

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

Site Number __ 82-01882 _____
Related District Number _____

Page ____ 1 ____

Name of Property _____ Ficke Block _____ County _____ Scott _____

Address _____ 307 (307-309) Harrison Street _____ City _____ Davenport _____

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Ficke Block is located on part of Lot 1, Block 44 of LeClaire's 1st Addition. The building is sited on the east side of Harrison Street, near the middle of the block; its primary façade faces west. It is bound on the south by a commercial structure of similar size and construction era, and on the north by a parking lot, with an alley running east-west just north of the lot. A public sidewalk provides access to the building's entrance on Harrison Street.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The Ficke Block is a four-story brick building constructed on what is likely a stone foundation. Designed as a doublewide storefront, the Ficke Block accommodated two businesses on the street level, with ample residential space in the upper stories.

Constructed in the latter years of the Victorian era, the Ficke Block exhibits a variety of influences associated with that period. The rusticated, semi-circular window arches of the third floor and the flat, stone lintels located over the paired windows of the fourth floor recall the sense of solidity and mass associated with the Romanesque. The pair of two-story bay windows, complete with garland swag embossing, the wrought iron balconies, and the ornate cornice all exhibit the exuberance of the Queen Anne.

The historic character of the storefront is lost in time; the only remnants are the iron columns indicating the division of the storefront. Today the storefront has been bricked in; pairs of fixed-paned windows with arched heads flank a modern entrance of aluminum and tinted glass.

Condition

Despite the extensive and historically inappropriate renovation of its storefront, the Ficke Block retains a very high level of historic integrity. This is due to the retention of the upper story form, fenestration, and elaborate detail, which define the Victorian era character of the building as a whole.

As a masonry structure, the greatest concern for the building is the condition of its brick and stone. A visual inspection indicates that the building appears to be in generally good condition, with some areas of joint damage that should be repaired.

PROPERTY HISTORY

The Ficke Block was constructed in 1899 to house the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company, as well as multiple residential units. In 1915 the south storefront (307) became home to the L.R. Wareham pool hall. This side of the building remained a pool hall through the 1940s. The north storefront (309) housed a wide variety of businesses over time, including City Fuel and Lumber Company (1915), Bee Jay Tire Service (1918), Savoy Café (1920), the Colorado Restaurant (1925-1930), the Old Timer, beverages (1935), and the Three Hundred Nine Tavern (1940).

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The building at 307 Harrison Street is associated with Charles August (C.A.) Ficke, a prominent local attorney, politician, and developer. Ficke is connected with numerous enterprises in the downtown Davenport. In addition to the building at 307 Harrison, the architectural database of the local firm of SGM Architects & Interior Designers indicates that he was involved with the 1904 and 1916 renovations of a store at 226 W. 3rd Street (east end of the Henry Berg Building), the c.1900 construction of a three-story commercial building (also known as the Ficke Block) located at 432 W. 3rd Street, the c.1900 construction of the four-story building at 305 Harrison Street, the construction of the Horst & Streiter Co. building at 420 W. 3rd Street (non-extant), and alterations to the storefronts of buildings at 414 and 416 W. 3rd Street (both buildings non-extant).

It should be noted that the residence of C.A. Ficke, an outstanding example of the French Second Empire style, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. In addition to its significant architecture, the residence was determined eligible under Criteria A in its association with Ficke and his role in the history of Davenport government and politics.

Currently the Berg Apartments and the Investment Council Inc occupy the Ficke Block.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Ficke Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. Then, as is true today, the building is considered significant under Criterion C as an example of Late Victorian commercial architecture. In addition, the resource is considered significant under Criterion A in its association with the history of Davenport government and politics as they relate to C.A. Ficke specifically.

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View of the Ficke Block (noted with an arrowhead) within the context of its streetscape.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

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View of primary (west) elevation, looking northeast across Harrison Street. Despite the reconfiguration of the building's storefront, the building retains a high level of historic character.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

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View of the Ficke Block's rear (north) and west elevations, looking southeast across Harrison Street.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

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The upper stories of the Ficke Block are highly ornamented, much of which remains intact. The two-story bay windows, wrought iron balconies, stone window headers, and ornate cornice are all interesting elements of an usually attractive whole.

(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – November 2004)

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Judging by the automobiles on Harrison Street, this image dates to the late 1930s. The Ficke Block can be seen at the far left.

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

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This c.1960 image documents the Ficke Block within the context of its streetscape. It is seen midway down the block on the left. Note the multiple buildings to its north, now non-extant.

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

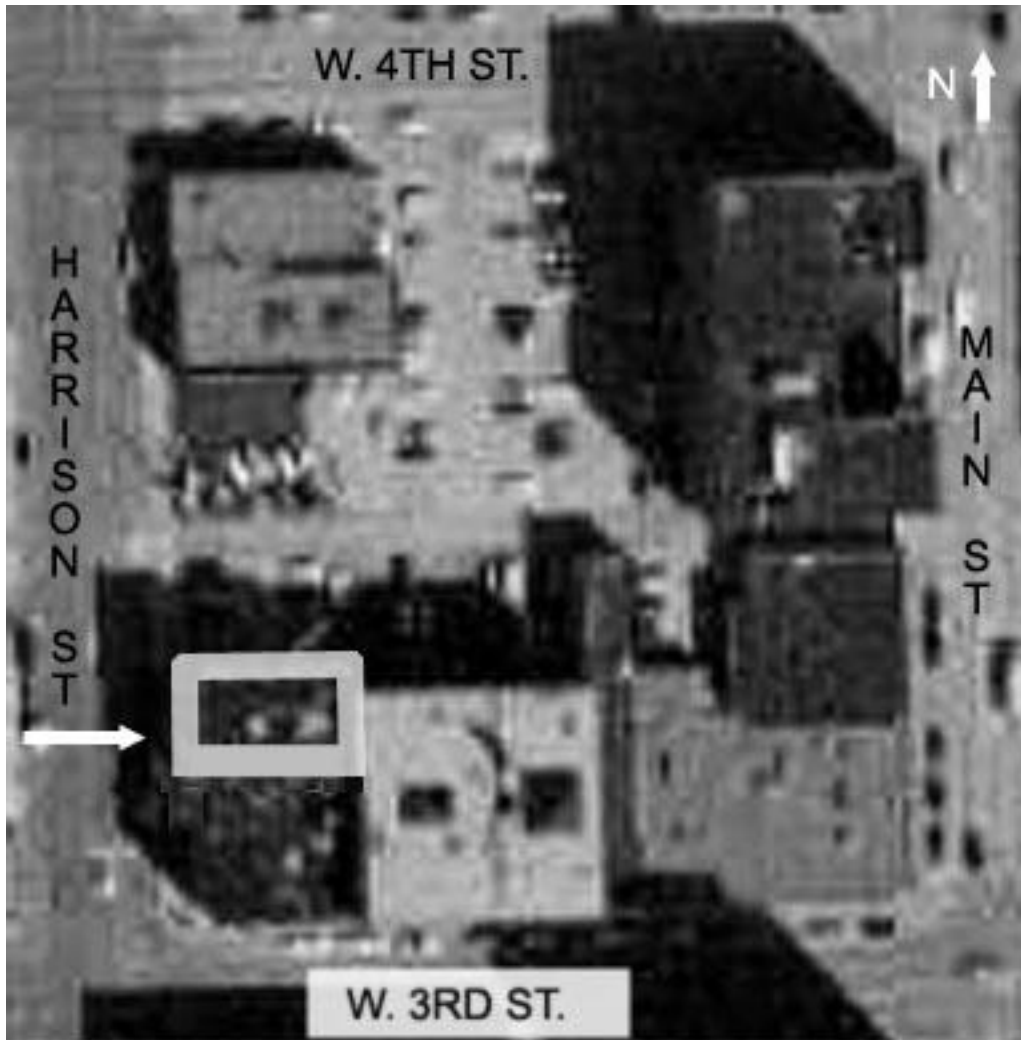
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The arrow indicates the location of the Ficke Block.

(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.

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

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.