

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

State Inventory No. 70-00143 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 Commercial Building
 other names/site number Field Site #: FS-089

2. Location

street & number 303 E. 2nd 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) Block 31 Lot(s) E 1/2 W 2/3 of Lot 1

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 _____ Noncontributing _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ buildings | <u>1</u> _____ buildings |
| | _____ sites | _____ sites |
| | _____ structures | _____ structures |
| | _____ 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>02G04: Commerce/Trade/Restaurant/Tavern</u> | <u>02G01: Commerce/Trade/Restaurant/Cafe</u> |
| <u>02E11: Commerce/Trade/Specialty Store/Grocery</u> | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

7. Description

| | |
|--|---|
| Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions) | Materials (Enter categories from instructions) |
| <u>05: Late Victorian</u> | foundation _____ |
| _____ | walls <u>03: Brick</u> |
| _____ | roof _____ |
| _____ | 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 303 E. 2nd Street Site Number 70-00143
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)

05: Commerce
02: Architecture

Significant Dates

Construction date 1865 check if circa or estimated date
Other dates c.1895 façade (by 1899)

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, City of Muscatine (R.L. McCarley, consultant)
organization Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission date June 10, 2005
street & number 215 Sycamore telephone 563-264-1550
city or town Muscatine state IA 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>Commercial Building</u> | <u>Muscatine</u> |
| Name of Property | County |
| <u>303 E. 2nd Street</u> | <u>Muscatine</u> |
| Address | City |

7. Narrative Description

This three-story building sports one of the most significant upper facades in downtown Muscatine. The storefront, however, has been remodeled. A permit to remodel the building was issued on March 18, 1957, and the storefront alterations might have been connected with the building remodeling at that time (Muscatine Journal Year End Review December 30, 1957, Sec. 2, p. 14). Currently, the non-historic storefront is recessed, angled diagonally back to the entry. This plate glass storefront includes a large window to the right of the single-door entry and a smaller window to the right of the entry. The non-historic upper story entry is flush with the front of the building, at the far right of the storefront. A flat, corrugated tin and wood canopy extends across the façade, and the upper portion of the storefront has been clad in wood siding. The upper two stories are clad in a decorative metal façade. It is divided into three bays, with the center bays wider than the side bays. Each side bay has a single double-hung window, and the center bay has paired double-hung windows. The current windows are not historic, and they are shorter than the original openings. The windows have pseudo stone lintels. Each of the bays is separated by two decorative narrow pilasters. A decorative band with circular details extends across the façade roughly at the middle of the second and third stories windows. Each story has a small flat band that defines the top of the story with a row of leaf like detailing under the band. The metal on the pilasters at each side of the building also reflect a pseudo stone block pattern. Rope detailing extends across the top of the building under the frieze. The frieze is decorated with four large brackets at the point of the lower bays with three smaller brackets between them. Rectangular paneling is found between the brackets. The cornice is slightly projected with square panels above each of the larger brackets.

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

This commercial building does not appear individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A or B. However, it does appear individually eligible under Criterion C. Additionally, it is a contributing building in a potential downtown historic district.

The building at 303 E. Second does not appear to have been associated with any significant individual, business, or event. However, from an architectural standpoint, it does contain some significant features that help it stand out from its neighbors and other nearby buildings. The tin-front façade is the primary feature that sets this building apart. Although it has sustained some modest alterations by owners adapting their business to current trends, it still conveys its historic appearance and the purpose intended by the 19th century architects who designed these buildings. No other buildings in downtown Muscatine provide a comparable façade; the other two buildings with metal facades are not as outstanding as this building. Thus, this building appears to be individually eligible under Criterion C.

Additionally, this building appears to be a contributing building in a potential downtown historic district. It falls within two historic contexts identified for the district: "19th Century Business and Industry" and 20th Century Business and Industry. The variety of businesses which have used this building over the past two centuries provides a good example of business development in Muscatine during the 19th and 20th

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| Address | City |

century. Additionally, the significant metal façade contributes architecturally to the district. Some modifications have been made to the building, but have not altered the overall appearance of the building. The storefront modifications in 1957 may fall within the period of significance for the district.

No historic photos that were taken prior to 1883 have been located. However, in a reminiscence that spanned from the 1860s to the turn of the 20th century, local pioneer settler Charles C. Braunworth reported grocer George Wilmering was the first business he recalled at this site. A review of the 1866 directory shows Wilmering at 222 Second Street. In the same recollection, Braunworth also identified Graham Brothers' Drug Store as being next door to the Wilmering Grocery. Grahams, which occupied the building currently at 301 E. Second, is listed in the 1866 directory at 224 E. Second, confirming Braunworth's recollection (Carlson 1989: 150). The 1859-60 directory does not have a Wilmering Grocery listed, indicating his building appears to have been constructed between 1859 and 1866. G.W. "Wellmering" continues to be listed as a grocer on "ns 2nd bet Walnut and Cedar" in the 1869 city directory.

The 1883 Sanborn map shows a three-story building occupying the front third of the present lot with a one-story addition attached to the rear of the taller building. The map identifies the building as the location of a saloon, but the city directories from that period do not list any saloon at that address. The 1888 Sanborn map indicates that it is vacant, while the 1892 map indicates a grocery. Murray W. Wheeler is identified as operating a grocery at 303 E. Second beginning around 1890. Wheeler continues to operate a grocery there until sometime between 1913 and 1916. Wheeler was listed in the 1899 directory of leading businesses in Muscatine. Assuming the iron façade does not date to the original c.1865 construction of the building, it appears that it was added in the 1890s, while Wheeler operated here. The 1899 Sanborn map clearly indicates an iron clad façade, while the earlier maps (1883, 1888, 1892) do not appear to note it.

These sheet metal facades were popular around the turn of the 19th century. Two popular manufacturers of such facades were the George Mesker Company of Evansville, IN and Mesker Brothers of St. Louis, Missouri. These companies provided pre-fabricated metal storefronts around the Midwest, which probably helped spark production by other local companies around the country. The Niver Iron Works of Muscatine was one of these local manufacturers, advertising cast and wrought iron building work by 1898 ("Niver Iron Works Co," December 7, 1898, 21). According to the 1897-98 city directory, its plant was located between the railroad tracks at Second and Spring Streets. The Niver Iron Works continued to operate into the 1920s. While the façade at 303 E. 2nd Street no longer has any visible manufacturing nameplate, the detailing is not clearly distinguishable as a Mesker, so it seems more likely that it may have come from a local rather than regional supplier. Regardless of who the supplier was, the upper façade of 303 E. 2nd Street is one of the most extensive uses of this material in the community.

For several years after 1916 the building apparently remained vacant, or housed a short-lived business. Sometime before 1919, the building was converted into a theatre. Between 1919 and 1927 it was the Gayety Theatre and from 1927 until 1939 it was the Crystal Theatre. According to the 1916 and 1919 city directories, several other theatres, including the American, 111 Sycamore; A-Mus-U, 103-105 Sycamore; Grand Opera House, corner of Second and Walnut; Orpheum, 219-221 E. Third; Palace, 212 Sycamore; and the Princess, 227 E. Second were also operating in the downtown just prior or during the conversion

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| Address | City |

of 303 E. Second into a theatre. All of these buildings, with the exception of 227 E. Second, no longer exist.

The building appears to have been vacant through World War II. After the war it was converted back to a retail business, and the Pittsburg Paint Store operated from it through the 1960s. A meat market/catering service later located in the building and evolved into the current restaurant operation.

The development of such a variety of business activities at 303 E. Second stands in stark contrast to its neighboring buildings. Graham Drug, at 301 E. Second, was one of Muscatine's oldest and longest-surviving businesses until it eventually closed in 1967. A confectionary/bakery enterprise continued to operate at 305 E. Second until 1927, when a restaurant opened and operated into the 1960s. The building at 303 E. Second was able to sustain business activity at the site, but as social and cultural factors influenced the area through the 19th and 20th centuries, the business owners were forced to adapt and adopt new strategies. The businesses in the adjoining buildings appear to have been less affected by these changes, leading to a more stable operation at their sites. This trend obviously occurred at other sites in the downtown. However, the close proximity of long-lived businesses, combined with intact buildings that retain most of their integrity, provides an unusual combination of factors that makes this area a significant contributing feature of the downtown.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Carlson, Jo Ann & Barbara Bublitz, *Muscatine History Notes, Vol. 1*, Musser Public Library, Muscatine, IA, 1989.

City Directories, Muscatine, Various publishers, 1869-1959. Available at the Musser Public Library.

"Got Mesker?" website, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Springfield, IL. Resources online include brief history, identification guide, and 1904 Catalog, Accessed online at <http://www.illinoishistory.gov/ps/gotmesker.htm> in June 2005.

"Niver Iron Works Co," *Muscatine Journal*, December 7, 1898, 21.

"Permits Issued For Remodeling And Building," *Muscatine Journal Year End Review*, December 30, 1957, Sec. 2, p. 14

Sanborn Map Company. "Muscatine, Iowa," Sanborn fire insurance maps. Pelham, NY: Sanborn Map Company, 1883, 1888, 1892, 1899, 1907, 1912, 1919, 1928, 1946. Accessed online at: sanborn.umi.com.

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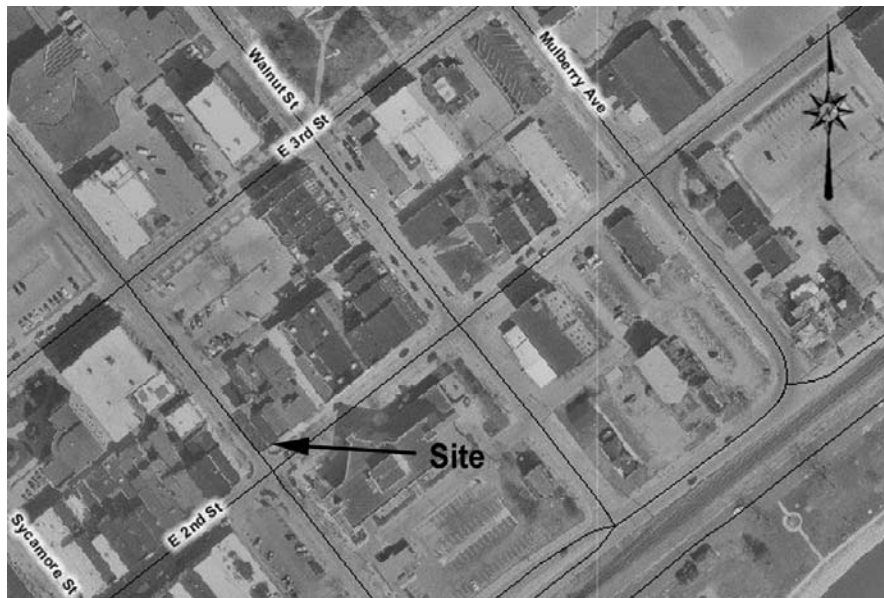
Commercial Building
Name of Property

Muscatine
County

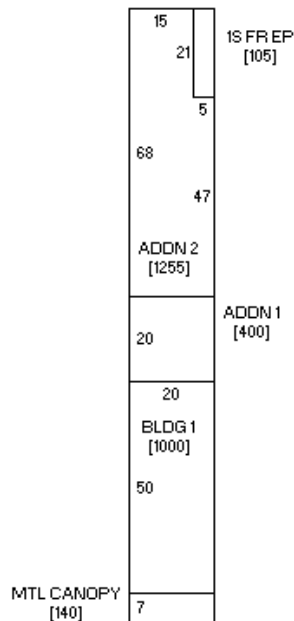
303 E. 2nd Street
Address

Muscatine
City

Location Map



Plan (from assessor's office)



(front – 2nd Street)

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303 E. 2nd Street
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Photograph of building (digital image)

