

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

Site Number __ 82-00220 _____
Related District Number _____

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Name of Property _____ J.H.C. Petersen's Sons' Store _____ County _____ Scott _____

Address _____ 123 (123-131) W. 2nd Street _____ City _____ Davenport _____

SITE DESCRIPTION

The J.H.C. Petersen's Sons' Store is located on Lot 10, Block 4 of LeClaire's 1st Addition to the Original Town of Davenport. The building is sited on the southeast corner of the intersection of West Second and Main Streets; its façade faces north. The Petersen Store, once the west end of a contiguous line of commercial structures, is now one of two remaining, historic structures on the block. A paved courtyard currently adjoins the building on the east. An east-west alley bisects the block at the rear of the building. A public sidewalk provides access to the building's entrances on West Second and Main Streets.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The J.H.C. Petersen's Sons Store is a four-story, stone building constructed on what is likely a brick foundation. The structure is nearly square in form with the flat roof typical of commercial structures. The Petersen Store is clearly inspired by the work of the early Chicago School; its precedent, the nationally recognized, Rookery Building (1885-1886) designed by the Chicago firm of Burnham & Root (see rendering, page eight.)

The parallels between the two structures are obvious, even to the casual observer. Although smaller in scale, the Petersen Building adopted the Rookery's general form, use of a central, projecting pavilion, vertical grouping of windows in round arched arcades, and the decorative, terra cotta detailing of the name plate and entrance spandrels.

Condition

Following a relatively recent rehabilitation, the J.H.C. Petersen's Sons' Store is in excellent repair. Despite modifications made to accommodate the present occupants, the building's exterior retains a very high level of historic integrity and remains a signature building in the Davenport Central Business District.

The renovation of the building's interior was completed in a manner that, while creating highly contemporary spaces, retains the expression of the iron column and wood beam structural system. This is of particular note given the building's association with the history of the Chicago School and the technological advancements that resulted from the innovation of that period.

PROPERTY HISTORY

The building at 123 W. 2nd Street was constructed in 1892 to accommodate a department store for Davenport's leading retailer, John H.C. Petersen. According to the 1983 Historical Survey completed by Marlys Svendsen and Martha Bowers, Petersen and his sons established a dry goods firm in 1872. The operation grew steadily over the ensuing years, the construction of the "department store" at 123 W. 2nd Street the culmination those years. The building was designed to meet the evolving retail marketing strategy of the department store, with a literal departmentalization of goods. John Petersen's sons (Max, Henry F. and William) took command of the family business at this time, continuing with both retail and wholesale operations. It should be noted that the company's warehouse was formerly sited a block west of the

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department store, on the north side of West River Drive, between Main and Harrison Streets. The warehouse is non-extant, but historic images of the structure are located in the Richardson-Sloane Special Collections at the Davenport Public Library.

Although the Petersen Store was sold in 1916 to one of its greatest competitors, the Harned and Von Vaur Co., it continued to operate independently until the 1928 consolidation that resulted in the creation of the Petersen-Harned-Von Maur Store. The business operated out of the Petersen Building, rather than the Harned and Von Maur structure located on southeast corner of Second and Harrison Streets. The company continues to operate numerous department stores in Iowa, including locations in Davenport and Des Moines.

The locally prominent architect, Frederick G. Clausen, designed the J.H.C. Petersen's Sons' Store. Clausen, a German immigrant who came to Davenport in 1869, founded the architectural firm of F.G. Clausen in 1871. Clausen's son, Rudolph, joined him in the practice in 1904, at which time the firm became Clausen & Clausen. Known by various names over the course of its one hundred thirty-four year history, the firm is responsible for some of Davenport's landmark buildings including the Democrat Building, the Scott County Savings Bank, the Davenport Municipal Stadium (aka John O'Donnell Stadium), and the W.D. Petersen Memorial Music Pavilion. The J.H.C. Petersen's Sons' Store is, perhaps, the Davenport building most widely associated with the architectural work of Frederick Clausen. Today Clausen's firm is known as SGGM (Scholtz-Gowey-Gere-Marolf) Architects & Interior Designers, and is one of the oldest architectural firms in Iowa.

Multiple enterprises, including the Center for American Roots Music, Centro (a restaurant), and Mojo's (a bar), currently occupy the J.H.C. Petersen's Sons' Store.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The J.H.C. Petersen's Sons Store was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. As was true at the time of its listing, the building is considered significant under Criterion A in association with the history of commerce in Davenport, specifically the development of the department store under the hand of J.H.C. Petersen.

In addition, the building is considered significant under Criterion C as an excellent example of the influence of the early Chicago School of architecture manifested in local architecture.

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View of the primary (north) and west elevations, looking southeast across the intersection of West Second and Main Streets.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

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View of primary (north) and east elevations, looking southwest across West Second Street.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

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Detail view of the projecting pavilion that marks the primary entrance on the north. Notice the terra cotta detailing around the arch of the entrance and in the building's name plaque.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

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Detail view of name plaque.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

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As the label indicates, this historic image dates to c.1920, some twenty-five years after the building's construction. As seen in this image, the entrance pavilions, on both the north and the west, were designed to project above the roofline. Those elements have been lost in time, as have the corner pinnacles.

(SOURCE: Image courtesy of the Richardson-Sloane Special Collections of the Davenport Public Library.)

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The 1885-1895 Rookery Building by the Chicago firm of Burnham & Root inspired many similar constructions throughout the country, including the J.H.C. Petersen's Sons' Store.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting Postcard Collection)

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This c.1880 image documents West Second Street, looking east from Harrison Street, in the years prior to the 1892 construction of the J.H.C. Petersen's Sons' Store. When constructed, the building replaced the three-story building seen on the right, near the middle of the streetscape (West Second & Main Streets.) The new Petersen store's height and mass had a much greater physical and aesthetic impact on the early streetscape than that of the building seen here.

(SOURCE: Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science. Davenport, Iowa.)

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This undated (c.1925) view of West Second Street, looking west from Brady Street, documents the Petersen store (middle left) within the context of its historic streetscape.

(SOURCE: Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science. Davenport, Iowa)

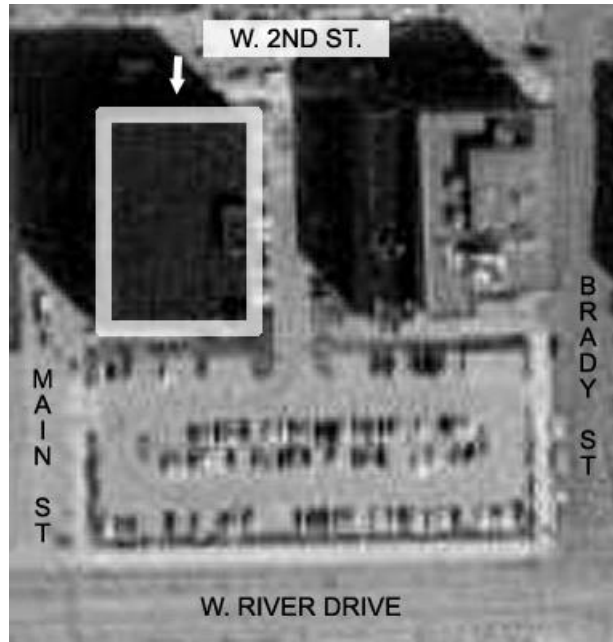
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The arrow indicates the location of the J.H.C. Petersen's Sons' Store.

(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.

AKAY Consulting Postcard Collection. Boone, Iowa.

Database of SGGM Architects & Interior Designers. Rock Island, Illinois.

Local Publications

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

Internet Resources

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