

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

State Inventory No. 70-00206 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 Dr. D.P. Johnson House (#2)
 other names/site number Ralph J Wittich Funeral home; Field Site #: WH-044

2. Location

street & number 216 W. 3rd St
 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) 35 Lot(s) lot 9 & W 1/2 lot 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)	Number of Resources within Property		
	If Non-Eligible Property	If Eligible Property, enter number of:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Enter number of:	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____ buildings	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____ sites	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____ structures	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____ 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 _____

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)
<u>01A01: Domestic / Single residence</u>	<u>08C01: Recreation and Culture / Art Gallery</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>05D: Late Victorian / Queen Anne</u>	foundation <u>03: Brick</u>
_____	walls <u>03: Brick</u>
_____	roof <u>08A: Asphalt / Shingle</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 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
City Muscatine

Address 216 W. 3rd St

Site Number 70-00206
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 Dates

Construction date

1890 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 Christine Conley, volunteer (R.L. McCarley, consultant)

organization Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission date November 30, 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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7. Narrative Description

This is a three-story, four-bay, Queen Anne house. The house sits on a brick foundation. The walls are brick. The hip roof is clad in asphalt shingles. Most of the windows are one-over-one-light double-hung replacement windows. In the early 1930's, a new façade brick was applied to the house, and earlier details were obscured, including segmental arch lintels over the windows. The top of the tower on the northwest corner has also been removed.

A c.1891 photo shows the original design of the home, with the covered porch across the front, the tower with a "cupola" top on the northwest corner and widow's walk on top of the roof with what appears to be a wrought iron balustrade surrounding it (Semi-Centennial Edition of the Muscatine Journal, January 1891). Sanborn maps shows that a front porch between the bay window and turret was removed between 1919 and 1928. A 1934 photo of this property still shows there is a six-sided tower with the full top that extended up from the northwest front angled bay window but the balustrade has been removed. The lower part of this section is still a current part of the roof and contains a ballroom on the third floor. This photograph also shows decorative brackets along the eaves. All the windows had segmental arch lintels, and a brick belt course projected between the 2nd and 3rd stories. There were striped awnings on several of the first story windows that are no longer there. It appears that the metal roof over the front entrance today was added sometime after 1932. The surround appears to have been salvaged. It appears that the one main chimney at the rear of the house is no longer there but there are three others; two along the west elevation and one on the east elevation ("OG-3617," 1934 Historic Photograph, Oscar Grossheim Photography Collection). According to pictures in the Muscatine Journal newspaper advertisements for the Ralph J. Wittich Funeral Home, it would appear that the new brick on the house and the removal of the tower and cupola happened sometime between 1947 and 1951. The awnings shown in the 1934 are not depicted in the hand drawn ads from 1935 and 1946 (12/30/1935 AD, December 30, 1946 AD) but do show up in the picture with the 1938 advertisement (December 30, 1939 AD). In 1951 the hand drawn advertisement depicts a new brick façade and the tower has been removed.

This front (north) elevation of this house is framed by a angled bay window on the left, and an angled turret on the right (northwest) corner. It has concrete stairs leading up to an awning covered concrete stoop to the left of center. There are wrought iron supports and railings with some detail. The original wood surround with round pilasters, dentils, and arch pediment appears to be intact behind the awning. The double door entry is slightly recessed, and each door has a beveled glass transom window. It has what appear to be the original wood doors with carving and two panes of beveled glass in each door. To the right of center is a one-over-one-light double-hung replacement window. The angled bay window on the left of the elevation has three one-over-one-light double-hung replacement windows on the first and second story. The turret on the right also has three one-over-one-light double-hung replacement windows on the first and second story, wrapping around to the west elevation. The second story has two one-over-one-light double-hung replacement window centered between the bay window and turret. The third story has eight, small, single light fixed attic windows, above each of the second story windows. The third story windows appear to be original.

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The east side elevation has two one-over-one-light double-hung replacement windows. There is a three-story angle bay window toward the back of this elevation. This bay window is depicted on the 1919 Sanborn map, and it is not depicted on the earlier maps. It has two one-over-one-light double-hung replacement windows on each side of the bay. The middle of the bay is all brick for all three stories. The second-story has five one-over-one-light double-hung replacement windows. All are directly above the first story windows. The third-story has five, small, single light fixed windows and they are all directly above the windows on the first and second stories. There is a 1 ½ story rear section, part of the original home according to the Sanborn maps. There is a single door entry on this elevation with three concrete stairs leading up to a small covered porch. There is a double one-over-one-light double-hung replacement window directly above the porch roof. To the left side of this porch are two one-over-one-light double-hung replacement windows, one directly over the top of the other.

The west side elevation toward the rear of the house, directly across from the bay window on the east side, is another three-story angled bay window. The first story has two one-over-one-light double-hung replacement windows; these are on each side of the bay. The center bay has a small stained glass window, which appears to be original to the home. There is a single wood door entry with a transom, most likely a replacement door located all the way to the rear of this elevation where the garage meets the house. On the 1 ½ story part of the house are three one-over-one-light double-hung replacement windows; they are toward the top ½ story. A brick addition juts out beside the entry and appears to possibly be part of the garage that is attached to the 1 ½-story portion of the house. The Sanborn map show an open porch on the side of this section previous to 1928, and it was removed by 1946. There is a concrete sidewalk with a metal railing on the west side of the house.

The rear (south) elevation is mainly the garage. There are also two one-over-one-light double-hung replacement windows on the top of the 1 ½-story portion of the house.

The one-story brick garage was added on sometime between 1928 Sanborn map and a 1932 picture of the house, which shows the garage. It is a three-car garage facing east with one single garage door and one double garage door. The garage doors are non-historic. There are two small one-over-one light double-hung replacement widows centered on the south elevation of the garage. The west elevation of the garage is all brick and cement block, with no windows or doors.

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The Dr. D.P. Johnson House does not appear to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B, or C. However, it does appear to be a contributing building in a potential "West Hill" neighborhood historic district.

Dr. D.P. Johnson built this mansion of local brick for his family around 1890. He worked most of his life as a physician and surgeon, living at 126 W. 3rd Street (demolished 2005). He built this house as he

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retired, and this was his home until his death in 1900. His wife continued to reside there until the house was sold to the Blivens and then the McKees of the McKee Button Company. With the later alterations, such as the new façade brick, new windows, and removal of the top of the corner tower, it does not strongly reflect the period that the Johnsons, McKees, or Blivens lived here. With the alterations to the house, there are several better examples of the Queen Anne style in the West Hill neighborhood and throughout Muscatine. Additionally, no significant events appear to be associated with this house. However, the locally prominent funeral home Ralph J. Wittich funeral home was located at this address for almost 65 years. The alterations were made as part of modernizing the building for their use sometime between 1946 and 1951. Ralph and his father Werner Wittich opened this funeral home in 1932, their location has since moved to 1931 Houser Street but the Ralph J. Wittich, Riley, Freers, Funeral Home is still today in existence here in Muscatine. Thus, the Dr. D.P. Johnson House does appear to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the funeral home business

Additionally, the Dr. D.P. Johnson House does appear to be a contributing building in a potential "West Hill" neighborhood historic district. It reflects the neighborhood development of this area in the late 19th century. The Johnson family was a prominent family in Muscatine, who built this house to reflect their status. Though there have been many changes and updates including the removal of the tower and cupola, it still retains some key Queen Anne features. According to pictures in the Muscatine Journal newspaper advertisements for the Ralph J. Wittich Funeral Home, it would appear the removal of the tower and cupola happened sometime between 1947-1951. The house contributes historically and architecturally to this potential historic district.

The 1888 Sanborn map shows a high bluff at this location. The house appears on the 1892 Sanborn with the main two-story section and a rear one-and-one-half-story section. Dr. D.P. Johnson, Jr. bought property in Block 35 in 1890, and then sold his father Dr. D.P. Johnson, Sr. the west half of Lot 8, Block 35 on March 11, 1890. Though the transaction for Lot 9, where most of the house sits, could not be located, it is assumed Dr. D.P. Johnson, Sr. also bought this lot around the same time. Thus, construction on this house began in 1890. Dr. Johnson was listed as one of eight physicians in Muscatine in the 1859 *Business Mirror*. In 1859, he married his second wife, Sarah Melissa Bumgardner. After serving in the Civil War, Dr. Johnson returned to Muscatine, resumed his practice and continued to serve the medical needs of Muscatine residents for another 30 years. Dr. D.P. Johnson is listed as retired in the 1889-92 directory, but his residence remains at 126 W. Third. At the time that he retired in 1889, he was one of the oldest practitioners in Iowa ("Death Dr. Johnson," *Journal*, February 14, 1900, p.1). He soon built this house at 216 W. 3rd Street. The 1891 city directory lists D. Powell Johnson, a loan broker at 209 Iowa Ave., at this address. The 1897 city directory lists D. Powell Johnson, retired physician, at this address. He lived here until his death in 1900. His obituary noted, "his genial disposition and kindly personality...made him a favorite among all classes." As long as his health permitted it, he took "a daily ride to all the four corners of Muscatine, never failing to find friends to visit with on the cars enroute. Every man, woman, and child in the city knew the venerable doctor, and his familiar figure will be greatly missed...Dr. Johnson was an honored citizen, a man of exceptional worth

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and intelligence, and one of whose life, work, and daily acts only words of praise will be spoken" ("Death Dr. Johnson," *Journal*, February 14, 1900, p.1).

His wife continued to live in the house until 1909. The 1900 census indicates that Sara M. Johnson (age 58) was head of household at this address and her daughter, Vivian, age 15, and a servant Amanda also resided here with her. On May 25, 1904, Sarah Johnson officially received title to the west 1/2 of lot 8 and all of lot 9, Block 35, from the heirs of D.P. Johnson (Lots Book 28: 186). She then transferred it to Winslow Blanchard on the same day (Lots Book 36: 698). Winslow Blanchard I, working at Blanchard Packing Co., and his wife Amanda M. Blanchard are listed in the 1907 city directory as the sole residents of 216 W. 3rd Street. Relationship is unknown, but Sarah continued to be listed here in the 1907 city directory.

Nellie Bliven bought the west 1/2 of lot 8 and all of lot 9 from Winslow Blanchard on October 22, 1909 (Lots Book 42: 257). The 1911 city directory indicates William and Nellie Bliven lived in the house with Miriam and Helen Bliven, both students. In the 1913 city directory it is indicated that William and Nellie Bliven (his wife) were the current residents of this house. William was identified as working as the Vice President of Muscatine State Bank, and Vice President of the McKee Button Company. James McKee and his brother-in-law William Bliven formed their first button company in the late 1890s. McKee appears to be the primary manager of this business, with financial backing from Bliven who did not live in Muscatine through most of this period. After operating at 315-319 W. Front (Mississippi) for a decade, they launched their namesake business in 1906, the McKee & Bliven Button Company. Around 1910, they moved to their permanent location at 1000 Hershey, on the south side of Hershey at the end of Front Street and Elm Street, along the railroad tracks in South Muscatine. By 1911, they reportedly employed between 500 and 600 people, and they sold buttons throughout the United States (Sanborn Map Company 1905, 1912; Richman 1911, Vol. 2: 117). William Bliven died in 1915, and the company continued to be run by James S. McKee and his sons Harold and Albert ("Albert McKee Dies at 58; Managed Local Button Co.," *Journal*, July 10, 1948, 1).

Anna McKee bought the property from her sister-in-law Nellie Bliven (widow) on November 25, 1916 (Lots Book 48: 528). The 1916 directory shows James S. and Anna McKee and Nellie, Ruth and Theodore McKee (students) as the residents. From 1919-1924 James S. and Anna B. McKee are indicated to be the current residents here. James is identified as working for McKee and Bliven. The 1920 census lists James S. McKee (54, manager of button company), wife Anna (52), son Harold (26, laborer at button company), son Theodore (19), and daughter Ruth (16) at 216 W. 3rd Street. On July 1, 1926, the family incorporated the company as the McKee Button Company. James served as president until his death in January 1927, and the eldest son J. Harold took over as president at that time ("Albert McKee Dies at 58; Managed Local Button Co.," *Journal*, July 10, 1948, 1). Anna McKee, widow of James S, was listed as the sole occupant in 1927. According to the city directories the house sat vacant from 1929 to 1931. Anna is not listed in the 1929 and 1931 Muscatine City Directories, however she does appear in the 1934 directory as residing at 1100 Oakland Drive.

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Werner Wittich bought the house (west 1/2 of lot 8 and all of lot 9) from Anna McKee on April 28, 1932 (Lots Book 76: 317). On August 5, 1932, the Wittich Funeral Home opened at this location, and it continued to operate here until 1996. Werner Wittich opened an embalming establishment with Christian Kegel in 1867 on Iowa Ave. Another partner, Frank Weinker, was later taken into the firm, and the three started one of the first casket and furniture factories in the state. Werner Wittich severed his ties with the Kegel-Weinker partnership around 1879 and began a business at 219 E. 2nd St., along with his eldest son, George, who was then 15, and J.B. Mark, a new partner. The younger Werner Wittich joined his father and brother in the late 1880's. Around 1890, the business name was changed to Wittich & Son and continued to be located at 219 E. 2nd Street. The new name continued to be used after the elder Wittich's death in 1894, until c.1900, at which time it was changed to Wittich Brothers Funeral Home. They moved to 210-212 Cedar Street by 1916. Around 1923, they built a new building on this site, which remains standing (see 70-00971). In 1923, five other funeral directors were listed in the city directory, including four that had been listed in 1910. The Wittich Brothers Funeral Home, in addition to being prominent among these funeral businesses, built the only "commercial" funeral home building in this period, located in downtown Muscatine. George and Werner Wittich continued their business partnership until 1932, and the business continued at 210 Cedar St as the George M. Wittich Funeral Home.

At this time, Werner moved to the former Dr. D.P. Johnson home at 216 W. 3rd St. to begin a new funeral home with his son, Ralph. On August 5, 1932, Ralph J. Wittich Funeral Home opened at this location. In 1933, Ed Freers, a licensed embalmer, joined the Ralph J. Wittich Funeral Home. According to an article on the business in 1940: "The funeral home has made progressive changes in the 8 years of its existence, buying new equipment that would improve services. Outstanding among these improvements is the new air conditioning system installed a year ago. A lovely cathedral organ is available for all services. Dependable ambulance service is maintained at all times." Ralph J. and Werner Wittich both served as licensed embalmers, while Ralph's wife acted as hostess and assistant (Centennial Edition, *Muscatine Journal*, May 31, 1940. Section 7, pg 16).

Ralph J. Wittich and Violette his wife bought the property from Werner and Minnie Wittich on February 19, 1944 (Lots Book 108: 175). After Werner Wittich died in 1944, Mr. Freers became a partner with Ralph Wittich in the business. There are only four funeral homes listed in the city directory; Fairbanks Home for Funerals, located at 114 W. 4th St., Riley-Meyers Funeral Home, at 410 E. 7th St., Geo M. Wittich Funeral Home at 210-212 Cedar St, and Ralph J. Wittich Funeral Home at 216 W. 3rd St. The change in ownership apparently ushered in a period of alterations to the building. The earlier appearance continued to be depicted in 1947, but a 1951 drawing of the building in a *Journal* advertisement shows the renovated/current appearance. The same four funeral homes continued to operate in town in 1954.

The partnership between Ed Freers and Ralph J. Wittich continued until 1964, when Ed Freers purchased the business from Ralph. Ed Freer's son, David joined the firm in 1970 and purchased it from his father in 1978. In 1996, the Ralph J. Wittich Funeral Home merged with the Riley Funeral Home of Muscatine. Riley's had served Muscatine since 1941, when they purchased the Meyers funeral home at

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401 E. 7th St. The new business moved from 216 West 3rd to 1931 Houser Street in 1996 and continues in business to this day (Ralph J. Wittich-Riley-Freers Funeral Home, 2005). They sold it in 1996 to the current owners, who now operate the River's Edge Gallery there.

Today, there are three funeral homes in Muscatine. Two of these businesses are directly descended from the Wittich family. The other funeral home in town associated is the George M. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home. In 1936, Thomas F. Beveridge and Floyd Downey purchased the George M. Wittich Funeral Home, with Beveridge becoming the sole owner in 1945. They sold it to Stacy Lewis in 1978. The business was moved in 1983 from 210-212 Cedar to 2907 Mulberry Avenue and continues in business to this day (George M. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home 2005).

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

"Death Dr. Johnson," David Power Johnson [Sr.] obituary, *Muscatine Journal*, February 14, 1900, p.1.

Deed/Abstract Records, Recorder's Office, Muscatine County Courthouse, Muscatine, Iowa.

George M. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home, Website, Muscatine, IA, 2005. URL: lewisfuneralhomes.com

Muscatine Journal, Annual Edition, December 30, 1946, section 4, page 11.

Muscatine Journal, November 3, 1951.

"OG-3617," 1934. Historic Photograph, Oscar Grossheim Photography Collection, Musser Public Library, Muscatine, Iowa.

The Pearl City, Muscatine Iowa, p116.

Ralph J. Wittich-Riley-Freers Funeral Home, Website, Muscatine, IA, 2005. URL: wittichfuneralhome.com

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.

"Sara Bumgardner Johnson," Obituary, *Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, February 17, 1920, 1.

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Photograph of building (digital image)

