

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

State Inventory No. 70-00941 **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 Woolworth Building
 other names/site number Field Site #: FS-056

2. Location

street & number 121-123 E. 2nd 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) 33 Lot(s) 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 Historical and Architectural Survey and Evaluation of the Downtown Commercial District Historical Architectural Data Base Number 70-013

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions) 02F01: Commerce / Department Store/General Store
Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions) 02E: Commerce/Trade / Specialty Store/ (carpet)

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions) _____
Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
 foundation _____
 walls 03: Brick
 roof _____
 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)
 Yes No More Research Recommended **A** Property is associated with significant events.
 Yes No More Research Recommended **B** Property is associated with the lives of significant persons.
 Yes No More Research Recommended **C** Property has distinctive architectural characteristics.
 Yes No More Research Recommended **D** Property yields significant information in archaeology or history.

County Muscatine Address 121-123 E. 2nd Street Site Number 70-00941
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)

05: Commerce

Significant Dates

Construction date 1953 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 Glenna Howard, Volunteer, Jim Rudisill, MHPC Staff; (R.L. McCarley, Consultant)

organization Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission/City of Muscatine date February 8, 2005

street & number 215 Sycamore telephone 563-264-1554

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>Woolworth Building</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Name of Property	County
<u>121-23 E. 2nd Street</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Address	City

7. Narrative Description

This one-story, commercial brick front structure was constructed in 1953-1954, with a building permit issued on January 7, 1953. It replaced several 19th century buildings, including a three-story structure that had been erected in 1852 by S.G. Stein. Construction on this one-story (with mezzanine floor), commercial brick front structure was completed in late August 1953 and the store held its grand opening on September 3-5, 1953 (Muscatine Journal 1953, 5). The current building includes a recessed double-glass door entry at each side of the storefront. A single show window separates the entry from the edge of the building. The double-glass doors in each entry are each flanked by sidelights. Show windows line the side of each entry, with three large show windows aligned between the entries in the center of the storefront. The windows all rest on a short bulkhead. The granite bulkheads appear original. The historic photos of the current structure are not clear, but there does not appear to have been any large scale altering of the 1953 storefront since it was constructed. The storefront fenestration does not appear to have been changed since the original construction, although the original windows may have been replaced. (Muscatine Journal Ad December 30, 1957, 22).

A flat, full-length awning stretches across the storefront. The building's brick front has a running bond and extends above the awning approximately seven feet. Two small signs flank a larger sign that is centrally located in the upper half of the brick front. The overall simplicity of the structure reflects the typical characteristics of a 1950s commercial building.

A flat, full-length awning stretches across the storefront. It appears to be in a lowered position in some historic photos, something the current awning is not capable of doing (Muscatine Journal 1953, 12). However this and other photos may simply have been showing the present awning not yet fully installed. Both awnings appear to share the same dimensions, but a series of lines runs the full length of the historic awning. The current element does not have the design, but the designs may not have been structural and only painted on the surface (Muscatine Journal Ad, December 30, 1957, 22). The building's brick front has a running bond and extends above the awning approximately seven feet. Two small signs flank a larger sign that is centrally located in the upper half of the brick front. The overall simplicity of the structure reflects the typical characteristics of a 1950s commercial building.

The interior of the building, including the mezzanine floor, has been masked by a suspended ceiling.

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The F.W. Woolworth Building does not appear individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B, and C, but it does appear eligible as a contributing building in a potential downtown historic district. Though the Woolworth Building is significant as one of the few mid-20th century buildings in downtown Muscatine, the Broude Department Store is a more developed example of this type and period. It retains good exterior integrity but many of the interior elements that were described in 1953 have been removed or masked.

Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 4

<u>Woolworth Building</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Name of Property	County
<u>121-23 E. 2nd Street</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Address	City

The Woolworth Building at 121-123 E. Second Street provides a significant historical connection between the early and latter half of 20th century business development in the Muscatine downtown. It falls within one historic context identified for the district: "20th century Business and Industry." The construction of 1953 Woolworth Building appears to have been one of the last major downtown retail renovations of the 20th century. The needs of retail stores were changing in this period, requiring more open floor space. When the building was completed, the company returned to the store and continued to operate there until 1973, creating a direct link between its initial 1919 operation and development into a modern 20th century retail giant. Thus, this building appears to be a contributing building in a potential downtown historic district.

Several 19th century commercial structures once occupied the site on which 121-123 now sets. Most of those structures provided commercial space for such activities as furniture, dry goods and similar products. The top floor of one of the buildings, the Stein Music Hall, was converted into a community theatre/music hall. In 1919 the Woolworth Company, which originally began operating in Muscatine in 1906, moved into the first floor of the Stein Music Hall and remained there until the building was razed in February 1953 ("Landmark to be Replaced by Modern Building" 1953, 3).

Following the demolition of the Stein Music Hall, little was reported in the Muscatine Journal about the new replacement structure. During the construction of the new building, there were a series of ads published by Woolworths in the Journal that identified its temporary location as 206 E. Second Street.

When the new store held its grand opening on September 3-5, 1953, the Journal reported crowds "which resembled those on a busy Saturday or just before Christmas filled the new and enlarged store" ("Crowds Throng Woolworth Store for Formal Opening," September 3, 1953, 20). The store obviously was an attraction. Store officials said it was the only Woolworth store in Iowa that had a mezzanine floor. Other interesting features included an expansive lunch department with new stainless steel equipment and a full kitchen. The new store offered twice the floor space as the old location and the Journal reported that many of the customers commented on its beauty and space. Store manager C.D. Ager called the new Muscatine store the "Midwest's most modern Woolworth store" in a newspaper ad announcing the store's opening. Store details he mentioned in the ad included that it had 10,000 sq. ft. of shopping area, was air-conditioned, contained one half-mile of fluorescent tube lighting and provided ventilated air (Muscatine Journal 1953, 5).

The decision by Woolworth to construct the new store appears to have created a frenzy of downtown business activity and expansion. A review of the Muscatine Journal during the first half of 1953 shows at least five businesses reported expansion or remodeling of their buildings during this time (Muscatine Journal various 1953 dates). Included in this list were Ficken's Furniture, Reynolds, Minton's, Tradehome Shoe Store and Sterneman Clothing. Although the decision by these businesses to remodel or expand may not have been affected by the Woolworth construction, it does appear the decisions were influenced by some activity or event. The announcement that a major downtown business such as Woolworths was planning to expand would have provided a strong incentive for competitors and other shop owners to keep pace.

Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 5

<u>Woolworth Building</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Name of Property	County
<u>121-23 E. 2nd Street</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Address	City

The increase in renovations and construction at this time marked one of the last major upgrading of retail businesses in the downtown. Urban revitalization would dominate the area in the 1970s, but much of that work involved demolition of what was considered blighted properties, with little new construction to replace buildings that were torn down. The result became a more open downtown with many of the open lots converted to parking. When construction was done, it normally focused on office or similar buildings, not retail shops. This trend towards a downtown that appeared less focused towards retail began to stabilize during the last quarter of the 20th century.

The construction of 1953 Woolworth Building appears to have been one of the last major downtown retail renovations of the 20th century. When it was completed, the company returned to the store and continued to operate there until 1973, creating a direct link between its initial 1919 operation and development into a modern 20th century retail giant. Although Woolworth moved out in 1974, the development and growth of the downtown continued to be reflected in this building when a new business, Carriage House, moved into it in 1984.

The development of large retail giants was a significant event in 20th century business and industry. Most of these developments occurred in downtowns. Muscatine's 1953 Woolworth construction and expansion was a clear instance of this development. Like many similar developments around the country, it did not last long and most of these businesses eventually migrated to malls or their own big box locations. However, as an important step in the development of downtowns in the middle half of the 20th century, these businesses affected downtowns by influencing other businesses to also renovate or remodel; or in some cases to close their doors because they could not compete.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Advertisement (Woolworth), Muscatine Journal, March 6, 1953, Page 3.

Advertisement (Reynolds), Muscatine Journal, April 17, 1953, Page 7.

Advertisement (Minton's), Muscatine Journal, April 24, 1953, Page 12.

Advertisement (Woolworth), Muscatine Journal, September 3, 1953, Page 5.

Advertisement (Woolworth), Muscatine Journal, December 30, 1957, Page 22.

City Directories, Muscatine. Various publishers, 1856-present. Available at the Musser Public Library.

"Crowds Throng Woolworth Store For Formal Opening," Muscatine Journal, September 3, 1953, Page 20.

"Display Front of New F.W. Woolworth Store," Muscatine Journal, September 1, 1953, Page 12.

Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 6

<u>Woolworth Building</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Name of Property	County
<u>121-23 E. 2nd Street</u>	<u>Muscatine</u>
Address	City

"F.W. Woolworth and Company," Centennial Edition of the Muscatine Journal, May 31, 1940, Section 4, Page 24.

"Ficken's Offers Latest Trends in Home Furnishing," Muscatine Journal, April 13, 1953, Page 11.

"Landmark To Be Replaced By Modern Building," Muscatine Journal, February 28, 1953, Page 3.

Randleman, Doug. "Street Scene, 9/10/87," Historic postcard, Doug Randleman Collection, Musser Public Library, Muscatine, Iowa

Sanborn Map Company. "Muscatine, Iowa," Sanborn fire insurance maps. Pelham, NY: Sanborn Map Company, 1883, 1888, 1892, 1899, 1905, 1912, 1919, 1928, 1946. Accessed online at: <http://www.sanborn.umi.com>.

"Sterneman Clothing Company Has Completed Large Remodeling, Modernization Program," Muscatine Journal, March 26, 1953, Page 14.

"Tradehome Holds Grand Opening In Remodeled Store," Muscatine Journal, March 19, 1953, Page 7.

Location Map



Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet

Page 7

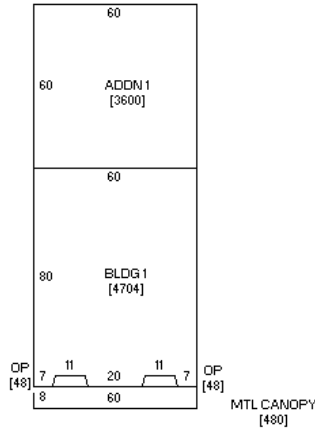
Woolworth Building
Name of Property

Muscatine
County

121-23 E. 2nd Street
Address

Muscatine
City

Plan (from assessor's office)



(front – 2nd St.)

Photograph of building (digital image)

