

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

State Inventory No. 70-00189 New Supplemental
 Part of a district with known boundaries (enter inventory no.) 70-01005
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 W.F. Johnson House

other names/site number Field Site #: WH-031

2. Location

street & number 608 W. Second Street

city or town Muscatine

Legal Description: (If Rural) Township Name

Township No. vicinity, county Muscatine

Range No. Section Quarter of Quarter

(If Urban) Subdivision Original Town Block(s) 6 Lot(s) 8

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)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

If Non-Eligible Property
Enter number of:
buildings
sites
structures
objects
Total

If Eligible Property, enter number of:
Contributing Noncontributing

buildings
sites
structures
objects
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

A Historical and Architectural Survey of the "West Hill" neighborhood, Muscatine, Iowa

70-016

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

01A01: Domestic / Single residence

01A01: Domestic /Single residence

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

04A:Mid-19th Century/Greek Revival

foundation 03: Brick

walls

02A: Wood/Weatherboard (Clapboard)

roof

08A: Asphalt/Shingle

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 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 608 W. Second Street
City Muscatine

Site Number 70-00189
District Number 70-01005

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)

31: Other/Neighborhood Development

Significant Person

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)

Significant Dates

Construction date

1867

check if circa or estimated date

Other dates

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, Planning & CD Coordinator (R.L. McCarley, consultant)

organization Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission date December 22, 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

1. **Map:** showing the property's location in a town/city or township.
2. **Site plan:** showing position of buildings and structures on the site in relation to public road(s).
3. **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/slave sheet # _____ Frame/slot # _____ Date Taken _____
Roll/slave sheet # _____ Frame/slot # _____ Date Taken _____
Roll/slave 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

1. **Farmstead & District:** (List of structures and buildings, known or estimated year built, and contributing or non-contributing status)
2. **Barn:**
 - a. A sketch of the frame/truss configuration in the form of drawing a typical middle bent of the barn.
 - b. A photograph of the loft showing the frame configuration along one side.
 - c. 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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W.F. Johnson House

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7. Narrative Description

This is a two-story, three-bay, side-gable house with some Greek Revival features. It sits on a brick foundation. The walls are frame, clad in wood clapboard siding. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles. The house is on an elevated lot that drops off sharply at the back end of the lot. A two-story, cross-gable wing extends towards the back of the lot. The house has several Greek Revival features, though twin brackets support the overhanging roof eaves indicating some Italianate influence on this 1860s house.

The front (north) elevation is symmetrical with a one-story, gable-roof, entry portico that is centered on the façade. Two round columns support the outside of the portico while two smaller pilasters support the interior. A triangular pediment is located in the gabled end of the portico. The entablature includes a series of dentils that extend around the frieze. The single-door entry has a multi-light transom and two narrow sidelights. The entry contains a twelve-light wood storm door and a solid wood panel interior door. Two six-over-six-light, double-hung windows are in the bays on either side of the centered entry on the first story. A plain, slightly extended wood lintel is located over each window and a pair of decorative shutter is attached at the sides. Three windows are equally spaced in a row across the elevation's second story. Each window contains six-over-six-light, double-hung sashes. Double brackets extend along the gable.

The east elevation contains eight openings on the main gable end. Four six-over-six-light, double-hung windows are located on the first story. Two of the windows are centered on the front half of the elevation and the other two are centered on the back half. Each window contains the same lintel and shutters as the front elevation openings. Three second-story openings contain similar windows. Two of the windows are centered over the front half of the elevation. The single back window on the second story is aligned over the corresponding first-story window. The remaining opening on the gable end of the elevation is a single-light, fixed sash attic window located in the upper gable. Double brackets extend along the side gable. Several other openings are scattered along the remainder of the east elevation. A slightly recessed, enclosed room, which might be a converted sleeping porch, is located on the second story within the junction created by the side gable and the cross gable. A single window is located on the porch's east wall and a pair of windows is centered on the porch's south wall. Each window contains six-over-six-light, double-hung sashes. Shutters are present on each window, but only the east window contains the small, extended lintel. A short hip roof wraps around the porch and extends out a short distance from the side of the elevation. The hip roof covers a first-story, enclosed entry. A six-over-six-light, double-hung window is located below the single window located on the sleeping porch's east wall. An entry is located to the left of the first-story window. The entry does not appear to be used, although it still contains an eight-light storm door and interior panel wood door. A flat patio roof extends out from the entry. The rest of the patio roof has been framed, but not covered. A six-over-six-light, double-hung wood window is located on the enclosed porch's south wall and under the framed, but uncovered patio roof. The remaining opening on the east elevation is a second-story six-over-six-light, double-hung window located to the left of the enclosed sleeping porch. Double brackets are located on the side gable.

The west elevation shows the similar pattern on the gable end as the east elevation, except there is one less window on each story. Three openings are located on the first story. There is one front window

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centered on the front half of the first story and a pair of windows centered on the back half of the story. Two second-story windows are also present. The front window is aligned with the front window on the first story, while the second-story back window is aligned with the first-story's middle window. All of the windows contain six-over-six-light, double-hung sashes with simple lintels and shutters. The remaining window is a single-light, fixed sash attic window in the upper gable. Double brackets are located on the side gable. Other west elevation openings include first- and second-story windows that are both centered on the back half of the side of the rear gable-roof section. Each window contains typical six-over-six-light, double-hung sashes with shutters. A entry is also centered on the front half of the rear section. A pair of decorative brackets supports an overhang that extends out over the entry. Two windows, one on the first story and one on the second, are also located on the south wall of the side gable. Each is immediately adjacent to the rear section and contains six-over-six-light, double-hung sashes and shutters. Double brackets are located on the side gable.

The rear elevation features a screened first-story patio in the end of the rear gable-roof section. Four openings are located inside the patio. An entry is located at the far right. It contains a flush-mounted wood storm door with twelve lights. A solid non-historic interior door is also present in the entry. A small transom is located above the door. The entrance to the screened patio is on the east wall near the house and contains only a screen door. Three other first-story openings are located to the left of the entry. Each contains a six-over-six-light, double-hung window. A short, wood railing surrounds the flat roof of the patio. Second-story openings include a pair of eight-over-eight-light, double-hung windows centered in the end wall. An attic vent is centered in the upper gable.

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The W.F. Johnson House appears to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. It also appears to be a contributing building in a potential "West Hill" neighborhood historic district.

Ownership records and city directory information indicate W.F. Johnson built this house sometime between 1866 and 1869, although a smaller, earlier house might have been constructed on the property in the late 1850s by either Judge Stephen Whicher or his son S.E. Whicher. W.F. Johnson was a well-known businessman who was born in Massachusetts in 1817. He moved to Muscatine in 1857 and operated a shoe store until he retired around 1884. Johnson lived in the house for most of the last half of the 19th century; and other members of his family continued to live there after he died in 1904. Johnson does not appear to have made a significant impact on the community. No significant event is known to have occurred on the property. The condition and the appearance of the property however are outstanding. There does not appear to have been any substantial alterations to the property. The house exhibits several Greek Revival features, such as an entry with sidelights and transom, entry porch with pediment and dentils, six-over-six-light double-hung windows, with an overall design that features a symmetrical side gable. Few other Greek Revival houses are found in Muscatine with this number of characteristic features, and this particular house has retained its original sense of place, modesty and

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style. Thus, the W.F. Johnson House appears to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C.

The W.F. Johnson House also appears to be a contributing building in a potential "West Hill" neighborhood historic district. Construction of the house in the mid-19th century continued the movement of families into the neighborhood and further up the hill. As others followed, the original West Hill neighborhood grew, boosting its attractiveness and appeal to more families and other interested citizens. The association with the Johnson family would also have attracted local residents to that areas of the neighborhood. This house significantly contributes to the history and architecture of this potential historic district.

It is possible that either Judge Stephen Whicher or his son S.E. Whicher (who appears to have sometimes been identified as Emerson S. Whicher) built an earlier house on this site between 1855 and 1859, possibly in anticipation of S.E. Whicher's marriage. Judge Whicher had already built a house across Second Street at 609 W. Second, and he lived at this location. He died in February 1856, about 15 months before his son married Miss Anna H. Mason. The 1856 city directory lists only Stephen Whicher, lawyer, living on the "ws Locust c second." This would correspond to the current location of 609 W. Second. The son purchased Lots 3 and 8, Block 6 from his mother, Mary E. Whicher and Margaret Caldwell (relationship unknown) for \$1 on July 26, 1858 (Book Q, Page 396). Lot 8 faced Second Street and was the site of 608 W. Second, while Lot 3 was the lot behind the house, which included the bluff dropping down to Mississippi Avenue.

Emerson S. Whicher sold Lot 8, Block 6 to Charles Chaplin, an engineer, on April 7, 1859 for \$700 (Book S, Page 47). This would appear to be a price that is too high for a vacant lot, but too low for a house the size of the current building. This would seem to indicate the possibility of an earlier house. Chaplin is listed in the 1856 directory at 90 Second Street and in the 1859 directory at "ss 2d Locust and Broadway." Possibly these could be the same location, but given the property sale in 1859, likely represent two different houses. Assuming the directory was published prior to his April purchase, this could indicate Chaplin lived in the house as a tenant and then purchased the land. The 1859 address description appears to match the current location of 608 W. Second. Chaplin must have run into tax or financial difficulties after purchasing the property. The county sheriff sold Lot 8, Block 6 for the levied amount of \$636.72 on November 26, 1859 to Simon G. Stein. Stein was recorded in the 1856 city directory at 144 Second, while his furniture store was at 136 Second, placing both of these locations near to the downtown. In the 1859 city directory Stein was recorded at the "n e c 2d and Pine," meaning he was not living at 608 W. Second in either 1856 or 1859. Since the 1859 city directory listed Chaplin already living on the "ss 2d Locust and Broadway," the apparent current location for 608 W. Second, a house must have already been on the property before Stein acquired it. If the Whicher family did not construct a small house here, Chaplin would have been the one. However, since the April 1859 sale price and the November levied amount are so close, it would appear no improvements were added to the property between the Chaplin and Stein ownerships. What seems more reasonable is that one of the Whichers built the house and then sold it to Chaplin. Since Chaplin is recorded as living there in the 1859 directory, a house had to be present. After buying it however, Chaplin apparently ran into a financial setback that lead to the sheriff's sale and subsequent purchase by Stein. Although no record could be

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found for the actual transfer, Stein acquired a plat, and apparently at some point a deed, from S.E. Whicher's brother, Patterson V. Whicher, for Lot 3, Block 6 on March 21, 1866 (Book 2, Page 22).

W.F. Johnson then purchased Lots 3 and 8, Block 6 from Simon G. Stein for \$1,350 on September 14, 1866 (Book 2, Page 474). Although this involved two lots, Lot 3 appears to be primarily steep slope and not of high value. Therefore, it appears a small house was present on Lot 8 when Johnson bought it. The 1866 directory had him on "Walnut – es 2 n Second." The 1869-70 city directory listed W.F. Johnson's residence on "ss Second." Based on those records, and the price he paid for the property in 1866, a small house was likely on the property when W.F. Johnson bought it. He probably removed the house and built the larger, more refined house now on the lot. According to the 1866 city directory, Johnson, who likely owned a commercial building on Second Street where his business was located, was one of the three wholesale and retail boot and shoe dealers in the community. In addition, there were 18 boot and shoe manufacturers who also probably served the wholesale and retail markets. He was recorded in the 1870 census, although the index incorrectly listed him as W.J. and not W.F. According to that record, W.F. Johnson, 54, shoe dealer, owned real estate valued at \$6000 and a personal estate of \$1000. The real estate value indicates a much more substantive building than the earlier levied amount associated with the Stein purchase. This amount matches the real estate values recorded on the 1870 census record for other residents in the neighborhood. Others listed in the household in the 1870 census included Johnson's wife Sarah, 42; and son Charles, 18, who was working as a store clerk, probably for his father. The 1874-75 directory narrowed the location of his house down to "ss Second w Locust," while the 1876-77 directory gave it the address of 109 W. Second. An 1874 birds-eye map of the West Hill area shows a two-story, side-gable house at the correct location. The 1883-86 directory provided the current address of 608 W. Second. Johnson lived there until he died in 1904. W.F. Johnson was born on April 18, 1817 in Bradford, Mass. He came to Muscatine in 1857 and became a well-known shoe store owner in the community. He retired from the business around 1874 and devoted a great deal of his time after that working with flowers and gardening. He and his wife Sarah had two daughters, E_____, and Anna, in addition to their son Charles (Muscatine Journal, September 20, 1904, 6). The 1900 census showed Johnson, 84, widowed, and his daughter Anna, 46, living at 608 W. Second. The only other person in the household was Anna Loab, 21, a servant. Anna was identified as a school teacher. W.F. Johnson died in Muscatine on September 19, 1904. No record of Sarah's death could be located.

In the 1907 city directory Anna C. Johnson was listed at the residence, along with F.L. and Fannie Bihlmeier, indicating Johnson had split the house into a duplex. According to the 1910 census, Bihlmeier was a 29-year-old attorney, but that record actually showed him at a Locust Street address and not 608 W. Second. Instead, the 1910 census listed Elsie Enke (?), 21, as a boarder with Johnson. She appeared to be employed by the city school system as a supervisor of planning (?). The discrepancy between the census and city directory records continued over the next several years, as the Bihlmeiers continued to be listed by the directories at 608 W. Second. That continued until the 1916 issue when Walter S. and Hannah Cohn were listed as 608 W. Second residents. No occupation was provided for Cohn. Although Anna Johnson was not listed that year as a resident, she was listed the following year and intermittently for the next nine years. It is assumed she consistently lived in part of the house through this period. In 1919 E.C. and Flora Rosenmund were identified as residents with Johnson. Rosenmund was identified as an assistant cashier at Muscatine State Bank in the 1920 census, which confirmed

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them at 608 W. Second. The Rosenmunds' daughter Gwenyth, 1, was the only other person identified in the household. The Rosenmunds continued to be listed in the 1921 and the 1923-24 directories. E.C. Stocker was also listed in the 1921 and 1923-24 directories as living on the second floor. It is unclear if Johnson was still living there, but she reappears as a resident of the west side of the building in the 1927 directory, indicating three apartments might have been present during the early 1920s. However, while E.C. Stocker, a librarian at the Musser Public Library, was still listed as a resident in the 1927 directory, the Rosenmunds were gone, hinting they might have moved to make way for Johnson's return. In any case, Johnson was not listed as a resident after the 1927 directory. There is no death record in the Muscatine County Courthouse for Anna Johnson and her obituary could not be located. Anna Chase Johnson is listed in the Greenwood Cemetery records as dying at age 82, which would have placed her death sometime around 1936. Musser Public Library records do not include those years.

In 1927, Mrs. Augusta C. Eschbach, widow of Henry, moved into part of the house, according to the directory from that year. She purchased the property on June 4, 1928 from Anna C. Johnson (Book 70, Page 465). G.W. and Martha Newton were also listed as residents, indicating Eschbach continued to rent a part of the house. Newton was the city editor for the *Muscatine Journal*, while his wife was a secretary for C.C. Hakes & Co. No occupation was provided for Eschbach. Eschbach continued to live there through the 1959 directory. The Newtons also were long residents of the house, except when Anthony and Elizabeth Howe were listed as residents in the 1934 and 1931 directories. Howe was the manager of the Montgomery Ward store. The Newtons returned in the 1936-37 directory and remained there until the 1954 directory. Martha Newton, widow of George, was then listed as a resident in the 1956 directory. She was also identified as a teacher at St. Katharine's in Davenport in that directory. After the 1956 directory, only Eschbach is listed as a resident.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Census Records, United States Census Bureau, 1860, 1870, 1900, 1910, 1920.

City Directories, Muscatine. Various publishers, 1856-1959. Available as the Musser Public Library.

Koch, Augustus. *Bird's-eye View of the City of Muscatine, Muscatine County, Iowa*. Koch, 1874. In the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

"Old Settler Dies," Obituary for W.F. Johnson, *Muscatine Journal*, September 20, 1904, page 6.

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

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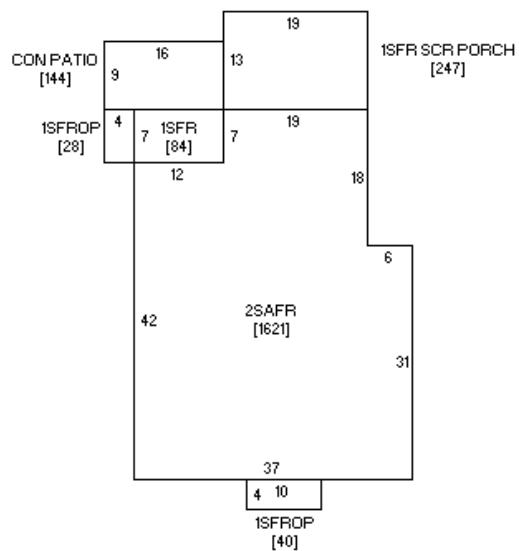
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Location Map



Plans of buildings on site (from assessor's office)



(front – W. 2nd Street)

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Photograph of building (digital image)

