

Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

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M.W. Griffin House
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7. Narrative Description

The Griffin residence is a two-story, double-bay, Italianate house. The house sits on a brick foundation. All of the exterior walls are wood studs, clad with a brick veneer. The roof is a shallow sloped hip roof with asphalt shingles. The hip roof terminates with a flat deck indicating an area for a cupola or where a cupola had been removed. The overall appearance of the house is simple in appearance with minimal detail. The house has a front porch that is also simple in detail and appearance. All of the windows are paired; one-over-one-light double hung wood windows. All the windows appear original.

The front of the house (south elevation) has the aforementioned porch. The porch is comprised of two asymmetrical bays framed with simple wood columns. The porch columns rest upon stone block bases. The porch roof is a very shallow hip roof with wide overhangs. Shallow eave brackets (modillions) follow the overhang of the porch, as well as, the overhang of the house. The 1891 photograph shows an earlier porch, which appears to have been replaced in the 1920s, based on the deeper porch shown on the 1928 Sanborn map than the 1919 map. A pair of tall narrow wood doors aligns with the second floor windows. Wood screen doors cover the solid wood entry doors. All of the tall windows have decorative wood lintels/entablatures above them giving the simple windows much character.

A historic photograph from circa 1891 shows a house that looks much the same today as it did then. There have been a couple of changes, however, the first being the replacement of the front porch. Second is the removal of the iron cresting and finial from the roof. The original chimney has also been removed (*Muscatine Journal Semi-Centennial Edition*, January 1891, 50).

The west elevation has a two story bay window. The windows in the bay are one-over-one-light double-hung wood windows. There is also a lead glass wood window with decorative wood lintel. There is a window on the second story, but is currently shuttered. It is likely similar to the other one-over-one-light double-hung wood windows on the east elevation. This window also has decorative wood lintels. In the rear section of the house, along the west elevation, is a single entry door leading to the kitchen. There is also one window that is a one-over-one-light double-hung wood window with decorative wood lintel. The second story of the east elevation rear section includes two one-over-one-light double-hung wood windows. There are no decorative wood lintels on these windows. The rear kitchen portion of the house steps back from the west elevation. According to Sanborn maps as early as 1883, this part of the house existed. If it was added, it was added shortly after the house was built. It likely was just constructed as a rear section originally.

The east side of the house is very similar to the west elevation. It has all of the same eave and cornice detail as the rest of the house. There is also a bay window similar to the bay window on the west side. However, the bay window on the east side occurs at the first floor only. The first floor also includes one one-over-one-light double-hung wood window, and with a decorative wood lintel. The second story includes a one-over-one-light double-hung wood window, and with a decorative wood lintel. There is also

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toward the back of this elevation on the second story two windows paired together. They are one-over-one-light double-hung wood windows also. They have decorative wood lintels.

The rear of the house is has a recently added single story addition to the rear kitchen section. The new addition is wood framed and clad in wood – painted to match the trim of the house. The addition is three sided with two modern windows paired together on each side. There are canopies over each pairing of windows. There is an extensive use of trellises and a large garden in the backyard that dominates the landscape.

The interior of the house still has much of its original wood work and original wood floors. The kitchen and bathrooms have been updated.

There is a garage on the property. However, it was constructed within the last ten years. Interestingly, none of the Sanborn maps indicate a structure at the location of a garage/ carriage house.

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The M.W. Griffin House does not appear to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A or B, but it does appear to be individually eligible under Criterion C. The M.W. Griffin House also appears to be a contributing building in a potential “West Hill” neighborhood historic district.

There do not appear to be any important events associated with this house. There also do not appear to be any particularly important people who have lived here. M.W. Griffin was a well known insurance agent, and apparently very successful according to a caption underneath an old picture of his house that reads “Residence of M.W. Griffin, oldest and Most Successful Farm Insurance Agent in Eastern Iowa” (*Muscatine Journal Centennial Edition*, January 1891, page 50). Mr. Griffin, however, is one of many insurance agents in business at this time. This may have been a paid advertisement. Thus, it appears that the M.W. Griffin House is not individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A or B. The M.W. Griffin House does appear however, to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. This house has had few alterations since it was constructed. The windows are rather unique to most Italianate houses, and particularly unique to Italianate houses in Muscatine, in that the windows are paired and are taller and narrower than the windows usually associated with Italianate houses. The details of this house are also very simple compared to most Italianate houses. As well, the decorative wood lintels appear to be original, and also somewhat unusual to Muscatine’s Italianate architecture. Thus it appears that the M.W. Griffin House is individually eligible for the National Register under Criterion C.

The M.W. Griffin House also appears to be a contributing building to a potential “West Hill” neighborhood historic district. This is one of eight houses on this block, and on this side of the street, which are made of brick. These homes all have good integrity, with this home having particularly strong integrity, as there

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have been few changes to the original appearance. This block represents a strong example of 19th century neighborhood development. Thus it appears that the M.W. Griffin House is a contributing building to a potential "West Hill" neighborhood historic district.

The M.W. Griffin House does not appear on the 1874 birds-eye view of Muscatine, but does appear on the 1883 Sanborn Map. Maria Griffin bought this property from Samuel Houser on February 25, 1879 for \$1100 (Lots Book 12: 508). It appears that there was a house on the lot at this time, and may have been built in 1878, in order to sell the lot. The Griffin's were still listed at there old address in 1879; on 3rd E. of Mulberry. The 1880 census shows M.W. Griffin (35), Fire and Life Insurance; Maria (36), Keeping House; and son Malcom (1), living at this location. The city directories show M.W. Griffin and his wife Maria here from 1883 to 1895. M.W. Griffin is listed as an insurance agent, and in 1889 the directory more specifically lists him as a district agent for the Continental Insurance Company of New York. On July 9, 1895, Myron W. Griffin died. His obituary does not add a lot of detail to his life, but did state that he had served in the Civil War from beginning to end, and then after the war came to Muscatine, and became involved in the insurance industry. He had one child (Muscatine Evening Journal; July 9, 1895, pg.4).

Maria Griffin continues to be listed in the city directories as living here through 1907. In one city directory (1899-1900), J.P. Fox Sr. and J.P. Fox Jr. were living here with Maria Griffin. J.P. Fox Sr. is listed as retired. The 1900 census information just list Maria Griffin at this address, owning the house at age 50. Her two children had died. No occupation is listed for her through this period. On March 21, 1908, Maria Griffin died.

On January 2, 1909, Henry Butz bought this property from William Jayne and Harry Huttig, the executors of the last will and testament of Maria Griffin. Henry Butz and his wife Maria are shown by city directories as living here from 1911 to 1941, with Henry shown as proprietor of Butz-Fair Variety Store. The Butz-Fair store was established at 113 West 2nd Street, on September 3, 1900, by Henry Butz, as a racket store. Henry had earlier started out in the hardware business at Walde and Company, where he acted as manager. Items sold at the Butz-Fair store included gasoline and kerosene stoves, ice boxes, and refrigerators (*Brief Histories of Muscatine Businesses*, July 17, 1902, 21). In the 1916, 1919 and 1921 city directories, W.A. Matthews and his wife Edith lived on the 2nd floor. William Matthews is listed as local manager of the telephone company. The 1920 Census shows Henry Butz (61, Proprietor of variety store), Anna Mae (56, wife), William Matthews (38, manager telephone company), Edith Matthews (31, wife), Eileen (15, Daughter), Talma Luke? (41, Sister of Edith, Dressmaker at a department store). On August 26, 1940, Henry Butz died, and left the home to his wife Anna Mae, and his Grandson Henry George Patterson. The warranty deed is dated May 8, 1941 (108:372). Anna is listed living here alone in the 1943 city directory. Anna Butz dies on June 23, 1944,

The house passes to Henry George Patterson fully after Anna's death, with the deed dated June 30, 1944 (Lots Book 108: 372). The 1946 city directory Henry G. Patterson was living here with his wife Florence. Henry's occupation is listed as the Patterson Company. The Patterson Company is listed in the city directory as one of three wholesale button manufacturers and jobbers. The company was only

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listed in the 1946 directory. It was located at 604 East 3rd Street. The city directory for 1949 shows the house vacant.

On October 1, 1949, Dorothy Jackson bought this property from Henry G. Patterson (Lots Book 127: 360). The 1952 and 1954 city directories show Lloyd Jackson and his wife Dorothy living here, with Dorothy listed as working for Grain Processing in 1952, and in 1954 as an employee of Mississippi Valley Grain.

On January 4, 1956, William and Barb Duval bought this property from Dorothy and Lloyd Jackson (160:173). The house was now used as a rental, with the 1956 city directory showing Ronald Evans living at 327, with his wife Doris. Ron is shown as being an attendant at Leslies Service Station. Irene Harter was living at 327½, and working as an inspector at the Celon Corporation. The 1958 city directory shows the same people with the same occupations listed here. In 1959 Lonnie Hillman was living at 327 with his wife Dorothy. Lonnie is listed as a plumber with Claude Lucas Quality Plumbing. Irene Harter remained at 327½, continuing to work for the Celon Corporation.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Related District Number 70-01005

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Photograph of building (digital image)

