

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

State Inventory No. 70-00210  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 Block House  
 other names/site number Field Site #: WH-055

**2. Location**

street & number 305 West 3rd  
 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) 53 Lot(s) E 1/2 Lot 4

**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:	
	Enter number of:	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	_____ buildings	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____ sites	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____ structures	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____ objects	_____	_____ objects
<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____ 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 A Historical and Architectural Survey of the "West Hill" neighborhood, Muscatine, Iowa Historical Architectural Data Base Number 70-016

**6. Function or Use**

<b>Historic Functions</b> (Enter categories from instructions)	<b>Current Functions</b> (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>01A01: Domestic / Single residence</u>	<u>01A01: Domestic/Single residence</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

**7. Description**

<b>Architectural Classification</b> (Enter categories from instructions)	<b>Materials</b> (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>09A01: Front-gabled roof</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 Address 305 West 3rd Site Number 70-00210  
City Muscatine 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 1885  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 Jo Ann Carlson, Commission Member (R.L. McCarley, consultant)

organization Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission date 1/27/2006

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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Block House  
Name of Property

Muscatine  
County

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Muscatine  
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## 7. Narrative Description

This is a two-story, three-bay, gable-front brick house. The house sets on a brick foundation. The walls are brick, although a frame two-story tower/porch in the southeast corner of the house is clad in vinyl and a rear wall on the east elevation is clad with weatherboard. The gable-front roof is clad in asphalt shingles. There are visible markings on the brick that indicate earlier front and back porches have been removed. According to the assessor's office, the main part of the house is 47 feet by 22 feet. The front porch measures six by ten, and the back addition is approximately fifteen by nine. The house was built around 1885, as it is not depicted on the 1883 Sanborn but shows up on the 1888 Sanborn map. The 1888 Sanborn map shows a rectangular two-story house with a rear one-and-one-half-story section that has a side porch.

The front elevation has a projected frame porch on the right side that is clad in vinyl siding. A full front porch is shown on the Sanborn maps from 1888 through 1919. The 1928 Sanborn map shows a taller porch on the right side with a one-story porch across the rest of the house. Two openings appear on the front wall of the porch, one centered on the cut-away first story and another on the wider second story that overhangs the main entrance into the house. Each opening contains a 12-block glass window. A similar 12-block glass window on the tower's east wall is located midway between the two stories. The tower roof is flat with a narrow overhang. The front wall of the main house contains three openings on the first story, including the main entrance, which is located under the tower's overhanging second story. The entrance contains a non-historic combination aluminum storm door with a wood interior door. Two windows each are present on the first and second story. The right windows are centered on the wall and the left windows are centered on the left bay. Each window contains one-over-one-light, double-hung wood windows. A round one-over-one-light, double-hung attic window is located in the upper gable.

The east side elevation features the east wall of the two-story, main brick house, sandwiched between the front porch and a one-story rear enclosure that has an east wall clad with wood siding. The east wall of the tower contains only a single 12-block glass window located mid-level between the first and second story. The two-story brick wall contains three windows on both the first and second stories. Each second-story window is aligned with its corresponding first-story window. Two sets of the first- and second-story windows are centered on the back half of the wall. The remaining set is centered on the front quarter of the wall. Each window contains one-over-one-light, double-hung wood sashes. Each has a small project wood sill, but no lintel. The back frame enclosure contains a centered, one-over-one-light, double-hung wood window. A second, smaller, one-over-one-light, double-hung window is located to the left of the centered window. The one-story enclosure is covered by a flat roof that acts as a deck to a second-story apartment entrance. The entrance is located on the east wall of the rear gable addition, which covers only the west two-thirds of the main house's north wall. The entrance contains a solid wood door. A set of wood steps extends to the center of the rear gable's north wall, then makes a right-angle turn to the left and continues up the side of the gable to the deck. A wood railing with balusters lines the steps. A pair of one-over-one-light, double-hung windows is located on the adjacent, uncovered north wall of the main house.

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The west elevation is within a few feet of the adjoining property at 307 W. Third. Two windows, one on the first story and the second aligned above it on the second story, are centered on the front quarter of the wall. Each window contains two-over-two-light, double-hung wood sashes. The only remaining first-story opening is located at the back quarter of the wall and also contains a two-over-two-light, double-hung wood window. Three additional second-story windows are present on the west wall. One is a centered two-over-two-light, double-hung window. It contains an air conditioner in the lower sash. Another two-over-two-light, double-hung window is located to the left of the window with the air conditioner. Another second-story window is located to the right and above the centered window. It contains a single-light, possibly fixed sash.

The rear (north) elevation features a projecting two-story rear gable extension that extends across approximately the west two-thirds of the main house's back wall. A one-story enclosed porch covers the remaining east end of the main house wall. The roof of this porch acts as the access deck for the entrance into the second-story apartment. Two additional rear apartment entrances are present on the first story. One is a flush-mounted entrance located on the north wall of the enclosed porch. A portion of the upper deck overhangs the entry. It contains a two-light, wood storm door that covers an interior wood door with a single light in the top half. The second entrance is a centered entry that projects out from the northeast corner of the rear gable extension. It contains a single-light, wood panel door. The roof of the projecting entry has a small overhang. There is only a single window on the first story. It contains two-over-two-light, double-hung sashes and is located to the right of the wood stairs leading to the second story. A similar window is aligned directly above this window on the second story.

The Sanborn maps show a series of outbuildings on the rear section of this lot. The current two-story brick carriage has been converted into a garage. The carriage house was built around 1895 by the Achter family and was originally associated with this house. When the corner house at 303 W. Third (70-01017) was constructed, the carriage house was divided between the two lots. The majority of the carriage house sits on Lot 5, the corner lot (303 W. Third). The same owner currently owns both properties and the carriage house is now primarily associated with 303 W. Third. A description of the carriage house can be found in that report.

## 8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The Block 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.

Abstract and Sanborn map records show that heirs of Marx Block built this house between 1883 and 1888, probably as speculative building. Little information is known about the family, indicating they did not make a significant impact on the history of the city. No significant event is known to have occurred on this property. In addition, the house is a relatively non-descript gable-front building. Although its integrity is relatively intact, it has been altered in the rear with apartment entrances and in front with construction

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of a two-story frame enclosed porch. Thus, the Block House does not appear to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B, or C.

However, the Block House does appear to be a contributing building in a potential "West Hill" neighborhood historic district. It falls within one historic context identified for the district: "19<sup>th</sup> century residential and neighborhood development." Collectively, couples helped to stabilize the local neighborhood and maintain its growth and development. In addition, the house retains enough integrity, despite the rear and front alterations, for it to contribute to the history and architecture of this proposed historic district.

German immigrant Marx Block originally purchased Lot 4, Block 53 from J.A. Green for \$700 in 1858 (Book T, Page 246). After arriving in Muscatine in 1845, Block worked in the dry goods business, but later became involved in the forwarding and commission business and steamboat agency. He was elected city alderman in 1853-54 and again in 1880, and was serving that term when he died on August 5, 1881. The 1856 city directory records him at the "es Pine s Third", while the 1859 directory has him at "ns 3d b Pine and Linn." This would correspond to the current location of 305 W. Third. The 1860 census lists Block, 42; his wife Sallie, 32; four children, Charles O., 14; William G., 11; Frank, 4; and Lucy, 2. Bridget Morris, 20, an Irish immigrant servant, also was recorded in the household. The 1866 city directory listed the family's residence as "Third nw cor Pine." This would be the corner Lot 5 of Block 53, a property he is recorded as purchasing on February 26, 1866 from J.A. Reuling (Book 1, Page 569). The house on Lot 4 likely was rented out. The 1874 birds-eye view of Muscatine shows a side-gable house on this lot. After Block died on August 5, 1881, the property reverted to other members of his family. A guardian deed was issued by W.G. Block to Jacob Erb for the W 1/2 of Lot 4, Block 53 on July 31, 1884 (Book 1 GD, Page 65). Erb paid \$183.33 for the property.

The 1883 Sanborn map shows no house on Lot 4, with the corner house present on Lot 5. By 1888, the current gable-front house is located on the east half of Lot 4. In the 1886 city directory, Wm. G. Block was a steamboat agent, comm. merchant, and the city treasurer and lived at 305 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. Thus this house appears to have been built between 1883 and 1886. Other members of the family lived in the corner house at 303 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street - Frank L Block worked in a lab, Marx E. Block worked for the railroad as a mail agent, and Mrs. M.B. was a widow. Block's heirs sold the E 1/2 of Lot 4 (306 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street) to Fred H. Little on September 29, 1890 for \$1800 (Book 22, Page 348), indicating a building was present on it. Little sold the parcel to Nellie W. Lindler on May 17, 1892 (Book 24, Page 247). Lindler transferred it the same day to J. Linn Hoopes (Book 24, Page 248). No residents for this period have been identified.

Hoopes sold the house on August 15, 1892 to Mary W. Achter (Book 24, Page 381). Achter was married to Henry Achter, secretary-treasurer of the MPB Company. They are listed in the 1893-94 through the 1897-98 city directories at that residence. Henry is identified as retired in the 1897-98 directory. The Achters constructed the two-story brick carriage house that is now associated with 303 W. Third sometime around 1895. They show up in the 1900 census, with their daughter Helen as lodgers at the Commercial Hotel.

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Abstract records show they sold the E ½ of Lot 4, Block 53 to E.B. (Ebenezer) Day on April 20, 1900 (Book 33, Page 365). Day was a supervisor for an art store and an undertaker. He and his wife Jennie are listed with the Achter family as residents in the 1899-1900 city directory, but only the Days are recorded at 305 W. Third in the 1900 directory. The 1900 census also records them at that address. Day, 57; Jennie, 45; and sons Lyle, 22; and Wallace, 16, are listed there. He is shown as the owner and his occupation is shown as a furniture dealer. In 1904-1907 city directory Eb P. and Jennie Day lived at 305 West 3<sup>rd</sup>. He was a supervisor at an art store and undertaker at 300 E 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ebenezer and Jennie Day continue to be shown as the residents and owners in the 1910 census. He is listed as an owner of an art store. Apparently, he soon died. The 1911 directory lists Jennie (widow) as the resident.

Jennie apparently moved shortly after 1911, but kept possession of the property. She also apparently converted into an apartment house. The 1913 city directory lists Jas. A. and Ida Coe as residents, along with H.C. Smith on the second floor. Coe was identified as the superintendent for the MN&S Railroad, but no occupation was recorded for Smith. The 1916 city directory identifies Lulu Magoon and Vera Webster, no occupations listed for either, as the residents. On September 24, 1917, Jennie M. Day sold the property to Ida Lowe (Book 51, Page 73).

Lowe then sold it on January 12, 1920 to Sam A. Barger (Book 53, Page 495). However, it appears Magoon and Webster continued to live there through this period, with both recorded there in the 1921 city directory. Webster was identified as the second-floor resident in that directory. S.A. and Ida Barger are listed as residents of 305½ W. Third in the 1923-24 city directory. He was identified as the district agent for Mutual Life of New York. Mrs. Margaret Gobble, widow of John, was also listed as a resident of 305 West 3<sup>rd</sup> and 305 ½ W 3 is Samuel Borger & Ida D, dis agt Mutual Life of NY. No occupation was recorded for her.

Samuel A. Barger sold the E ½ of Lot 4, Block 53 to Lysle G. Fruitig in 1927 (Book 68, Page 119). Fruitig and his wife Martha are recorded in the 1927 city directory as residents. He worked as a telephone operator for WUT Co. In the city directory for 1927. In addition to the Fruitigs, W.H. and Blanche Neitzel were recorded in the 1927 directory as second-floor residents. Neitzel worked as a bookkeeper for the stockyards. In the 1929 city directory, Andrew Jr. and Lillian Cracker were the recorded residents. He worked as a switchman. There was no record of any other residents. The Crackers were still listed there in the 1931 directory, with Sidney Rankin, no occupation listed, recorded in the other apartment.

On August 30, 1932, Fruitig sold the property to Sidney Rankin (Book 8 SF, Page 65). Rankin was still listed as a resident in the 1934 city directory. Mrs. Louise Dillaway (widow of William.) was also recorded as the resident on the second floor. They both continued to live there through the 1941-42 city directory. In the 1943 directory, Rankin was again listed, still with no occupation identified, but Elbern & Ethel Knott had moved into the upstairs apartment. Knott was a salesman for Broud's electronics. Rankin died in 1945 and the probate was filed on December 24. The property apparently remained with the heirs, who continued to rent out the house. In the 1949 city directory, Van & Herdis Snyder are listed as the residents. He was an assistant controller for GPC. Meanwhile, William C. Peterson was listed at 305½ West Third in the directory. Robert C. and Ardyce Lane were listed as the residents in the 1952

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city directory. He was a woodworker for Roach and Musser. The other apartment had no return. The 1954 city directory listed Mrs. Lauren R. (Maude) Henderson as the resident. She was a widow and no occupation was recorded for her. Rodney M. & Marilyn J. Drake were living in the house in 1954, according to the city directory for that year. He was a teller at the Muscatine Bank and Trust.

The property was sold by Glyde M. Beach, assumed to be an heir of Cidney Rankin, to J.L. Webster on September 3, 1957 (Book 172, Page 514). Webster was not recorded as a resident, indicating he apparently was renting the property. The 1958 directory recorded Maude Henderson in the main house, with Jack Delveau in the upstairs apartment. No occupations for either was provided. Henderson was still recorded there in the 1961 directory, while James Howard was in the upstairs.

**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.

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

"Died" Obituary of Marx Block, *Muscatine Journal*, August 5, 1881, Page 4

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.

**Location Map**



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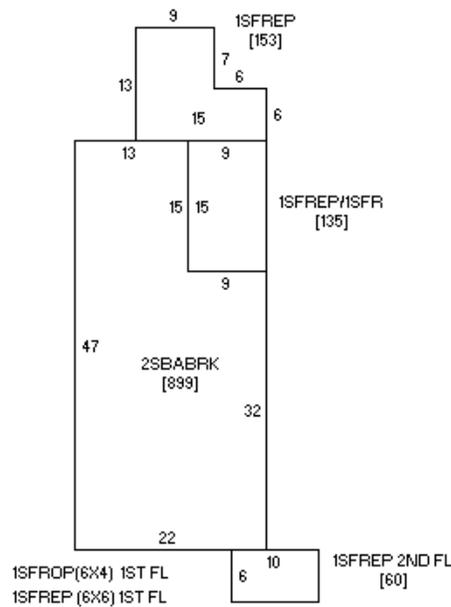
Block House  
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## Plans of buildings on site (from assessor's office)



(front – W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street)

## Photograph of building (digital image)

