Craftsman style of architecture that was popular in the early 20th century in the United States. It features simple, straight lines with little decoration. The front elevation shows an entry slightly to the south of the center of the building. The threshold of the two doors with transom windows is three steps up from grade and recessed into the façade of the building a few feet. The recessed entry is framed by the same, simple cut stone with a keystone in the lintel. To the south (left) of the entry is a fixed double window with a narrow, straight line cut stone lintel, jamb and sill built into the brick façade. Below the sill the cut stone continues to grade. To the north (right) of the entry is a fixed triple window with stone surround identical to the south window on the first floor and cut stone below. Both sets of windows on the first floor consist of a large main window with a smaller transom window. The second floor of the front elevation is dominated by two bay windows under a common, shingled roof. They are centered over the first floor entry. The south bay window consists of four one-over-one-light double-hung windows of the same size, while the north bay window is slightly narrower and consists of one larger one-over-one-light double-hung window in the center and two flanking one-over-one-light double-hung windows that are smaller. Both bay windows are framed and trimmed in wood. Between the two bay windows and centered above the entry lintel keystone, there is a narrow, one-over-one-light double-hung window, framed in brick, with a cut stone sill and two brackets. A similar, but larger one over one window exists on the second floor of this elevation to the north of the bay windows. It has cut stone lintel and sill with brackets. Above the second floor bay windows' projected roof rises the brick façade of the front elevation to a parapet that is capped with cut stone. The parapet was built at three different straight line levels or steps and has two scroll-like carved stone shapes set into two corners above the cut stone cap.

The south elevation of the building faces the alley and is entirely brick. The windows are unadorned and appear to be original to the building. There are four one-over-one-light double-hung small windows on the western half of the first floor and one small three pane horizontally placed fixed window next to a large, fixed window on the eastern half of the first floor. The second floor has seven one-over-one-light double-hung windows of equal size. Above the windows is a brick parapet face that is stepped from the front elevation to the back elevation and is capped with vitreous tile. A copper scupper and downspout to grade exists along the west edge of the south elevation.

This structure has lost little of its architectural integrity in the eighty plus years it has existed.

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The former George M. Wittich Funeral Home at 210 Cedar Street appears individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. This building, formerly Wittich Brothers Funeral Home, played a significant role in the cultural development of Muscatine. Additionally, it appears individually eligible under Criterion C for its early 20th century architecture. It is also a contributing structure in a potential downtown historic district.

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The Wittich Brothers were leaders in their profession. The manner in which a funeral home conducts its business touches the lives of all citizens of Muscatine, regardless of social status and position. In Muscatine, the Wittich name is recognized by everyone as excellence in the funeral business. Two of the three current funeral homes are directly descended from the Wittich Brothers Funeral Home at 210 Cedar Street. This building represents the first building specifically built for the Wittich Brothers Funeral Home, and perhaps the first building built specifically for any funeral home in Muscatine. The George M. Wittich Funeral Home appears individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A.

The Wittich Brothers Funeral Home also appears individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The George M. Wittich Funeral Home was constructed in the Craftsman style in the 1920s and has maintained its architectural integrity through the years. Two other commercial buildings in downtown Muscatine follow the same style: the Leu Ice Cream Shop at 214-216 Sycamore (70-00988) and C.F. Schroeder Building at 327-329-331 E. 2nd St (70-00952). The Schroeder building is a large building, more massive in scale than the Wittich building. The Wittich building is very well proportioned and detailed. It has more characteristic elements than Leu Ice Cream Shop. All of the elements making up the façade are thoughtfully placed and scaled, from the receiving entry with its cut stone surround and keystone, to the second floor bay windows under a common clay tile roof, to the stepped parapet with cut stone cap.

Additionally, it appears to be a contributing building in a potential downtown district. It falls within one historic context identified for the district: “20th century Business and Industry.” The Wittich Brothers Funeral Home was a strong early 20th century business in downtown Muscatine that branched into two of the current funeral homes. They built this building in the downtown specifically for their business and continued to operate here for several years. Additionally, the building contributes architecturally to the district.

Werner Wittich was a native of Germany, was born in 1830 and emigrated to Muscatine in 1852. Along with a partner, Christian Kegel, he opened an embalming establishment in 1867 on Iowa Ave. Another partner, Frank Weinker, was later taken into the firm, and the three started one of the first casket and furniture factories in the state at 208 E. 2nd St. Werner Wittich severed his ties with the Kegel-Weinker partnership around 1879 and began a business at 219 E. 2nd St., along with his eldest son, George, who was then 15, and J.B. Mark, a new partner. The younger Werner Wittich, also interested in the profession of mortuary science, joined his father and brother in the late 1880's. City Directories show that the Mark-Wittich partnership continued until c.1890, when the business name was changed to Wittich & Son and continued to be located at 219 E. 2nd Street. The new name continued to be used after the elder Wittich's death in 1894, until c.1900, at which time it was changed to Wittich Brothers Funeral Home (*Muscatine Journal*, 1940).

The first evidence of the Wittich Brothers Funeral Home at 210 – 212 Cedar St. is noted in the 1916 City Directory of Muscatine and is shown at 212 Cedar St. in the 1919 Sanborn Map of Muscatine. A comparison of the Sanborn maps of 1919 and 1928 show that the Wittich building had more than

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doubled in that period. Also, a comparison of two photo postcards of the First Baptist Church shows adjacent structures to the church on Cedar Street that are comparable in size and description to those shown on the Sanborn maps of 1919 and 1928 (Randleman 1981: 26). The current building at 224 E. 3rd St. was built in 1923, after the previous building was demolished in August 1922 (Muscatine Journal, August 28, 1922). These comparisons show that the building at 210 Cedar Street was built around 1923 (before 1928) by George and Werner Wittich.

In 1923, five other funeral directors were listed in the city directory, including four that had been listed in 1910. Three of these operated out of earlier commercial blocks, similar to the type of building that the Wittich Brothers began in. One of these, N.W. Meyers (Meyers and Gettert in 1910), operated out of a building at 401 E. 7th St. This building was also built in the early 1920s, apparently for the funeral home. It reflects more of a residential architectural style, and it is located in a residential neighborhood. The Wittich Brothers Funeral Home, in addition to being prominent among these funeral businesses, built the only “commercial” funeral home building in this period, located in downtown Muscatine.

George and Werner Wittich continued their business partnership until 1932, at which time Werner moved to the former Dr. D.P. Johnson home at 216 W. 3rd St. to begin a new funeral home with his son, Ralph. The business continued at 210 Cedar St as the George M. Wittich Funeral Home. George Wittich was a leader in the practice of embalming and funerary work: “Mr. (George) Wittich has the record of being the first licensed embalmer and funeral director in the county. He was also among the first to obtain a license in Iowa, his certificate being number 13. He is also licensed by the state of Illinois. His experience as a funeral director dates back some 55 years to the time when the burial casket was made as needed in the mortician’s own shop. In those days, a funeral director was required also to be a good cabinet maker” (“Beveridge, Downey Associated in George M. Wittich Funeral Home,” December 30, 1936, 21).

In 1936, an article appeared in the *Journal*, noting that “In keeping with his desire to give the public the finest and most efficient service possible, he has complete remodeled the funeral home during the past summer...Air conditioning was installed...[it] is equipped with a telephone and call bell to summon Mr. Wittich from his upstairs apartment. Mr. Wittich’s home occupies a portion of the second floor of the structure. Funeral merchandise displays occupies the upstairs portion of the funeral home.” In 1936, Thomas F. Beveridge and Floyd Downey purchased the business with Beveridge becoming the sole owner in 1945 (“Beveridge, Downey Associated in George M. Wittich Funeral Home,” December 30, 1936, 21). They sold it to Stacy Lewis in 1978. The business was moved in 1983 to 2907 Mulberry Avenue and continues in business to this day (George M. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home 2005). Today, there are three funeral homes in Muscatine. Two of these businesses are directly descended from the Wittich Brothers Funeral Home at 210 Cedar Street.

The other funeral home in town associated with this family is the Ralph J. Wittich-Riley-Freers Funeral Home. In 1933, Ed Freers joined the Ralph J. Wittich Funeral Home. After Werner Wittich died in 1944, Mr. Freers became a partner with Ralph Wittich in the business. The partnership continued until 1964, when Ed Freers purchased the business from Ralph. Ed Freer’s son, David joined the firm in 1970 and purchased it from his father in 1978. In 1996, the Ralph J. Wittich Funeral Home merged with the Riley

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Funeral Home of Muscatine. Riley's had served Muscatine since 1941, when they purchased the Meyers funeral home at 401 E. 7th St. The new business moved from 216 West 3rd to 1931 Houser Street and continues in business to this day (Ralph J. Wittich-Riley-Freers Funeral Home, 2005).

9. Major Bibliographical Reference

"Beveridge, Downey Associated in George M. Wittich Funeral Home", *Muscatine Journal*, December 30, 1936, 21.

City Directories, Muscatine. Various publishers, 1859 – 1959. Available at the Musser Public Library.

George M. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home, Website, Muscatine, IA, 2005. URL: lewisfuneralhomes.com

History of Muscatine County, Iowa. Chicago; Western Historical Co., 1879

"Muscatine Business Directory", *Muscatine Journal* Centennial Edition, May 31, 1940, 4.

"Title," *Muscatine Journal*. August 28, 1922, page 8

Randleman, Douglas. *Greetings from Muscatine, a pictorial postcard history*. Muscatine, Iowa: Knott Printers, Inc., 1981.

Ralph J. Wittich-Riley-Freers Funeral Home, Website, Muscatine, IA, 2005. URL: wittichfuneralhome.com

Sanborn Map Company. "Muscatine, Iowa," Sanborn fire insurance maps. Pelham, NY: Sanborn Map Company, 1883, 1888, 1892, 1899, 1907, 1912, 1919, 1928, 1946

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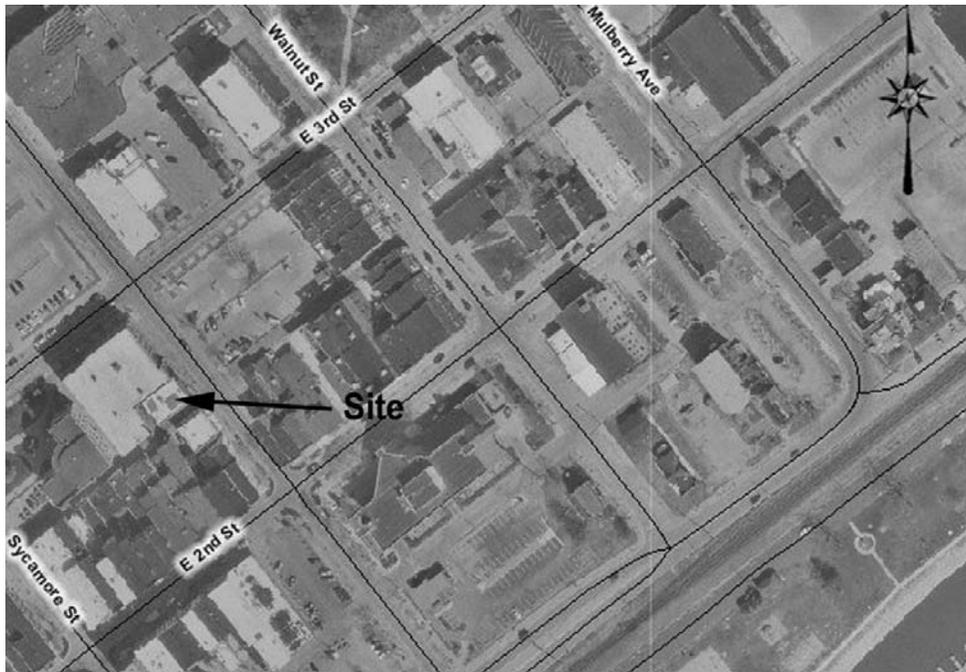
George M. Wittich Funeral Home
Name of Property

Muscatine
County

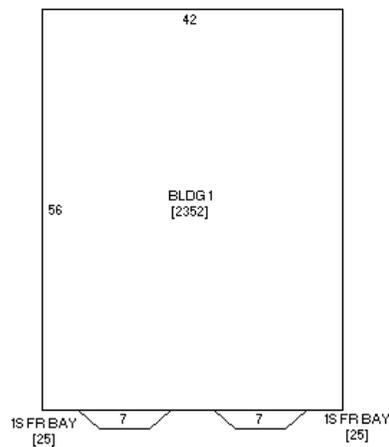
210 Cedar St
Address

Muscatine
City

Location Map



Plan (from assessor's office)



(front - Cedar)

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George M. Wittich Funeral Home
Name of Property

Muscatine
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210 Cedar St
Address

Muscatine
City

Photograph of building (digital image)

