

MAR - 4 1998

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Fay, Pliny and Adelia, House

other names/site number Fay, Pliny, House

2. Location

street & number 112 Locust Street N/A not for publication

city or town Muscatine N/A vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Muscatine code 139 zip code 52761

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patticia Chalkins DSHP 3-4-98
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall 4.23.98
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Ray, Pliny & Adelia, House
Name of Property

Muscatine County, Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

1

Total

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

0

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK, STONE/Sandstone

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other WOOD

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Fay, Pliny and Adelia, House
112 Locust St., Muscatine
Muscatine County, Iowa

Section Number 7 Page 1

CFN-259-1116

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The Pliny Fay House (112 Locust Street) stands at the northwest corner of Second and Locust streets, in the City of Muscatine, Iowa. Located at the edge of the bluff overlooking the Mississippi River, the Pliny Fay House has a sweeping view of the river, Muscatine Island, and the Illinois shoreline opposite. Constructed circa 1855, it is a two-story, brick, Italianate building with a side-gabled roof, Italianate porch, and one-story kitchen wing. It has a symmetrical three- by two-bay fenestration pattern with central entrances on both front and rear elevations, which reflects the Georgian arrangement of interior space. The interior of the house features paneled doors, molded trim, and a stairway typical of mid-nineteenth-century Victorian houses. Interior door and window surrounds and mantelpieces all display a simple round and oval cutout motif.

The Pliny Fay House has undergone several alterations—not unusual in a building of this age—but these do not diminish its overall integrity. It was moved back several feet from its original location at the edge of the bluff overlooking the Mississippi River before 1874, but this event did not alter the historic relationship of the house to the surrounding neighborhood. A porch was removed from one gable end prior to 1888, and a second floor bathroom was added to the rear of the house in the 1920s. The only other major alteration to this property has been the removal of a dilapidated wooden shed or summer kitchen, and the recent construction of a one-story brick garage in its place. In sum, the Pliny Fay House is in excellent condition and it ably demonstrates the integrities of design, materials, craftsmanship, feeling and association.

The Pliny Fay House is part of a mid-nineteenth- to early twentieth-century residential neighborhood that occupies the top of the bluff immediately south of the city's downtown commercial district. Many of Muscatine's oldest and most elaborate dwellings are found in this bluff-top neighborhood, with the houses generally increasing in size and ornamentation as one rises above the downtown. The ability to build a house on the bluff evidently signified that one had "arrived" financially and socially in Muscatine. Houses in this neighborhood are of wood frame or brick construction, and represent a variety of architectural styles, principally Italianate, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival, although relatively few houses are clear delineations of these styles.

The Pliny Fay House is a good example of the Italianate style, and it is representative of the first substantial homes built on the bluff by Muscatine's business class. It is a traditional rectangular, side-gabled building facing northeast. It measures 40 feet wide by 32 feet deep, and is constructed of what appear to be handstruck bricks—given the presence of mold marks—laid in a nine-course American bond. The mortar base is a fine-grained sand. The brick walls extend below the ground surface and rest on a foundation of roughcut sandstone blocks. There is no water table.

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The roof is low pitched with a molded cornice and single, scroll-cut brackets under the eaves. Eave overhangs are modest. Asphalt shingles cover the entire roof surface. Four symmetrically spaced, brick interior chimneys, combined with the symmetrical three-bay fenestration pattern, clearly indicate the Georgian configuration of rooms inside. Indeed, the general dimensions of the building, the broad, low-pitched roof, and the interior chimneys are all strongly reminiscent of the colonial Georgian houses found in the northeastern United States. There, side-gabled Georgian houses usually have a single central chimney or four exterior end chimneys. Four interior chimneys are more commonly found on hip-roofed Georgian houses.¹ The use of interior chimneys and a side-gabled roof on the Pliny Fay House is an interesting variation of the Georgian building tradition, and unusual in this region.

The windows of the Pliny Fay House are mostly six- over six-light wooden sash. The sashes are double-hung and have sash weights. The windows on the main house block are very large, three and one-half by seven feet. Much of the glass is wavy, which suggests that the sash are original or very old replacements. A modified Palladian window graces the southeastern (riverside) gable peak. A round-headed window with a double-arched design in the upper sash accentuates the center bay of the second floor front. The windows flanking the front door have wooden cornice lintels, with decorative brackets and a cut-out circle motif, similar to that found on the inside trim. Lintels over all other windows are composed of brick headers. Sills are wood throughout the building. Several windows have been replaced; these are discussed individually below.

Much of the ornamental detail on Victorian houses is concentrated around the front door and front porch, and the Pliny Fay House is no exception. A one-story, flat-roofed wooden porch spans the northeast (front) elevation. This is supported by massive chamfered posts with molded bases and open, scroll-cut cornice brackets. The porch was in place by 1869, according to photographic evidence.² A shallow vestibule that matches the style of the porch is fitted over the front door and sidelights, obscuring them from view from the outside. The vestibule has wooden walls (paneled inside and out), cornice brackets similar but not identical to those on the porch, and a segmental arched doorway with paneled double-leaf doors. The vestibule appears to be an early addition.

Inside the vestibule, the front door to the house is a single-leaf door with one large replacement light over three panels, flanked by full-length sidelights. The doorway is recessed several inches and has paneled reveals.

¹ McAlester, Virginia, and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 138-151; Noble, Allen G., *Wood, Brick, and Stone: The North American Settlement Landscape*, vol. 1 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 46-47, 102-104.

² "Panorama of Muscatine, Iowa, in 1869, from Richie and White's Grain Elevator: Made from a Series of Stereoscopic Views Taken by J.G. Evans, Photographer, June 1869." This is a framed reproduction print in possession of the present property owners; the original is in the Musser Public Library, Muscatine, Iowa.

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Mounted in the center of the door is a cast iron, hand-crank door bell, the brass bell of which reads "Taylors Patent Oct. 23, 1860." Originally, a transom probably filled the rectangular space over the inside front door; this space is now filled by a wooden panel with molding identical to that of the vestibule walls. The inside wall has been completely refinished over this area.

A small sleeping porch was constructed above the Italianate porch, off the northeast corner bedroom sometime after 1946.³ Tax assessment records indicate that this porch was removed in 1969,⁴ but a full-length, walk-out window opening remains. This opening contains a double-leaf casement window with one-light over one-panel wood sashes, and brass plated hardware.

The southeast gable end of the building faces the river. This wall currently contains two full-length, walk-out windows on the ground floor, two standard windows at the second floor level, and the aforementioned Palladian window in the gable peak. The Palladian consists of a hopper type window with fixed lights overhead and to each side. A small rectangular opening at the very peak helps vent the attic. The first floor window openings measure four by nine feet, and contain wooden, double-leaf casement windows. Each leaf has two lights; the two upper lights are fixed. The windows have porcelain knobs and machine-made butt hinges.

The wall below the top of the first floor windows is discolored; this and the full-length windows suggest that some kind of one-story structure was formerly appended to this wall. A circa 1866 photograph and Koch's 1874 *Bird's Eye View of the City of Muscatine*⁵ both show the Pliny Fay House with a porch across this end wall. Two small holes at the top of the discolored area may indicate where the porch was attached to the wall, but other evidence of attachment cannot be detected. Other holes may have been obliterated by subsequent repair work to the brick on this elevation. By 1888, when the house is first depicted on fire insurance maps, there was no porch on this elevation.

The southwest (rear) elevation essentially mirrors the fenestration pattern of the front, but lacks the porch, vestibule and decorative lintels over the first floor windows. The back doorway, directly opposite the front entrance, contains a solid paneled wooden door and sidelights. Like the front doorway, this entrance has paneled reveals. A plain board on the outside covers what was probably a transom. Like the molded panel over the front door, this board sounds hollow when rapped, but only directly over the doorway. Furthermore, two

³ The sleeping porch is not depicted on any Sanborn map, the last of which (1928) was updated in June 1946.

⁴ "Old" tax assessment card for 112 Locust Street, Muscatine, Muscatine County Assessor's Office, dated 25 August 1969.

⁵ Koch, Augustus, *Bird's Eye View of the City of Muscatine, Muscatine, Co., Iowa, 1874*, lithograph reproduced in John W. Reps, *Cities of the Mississippi: Nineteenth-Century Images of Urban Development* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 232.

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transoms were found stored in the basement of the house, and each is of sufficient size to fit the space over the doorways.

Projecting from the center bay of the second floor is a one- by one-bay, wood frame bathroom. The addition has a slight shed roof, clapboard siding and a single casement window (a replacement). Three brick pillars with poured concrete bases support the outer wall of the addition, which forms a kind of porch over the back door. The bathroom was added between 1919 and 1928, according to fire insurance maps.

A one-story kitchen wing is attached to the northwest gable end of the main house. This structure measures 19 feet wide by 16 feet deep, and is not centered on the house wall. It has flat-roofed porches on front and back eave walls, and three gabled dormers. More alterations have been made to the kitchen wing than to any other part of the Pliny and Adelia Fay House. Several episodes of modification or reconstruction are evident in the brick of the front eave wall. The two porches spanning the front and rear sides of the wing are clearly twentieth-century structures, though they may have replaced older porches. Both are wooden with flat roofs and concrete floors. The back porch is fully enclosed with vertical false-bead, tongue-in-groove boards and small fixed windows. The front porch is open, with a new lattice balustrade. The three gabled dormers are probably late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century additions. The end elevation of the wing has an original six- over six-light sash window in the peak and a smaller, replacement one- over one-light window below. A large square area of different brick around the downstairs window suggests another, unknown, modification to the wing. A band of concrete facing has also been applied along the bottom of the end wall, presumably to combat water damage.

Other features of the northwest gable end of the house include a small one- over one- window in the peak, two six- over six- windows and a square, fixed light at the second floor level, and a full-length walk-out window from the parlor to the porch across the front of the wing. The walk-out window is identical to those found on the opposite gable end.

A window opening between the dining room and what is now the back porch has been bricked in. The wall of the kitchen wing joins the main house at this window, indicating that it may have been infilled due to the construction of the wing, which also suggests that the present wing is not original. But more puzzling is that this infilled window and the one directly above it (which still exists) are not symmetrically placed in this wall (see figures 1 and 2). Why, on a house whose fenestration pattern is characterized by symmetry, are these two windows closer to the corner of the building than are other windows? The asymmetrical placement of these two windows suggests that a one-story kitchen wing was indeed part of the original design of this house. These two windows may be slightly offset to allow room for the roof of a wing. It may be true that the present kitchen wing is not original (see below), but that does not mean that the house was built with NO wing at all.

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DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR

Inside, the Pliny Fay House has a partially excavated basement (except under the kitchen wing which has a full basement), two full floors of living space, and an attic. The basement is unfinished and has a dirt floor. The four brick chimneys rest on sandstone block bases, with several all-brick piers inbetween as extra support. These piers support large timber beams running northeast-southwest. The beams in turn support the floor joists, most of which are rough and bear axe marks. Two newer (sawn) beams and several joists have been added over the years. There was once an outside entrance to the basement, under one of the windows on the southeastern, or riverside, elevation. This doorway has been bricked in.

The basement under the kitchen wing has a concrete floor and brick walls, except where the wing connects to the main house: here the brick portion of the basement walls rests on sandstone buttresses. The bricks in the wing's foundation are a deep red color—much different than the rest of the house, whose bricks have a yellowish cast—and look machine made. This suggests that this particular wing may have been added after the house was moved to this site, and would therefore be a different wing than the one shown in the 1866 photograph. There are two basement windows in the end wall of the kitchen basement; both have semicircular brick window wells and are now filled in with insulation.

The ground floor originally consisted of a central hall, containing the staircase to the second floor, and four rooms of equal size, each room with a fireplace. The partition between the two rooms on the left, or river, side of the house has been removed to make one large open room. The two rooms on the right side of the hall are joined by double wood paneled doors. The dining room has a single door leading to the kitchen.

The interior finish throughout the main house block consists of plaster walls with simple woodwork, very little of which is molded. Downstairs there are thick, high baseboards topped with Greek ogee molding, and simply molded chair rails in the hall. Door and window surrounds are made of wide, thick boards with oval and circular cut-outs, applied to plain boards underneath. Mantelpieces downstairs are of the same design and construction. The northwest front parlor fireplace has a hearth of geometrically patterned tiles in muted colors: black, rust, and ochre. Flooring in the hall and southeastern rooms downstairs consists of three-inch oak boards laid on. The dining room and northeast front parlor have older, much narrower floor boards laid diagonally. Interior doors throughout the house are the post and rail type. The downstairs doors have five panels, white glass knobs, mortise locks and large covered keyholes. The door to the basement and the doors upstairs have four panels, with the same hardware. The central staircase has a large, lathe-turned newel post (oak), turned spindle balusters, and a nicely rounded turn at the top. The staircase is, like the finish throughout the house, elegant without elaboration, and solidly constructed.

The kitchen has been extensively remodelled at least twice in the last thirty years, including a half-bath and laundry room built into its southeastern corner (see Figure 1). Access to the half-bath is from the front parlor,

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through a small door which, though clearly not original, replicates the historic door surrounds.

The Georgian symmetry of the ground floor is not quite carried over to the second floor (see Figure 2). There are two bedrooms of equal size (Bedrooms 1 and 2) on the river side of the house. The space over the front parlor and the dining room, however, appears to have been rearranged into a very small bedroom at the rear (Bedroom 3) and a slightly larger bedroom toward the front (Bedroom 4) with a hallway in between. This "back" hallway provides access to the attic stairs and two small rooms above the kitchen. The two closets in this hallway are not original, and the location of the attic stairway is also suspect. The wall between the hallway and the stairway is fiberboard, and the present configuration of space blocks the fireplace in Bedroom 3. The door from this bedroom to the back hallway is clearly late Victorian, and therefore probably an addition. It has a different configuration of panels, and an elaborately molded surround and cornice lintel with an egg-and-dart motif.

At the head of the main staircase, at the rear of the main hallway, is the house's principal bathroom, built in the 1920s. This 10- by 16-foot addition actually contains the bathroom and a walk-in closet for Bedroom 2. The bathroom has been completely remodelled at least twice, most recently in 1995.

The upstairs is finished much more simply than the downstairs. The door and window surrounds consist of boards with long oval cut-outs applied to plain boards underneath. The upstairs mantelpieces, extant in bedrooms 2 and 4, lack the oval cut-outs altogether but have two simple strips of molding instead. The baseboards upstairs are basically one- by six- boards with a chamfered edge. All upstairs rooms except the back hallway are carpeted. The floor in the back hallway is made of wide boards held in place with square head nails. The carpeting and the simplicity of the wood trim make it difficult to determine whether (and which) walls may have been moved. Simple, brass gas fixtures descend from the ceilings in bedrooms 1 and 2, and are the only remains of a gas lighting system in the house.

The upper floor of the kitchen wing was originally a single open room with a steep, narrow stairway down to the kitchen located in the southwest corner (over what is now the stairway to the basement). The steps were reportedly removed in the 1960s, and the only access to this space is now via the main house. This single room was divided into two rooms and a hallway (see Figure 2). The window in the center of the end wall made it impossible to make two rooms of equal size, so the interior wall is angled and the two small rooms of irregular dimensions. The northeastern room has a strip of egg-and-dart molding along the top of the wall. The floorboards in this room reveal the former location of a brick stove chimney (nonextant) in front of the six- over six- window.

The southwestern room over the kitchen was converted into a bathroom, probably the house's first "modern" bathroom. Local oral tradition has it that this was also the first upper floor bathroom in the city. Certainly, the partition and bathroom installation must have occurred before the present 1920s bathroom was added—possibly

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during the nineteenth-century, given the presence of a very old galvanized tin bathtub encased in a wooden box across the end of the room. An equally antiquated "Peerless" toilet and wall-mounted sink also remain. The bathroom was evidently heated by a small stove attached to the brick chimney that runs up through one corner of the room.

The attic is open and unfinished. The roof consists of common rafters and very wide board sheathing, some 18 inches wide or more. The flooring (boards and plywood) is not original, nor does it show any evidence of a previous location for the attic stairway.

OUTBUILDINGS

The only other structure on this property is a one-story, two-bay garage that faces Second Street, northwest of the house. The garage was built in 1996. It has brick veneer walls, and a gable roof with asphalt shingles and three gabled dormers. The building consists of a side-gabled section with a lower one-story, cross-gabled ell to the rear. There is a double door entrance in the end of the ell, and a single angled, entrance in the inside corner of the ell. These entrances open onto a patio just off the kitchen of the house. The garage replaced a dilapidated wooden "summer kitchen" that had stood northwest of the house since at least 1888. Although the garage does not contribute to the significance of this property, neither does it affect the facade of the house or the view of the river.

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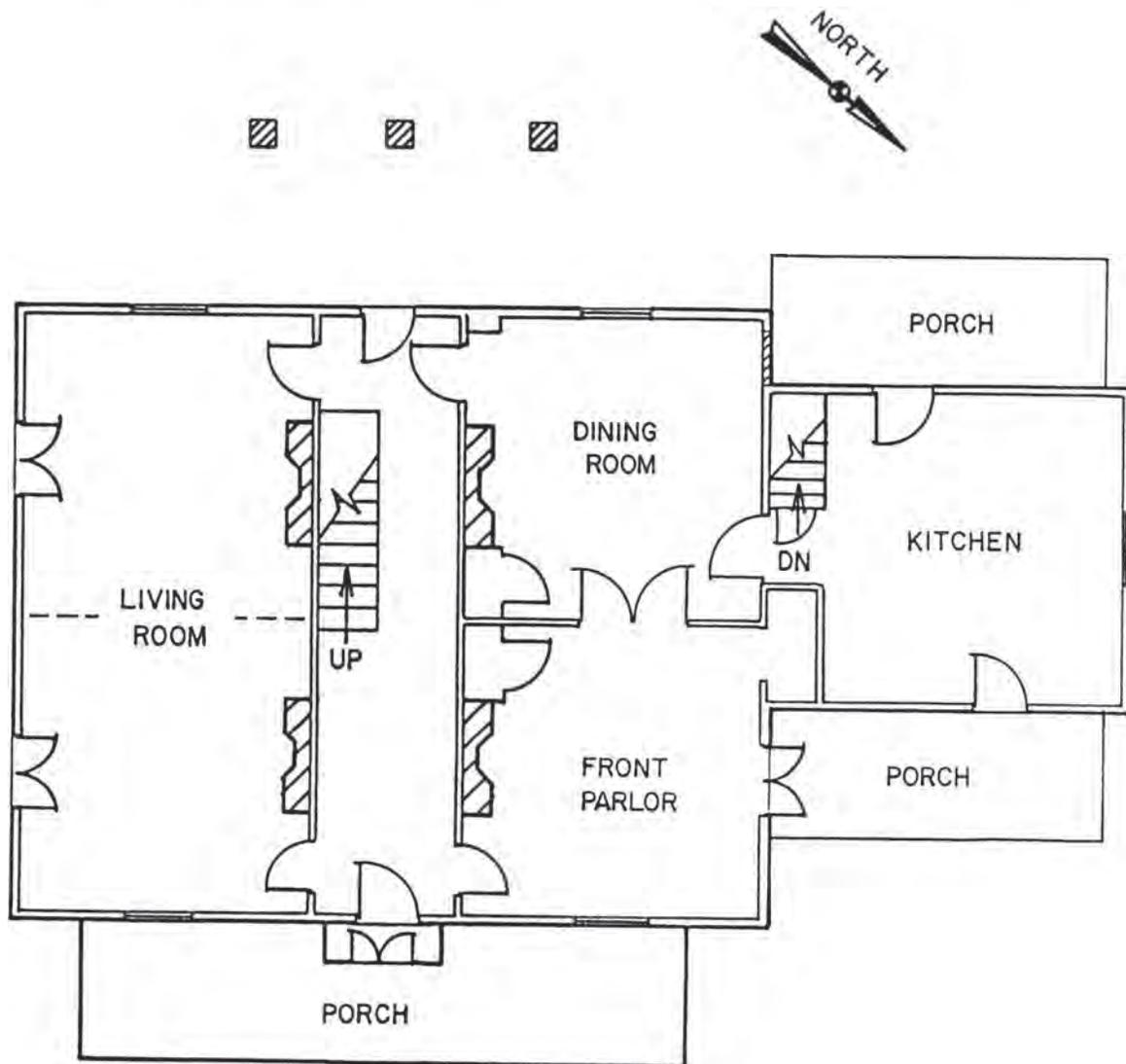
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Figure 1: 1st floor plan (drawn by Marie Neubauer, 1997) Scale: approx. 1 inch = 10 feet.



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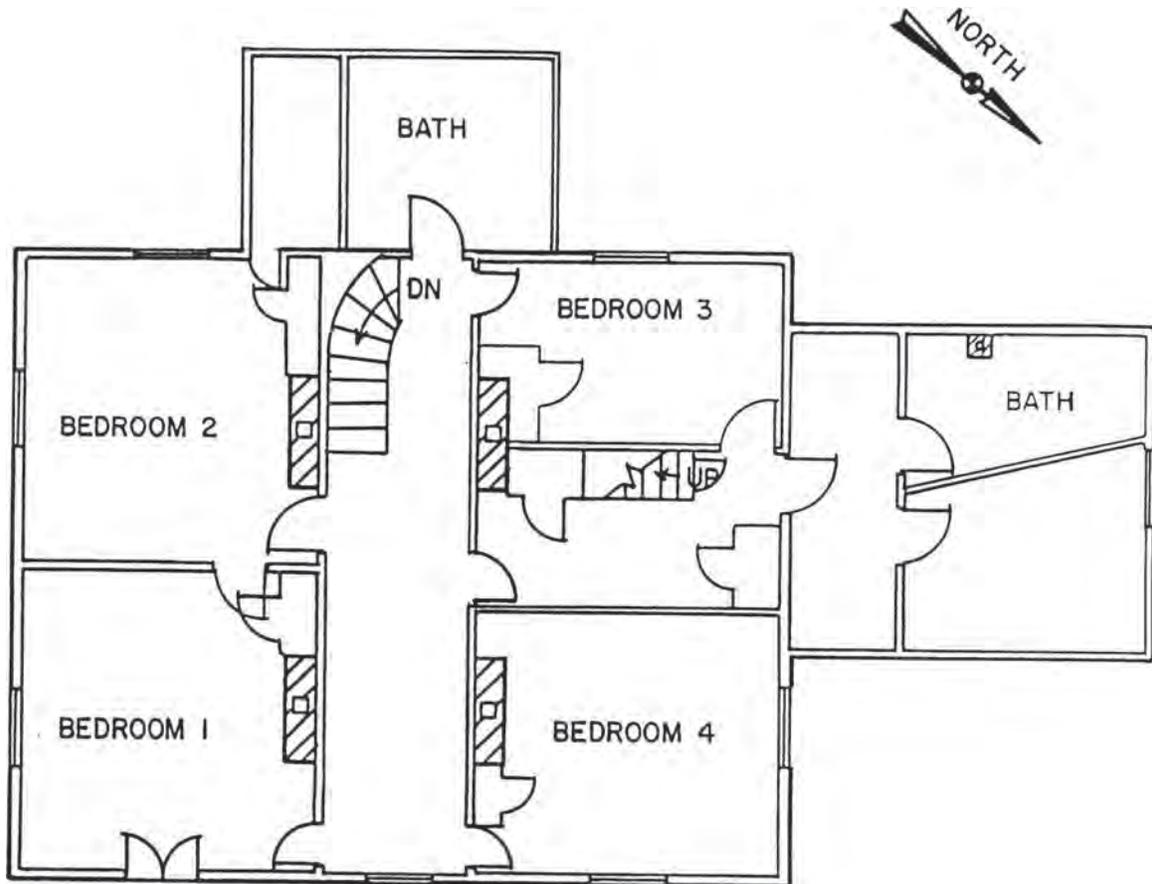
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Figure 2: 2nd floor plan (drawn by Marie Neubauer, 1997) Scale: approx. 1 inch = 10 feet.



Fay, Pliny & Adelia, House
Name of Property

Muscatine County, Iowa
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- 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)

ARCHITECTURE

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

Period of Significance

Circa 1855

Circa 1874

Significant Dates

Circa 1855

Circa 1874

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Musser Public Library, Muscatine, IA

Fay, Pliny & Adelia, House
Name of Property

Muscatine County, Iowa
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one (1) acre.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1,5	6,6,2,8,9,0	4,5,8,6,7,7,0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Tracy A. Cunning (with research assistance by Jean Boche)

organization Tallgrass Historians L.C. date 1 October 1997

street & number 931 Maiden Lane telephone (319) 354-6722

city or town Iowa City, state Iowa zip code 52240

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Gary P. and M. Jean Boche

street & number 112 Locust Street telephone (319) 263-0259

city or town Muscatine, state Iowa zip code 52761

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Fay, Pliny and Adelia, House
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Pliny and Adelia Fay House is locally significant under Criteria A and C for its association with the first period of real prosperity in the history of Muscatine. It was during this period, circa 1850-1857, that the city began to acquire its present-day appearance, including the establishment of an elite residential neighborhood overlooking the Mississippi River. Merchant Pliny Fay was one of Muscatine's earliest settlers, and he capitalized on the booming local economy—brought about by the town's advantageous river location—to acquire the wealth and position necessary to construct a new house on the bluff overlooking the river. This house was among the first to be erected on the bluff, and is therefore eligible under Criterion A as a product of the 1850s building boom in Muscatine. The Pliny and Adelia Fay House also meets Criterion C as a good example of early Italianate design in that it reflects the blending of popular nineteenth-century architectural styles with traditional building forms. Specifically, this house is reminiscent of the Georgian double-pile houses of the northeastern United States, and thus reflects the westward expansion of long-dominant folk building traditions from that cultural hearth.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Euroamerican settlement commenced in the Muscatine area in 1833, as soon as the United States government opened the land west of the Mississippi River to these settlers. The river was a major transportation artery, and opportunists in the first tide of white settlers scouted out likely places for establishing a steamboat landing and town. The place where the river resumes its southerly course, below the great bend that gives Iowa its distinctive shape, seemed a particularly good choice for a future townsite.

The town was surveyed and platted in 1836 on two tracts of land purchased from the federal government by Suel Foster and Niles Higinbotham, who were early residents and land speculators in the area. Muscatine County was organized in January 1837, with Muscatine (then called Bloomington) as the county seat. The proprietors laid out Bloomington in a typical grid pattern oriented to the Mississippi River, standard practice in river towns.¹

The fact that the streets are not oriented to the cardinal directions reflects the supreme importance of the Mississippi to the early settlement. From the 1830s until the arrival of the railroad in 1855, the settlers of the new territory depended on the river for the transportation of goods, produce, and people. As a steamboat landing on this north-south highway, Bloomington developed into a small market center where the local agricultural products and timber from upriver forests were sold and/or processed and shipped down river, and

¹ Horton, Loren N., "Town Planning, Growth, and Architecture in Selected Mississippi River Towns of Iowa, 1833-1860," Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1978, 294-301.

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where a growing cadre of merchants, manufacturers, and professionals provided the goods and services needed by a burgeoning local population. During the early years, Bloomington undoubtedly also served the needs of a transient population: land seekers and other fortune hunters who stepped off the steamboat and outfitted themselves before striking out for inland areas.

The town's initial growth was slow, yet in spite of a population of just 71 persons, Bloomington was incorporated in 1839. The population had reached 507 by the time of the 1840 census, and throughout the 1840s the number of steamboats landing at Bloomington, the amount of goods and produce shipped through the town, and its population all rose steadily. By 1850, Bloomington had been renamed Muscatine, and supported a population of over 2500 people.² In the larger scheme of things, Muscatine was a mercantile outpost in an urban economic network dominated by St. Louis. Muscatine retailers controlled a small local hinterland by extending credit to cash-strapped interior farmers, but they in turn were bound by a web of reciprocating credit to their St. Louis wholesalers.³

The decade of the 1850s was a period of great flux for the Mississippi River towns, as for the rest of the nation. European immigration and the westward migration of eastern Americans to this region surged in response to easy credit, improved transportation, and relatively high grain prices. On the river, the steamboat and lumber trades flourished. The arrival of the railroad in the mid-1850s raised optimism to a fever pitch and fueled manic speculation in railroads and public lands. Located at the critical junction between farm and market, the river towns basked in prosperity during the first half of the decade.⁴

In 1854 the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad (M&M), the first railroad in Iowa, planned a main line from Davenport to the Missouri River, as well as a branch line running southwesterly through Iowa and Missouri to Leavenworth, Kansas. The company completed the branch from Wilton as far as Muscatine in November 1855, even before the main line was laid to Iowa City. Muscatine benefitted from its new status as a railhead as well as steamboat stop from 1855 until 1858, when the M&M pushed the branch line toward Fairfield.⁵ (Davenport and Dubuque were the only other Iowa river towns with both railroad and steamboat facilities at this time.) At Muscatine the bluff was cut away to make room for a railroad yard between Water Street and the river. Water

² Horton, "Town Planning," 300-309.

³ Mahoney, Timothy R., "Urban History in a Regional Context: River Towns on the Upper Mississippi, 1840-1860," *Journal of American History* 72:2 (September 1985), 336-337.

⁴ Stampp, Kenneth M., *American in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 218-226; Horton, "Town Planning," 307-308, 347-348; Mahoney, "Urban History in a Regional Context," 337.

⁵ Thompson, William H., *Transportation in Iowa: A Historical Summary* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State Department of Transportation, 1989), 23-24, 28.

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Street—later known as Front Street and now called Mississippi Drive—was straightened in 1854-1855 to conform to the grid pattern of the rest of the city.⁶ The depot and locomotive shops were built below the end of Locust Street.

Muscatine began to assume its present-day appearance during the first half of the 1850s. By 1856 the city's population exceeded 6000 persons, and the building tradesmen were doing a brisk business. According to the state census of that year, there were 109 carpenters, 31 stone masons, 14 brick makers, and 5 brick layers in the city. In addition to the railroad, waterfront improvements, and the construction of new commercial buildings, many merchants and professionals were able to build new homes, the most impressive of which were erected on the bluff above the downtown. This established in Muscatine a new pattern of residential segregation based on class; after the 1850s, the wealthiest families in the city tended to live on the bluff. The architectural styles most often incorporated on houses in this neighborhood were Greek Revival, Italianate, and occasionally Gothic Revival.⁷

The construction boom ended abruptly with the nationwide Panic of 1857, when land values dropped, commodity prices plummeted, and credit and currency all but dried up. Following close on the heels of the Panic, the Civil War interrupted both population growth and the building boom in Muscatine.⁸ The city did not begin to recover until the late 1860s, when the country as a whole but the West particularly experienced new prosperity. Competition from railroads had significantly diminished the steamboat trade, but the city still relied on the Mississippi River. Widespread prosperity stimulated the building trades, and created an unparalleled demand for milled lumber, doors and sashes, and other wooden construction materials. Logs floated down the river from the northern forests were milled in Muscatine's numerous sawmills and factories, and were shipped west via the railroad. Lumber processing dominated the local economy as never before, and among Iowa cities Muscatine was reputedly second only to Clinton in the business. The men who made their fortunes in the lumber business were known as "lumber kings," and they and other prospering businessmen of Muscatine built palatial homes among the pre-Civil War houses on the bluff.⁹

One of these pre-Civil War houses was built for Pliny Fay (1812-1886), a native of Massachusetts who was among the first whites to settle in the area. Fay first settled in Alton, Illinois in the early 1830s, but moved to

⁶ Muscatine County Deeds, Muscatine County Courthouse, Muscatine, Iowa.

⁷ Horton, "Town Planning," 348-349, 362.

⁸ Horton, "Town Planning," 362.

⁹ Andreas, A.T., *A.T.Andreas' Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa* (Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co., 1875), 449-450; Horton, "Town Planning," 347-348.

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Muscatine in 1837 to join his elder brother, Edward E. Fay, who had arrived here the previous year.¹⁰ In 1840 Pliny Fay married another New Englander, Adelia St. John, sister of William and Hamilton St. John, who were early land speculators and entrepreneurs in the area.¹¹

From the beginning the Fay brothers—Edward more so than Pliny—were actively involved in the economic, political, and social affairs of the new town. Among other political offices, Edward was the first postmaster, and Pliny succeeded him in this position from 1841 to 1845.¹² Pliny was the county probate judge the next year, and later served as U.S. Assessor for this district during the 1860s. He was also among the fifteen "pioneers" who organized the Old Settlers' Association in 1856.¹³ Both brothers were among the founding members of the Congregational Church in Bloomington, formed in 1843. Pliny Fay was the church's first deacon, a position he held for forty years. He had a reputation as a quiet, modest, remarkably devout man, and was known familiarly throughout the town as "Deacon Fay."¹⁴

Early in the settlement period Edward and Pliny Fay opened a drugstore, evidently the second in town. When Edward's health failed (he died in 1848¹⁵) Pliny took on another partner, Frederick H. Stone. By 1856 Fay &

¹⁰ "The Old Settlers: Sentiments and Addresses at the Reunion, Oct. 5, 1881," in *Memories of Muscatine: A Collection of Informational Clippings* (Muscatine: Musser Public Library 1989), 42; Richman, Irving B., supervising editor, *History of Muscatine County, Iowa, From the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time*, vol. 1 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1911), 62.

¹¹ "Early Settler, Wife," *Muscatine Journal*, Centennial Issue 1840-1940, 31 May 1940; Brossart, Marlin W., compiler, "Muscatine County, Iowa, Marriage Records, 1837-1879" (Muscatine, Iowa: by the compiler, 1980), 1; Horton, "Town Planning," 303; Richman, ed., *History of Muscatine County*, 62, 251, 285-286; United States Bureau of the Census, population schedules for the years 1850, 1860, and 1870, on microfilm in the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

¹² Richman, Irving B., ed., *History of Muscatine County, Iowa, From the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time*, volume 1 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1911), 88-90, 205, 292.

¹³ Richman, ed., *History of Muscatine County*, 90, 205, 336, 420, 421.

¹⁴ "'Silver Wedding,' A Large Gathering and Happy Occasion [celebrating Rev. A.B. Robbins' 25th year as pastor of the Congregational Church]," *Muscatine Weekly Journal* 20 November 1868, 3; Walton, J.P., "Muscatine's Pioneer Preacher," paper read before the Semi-Centenary [sic] of Muscatine, Iowa, April 28, 1892, in J.P. Walton, *Scraps of Muscatine History* (Muscatine: by the author, 1893), 2-3; Richman, ed., *History of Muscatine County*, 205, 316-323, 336; "The Old Settlers, Sentiments and Addresses at the Reunion, Oct. 5, 1881," in *Memories of Muscatine: A Collection of Informational Clippings* (Muscatine: Musser Public Library, 1989), 42.

¹⁵ Works Progress Administration (WPA), *Muscatine County Graves Registration*, Sponsored by the Adjutant General of Iowa in cooperation with the WPA (Des Moines, Iowa, 1939[?]), no page.

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Stone was one of four drugstores listed in the Muscatine city directory.¹⁶ The partners did well enough to hire at least one clerk, and appear to have been in business until at least 1858.¹⁷

By the early 1850s Pliny Fay had become prosperous enough to have a large brick house built on the bluff. In 1853, he purchased from local speculator and businessman Suel Foster, Lot 6 and the northwestern 100 feet of Lot 5 for \$500. In 1854, Foster sold the southeastern 141 feet of Lot 5 to the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad (see Figure 3). Pliny Fay then purchased the remaining 41 feet of Lot 5, consisting of the newly cut bluff face, the next year. The Fays mortgaged Lot 5 in 1856 for \$450.00, perhaps to help pay for construction of the house. They enlarged their holding with the purchase of Lot 7 from Stephen Whicher, their next door neighbor, in 1865.¹⁸

Research for this nomination yielded no documentary evidence for the design and construction of this house, but current property tax records and local oral tradition date the house to 1854. This date is consistent with the records of land ownership, and the construction and architectural style of the house.¹⁹ Historical sources are equally silent concerning the identity of the architect and/or builder of this house. At least two architects are known to have worked in Muscatine prior to 1860 but buildings can be credited to only one, Josiah Proctor Walton, who was active from 1852 until the 1890s. Several houses in Muscatine are attributed to Walton, but the Fay House is not one of them.²⁰

¹⁶ Walton, J.P., "Recollection of Business in the Early Days of Muscatine," No. 3, in J.P. Walton, compiler, *Pioneer Papers, Comprising a Collection of the Recollections of Early Events of Bloomington, Iowa, Now Muscatine, and its Surroundings...* (Muscatine: by the author, 1899), 8-9. First published in the *Muscatine Saturday Mail*, 30 January 1897.

¹⁷ "J.H. Canon," *Portrait and Biographical Album of Muscatine County, Iowa* (Chicago: Acme Publishing Co., 1889), 461-462.

¹⁸ Abstract of Title, Pliny and Adelia Fay House, entries 30, 31, 34, and 54 [in possession of the property owners].

¹⁹ Tax assessment cards, Muscatine County Tax Assessor's Office, Muscatine County Courthouse, Muscatine, Iowa. Local newspapers for the period 1852-1857, during which this house was probably built, have not survived to the present time.

²⁰ Horton, "Town Planning," 351-353.

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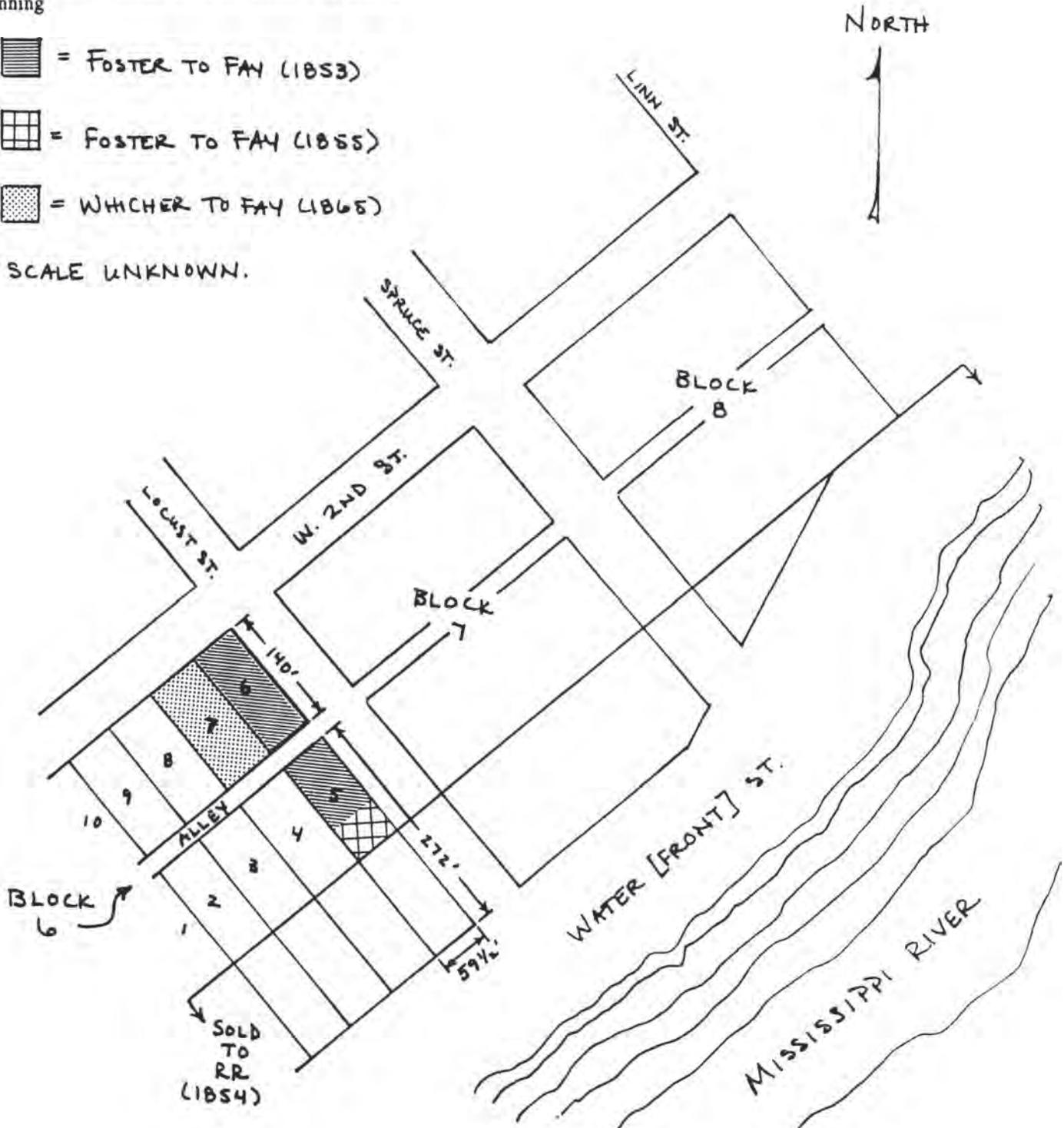
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Figure 3: Land Transactions, Pliny & Adelia Fay House
By T. Cuning

-  = FOSTER TO FAY (1853)
-  = FOSTER TO FAY (1855)
-  = WHICHER TO FAY (1865)

SCALE UNKNOWN.



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The house was moved back from its original location at the edge of the bluff between 1866 and 1874, according to local oral tradition, historical photographs, and Koch's 1874 *Bird's Eye View*.²¹ This corresponds to a period of much house moving in Muscatine. The city's hilly terrain had long caused severe erosion, but it was not until after the Civil War that the community undertook an intensive campaign of street grading, surfacing, and general leveling. Streets were leveled so much that many houses had to be lowered or raised to the new grade. This house was probably not moved because of street leveling, but the severity of erosion in early Muscatine may have caused the Fays some concern. (The 1866 photograph does show the house perched at the very edge of the bluff.) House moving kept local builders busy, and J.P. Walton became proficient in the practice; several brick houses in Muscatine are said to have been moved by his firm. There is no evidence that Walton moved the Pliny and Adelia Fay House but if he was the local expert on the subject, it would seem a likelihood.²²

The Fays lived in their large but simply ornamented brick house from the 1850s until 1872 or 1873. Census schedules indicate that in addition to the Fays and their three children, the household included Pliny's aging mother and occasionally a boarder and/or servant. The latter presumably lived over the kitchen. The Fays two daughters were married in 1867, but their son, Hamilton, (also a druggist) remained. Pliny's mother died in 1871, and the following year he and his wife sold the property. Citing health problems, the Fays left Muscatine in 1872 or 1873, and retired to Santa Cruz, California.²³

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Pliny and Adelia Fay House meets Criterion A as a representative of a critical phase in the development of Muscatine, when at the crest of an economic boom spreading throughout the upper Mississippi Valley in the 1850s, prominent businessmen began to erect large residences on the bluff above the city. The basic plan of the city had been determined in the 1830s, but it was not until the boom of the 1850s that the architectural foundation of Muscatine's present-day appearance was laid. This phase included the arrival of the railroad, the construction of brick commercial buildings downtown, and the beginning of intensive residential development

²¹ "West Front Street, 1866," historical photograph of Muscatine taken from the Mississippi River; from the Graham Collection, Bamford Studio, Muscatine, Iowa; "Panorama of Muscatine, Iowa, in 1869, from Richie and White's Grain Elevator: Made from a Series of Stereoscopic Views Taken by J.G. Evans, Photographer, June 1869;" framed reproduction print in possession of the present property owners; Koch, *Bird's Eye View of the City of Muscatine*, in Repts, *Cities of the Mississippi: Nineteenth-Century Images of Urban Development*, 232.

²² Horton, "Town Planning," 353.

²³ United States Bureau of the Census, population schedules for the years 1850, 1860, and 1870, on microfilm in the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa; "Early Settler, Wife," *Muscatine Journal*, Centennial Issue 1840-1940, 31 May 1940; Brossart, Marlin W., compiler, "Muscatine County, Iowa, Marriage Records, 1837-1879" (Muscatine, Iowa: by the compiler, 1980), 1; Richman, ed., *History of Muscatine County*, 205.

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on the bluff top by the city's business class.

At the time of its construction, the Pliny and Adelia Fay House was one of the more substantial dwellings in the city and one of the few on the bluff. Fay had arrived very early in the frontier period and over the course of two decades became a successful, well-respected merchant. The ability to erect a commodious home among the town's other elites was a mark of his prosperity and status, and by extension, that of the city itself. The construction of several fine dwellings, including this one, on the bluff reflects the maturation of Muscatine from a frontier outpost of tree stumps and crude buildings clustered around a steamboat landing, to a full-fledged river town that supported a population of 6000 people, controlled a small economic hinterland, and boasted two- and three-story buildings exhibiting the latest architectural refinements.

As architecture, the Pliny and Adelia Fay House meets Criterion C as an excellent example of early Italianate design. The house is not a clear rendition of this so-called "high style," but it makes too strong a "stylistic statement" to be categorized as a purely folk form.²⁴ Its decorative trimmings acknowledge the aesthetic tastes of the mid-nineteenth century, but the basic form and plan of the house conform to a much older architectural tradition. The floorplan, the low pitch of the roof, the Palladian window, and the four symmetrical interior chimneys are all traditionally Georgian characteristics, whereas the porch, vestibule, round-headed window, and cornice brackets are typically Italianate.

Although the Italianate style in this region is commonly associated with the railroad era, the Fay House exhibits characteristics of pre-railroad construction. The bricks appear to be handmade, it has relatively little molding, and its decorative woodwork is simple, thick, even massive in its proportions. Even if the Fay House was built after the arrival of the railroad, these materials were probably produced locally, given the number of local brick makers and Muscatine's involvement in the lumber trade in the mid-1850s. Moreover, the house is the only house along Second Street that does not face that street; its principal elevations face Locust Street and the Mississippi River, *the* most important feature of the physical and economic landscape of Muscatine prior to the railroad era. The lives of the city's early residents were oriented to the river, and this house, perhaps more so than any other house around it, still represents that pre-railroad relationship.

At a broader level, the particular combination of design features—*this* shape with *that* roof, *those* chimneys, and *this* kind of trim—illustrates the remarkable fluidity and variety but also the underlying conservatism of the early architecture of Iowa's river towns. Many historians and geographers have noted the cultural continuity between frontier areas and the established settlements of the East: in the process of building new lives and new communities, settlers often emulated the style and institutions of the communities whence they came. New Englanders were prominent in the early settlement of Muscatine, and it may not be coincidence that the design

²⁴ McAlester, Virginia, and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 308-317.

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of this house recalls the Georgian double-pile houses of the New England cultural hearth.²⁵

²⁵ Noble, *Wood, Brick, and Stone*, 102-103; Meinig, D.W., *The Shaping of America, A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History: Volume 1, Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1986), 432-438.

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"West Front Street, 1866." Photographic print (reprint) of Muscatine, Iowa, taken from the Mississippi River. From the Graham Collection, Bamford Studio, Inc., Muscatine, Iowa.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property consists of Lots 5 and 6, and the north ½ of Lot 7, Block 6, Original Town Plat, in the City of Muscatine, Iowa.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The area described above was selected because the house has occupied Lot 6 since circa 1870 and because the present property is all that remains of the three contiguous city lots (5, 6, and 7) originally associated with the Pliny and Adelia Fay House.

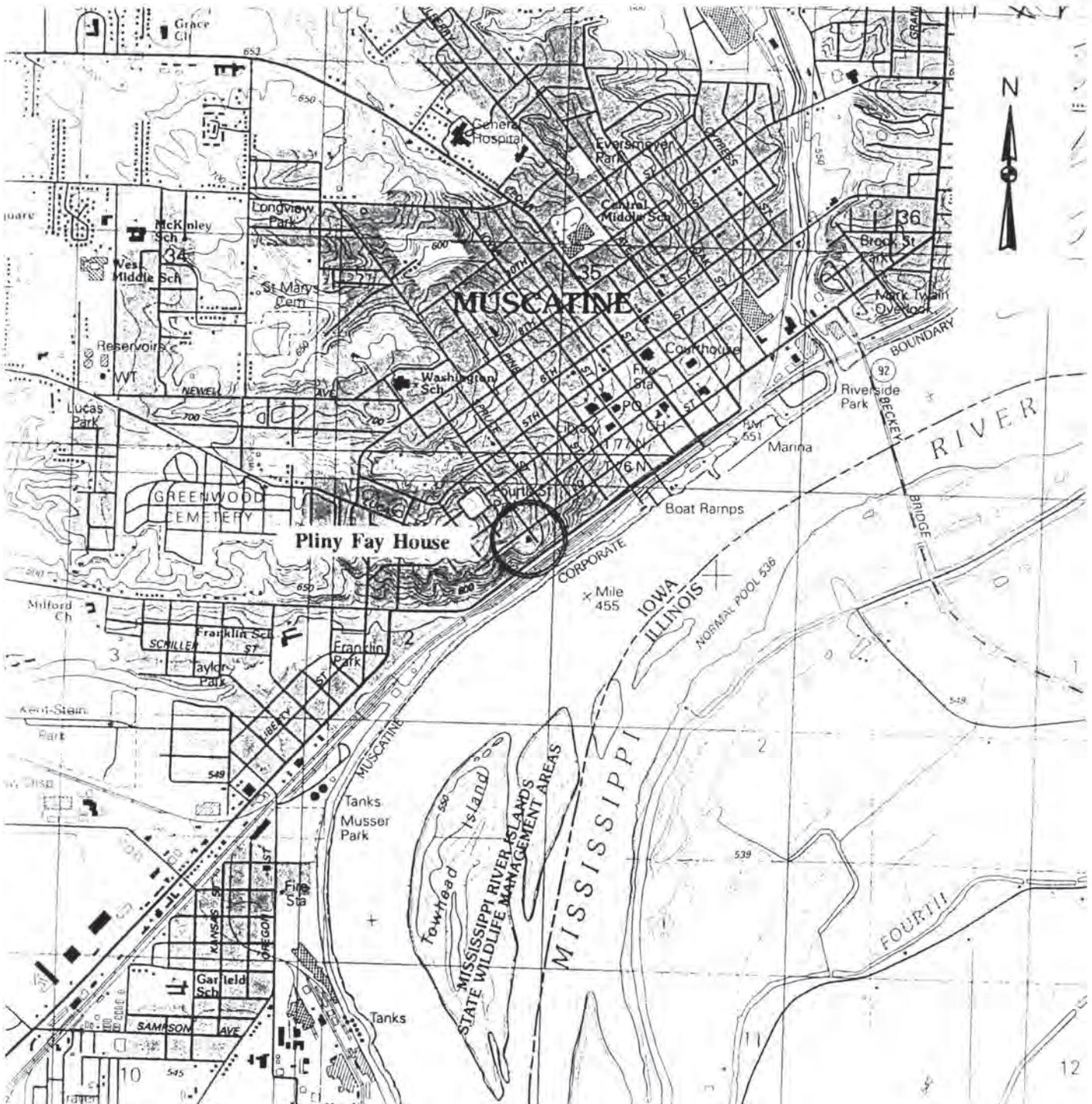
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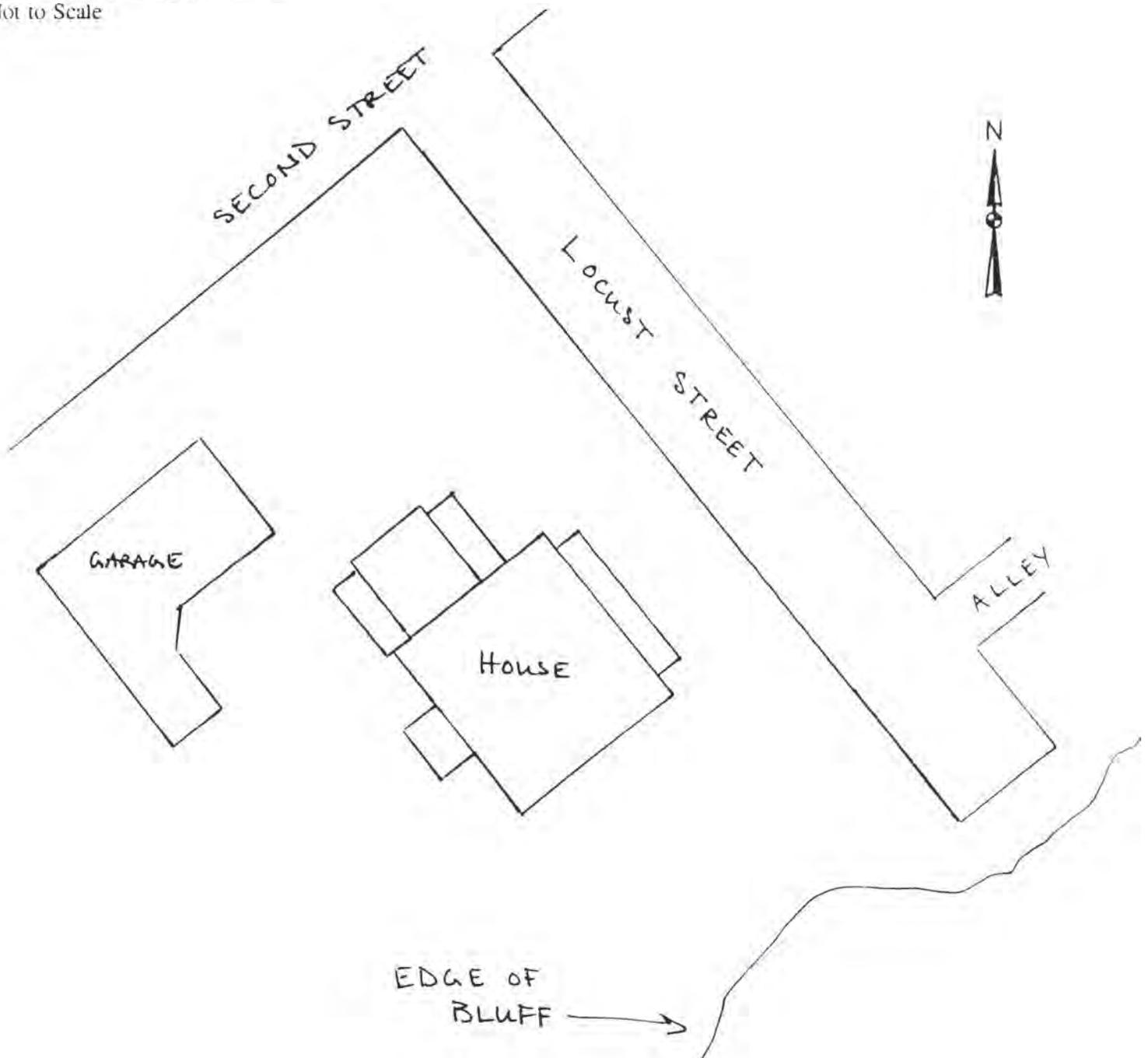
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CPHY-255-1111

Site Sketch Plan

By T. Cuning, 1 October 1997
Not to Scale



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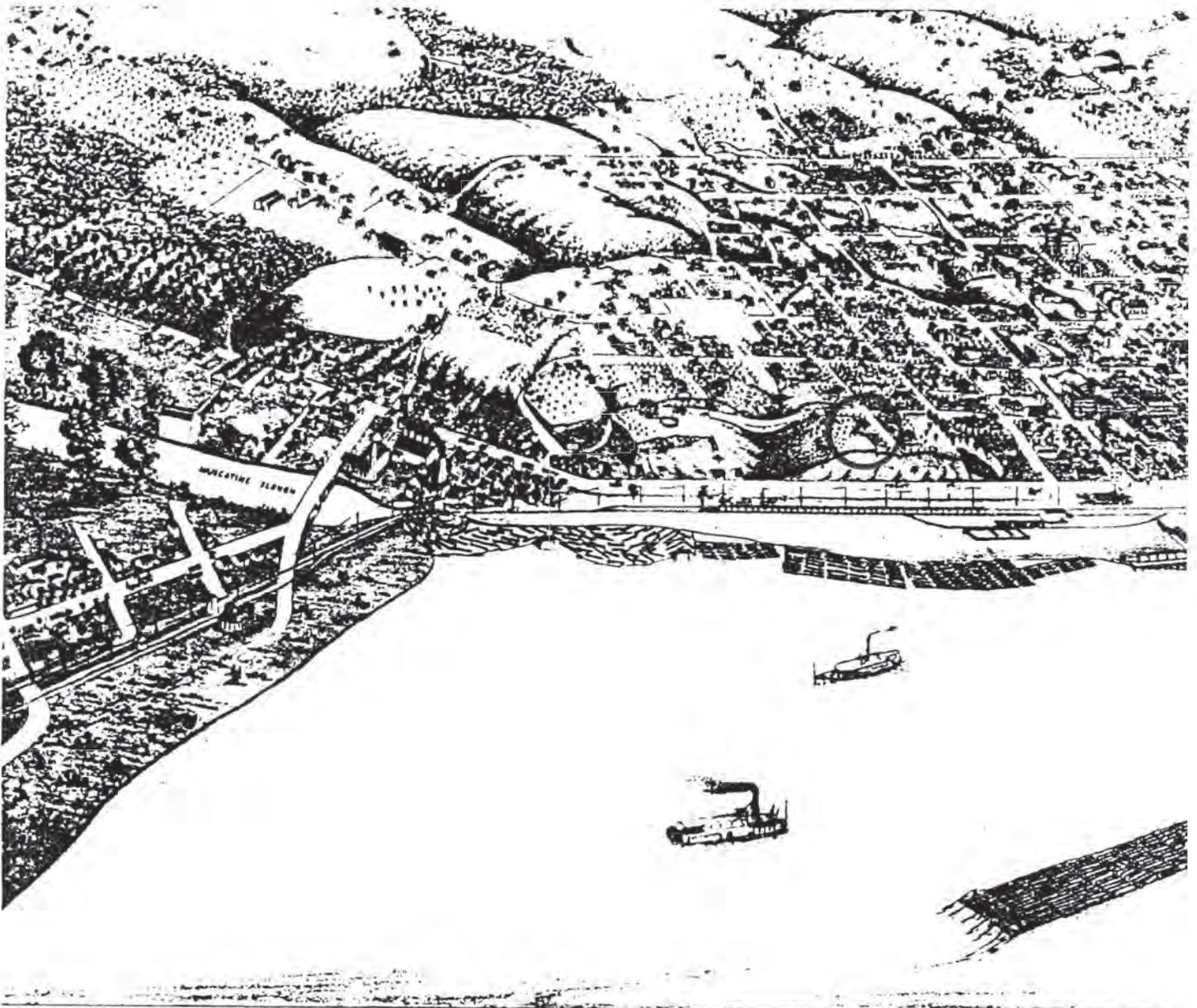
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BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE CITY OF
MUSCATINE
 MUSCATINE, IOWA

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Fay, Pliny and Adelia, House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Muscatine

DATE RECEIVED: 3/27/98 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/07/98
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/23/98 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/11/98
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 98000382

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4.23.98 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



1. Fay, Pliny and Adelia, house
2. Muscatine County, Iowa
3. Jan Olive Nash
4. May 1997
5. Photographer
6. Northeast front and Northwest Side,
facing South
7. Photo # 1



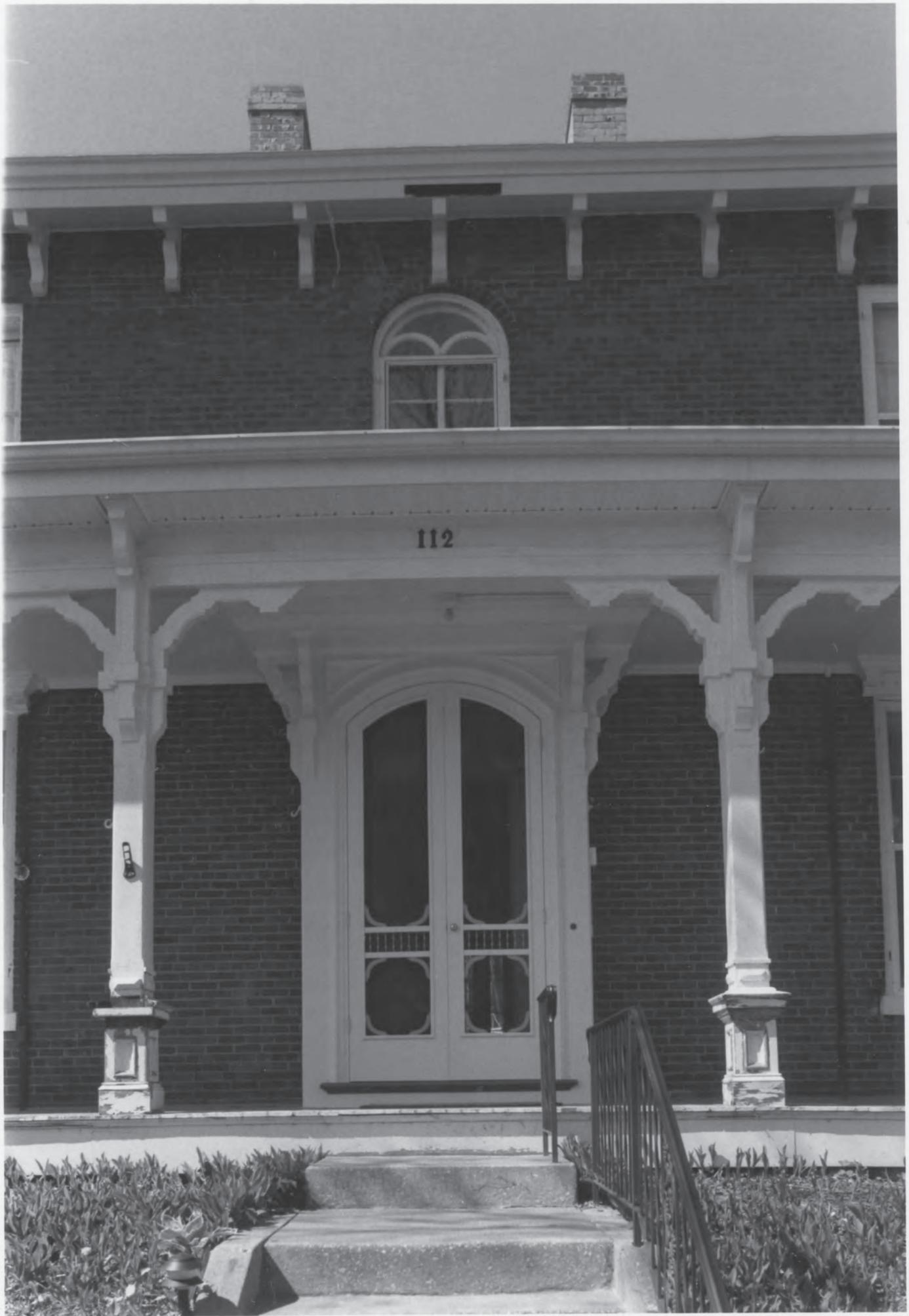
1. Fay, Pliny and Adelia, house
2. Muscatine County, Iowa
3. Jan Olive Nash
4. May 1997
5. Photographer
6. Northeast front and Northwest Side
facing South
7. Photo # 2



1. Fay, Pliny and Adelia, house
2. Muscatine County, Iowa
3. Jan Olive Nash
4. May 1997
5. Photographer
6. Northeast front, facing Southwest
7. Photo # 3



1. Fay, Pliny and Adelia, house
2. Muscatine County, Iowa
3. Jan Olive Nash
4. May 1997
5. Photographer
6. Southeast Side and Southwest rear, facing north
7. Photo # 4



1. Fay, Pliny and Adelia, house
2. Muscatine County, Iowa
3. Jan Olive Nash
4. May 1997
5. Photographer
6. Detail front entrance,
facing southwest
7. Photo #5

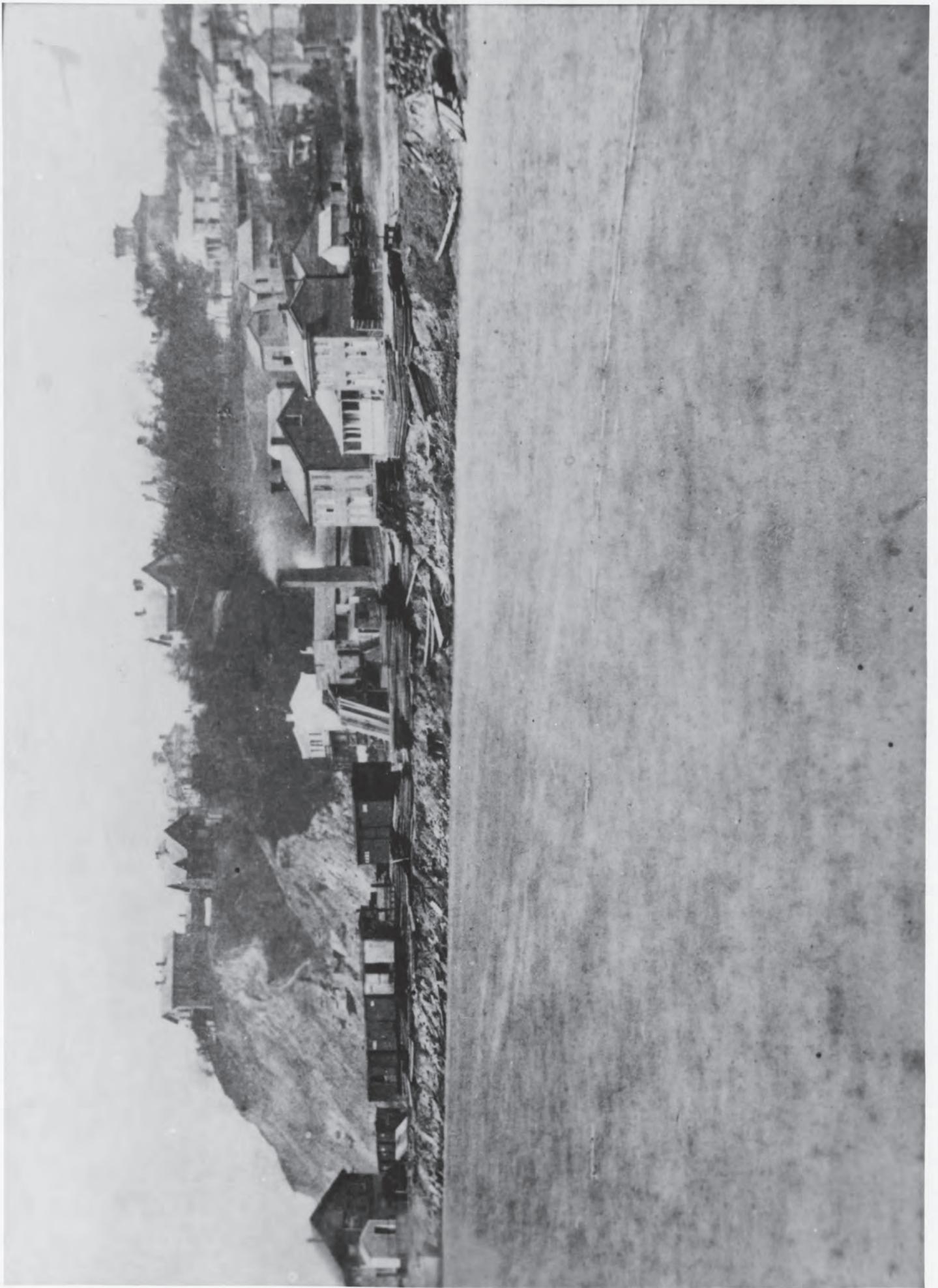


1. Fay, Pliny and Adelia, house
2. Muscatine County, Iowa
3. Jan Olive Nash
4. May 1997
5. Photographer
6. Interior First floor Central hall
facing Southwest
7. Photo # ~~76~~ 76

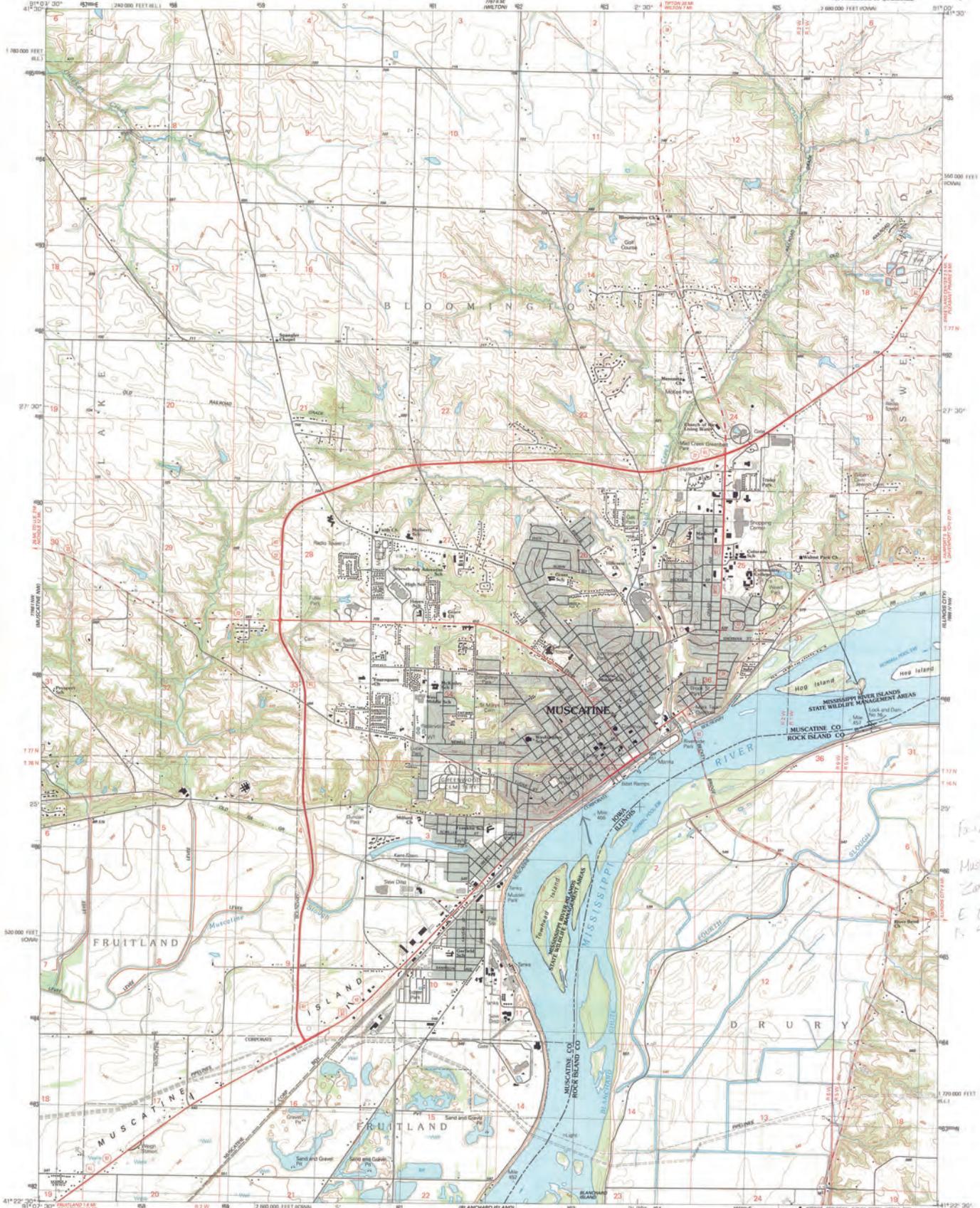


1. Fay, Pliny and Adelia, house
2. Muscatine County, Iowa
3. Jan Olive Nash
4. May 1997
5. Photographer
6. Interior, first floor Northwest front Parlor, facing east.

7. Photo # 7

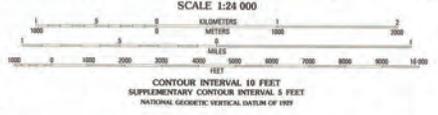


1. "View of West Front Street, Muscatine, Iowa, 1866" with Pliny Fay House in upper left-hand corner.
2. Muscatine County, Iowa
3. Photographer unknown
4. 1866
5. From the Graham Collection, Bamford Studio, Muscatine, Iowa.
6. Town of Muscatine from the Mississippi River, looking west.
7. Photograph #8



Handwritten notes:
Fruitland
Muscatine IA
ZONE 15
E 1000 870
N 4530 710

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NGS/NOAA
Field checked 1988. Map revised 1991
Projection: Iowa coordinate system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)
10,000-foot grid (Iowa coordinate system, south zone and Illinois coordinate system, west zone)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 15
1927 North American Datum
The difference between 1927 North American Datum and North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) for 7.5-minute intersections is given as USGS Bulletin 1875. The NAD 83 is shown by dashed corner ticks.
Gray tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, hard surface Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface Unimproved road
Interstate Route U. S. Route State Route

MUSCATINE, IOWA-ILL.
N41091-D1-TF-004
1991
DMA 7766-1 NE-SERIES 1876

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
IOWA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240
AND ILLINOIS GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS 61820
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST