

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

State Inventory No. 70-00144  **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 Grossheim Building  
 other names/site number Field Site #: FS-093

**2. Location**

street & number 315-317 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> 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) 31 Lot(s) W 1/2 of Lot 3

**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	_____	_____ 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**

<b>Historic Functions</b> (Enter categories from instructions)	<b>Current Functions</b> (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>02E07: Commerce/Specialty Store/ Photographer</u>	<u>11D01: Health Care/Medical Business/Office/Pharmacy</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

**7. Description**

<b>Architectural Classification</b> (Enter categories from instructions)	<b>Materials</b> (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>05B: Italianate</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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	A	Property is associated with significant events.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input 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 Address 315-317 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Site Number 70-00144  
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  
04: Art

**Significant Dates**

*Construction date*  
1898  check if circa or estimated date  
*Other dates* \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)  
Oscar Grossheim

**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 Jerry Kleindolph, volunteer & Jim Rudisill, City of Muscatine (R.L. McCarley, Consultant)  
organization Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission date February 23, 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

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<u>Grossheim Building</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Name of Property	County
<u>315-317 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Address	City

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## 7. Narrative Description

The handsome two-story, three-bay Italianate building at 315-317 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street was constructed by Oscar Grossheim sometime between 1892 and 1899, according to the Sanborn maps published during those years. The building's tin cornice includes a date of 1899, along with the name "Grossheim" inscribed across the front façade. Since it is unknown if this component is an original part of the building, this date might be wrong. Other possibly construction dates include 1898 (Bublitz, et al. 1996: 4) and 1897 (Bublitz, et al. 1996: 41). Grossheim, the son of German immigrants, was a pioneer photographer who lived and worked in Muscatine his entire life. In 1877, at the age of 15, Grossheim was apprenticed to a local photographer where he learned to make totypes. After working with his brother Alexander in a joint photography business, Oscar set up his own studio at 317 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. He continued to photograph Muscatine residents and scenes until 1954, mostly with glass plate negatives (GPN). Over 55,000 of the plates were shot and are now a special collection of the Musser Public Library.

The building at 317 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street has changed little from its original appearance. Two large storefront windows continue to flank a recessed entryway, the same design seen in a 1905 photo of the original structure. The historic photo also shows the existing iron storefront columns bordering the front of the entryway. These columns also provide corner support to the large front windows and slightly narrower side windows located in the recessed entryway. There are small bulkheads under the windows in the historic photo. A full-width awning has the names of Tom Davidson and Oscar Grossheim across the front, indicating the store was divided into separate businesses, with Davidson in 315 and Grossheim in 317 E. 2<sup>nd</sup>. The photo does appear to show at least one diagonal wood door entry into the Grossheim side of the storefront. The opposite side of the entry is hidden, but the center portion of the entry appears to be a full length opening, probably an exterior door leading to the second floor (Grossheim, "Awning for J.W. Richards," 1905).

The current first floor façade continues to be dominated by the large storefront windows. The iron storefront columns continue to stand. The recessed entry area is also present. This area includes three entries - two glass storefront doors and a central entry to the upper stories. A full-width awning, this one with Wester Drug on the top, also continues to exist on the façade. The upper portion of the building remains remarkably similar to the original design. The second story is dominated by a pair of oriel windows. Each oriel window has a curved Mansard roof with corrugated metal sheeting. The individual windows have non-historic one-over-one-light double-hung sashes. Above the windows the tin cornice includes brackets with a series of decorative circles under each bracket. Two larger brackets with decorative flowers are located at each end of the cornice. Above the cornice are four decorative finials. Two are located above the terminal brackets and two flank a triangular pediment. In the 1905 historic photo a panel appears in the cornice below the pediment, but there does not appear to be any writing or inscription in the panel. At some later time, "Grossheim" was apparently added, with 1899 below the name.

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<u>Grossheim Building</u> Name of Property	<u>Muscatine</u> County
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## 8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The Grossheim Building appears to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B, and C. Additionally, it is a contributing building in a potential downtown historic district.

Oscar Grossheim was a native of Muscatine who helped pioneer the development of portable cameras in the U.S. in the late 1800s. Born in 1862 to German immigrants, Grossheim began his nearly 80-year photography career as a 15-year-old apprentice to a local photographer. Around 1885 the two brothers formed their own studio, but around 1891 that partnership broke up and Oscar started his own business. Grossheim continued his Muscatine practice until retiring in 1954, shortly before his death. His collection of glass plate negatives, spanning from the late-1890s to around 1945, was saved from destruction by another local photographer and eventually was donated to the Musser Public Library. Around 6000 of the glass plates, including all the scenes and many portraits, have been printed. They provide an invaluable look into the past for local and period historians and other researchers, including the large number interested in family history or other genealogical information. As the primary site for his business, the building at 315-317 E. Second was the location for much of Grossheim's photographic research and other activity. The bulk of his glass plate photographic collection would have been taken, developed or stored at this building, especially after he installed state-of-the-art background equipment in 1909. No other building in Muscatine contributed such a significant impact on Muscatine's photographic history. While the building was the site for much of this history, Grossheim was the individual it all centered around. Through his photographs, Grossheim has helped connect the present to the past, creating a link that remains today one of the most significant in Muscatine, and one which few other communities in the country can match. Thus, the Grossheim Building appears to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and B for its association with Oscar Grossheim and his photography business.

The Grossheim building at 315-317 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> also contributes to the history of the community through its architecture. The building has changed little since its construction in c.1898 and continues to provide a sense of connection to both Grossheim and his era. Few, if any, alterations have been made since 1954 when the studio closed. This is perhaps the best example of Queen Anne commercial architecture in downtown Muscatine. It exhibits several characteristic features of the style, including the oriel windows and decorative cornice. Unlike most buildings constructed in the 1890s, this building has retained its original storefront configuration through several subsequent owners. Overall, the building retains high integrity as an example of Queen Anne commercial architecture. Thus, the Grossheim Building also appears to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its architecture.

In addition to its individual significance, the Grossheim Building also contributes to a potential downtown historic district. It falls within two historic contexts identified for the potential downtown historic district: "19<sup>th</sup> century Business and Industry" and "20<sup>th</sup> century Business and Industry." Grossheim constructed the building late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as he continued to prosper in the community through his photography practice. The construction of the new building and studio spearheaded Grossheim's business into the

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20<sup>th</sup> century. The growth of Grossheim's photographic business demonstrated two local developments during this period - the steady increase in Muscatine's middle class and the economic power they could generate, and the impact that power had on consumer related services and activities. It also demonstrated the growing appeal nationally for consumer services that could branch into recreational and other activities. Additionally, the overall design of the building contributes architecturally to the potential historic district.

Born in 1862 to German immigrants, Grossheim began his nearly 80-year photography career as a 15-year-old apprentice to a local photographer. While still in high school, Grossheim began his photography career as an apprentice in J.G. Evans' studio. After spending some time in California, he returned to Muscatine around 1885, continuing his training locally with an older brother Alexander and other photographers and artists (*Portrait and Biographical Album* 1889: 506; Lewis 1901: 100; Bublitz et. al 1996: 1, 35, 40). Alexander had traveled to Berlin to study photography in 1883, returning to Berlin a year later to continue his studies. When Alexander eventually returned to Muscatine, he and Oscar opened the Berlin Studio in Muscatine at 117-119 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street on May 16, 1886.

Oscar also experimented with the technical aspects of his art. In the early 1880s he developed a portable camera. In 1890, George Eastman, founder of Eastman Kodak Company of Rochester, New York, exhibited a small portable camera he had developed at an exhibit in St. Paul, Minnesota. At the exhibit, Eastman was told that Grossheim had developed a portable camera several years earlier (*Muscatine Journal*, November 3, 1954, 2). Following the exhibit, Eastman traveled by boat to Muscatine and spent two days in the city conferring with Grossheim about portable photography. Grossheim later went to New York and continued to confer with Eastman about portable equipment and photography (*Muscatine Journal*, November 3, 1954). Following his consultations with Grossheim, Eastman went on to perfect his portable camera, which eventually helped propel photography into the popular, consumer-based activity of today.

Around 1891, Alexander and Oscar parted ways and each continued with his own studio. Alexander eventually retired in 1911, but Oscar continued until 1954, when he retired at age 92. Shortly before the turn of the century, Oscar constructed a building at 317 E. Second Street and opened his new studio. The new facility was described as thoroughly modern, allowing him more than ever to "do his usual high grade art work. Before long, the Grossheim prints were recognized as superior to the work of other artists (*Portrait and Biographical Album* 1889: 506; Lewis 1901: 100; Bublitz et. Al 1996: 1, 35, 40).

The construction of the building not only provided him with an image of a successful local businessman, but it also offered him the opportunity to develop a state-of-the-art studio in Muscatine. In 1909, he hired C.A. Stanley to come to Muscatine and install a set of permanent and movable photograph scenic effects. The work apparently included a wall designed as a permanent room. With the wall, it was "possible to take a picture showing any portion of a handsome and elaborately decorated wall and giving a setting of group pictures that cannot be surpassed." The new set also provided a section for child poses. The new equipment quickly enthralled local residents. "The background effect that Mr. Grossheim has secured is something rarely found in a city the size of Muscatine," the *Journal* reported.

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The newspaper report added that Grossheim was proud of the new effort and would show it to anyone who visited his studio ("Local Man Takes Progressive Step," August 28, 1909, 10).

For the next 40 years he continued to photograph the people and scenes around Muscatine, using the same glass-plate technology that he had learned as a young photographer for most of his career, although he did upgrade and modify his studio throughout his career. A newspaper article printed when Grossheim held his 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1924 described the latest effort: "Through adding continually to his equipment, he has kept abreast of the times. Among his latest additions is a portable skylight, which can be utilized day or night, a demonstration that he saw while attending the state convention of photographers at Ottumwa recently" (Bublitz, et al. 1996: 41).

Grossheim did not identify any specific photographic activity he conducted. In the city directories throughout his career, he simply stated photographer or Grossheim Studio in his listing. The one exception appeared to be during the 1930s, when he was listed as a portrait and commercial photographer. No other photographers are listed with his studio, indicating he worked alone. His wife possibly might have assisted, since her name was listed with his under the studio heading.

Grossheim also kept up with the latest trends and equipment by actively participating in state and national photographic conventions. He was a member of the Photographers Association of America and frequently provided photographs for that organization's Traveling Loan Collections. He was also an active resident of Muscatine. His civic interests included serving on the Muscatine School Board and terms as president of the Muscatine Civic Society (a predecessor of the Chamber of Commerce) and commodore of the Muscatine Launch Club (Bublitz, et al. 1996: 4).

Oscar continued to photograph scenes and residents of Muscatine until he retired in 1954. Oscar Grossheim was a prolific local photographer who attracted national attention from other early photographic pioneers, such as George Eastman, for his work on portable cameras. For over 60 years Grossheim photographed the residents and scenes of Muscatine and the surrounding area, eventually leaving a legacy of over 55,000 glass plate negatives that are now used extensively in genealogical and other historic research. Those plates were purchased from the Grossheim estate by local photographer Mike Bendle, who gave them to the Musser Public Library in 1982. Around 6000 of the plates have been printed (Musser Public Library).

After Grossheim died in 1954, Graham studio opened at that location. Graham however only stayed there until 1956. After that he was listed at 1333 E. Second until 1959, when the company apparently dissolved. Wester Drug moved into 315 E. Second soon after. It continues to operate at that location. The 317 E. Second storefront was more active. The Singer Sewing Machine office was located there in 1961, but by 1965 the storefront was vacant. Two beauty shops, a coin exchange and a pet grooming business were all located there into the 1990s. Manley Antiques now operates from the store.

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<u>Grossheim Building</u> Name of Property	<u>Muscatine</u> County
<u>315-317 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street</u> Address	<u>Muscatine</u> City

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Bublitz, Barbara, Diane Mayer Day, and Jo Ann Carlson. *Grossheim Family*. Muscatine: Musser Public Library, 1996.

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

Grossheim, Oscar. "Awnings for J.W. Richards," January 22, 1905, Historic photograph, Oscar Grossheim Collection, Musser Public Library, Muscatine, Iowa. Historic photograph in Upper Mississippi Valley Digital Image Archive online at [www.umvphotoarchive.org/cgi-bin/viewer.exe?CISOROOT=/muspl&CISOPTR=960](http://www.umvphotoarchive.org/cgi-bin/viewer.exe?CISOROOT=/muspl&CISOPTR=960)

"Grossheim Studio," *Muscatine Journal Centennial Edition*, May 31, 1940, Section 3, p. 2.

"Grossheim Studio Is Long Established," *Muscatine Journal*, December 31, 1938, p. 10.

Lewis, H.W. *Picturesque Muscatine: a Booklet Descriptive of the "Pearl City" of Iowa*. Muscatine, IA: H.W. Lewis, 1901.

"Local Man Takes Progressive Step," *Muscatine Journal*. August 28, 1909, p. 10.

Musser Public Library. "Oscar Grossheim's Glass Plate Negative Collection," (an informational brochure about the collection) Musser Public Library, Muscatine, Iowa (no date listed).

"Oscar Grossheim, Pioneer in Photo Profession, Dies," *Muscatine Journal*. November 3, 1954, p. 2.

*Portrait and Biographical Album of Muscatine County, Iowa*. Chicago: Acme Publishing, 1889.

Sanborn Map Company, New York. Maps of the City of Muscatine dated September 1883, August 1888, October 1892, August 1899, December 1905, February 1912, July 1919, March 1928 and June 1946.

## Location Map



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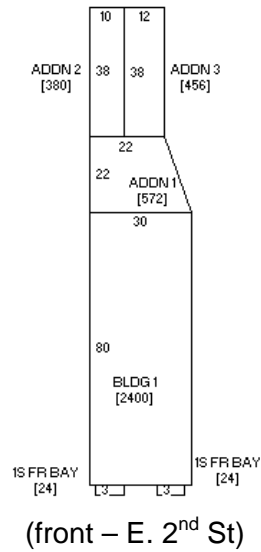
Grossheim Building  
Name of Property

Muscatine  
County

315-317 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Address

Muscatine  
City

## Plan (from assessor's office)



## Photograph of building (digital image)

