

Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
State Historical Society of Iowa
Iowa Site Inventory Form
Continuation Sheet

Site Number __ 82-00238 _____
Related District Number _____

Page __ 1 __

Name of Property _____ Iowa Reform Building _____ County _____ Scott _____

Address _____ 526 W. 2nd Street _____ City _____ Davenport _____

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Iowa Reform Building is situated on part of Lot 1, Block 10 of the Original Town of Davenport. This block of the Davenport Central Business District was once part of a vibrant German community, the structural manifestation of which included various commercial and cultural buildings.

The building is sited on the north side of West 2nd Street; its façade faces south. Early in its history, the building was flanked on both sides by commercial structures, most likely of similar size, proportion, and material. Today, a small parking lot adjoins the building on the west (the existence of a former structure alluded to in the ghost lines remaining on the west wall), with a one-story, two bay brick commercial building dating to c.1910 located on its east.

A public sidewalk runs the length of the block, providing access to the building's primary entrances on the south.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The Iowa Reform Building is a two-story commercial structure built of red brick on a stone foundation. The primary (south) façade features horizontal stone banding; used here to delineate the elements of the façade elevation (i.e. storefront, upper story, and cornice.)

The building's storefront features dual entrances accessed by iron steps and handrails. Cast iron is also used in the columns of the storefront (now painted). The iron elements are most certainly original to the structure. In all likelihood, a 1998 rehabilitation, (Scott County Assessor), was responsible for the storefront's current incarnation which features vertical wood boards, multi-paned windows, and a large, fixed awning. Despite these invasive changes, original entrances remain intact, helping to retain an important level of historic integrity.

The structure's upper story, defined by the placement of stone banding, is dominated by four double-hung windows; two paired on-center, the remaining two set nearly flush with the structural piers of the east and west walls. While the original openings remain intact, the windows have been retrofitted with aluminum storms (wood frame may be intact). The window on the east is now a single, fixed pane. Deep, fixed awnings have been set into each window opening.

A band of stone runs the width of the upper story façade; serving as both window hood and visual separation between the second floor and the cornice. The building's cornice was created through the laying of brickwork in a combination of patterns. First, a set of stepped courses rising to a series of small, recessed squares. The outside wall structural piers on either side restrain this pattern work. A metal, molded cornice featuring an egg & dart pattern is mounted above the brickwork. Aluminum flashing intrudes over the façade parapet; providing some protection from the elements, but detracting from the beauty of the decorative cornice.

Secondary elevations are all constructed of a lower grade brick with no decorative embellishment. A pair of double-hung windows are located in the upper story of both the east and west walls. In addition, both walls show ghost lines of previous, adjoining structures. The west elevation bears the faded signage of "Denny Moo Auto Sales" dating to after the adjoining building was demolished. A small sign advertising "Pioneer Shop Antiques" is nestled in a small niche on the east wall, created by the set-back of The Market building.

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A small, wooden addition has been made to the rear. The addition appears to serve as a storage area at ground level with a porch above.

Condition

As a masonry structure, the greatest concern for this building is the condition of its brick. Generally speaking, the building can be described as suffering some measure of joint loss throughout. The west elevation (now fully exposed due to loss of an adjoining structure) shows significant deterioration of joints and brick spall along the parapet wall and near the foundation. In addition to this deterioration, the upper wall has been patch repaired and a window near the rear of the elevation has been bricked in.

Like the west elevation, the exposed areas of the east wall have areas of significant deterioration. Deterioration on the primary (south) elevation appears to be confined to joint loss on the piers, significant due to their structural function.

PROPERTY HISTORY

The building at 526 W. 2nd Street was constructed c.1892 to house the Iowa Reform, a German newspaper that had been publishing in Davenport since 1884. As noted previously, the building sat amid numerous social, civic, and retail enterprises that had grown up in the heart of the German community, including the Prien Building and the Hoffman Building – owned and occupied by German retailers, the Farmers Hotel, and the Turnverein (Turner Hall) – the social heart of the German community.

As the historic image found on page 9 indicates, the Iowa Reform was housed on the opposite end of this block (502-504 W. 2nd Street) c.1884 to 1892. That building is non-extant.

As the Svendsen survey of 1982 records, the Iowa Reform was a semi-weekly publication serving the German community of the Tri-City area. The paper was one of few to survive the censorship of World War I. By 1939 the Iowa Reform was the sole remaining German newspaper in the state of Iowa. The paper ceased publications in 1943; the anti-German sentiment of World War II being more than it could overcome.

A specialty service provider, “Premier Computer Services”, currently occupies this property.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The property at 526 West 2nd Street was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. Then, as now, the building is considered significant under Criteria A in its association with the history of the German community in Davenport, specifically the contributions made by the Iowa Reform newspaper to that ethnic group.

The structure at 526 W. 2nd Street is currently designated as a City Landmark in its association with the Iowa Reform newspaper and its long and significant contribution to the Davenport German community.

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This view of West Second Street, looking northeast shows the tremendous loss of historic fabric in this block of the Davenport Downtown Commercial District.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

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View of the Iowa Reform building (at left); south elevation, looking northwest across West Second Street.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

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View of the primary (south) and west elevations, looking northeast across West Second Street.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

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Detail view of the cast iron steps and railings.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

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This signage remnant is located on the east wall of the building. It reads “Pioneer Shop Antiques”.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

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Detail view of the west elevation. The faded signage appears to read “Denny Moo Used Cars & Trucks”.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

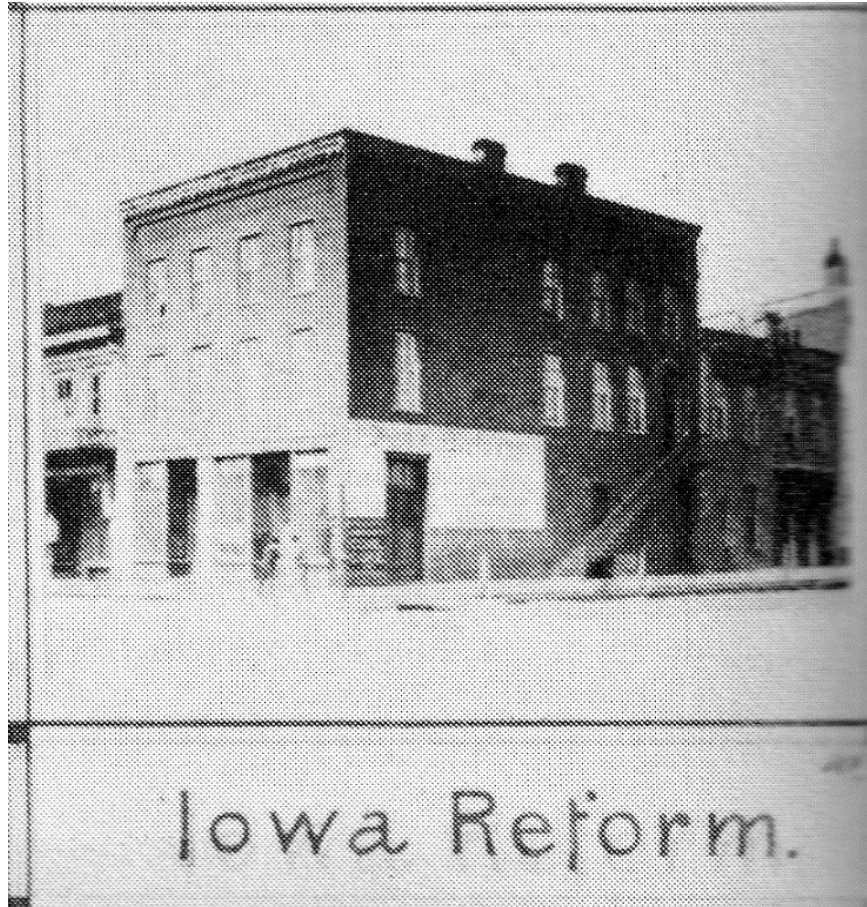
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The original home to the Iowa Reform is pictured above. The building was located at 502-504 W. 2nd Street and served the newspaper from c.1884-1892

(SOURCE: Huebinger. "First Album of the City of Davenport, Iowa". 1887.
Collection of the Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science.)

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The arrow indicates the location of the Iowa Reform building.

(SOURCE: City of Davenport – Planning Department – 1/2005)

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Special Collections

Davenport Public Library; Richardson-Sloane Special Collections
Davenport City Directory Collection 1890-1940
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Collection
Quad Cities Photograph Collection

Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science. Davenport, Iowa.

Local Publications

Svendsen, Marlys. "Davenport, Where the River Runs West: A Survey of Davenport History & Architecture". ND

Internet Resources

www.scottcountyiowa.com/assessor. Scott County Assessor.