

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

State Inventory No. 70-00147  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 Bisesi Block  
 other names/site number Field Site #: FS-112

**2. Location**

street & number 413 - 415 East Second 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) 30 Lot(s) W 2/3 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 <u>1</u>	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	Noncontributing _____	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____	objects
<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____	Total
	_____	<u>1</u>	

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>02E11: Commerce / Specialty Store / Grocery</u>	<u>03C01: Social / Civic / Volunteer Office</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

**7. Description**

<b>Architectural Classification</b> (Enter categories from instructions)	<b>Materials</b> (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>05D: Late Victorian / Queen Anne</u>	foundation <u>10B: Concrete / Poured</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 type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	A	Property is associated with significant events.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" 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 413 – 415 East Second Street Site Number 70-00147  
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

**Significant Dates**

Construction date 1912  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 March 20, 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: \_\_\_\_\_

# Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 3

<u>Bisesi Block</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Name of Property	County
<u>413-415 E. Second St</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Address	City

## 7. Narrative Description

The Bisesi Block at 414 – 415 East Second Street is a three story brick structure in a Queen Anne style. In 1912 an existing three story building at 415 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. was partially demolished to make way for the new structure. It is likely that a shared wall with 417 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. remained in place, as well as the north and west walls (Lazio 2005). Sanborn maps of 1883 through 1912 show a three story building at 415 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. with an identical footprint to that of the building erected in 1912 at 415 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. The internal walls may have been moved to accommodate a stairway that was moved from the west side of the 415 storefront to the east side. Except for modern, aluminum storm windows on the upper floors, this building is essentially as it was built in 1912 by Mr. Bisesi (“Muscatine,” c.1912).

The south facing, or front façade, was entirely built in 1912 and remains intact. 413 East Second Street was constructed as an exact mirror image of 415 East Second Street. On the first floor at grade, are two single entries on the left. They are recessed into the building face about four feet. The far left entry is access to apartments on the second and third floors. The other entry is to the store on the first floor. Both entries have large, glass transoms. Adjacent to the store entry is a large display window, set at an angle to the recessed store entry. Then, two large display windows with large, glass transoms, complete the store front. The sill of these display windows is knee-high to better display merchandise. An exposed steel I-beam is located above the windows and provides support for the brick wall above and rests on the east and west walls. A portion of an old awning support bracket still remains attached to the I-beam. The second and third floors have a single, one-over-one-light, double-hung window with stone sill and a segmental arch brick lintel near the west wall of 413 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Dominating this façade is a large bay window that is framed continuously between second and third floors. On each floor there are three one-over-one-light, double-hung windows in each bay window. The bay windows have sills and lintels that project from the structure and provide drip ledges. The surface of the bay window structure is partially clad with tin. Below each third floor bay window is found a garland swag in relief on a flat tin plate.

The front façade of 415 East Second Street is an exact mirror image of the previously described façade of 413 East Second Street, with two exceptions. An air-conditioner has been installed in the transom of the storefront entry, and the middle window of the second story of the bay window has two windows. Above the bay windows rises the south facing brick façade to a common cornice structure with decorative brackets. On the cornice, in the center of the structure, is the name BISESI in high relief. Above the name is a triangular pediment with the date 1912.

The west elevation shows that the adjacent churchyard is about eight feet above the storefront sidewalk level. There are no entries to 413 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. on this elevation. The west elevation shows five, one-over-one-light, double-hung windows, two on the third floor and three on the second floor with one window on each floor slightly smaller than the other two. One window on the third floor and all three windows on the second floor have segmental arch brick lintels. The west brick wall rises to a low parapet, that is stepped down from right to left. The east wall of 415 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. is a shared wall with 417 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St., which is a two story structure.

# Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 4

<u>Bisesi Block</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
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<u>413-415 E. Second St</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
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The rear, or north elevation reveals two stories, since grade at the rear of the building is approximately eight feet higher than grade at the front elevation. At the rear of 415 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St., there is a one story high, brick extension of the main building structure at the second floor level only. The extension is approximately twenty feet square, with two one-over-one light, double-hung windows on the north elevation and four one-over-one light, double-hung windows and a single entry on the west elevation. The second floor level at the rear of the building is approximately two feet above grade. The rear second floor elevation of 413 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. reveals, from left to right, two one-over-one light, double-hung windows, then a single entry, then a one-over-one light, double-hung window. The third floor of the north elevation is accessed by a steel stair. The stair is located near the west side of the elevation. From grade, the stair rises to a poured concrete deck that projects approximately six feet from the building face and is supported by posts to grade. The deck is continuous across the face of the building. From left to right on the third floor elevation of 415 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. there is a single entry, then two one-over-one light, double-hung windows. Continuing from left to right at 413 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St., a one-over-one light, double-hung window, then a single entry, followed by a one-over-one light, double-hung window. The windows and the entries at 413 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. second and third floor apartments have segmental arch brick lintels.

At the rear of the 413-415 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. property, there is a large concrete block garage with stepped parapet walls on the east and west sides. The roof slopes down toward the north, or alley side. There are three, single auto, modern panel doors on the north elevation.

## 8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The Bisesi Block appears to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under C. It may be individually eligible under Criteria A or B with further research and context development. Additionally, it appears to be a contributing structure in a potential downtown historic district.

The Bisesi Block at 413-415 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St retains a high degree of integrity of its early 20<sup>th</sup> century, late Queen Anne architecture. The characteristic features of the style remain intact, as well as the bay windows, cornice line, and storefronts. The condition of the brick façade is almost pristine. A glazed brick was used, so there has been little deterioration to its face. Also, the continuous use of both storefronts by similar businesses, such as grocery stores, fruit stores, confectionaries and restaurants has deterred architectural changes to its appearance. Thus, the Bisesi Block appears individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria C.

Due to hard work and perseverance, all three Bisesi brothers were successful and passed on their businesses to their sons and daughters, who operated their businesses for many years. The story of the Bisesi brothers is one where an immigrant's dream of coming to America and being successful, in spite of language and other socio-economic barriers is realized. For the citizens of Muscatine, the most significant commercial enterprises were those that provided basic, everyday goods, such as groceries. According to the city directory of 1919, there were nine fruit stores in Muscatine, eight of which were owned by Italian-Americans. In addition to the three Bisesi brothers, Anthony Cirvello had a store at 501-503 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St.. Louis Gaeta at 107 Iowa Avenue, Phillip Lonzaretto at 530 Mulberry Avenue, Joe

# Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 5

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<u>Bisesi Block</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
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Manjoine at 226 Walnut and Mike Manjoine at 529 Mulberry Avenue. Several of these surnames are still recognizable today as prominent business and property owners, most notably the Bisesi, Gaeta and Manjoine names. Through mutual support and common language and interest, the Italian immigrants overcame their initial difficulties and became successful and contributing citizens of Muscatine. Further research and context work on the role of Italian immigrants in Muscatine needs to be completed to better understanding the significance of this aspect of the building's history. Thus, more research is recommended to assess the individual significance of the Bisesi Block under Criteria A and B.

Finally, the Bisesi Block appears eligible as a contributing building in a downtown historic district. It appears eligible under one currently identified historic context for this district, "20<sup>th</sup> century Business and Industry," and may be eligible under a historic context to be developed in 2005-2006, "Cultural/Ethnic Diversity." It retains a high degree of integrity of its early 20<sup>th</sup> century late Queen Anne architecture, with even the storefront remaining intact. Additionally, its history as a fruit store and grocery store contributes historically to the downtown historic district.

Brothers Anthony, Joe and Peter Bisesi were born in Termini Imerese, near Palermo on the island of Sicily in the 1850's. They immigrated to the United States between 1876 and 1886 through the port of New Orleans and then up the Mississippi River to Saint Louis, Missouri, where they settled for a few years. They all followed a similar path to Muscatine, through Saint Louis, arriving with their families in Muscatine between 1890 and 1893. Upon arrival, Tony and Joe began a partnership in a fruit store venture at 210 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St., which was successful. In 1903, they moved their business to 324 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. and in 1910 they purchased the property at 413-415 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Joe and Tony continued operation of the fruit stores at 324 and 415 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. from c. 1916 until Joe's death in 1925. Tony then continued at 415 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. The 1916 city directory shows the Bisesi Fruit Store at 415 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St., where it remained until 1943. Brother Peter also began a fruit store and confectionery store at about 1900 at 406 Mulberry Avenue and later moved his business to the corner of Mulberry and Fifth Street, where it remained for many years. All three brothers and their families were members of Saint Matthias Church and participated in numerous fraternal and social organizations in Muscatine. Frank had also operated his own fruit store on Front Street near Iowa Avenue prior to his death in 1939.

After the Bisesi Fruit Store, the Lazio Confectionery was in operation at 415 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. during the late 1940's, then the B & E Café in 1952, the East End Café in 1954 and Carter Shoe Repair in 1956, followed by Second Street Grocery in 1958 and 1959, according to city directories.

Beginning in 1912, the occupants of 413 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. have been an unbroken succession of family owned and operated grocery stores until 1956. The I & I Grocery, which began in 1900 in the 300 block of East 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, was the first. Operated by T.H. Ogilvie, the I & I was in business at this address until 1932, when Mr. Ogilvie and his two sons opened a larger store on Walnut Street. The Fuhlman Grocery opened its doors at 413 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. in 1932 and continued in business at this location until 1948. City directories list Misel Grocery occupying 413 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. from 1949 through 1956.

# Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 6

<u>Bisesi Block</u> Name of Property	<u>Muscatine</u> County
<u>413-415 E. Second St</u> Address	<u>Muscatine</u> City

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Lazio, Augustina, granddaughter of Tony Biseli, interview with her daughter Maryrose Peterschmidt, March 2005.

“Muscatine Business Directory,” Muscatine Journal Centennial Edition, May 31, 1940, p. 2

“Muscatine,” Real Photo Postcard, c. 1912, Publisher unknown, Peterschmidt private collection.

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](http://sanborn.umi.com)

## Location Map



# Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 7

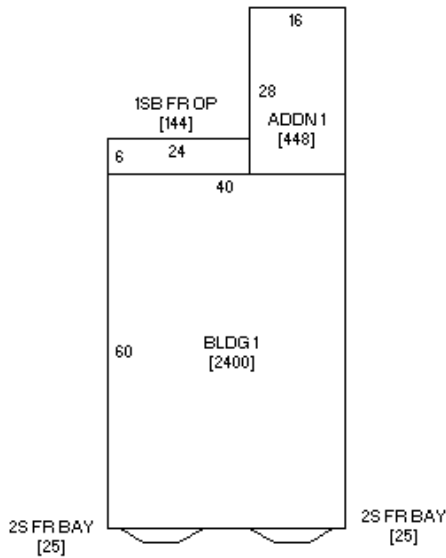
Bisesi Block  
Name of Property

Muscatine  
County

413-415 E. Second St  
Address

Muscatine  
City

### Plan (from assessor's office)



(front - 2<sup>nd</sup> St)

### Historic Postcard "Muscatine," Real Photo Postcard, c. 1912, Publisher unknown, Peterschmidt private collection



### Photograph of building (digital image)

