

**Historic Building Survey  
Of the Rath Administration Building  
Waterloo, Black Hawk County, Iowa**



October 2005

**City of Waterloo  
Black Hawk County, Iowa**

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**Prepared for:**

**The City of Waterloo  
715 Mulberry Street  
Waterloo, Iowa 50703**

**Prepared by:**

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## 1.0 Introduction

The Howard R. Green Company was retained by the City of Waterloo to provide an independent reanalysis of the historic significance of the Administration Building that is associated with the Rath Packing Company Historic District. This building, which has been vacant since the 1985 liquidation of the packing company, was previously determined to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) as a contributing element to the overall historic district centered on the meat packing plant operated by the Rath Packing Company. The Principal Investigator for this reanalysis of historic significance was Joe Trnka, of the Howard R. Green Company. Melissa Edsill, also of the Howard R. Green Company, provided research and fieldwork assistance. Finally, Berry Bennett of the State Historical Society of Iowa provided invaluable archival research assistance and his participation in this study is greatly appreciated.

The primary focus of this study is to review the condition of the historic fabric of the building in order to determine if it retains eligibility for National Register listing. Renovation and/or rehabilitation of this building in a manner intended to preserve historic integrity must be conducted if the building is to retain its historic significance. However, if the building no longer retains sufficient historic integrity, then rehabilitation of the building in order to provide useable space for new occupants can be accomplished instead of renovation or rehabilitation.

### 1.1 *A Brief History of the Rath Packing Company*

A number of histories of the Rath Packing Company are available (see Section 3.3) and are incorporated herein by reference. The Iowa State University, Special Collections Department, provided the following brief history (<http://www.lib.iastate.edu/>):

“George John Rath (also referred to as George Rath and John George Rath) was born in 1821 in Breitnau, Wurtenburg province, Germany. He came to the United States in the late 1840s and eventually settled in Dubuque, Iowa. In Dubuque, he began a merchant business, making and selling soap and tallow candles. He also began a pork packing operation. By 1873, he had a new partner in both endeavors, his son, Edward Frederick Rath. They did business under the name George Rath and Son.

In February 1891, the Rath's small pork packing plant and retail market in Dubuque was destroyed by fire. The fire came at a time when many growing towns in Iowa were trying to attract meat packers to relocate or open operations in their communities. A packing plant was a major acquisition for a small but ambitious town. Such a business meant locally-available fresh meat, employment, and typically created a livestock market, all adding to local commerce and prosperity.

The Rathes were approached by the Waterloo, Iowa, Board of Trade (a Chamber of Commerce forerunner) and were eventually won over. Incentives included \$10,000 in capital, land for a plant, and tax concessions. At some point during this process, George J. Rath decided not to leave Dubuque and not to continue in

the meat packing business, rather to stay with his mercantile business. His son, E.F. Rath and John W. Rath, a cousin from Ackley, Iowa, began the Waterloo venture.

The Rath Packing Company (Rath) of Waterloo (Iowa) opened for business on November 24, 1891, on the Cedar River. Initially, the company concentrated on hogs, but by 1908 the company was also slaughtering beef and soon lamb as well. Business thrived; lucrative contracts to supply meat to the Armed Forces during both World Wars helped the company grow. Growth and profitability were also spurred between the 1930s and 1950s by innovations such as the fancy dry curing of bacon and the vacuum canning of meats. By the company's fiftieth anniversary in 1941, the small regional packing house in Waterloo had grown into the nation's single largest meatpacking facility with branch facilities in 12 states. By the end of World War II, Rath was the fifth largest meatpacker in the U.S. Through two world wars, stock market panics, depression, and drought, the company had failed to show a profit in only four of its years (ISU 2005)."

The Rath Packing Company's main packing plant in Waterloo was determined to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. In 1991, Rebecca Conrad wrote the following statement of significance:

"The plant complex as a whole is significant under NRHP Criterion A for its association with Waterloo's industrialization period, 1890-1930. Building 149, the beef, sheep, and calf slaughtering facility, is a key contributing element of the historic district. This is where the process began, and this building fully exemplifies the downward flow of work which was typical of multistory plant design. Interestingly, it was constructed at about the same time the industry began to shift from multistory to one- and two--story plant design."

A partial copy of the Conrad report is available in the files of the State Historical Society of Iowa. The Administration Building is mentioned in Conrad's report as one of a few structures that are physically separated from the packing plant. It appears that Conrad considered the Administration Building to be a contributing element to a historic district centered on the Rath Packing Company's enormous meat packing plant. At one time, this meat packing plant covered over 700,000 square feet with multi-story buildings, the tallest being 7 stories. This complex of individual, contiguous buildings provided a total of approximately 3,000,000 square feet of work space. Many of these buildings have been demolished since the packing plant closed in 1985, others are in different uses or are currently vacant awaiting either reuse or demolition.

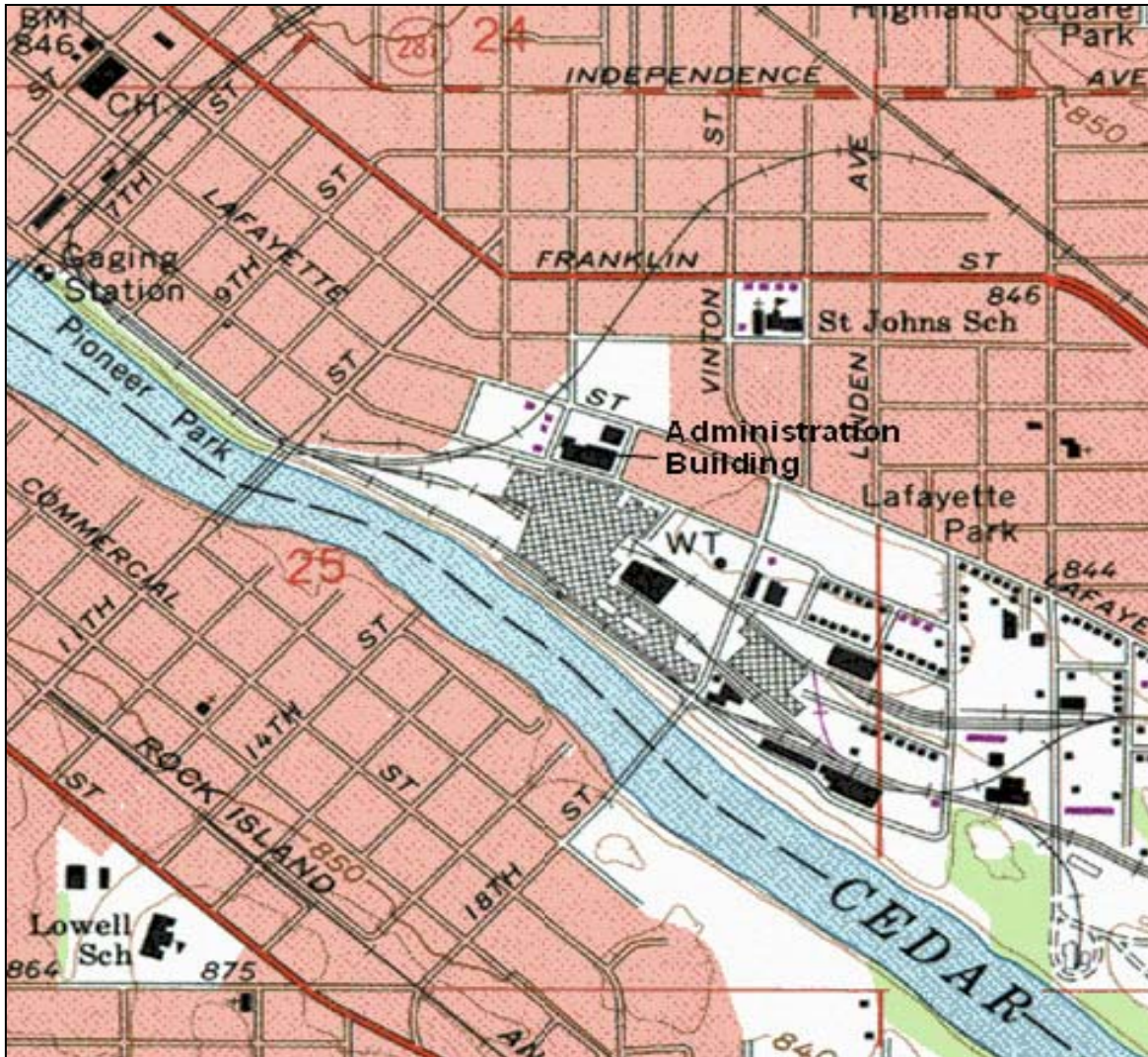
Key questions that this report attempts to answer are:

- Does the Administration Building retain integrity to the period of significance for the plant (1890-1930) that was established in 1991?
- Does the Administration Building and its material fabric retain sufficient integrity to facilitate the interpretation of its role in the overall historic significance of the Rath Packing Company Historic District?
- Does the Administration Building continue to exhibit National Register eligibility as a contributing element of the Rath Packing Company Historic District?

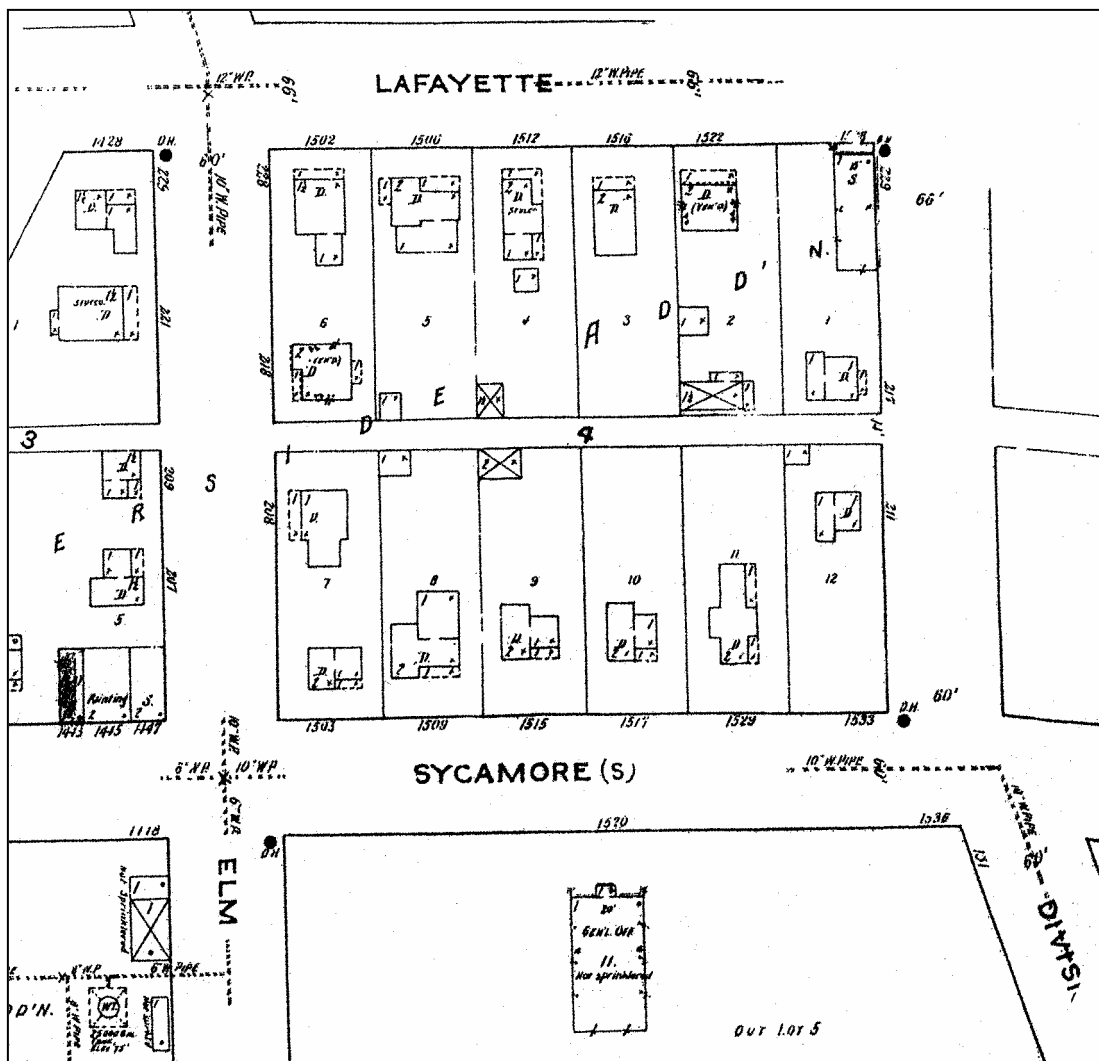


## 1.2 Location and Spatial Information

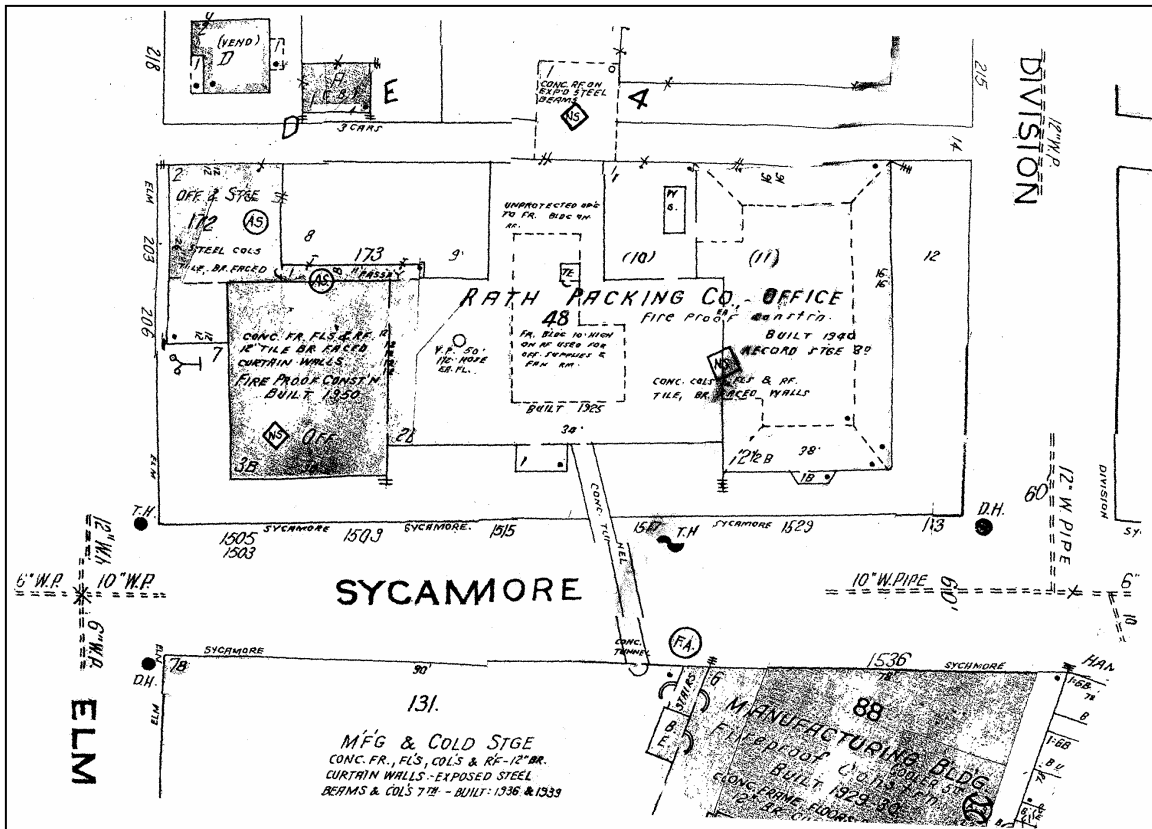
The Administration Building for the former Rath Packing Company is located in the southwest ¼ of the northeast ¼ of Section 25, Township 89 North, Range 13 West, in the City of Waterloo, Black Hawk County, Iowa. The building occupies lots 7 through 12 of Block 4 of the Riverside Addition.



The Administration Building is annotated on this portion of the USGS Waterloo South topographic quadrangle map. No scale.



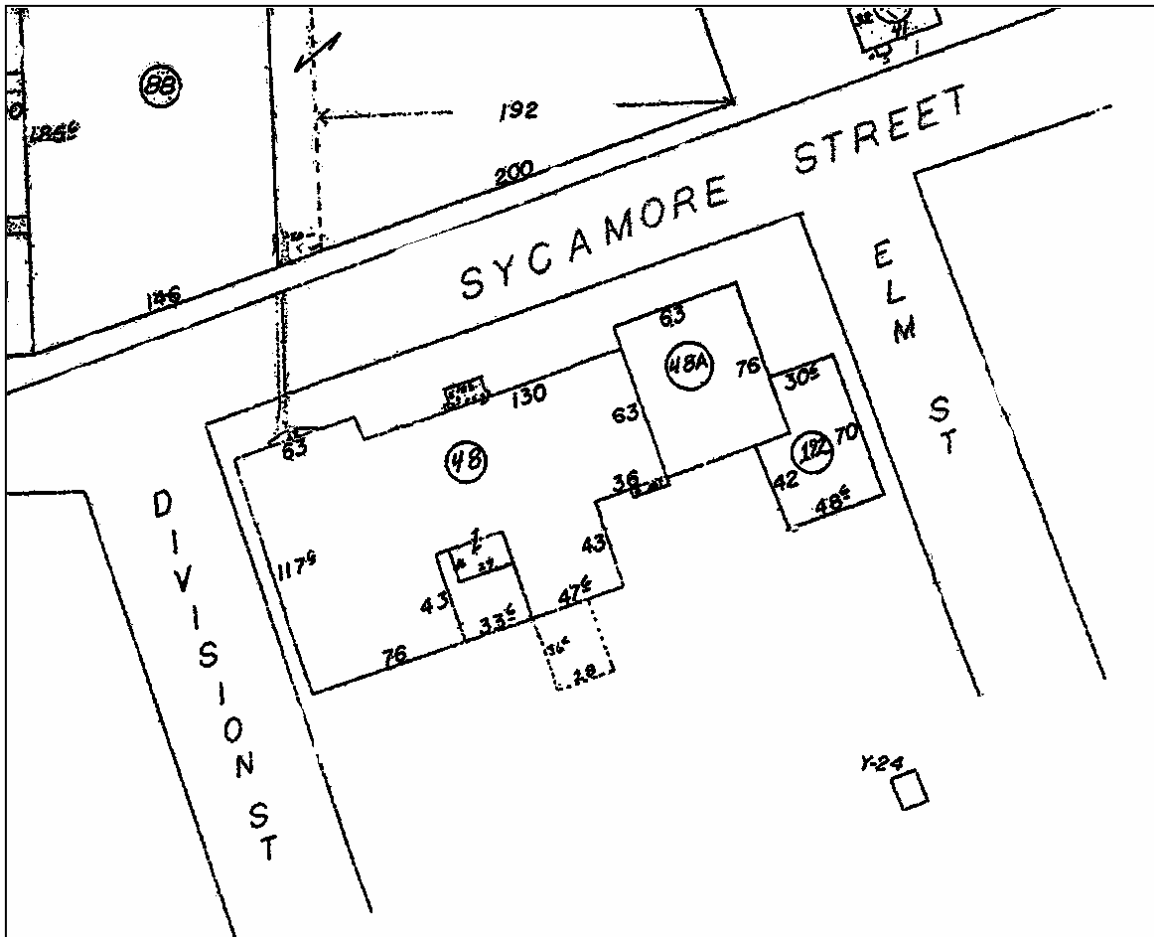
1918 Sanborn map for the building location. At this time, the Rath Packing Company's administration building was located in a much smaller building found on the opposite side of Sycamore Street. In 1918, the majority of Block 4 was occupied by simple frame dwellings. By circa 1950, lots 7 through 12 of Block 4 were all occupied by the Administration Building.



1956 Sanborn map for the building location. By this time, the building had assumed its current configuration and covers lots 7 through 12 on Block 4. Plant expansion has also obliterated the location of the previous administration building that was shown on the 1918 map. As shown here, the building is comprised of four sections. The first section was constructed in 1925 and is the central portion of the building. The first addition was constructed in circa 1940 along Division Street. The second addition was constructed in circa 1950 on the opposite side as the 1940 addition and resulted in the incorporation of the Adams Building into the Administration Building. A utility tunnel once passed underneath Sycamore Street and connected the Administration Building to the Rath Packing Company's steam plant. This connection no longer exists and the tunnel was reportedly filled in the 1980s or 1990s. All of the additions to the original 1925 Administration Building occurred outside of the period of significance of 1890 to 1930 that was established for the Rath Packing Company Historic District.



Administration Building, Rath Packing Company, circa 1970, looking southeast. This aerial photograph shows the building as it appeared at a time of full utilization of the entire plant. The original 1925 structure is located in the central portion of the building. Originally, it was a 130-foot by 100-foot two story structure with the main entry doors centered on its front, facing Sycamore Street. The original 1925 building is partially topped by a wooden attic structure that provided space for storage and ventilation equipment. In circa 1940, the overall building size was doubled when a 63-foot by 117.5-foot, two story addition topped by a concrete storage area was added to the southern portion of the original structure along Division Street. In circa 1950, a 63-foot by 75-foot, three story addition was added to the northern portion of the 1925 structure along Elm Street. The 1950s addition also resulted in the incorporation of the 48.5-foot by 70-foot Adams Building into the Administration Building. Photograph courtesy of Walden Photography of Waterloo.



Footprint plan of the Administration Building. The original 1925 Administration Building and the circa 1940 addition are identified as Building 48. The circa 1950, three-story addition is identified as Building 48A. The Adams Building is identified as Building 172. Map source: Rath Packing Company, 1983.





Rath Packing Company, circa 1970. The Administration Building can be seen in the left side of this aerial photograph of the plant. As shown, the entire packing plant was an enormous industrial complex that covered many acres and employed thousands of persons. Many of the plant buildings shown here have been demolished since the company was liquidated in 1985. Other buildings have been converted to other uses and a limited number remain vacant. Photograph courtesy of Walden Photo, Waterloo.



## 2.0 Rath Administration Building

The following narrative is organized into four sections. The first provides a general discussion of the Rath Administration Building and includes a footprint plan and historic photographs of the building. The second section is a discussion of the original, 1925 section of the building. The third section is a discussion of the two additions to 1925 building and the incorporation of the Adams Building into the larger Administration Building. The fourth section contains a series of current building photographs.

The Rath Administration Building is a conglomeration of two buildings and two building expansion projects. The original Administration Building was constructed in 1925 and expanded in circa 1940 and circa 1950. The resulting building continued to be generally known as the Rath Administration Building; however, the Rath Packing Company actually assigned a total of three building numbers to the structure. The entire structure provides approximately 88,000 square feet of administrative office and related support space.

The Rath Administration Building was owned for its entire functional life by the Rath Packing Company. No changes in ownership, management, or internal organization are evidenced by the building. The building appears to have served as an administrative center for the duration of its functional life and there is no evidence of any introduction of subsequent functions at the site or any effects this may have had on the building.

The site selected for the construction of the Administration Building provided convenience and satisfied the demand for a structure of this type to serve the Rath Packing Company. The selected location was constrained to a degree by surrounding land use, especially to the west due to the adjacent packing plant. The building was constructed on a lot that was made vacant through the demolition of the small residential properties that had previously been present. The growing packing plant building immediately to the west did constrain growth in that direction. The built-up nature of the entire neighborhood limited expansion to some degree. However, the adjacent covered parking lot (demolished) indicates that space was not at a premium.

The Rath Administration Building was designed by John S. Bartley, Head of the Rath Packing Company's Engineering Department. The sequence of construction is discussed in the following sections, as are the materials used in construction when known. A substantial portion of the building fabric appears to be original to various periods of construction of the building. There probably have been alterations to the interior of the building over time, however, a lack of detailed records and the general condition of the building precludes a detailed discussion or analysis of building alterations over time. Other than the additions, which will be discussed later, there does not seem to have been any major replacement, demolition, or other changes to the Rath Administration Building.

In general, the overall form taken by the Rath Administration Building appears to have been heavily influenced by the functions that took place inside of it. The style of the overall building, including the materials used and the details added to the building, gives an overall impression of prosperity. The building is larger and taller than would probably have been required simply to fulfill the administrative needs of a large packing company.

Similar stone and brick building details appear in other Rath Packing Company buildings nearby and in similar packing company buildings elsewhere in Iowa. The Administration Building clearly is an important building in the overall Rath Packing Company operations; however, it is clearly not the dominant building at the plant. As large as it is, the Administration Building is dwarfed by the industrial-scale packing buildings that are located immediately to the west.

## **2.1 1925 Administration Building**

The original 1925 portion of Administration Building consists of a two story office building with a footprint 130 feet wide by approximately 100 feet deep. This section consists of a two-story, steel and concrete frame, brick clad building with a full basement. The front of the building faces Sycamore Street. The original 1925 Administration Building, along with the circa 1940 addition, is identified as Building 48 on a 1983 property map prepared by the Rath Packing Company.

The building façade includes decorative courses of brick, concrete and stone details along the level roof line, and details at most of the exterior corners. The windows are four over four, casement-hung, wood sash with matching wood storm windows and wood screens. Much of the window glass has been broken over the years and some of the window frames and screens are broken or missing. The two bands of windows have additional fixed panes above each of the 4 over 4 light windows, resulting in a wide band of windows on the main and second floors along the front of the building.

The full basement includes a cafeteria, full kitchen, office areas, an incinerator, and storage space. The basement has sustained substantial water damage and the majority is wet, with saturated conditions and standing water throughout the basement. The metal fixtures exhibit substantial corrosion, much of the plaster is in the process of dissolving from the walls, and most of the ceiling panels exhibit considerable water damage. The basement also exhibits considerable evidence of mold growth, bird and vermin contamination, and overall neglect.

The main floor occupies the entire extent of the 1925 section of the building. Situated approximately ½ of a floor above ground level, access to the main floor is provided from the front (west) and rear (east) sides. Other doors likely existed but were eliminated during later building expansions. The front entrance is the largest, and features a set of double doors that open to a landing. A stairway leads down to the basement and a wide stairway leads up to the main floor.

The main floor is dominated by a large, open floor space that is punctuated by square load-bearing columns and offices around the perimeter. The square columns consist of steel framework clad in concrete (for fire-resistance) or are constructed of reinforced concrete. The columns and interior walls were plastered for aesthetic reasons.

The open floor, with its high ceiling, was clearly organized to provide space for dozens of administrative desks and appears to include outlets for both electrical and communications throughout the floor space. The lighting was provided by recessed fluorescents running in bands through the length of the ceiling. The bands of lights are separated by ceiling tiles. Hot water radiators provide heat around the perimeter of the floor space. A large freight elevator provides access to the full basement, the second

floor, and the attic roof space, as does a dumbwaiter. Several large bathrooms are provided off of the main floor.

A fire proof records storage area is found off of the main floor, a similar structure is found directly above it on the second floor. The metal door remains in good condition but the interior of both rooms is decrepit, with considerable moisture damage and possibly some fire damage having occurred in both rooms.

The second floor is very similar to the main floor. The main portion of the second floor is organized into an open area with rooms around the periphery of the floor. As with the main floor, many of the windows are broken and the roof leaks. The remaining materials are generally in a ruined condition because they have been saturated and covered with a layer of dust and bird waste for decades. Portions of the second floor have also been vandalized.

The building roof appears to have undergone no substantial maintenance in a considerable amount of time. The roof has obviously begun to leak in many areas and the majority of the building interior space is saturated and shows considerable amounts of standing water and water damage. Approximately ½ of the original roof area is flat and covered by composite roofing material. The remaining area consists of a wood-frame, wood-clad attic storage area that housed the ventilation equipment and provided storage space. The attic storage area still retains a considerable amount of detritus left over from decades of operation, including dilapidated office furniture, wooden storage boxes, inoperative monitoring equipment, and a variety of junk. Much of the remaining refuse is saturated due to the leaky roof and covered with a thick patina of dust and bird waste.

## **2.2 1940 Addition**

In circa 1940, a 63-foot by 117.5-foot, two story addition topped by a concrete storage area was added to the southern portion of the 1925 structure. This addition has a door leading from the sidewalk and parking area along Division Street. The exterior details of the 1940 addition are generally very similar to the original 1925 building. One notable exception is that the windows in the addition do not include the additional band of fixed pane windows. The 1940 addition is outside of the period of significance (1890 to 1930) that was established for the Rath Packing Company Historic District. However, the 1940 addition was completed using materials that are nearly identical to the original structure and does not substantially detract from the integrity of the original 1925 building.

The southwest corner of the 1940 addition appears to have been the location for the offices and main conference room of the lead corporate officers of the Rath Packing Company. These offices were paneled in fine wood with a parquet wood floor. The heat radiators were enclosed in ventilated wooden boxes. The conference room included a cove ceiling and a bay window. The wood and other fixtures from these offices and the conference room were largely salvaged at some time in the past. A large training room is directly over the corporate offices on the second floor.

## **2.3 1950 Addition**

In circa 1950, a 63-foot by 75-foot, three story addition was added to the northern portion

of the 1925 structure. This addition also resulted in the incorporation of the 48.5-foot by 70-foot Adams Building into the Administration Building. The 1950 addition is identified as Building 48A on a 1983 property map prepared by the Rath Packing Company. The circa 1950 addition is outside of the period of significance (1890 to 1930) that was established for the Rath Packing Company Historic District. However, the exterior of the 1950 addition was completed using materials that are nearly identical to the original structure and does not substantially detract from the integrity of the original 1925 building. The interior design and materials used for this addition; however, does detract from the integrity of the interior of the original interior of Building 48.

While the overall building appears to be a tall, two-story structure, the 1950 addition to the building actually consists of three stories. This was achieved by an adjustment of the interior ceiling heights to facilitate the construction of two floors above the main floor in this portion of the building. These floors are served by stairways from the main and second floors of Building 48 and by stairways from Building 172 (Adams). The ceilings are approximately 8 feet high, rather than the approximate 12-foot-high ceilings found in Building 48. When viewed from the front, the Administration Building shows three bands of windows in the façade of Building 48A and only two bands in the façade of Building 48. This difference in windows is somewhat masked by the use of fixed sash windows above the bands of main and second floor windows found in the central portion of Building 48.

The second and third floors of Building 48A appear to be similar in layout to the second floor of Building 48. The floors are generally open, with office spaces along a portion of the perimeter of the open floor area. Based on material remains, the third floor of Building 48A appears to have contained some form of electronic data equipment that could have possibly been some form of early computerized data system.

## **2.4 Adams Building**

Building 172, the Adams section, is possibly the most unusual section of the Administration Building. This section was originally constructed as a stand-alone building. Based on materials and building style, it appears to have been constructed in circa 1920. However, it could have been constructed as late as 1944, which is the construction date given in the 1985 auction materials. The Adams section was incorporated into the Administration Building when Building 48A was added to Building 48 in the 1950s. The addition of the Adams section is outside of the period of significance (1890 to 1930) that was established for the Rath Packing Company Historic District. The addition of the Adams Building does significantly detract from the integrity of the original 1925 building and its associated additions. The inclusion of the Adams section is particularly intrusive because of the completely different design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association of this section when compared to the remainder of the Administration Building.

The main floor of the Adams section was used for printing and storage space. The second floor appeared to have been some sort of employee area, with lockers and changing areas for company personnel. The basement appears to have been used for storage.

The Adams section was originally heated by a coal or wood furnace in the basement.

The Adams section appears to have been connected to the steam lines used to heat the Administration Building and the furnace was subsequently removed from the basement. The majority of the windows in the Adams section have been broken. Some of the broken windows remain open; others have been covered with wood over the years. Many of the wooden window coverings have also been compromised and the interior of this section is exposed to the elements. The Adams section is expected to continue to deteriorate at an accelerated rate unless the building envelope is immediately stabilized.

The historic fabric of the Adams section has been compromised over the years, with the loss of most of the original windows, the removal of the second floor emergency egress from the east side of the building, and generally by deferred maintenance and neglect of the building over the past decade or more.

The roof of the Adams section appears to have better integrity than much of the rest of the building. However, the ceiling and wall plaster is delaminating in areas and much of the wooden floor appears to have been buckled by water damage. The basement appeared to be relatively dry and water damage in general appears to be related to failed windows rather than a failed roof.



Front façade of the Rath Administration Building as viewed from Sycamore Street near the northwest corner of the building. Building 48A features three bands of 4 over 4 light windows. The original portion of Building 48 features two bands of windows with additional fixed panes above each of the 4 over 4 light windows, resulting in a wide band of windows. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.





Northwest corner of the front façade of Building 48A and Building 48. This two-story and three-story structure has a footprint of approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  city block. Constructed of a reinforced concrete or steel frame with brick curtain walls and large windows, its architectural style strongly resembles a public school. While this portion of the Administration Building was constructed outside of the period of significance for the Rath Packing Company, the exterior materials and design are clearly sympathetic to the design of the original 1925 structure. Therefore, the exterior of Building 48A does not significantly impair the exterior integrity of Building 48, the original structure. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.





Main entrance in the front façade of Building 48. This is the 1925 portion of the Administration Building. The words, "The Rath Packing Co." are clearly inscribed in the stone lintel that topped the double doors. The vertical scale of this two-story building is exaggerated by the use of fixed sash windows above the bands of main and second floor windows. The difference between the original windows of Building 48 and the circa 1940 addition to Building 48 are shown. The addition features two bands of 4 light over 4 light windows but without the additional rows of fixed panes. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.



Front façade as seen from the intersection of Sycamore Street and Division Street. The cant bay window in the center of the photograph illuminates the corporate conference room. While this portion of the Administration Building was constructed outside of the period of significance for the Rath Packing Company, it is clearly sympathetic to the design of the original 1925 structure and does not significantly impair the integrity of the original structure. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.





Side façade of Building 48 from the intersection of Sycamore Street and Division Street. The main floor of this corner of the 1940 addition contained the corporate offices, corporate conference room, and has a side entrance that lead a small off-street parking area along Division Street. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.



Front façade and side façade of Building 172, the former Adams Building, viewed from near the intersection of Elm Street and Sycamore Street. The three story addition (Building 48A) to Building 48 also resulted in the incorporation of the Adams Building into the Administration Building. However, even after it was incorporated, the Adams section continued to be identified by its own building number. The Adams section is not heated and the majority of its windows have been broken or otherwise compromised, exposing the interior to the elements. The Adams section is expected to continue to deteriorate at an accelerated rate unless the building envelope is immediately stabilized. This portion of the Administration Building was constructed outside of the period of significance for the Rath Packing Company. It is clearly not sympathetic to the design of the original 1925 structure and significantly impairs the overall historic integrity of the original structure. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.





Rear façade and side façade of Building 172 (Adams). The physical relationship between the two buildings is complicated by the fact that the floors of Building 48A do not correspond with the floors of the Adams section. The wooden structure above Building 172 is a stair well that provides access between it and the upper floors of Building 48A. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.



Lavish use of a variety of brick and stone detailing is exhibited throughout the exterior of the Administration Building, especially on the building's front. These corner details are found at the roofline of the southwest corner where the three-story, 1950 section meets with the original two-story, 1925 section. As shown here, the front of the 1950 addition has details that match the original 1925 section. The rear of the 1950 addition does not contain these details. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.





Main floor – entrance to Building 48. The stairway leading up from the main entrance in the front façade ended here. It is clear from the floor and fixture layout that the people that had business with the administrative personnel would have been screened here. The opening in the nearest column is a dumbwaiter that provided access to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, attic, and basement. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.



Main stair way. This stairway provided access from the main floor front entrance to the second floor. At one time, this stairway was detailed with painted plaster walls and a wainscot of hardwood paneling. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.



Corporate conference room. This once-lavish conference room once featured hardwood paneling, parquet flooring, a cove ceiling, and the plush setting typical of a successful corporation. Today, only the cant bay windows remain intact to suggest the former glory of the Rath Packing Company. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.





The "Corner Office." This office area, situated at the southwest corner of the main floor of the circa 1940 addition, had a private entrance into the corporate conference room and featured floor-to-ceiling hardwood panel walls, which have been removed. The corporate officers for the Rath Packing Company likely had their offices in this portion of the building, given the materials exhibited in these offices, including private bathrooms, and a separate entrance on the side of the building with its own parking. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.



Main floor – chalkboard. This chalkboard is found in an office on the main floor of Building 48 very near the front entrance. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.



UPC CODE	EOP CODE		% FAT	BIND	Color	
5001	20	PK TEMPLE MT	10.0	85.3	86	-
00006	05	50% LEAN PORK	58.0	50.9	38	Lit
51365	01	Visible LN PORK	85.0	19.8	9	500
AT 51397	51681 26	SKD JOWLS	68.0	59.4	28	
00018	08	GREEN HAM Pcs. <sup>ST</sup>	31.0	70.0	65	
00015		BELLY STRIPS	53.0			
00035		CURED HAM Pcs.	33.0	70.8	65	
55057	25	REG HAM	30.0	71.2	68	
00007	12	80% LEAN PORK	50.0	74.6	70	
00017		BOOT JACK	63.0			
50049	15	PORK HEAD MEAT	25.0	70.1	71	
00019	16	HAM SHANKS	18.0	84.9	78	
10008	17	PORK BLADE MT	10.0	94.2	86	

Detail – chalkboard. A variety of detailed information relevant to the pork-packing industry was tallied on a regular basis on this chalk board on the main floor of Building 48. This is one of the only remaining signs that the building was used to provide administrative support space for a company engaged in the meat-packing industry. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.





Basement cafeteria. The cafeteria was used primarily to provide eating space for administrative and managerial personnel. This dining area appears to have been comfortably furnished with fixtures similar to a typical hospital or college cafeteria. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.



Basement kitchen. This kitchen was clearly large enough to feed up to several hundred people per day. The size of the kitchen suggests that the primary customers were the administrative and management personnel from this building. This kitchen would not have been capable of feeding the thousands of workers employed by this very large meat packing plant. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.



Dishwashing area, basement kitchen. This skylight over the dishwashing area is indicative of the general level of both neglect and destruction that is typical for the Administration Building. Fixtures are broken, either deliberately or due to natural processes, and not repaired. Over the past 20 years, the neglect and deferred maintenance has contributed to an enormous amount of destruction of the historic fabric of this building. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.





Second floor of Building 48, office area. As shown here, the leaking roof and compromised windows have lead to a significant amount of water damage, especially on the second floor. Ceiling tiles and wall plaster has been destroyed by water and the entire floor is generally covered by a layer of dust and bird waste. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.



Second floor – open floor area. This photograph was taken from the center of the original section of Building 48 looking toward the additional floor space added by the circa 1940 expansion of this building. The second floor, much like the main floor, features a large expanse of open floor area with offices around the perimeter of part of the building. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.





Second Floor, Building 48A. The remnants of a pneumatic tube conveyance system can still be found near the stairs to the second floor of Building 48. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.



Stairway to the third floor of Building 48A. This stairway connects the second floor of Building 48 to the third floor of Building 48A. The doorway to the right of the stairway connects to the second floor of Building 48A, which is  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a story lower than the second floor of Building 48. Photograph by J. Trnka, July 2005.

## **2.5 General Observations**

The heating, ventilation, plumbing, and electrical systems for the entire Administration Building are inoperative. This building was originally heated by lines that drew steam from the heat plant for the packing complex. The closure of this heat plant means that there is no source of heat for this building at the present time. Portions of the electrical and plumbing systems appear to have been salvaged over time; other sections appear to have been allowed to fall into considerable disrepair.

The interior of the entire building has sustained substantial water damage and the majority is wet, with saturated conditions and standing water throughout the basement and on several floors. The metal fixtures exhibit substantial corrosion, much of the plaster is in the process of dissolving from the walls, and most of the ceiling panels exhibit considerable water damage. The entire building also exhibits considerable evidence of mold growth, bird and vermin contamination, and overall neglect. The entire building is expected to continue to deteriorate at an accelerated rate unless the building envelope is immediately stabilized through repair of the roof and boarding up or replacing the broken windows. Additionally, the building needs to be heated to keep the interior above freezing during the winter in order to reduce the continued deterioration of the interior due to the freeze and thaw effects on the water-saturated materials.

### 3.0 Conclusion

The Rath Packing Company was previously determined to be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. As discussed in Section 1.1, the plant complex as a whole is significant under National Register criterion A for its association with Waterloo's industrialization and its period of significance is given as 1890-1930. Constructed in 1925, the original portion of Building 48 of the Administration Building was undoubtedly an important component of the overall success of the Rath Packing Company. As the administrative nexus of the company, the Administration Building provided the space and facilities for the orderly and efficient management of company operations. Therefore, if the Rath Packing Company is eligible as a district, then it stands to reason that the Administration Building, as the "nerve center" of the company, must also be eligible for inclusion in on the National Register.

#### 3.1 Integrity

Before a property can be determined to remain eligible for National Register listing, its integrity must be considered. A historic property that has integrity possesses the ability to convey its historic significance to the public. The seven aspects of integrity are: location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. According to NPS guidance, a property must possess at least some of, and generally a majority of, these aspects in order to be considered National Register eligible.

**Location** – The Administration Building maintains integrity of location.

**Setting** – The Administration Building is found in a setting that has been compromised in the past 20 years. It remains adjacent to the large industrial meat packing complex operated by the Rath Packing Company; however, this packing company is no longer in operation. Many of its buildings have been demolished over the past 20 years. Others remain but are in different uses today. One of the largest remaining structures is currently used for storage. Other changes to the setting include the wholesale demolition of the neighborhood adjacent to the Rath Packing Company. The majority of the residential and commercial structures in the working class neighborhood adjacent to the plant have been demolished over the past few years as part of the redevelopment of the entire neighborhood.

**Design** – The Administration Building is a complex design. The original, 1925 section, was designed and built as a two-story administrative office building with a full basement and partial wooden attic. The circa 1940 addition maintained the general design very faithfully and provided an additional two floors, full basement, and full attic. The circa 1950 addition deviates substantially from the previous design and provides three floors, plus full basement. The design of the circa 1950 addition was altered to provide three floors within the space used for two floors by the other two sections. This truncated the floor arrangement and resulted in significant differences between the earlier two sections and the 1950s section. Finally, the construction of the circa 1950 addition resulted in the incorporation of the Adams Building into the Administration Building. The Adams Building was originally constructed as a stand-alone building and shares no common design features with the remainder of the Administration Building. The design of the overall building has been significantly compromised by the inclusion of the Adams Building.



**Materials** – The Administration Building retains some authentic and original building materials, most notably in the exterior façade. The interior materials have been significantly degraded over time due to 20 years of neglect, deferred maintenance, and vandalism. Some of the most notable materials, such as the hardwood paneling in the corporate offices in the circa 1940 addition, have been removed. The interior materials have been significantly compromised over the past 20 years. Much of the interior plaster and woodwork is in very poor condition and would likely require replacement rather than restoration. The building also contains both mold and considerable amounts of bird waste, which could require the replacement of considerable amounts of the interior finish rather than restoration of the existing materials. Finally, the materials associated with the Adams Building are not compatible with the materials used in the remainder of the Administration Building.

**Workmanship** – As with the materials, the Administration Building does retain some integrity of workmanship, especially the exterior façade. The interior, due to 20 years of neglect, deferred maintenance, and vandalism, has experienced a significant loss of workmanship.

**Feeling** – The overall feeling invoked by this building is significantly different from what it must have been like as a fully functional administrative hub of a major industrial plant located in a working-class neighborhood. The exterior of the Administration Building still evokes the feeling that this structure was involved in some sort of administrative or office function; however, the interior no longer evokes this feeling strongly.

**Association** – The overall association of the Administration Building with its setting and surroundings has been significantly compromised over time. The Administration Building no longer serves a purpose because the adjacent packing plant is no longer in operation. The association between the Administration Building and its surroundings is further obscured by the loss of much of the surrounding fabric of buildings and structures that once comprised the working class neighborhood that grew around the plant.

### **3.2 Conclusion and Recommendations**

As discussed in Section 1.1, this report attempts to address three key questions:

- Does the Administration Building retain integrity to the period of significance for the plant (1890-1930) that was established in 1991?
- Does the Administration Building and its material fabric retain sufficient integrity to facilitate the interpretation of its role in the overall historic significance of the Rath Packing Company Historic District?
- Does the Administration Building continue to exhibit National Register eligibility as a contributing element of the Rath Packing Company Historic District?

As discussed in Section 3.2, the Administration Building itself has suffered a loss of integrity due to alterations made to it subsequent to its period of significance, especially with the inclusion of the Adams Building. Moreover, the historic fabric of the Administration Building has been significantly diminished by two decades of neglect,



deferred maintenance, and vandalism subsequent to the plant closure in 1985. Therefore, this building does not appear to retain sufficient integrity to facilitate the interpretation of its role as a contributing element to the Rath Packing Company Historic District.

Serious consideration must be given to the fact that the Rath Administration Building is probably no longer eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The building has suffered a significant loss of a majority of the elements of integrity from the period of significance of the Rath Packing Company Historic District (1890-1930), most notably those of Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association. The interior of the building has suffered much more loss of these features than has the exterior façade. This loss of integrity renders the building a poor candidate for full restoration.

In general, the overall loss of integrity of the Administration Building is mirrored by the overall loss of integrity of the Rath Packing Company as a historic district. Many key buildings have been demolished since 1985 and other key buildings are now being used for dramatically different purposes than originally intended. The overall district has lost a substantial number of the buildings that made it significant in the 1980s. The loss of these buildings, coupled with the loss of integrity of the remaining buildings and structures, brings into doubt the ability of this site to provide a detailed understanding of the meat packing industry as practiced at the time when this plant was considered historically important.

One option would be to continue to consider the building to be eligible for the National Register but limit this eligibility to the façade that covers the exterior. This would facilitate the rehabilitation of the interior of the structure to a suitable use while maintaining the majority of the relatively intact historic fabric of the exterior. Exterior repairs would need to be made in keeping with the original details and materials used in the construction of the building; however, the interior could be gutted and remodeled without this same consideration. One complication would be the treatment of the Adams section of the building, which clearly does not connect to the rest of the Administration Building in terms of building design, materials, or workmanship. However, as an addition outside of the period of significance, the Adams section could be removed as part of a restoration of the exterior of the Administration Building.

A second option would be to determine that the Administration Building is no longer eligible for listing in the National Register due to the significant loss of integrity to its period of significance, as discussed above. This determination would either facilitate the rehabilitation of this building for some sort of future use or it could result in the demolition of the building if rehabilitation and reuse is determined to be not feasible.

### **3.3 Other Resources**

It is important to note that there are other resources available to further interpret the Administration Building specifically and the Rath Packing Company in general.

**Waterloo Packer: the Story of the Rath Packing Company** – This book by Geoffrey Parsons, Jr. and Robert M. Yoder was prepared for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Rath Packing Company in 1941. It includes photography by Torkel Korling. A copy is on file in the Special Collections of Iowa State University.

**Rath Packing Company Records** – A substantial amount of the company records are Collection Number MS 562 and are housed in the Special Collections Department of Iowa State University. The records date from 1930 to 1984 and occupy approximately 29.3 linear feet of space. The records are open for research. The records include clippings from 1940 to 1972, photographs from 1947 to 1961, and sales information materials from 1930 to 1984.

**Historic American Engineering Record** – The Rath Packing Company's Waterloo plant was the subject of photographic recordation done to Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) standards. While the entire plant was the subject of this HAER recordation, three large-format black & white photographs of the Administration that were taken in December 1992 or January 1993. The HAER recordation for the Rath Packing Company is on file at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

**Workplace Genres: A Sociohistorical Study of Communicative Practices in a Production Company** – Workplace activities at The Rath Packing Company of Waterloo, Iowa, form the background for this historical study by Mark Randol Zachry. Focusing on the interplay between company activities and communicative practices, the study explores how management techniques, regulatory controls, and technological tools in the twentieth century affected workplace communication. It contains a discussion of the complex and often unpredictable interplay of workplace activities and communicative practices and reveals how seemingly stable workplace genres are actually contested sites where communicators make decisions to vary and repeat prior practices.

**Why the Rath Packing Company Failed** – This book, by John D. Donnell, examines the causes of the failure of the Rath Packing Company. Four copies of this book are available at the Waterloo Public Library.

## 4.0 Sources

Auction Materials, Rath Packing Plant, Waterloo, Iowa. November 1985.

Historic Building Survey of the Rath Packing Company. Rebecca Conrad. 1991.

Historic American Engineering Record, Rath Packing Company. 1993. Library of Congress.

Iowa State University, Special Collections. Rath Packing Company Records, 1930-1984 (MS 562). Ames, Iowa.

Rath Packing Company, Building Plat. Plant map prepared by the Rath Packing Company. Dated 1983.

Sanborn Insurance Company. Maps dated 1918 and 1956.

State Historical Society of Iowa. Rath Packing Company file. Des Moines, Iowa.

United States Army Corps of Engineers Fallout Shelter Photographs. Waterloo, Iowa. Found at: <http://www.civildefensemuseum.com/coreng/waterloo3.html>. Photos dated 1968.

Waterloo Packer: *The Story of the Rath Packing Company*. G. Parsons and R. Yoder. 1941.



## **Appendix A**

### **Iowa Site Inventory Forms: Rath Packing Company**

Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa

# Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation  
Iowa State Historical Department  
East 12th & Grand Avenue  
Des Moines Iowa 50319

Site Number 07-028- 3871  
District Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Map Reference # 371

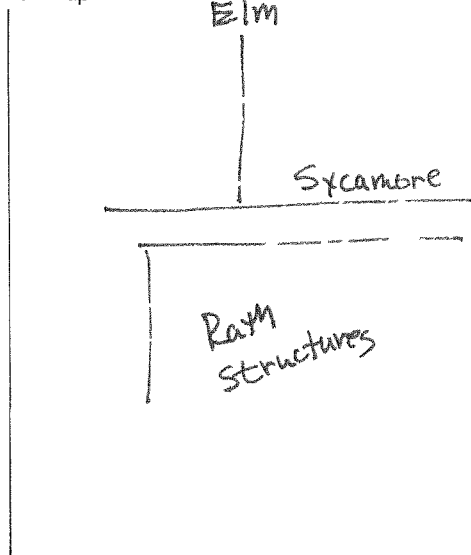
## Identification

- 1 Site Name Rath Packing Company  
2 Village/Town/City Waterloo Township \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_  
3 Street Address Sycamore & Elm  
4 Legal Location \_\_\_\_\_  
Urban Rural subdivision township block range parcel section subparcel & section of & section  
5 UTM Location zone \_\_\_\_\_ easting \_\_\_\_\_ northing \_\_\_\_\_ Acreage \_\_\_\_\_  
6 Owner(s) Name \_\_\_\_\_  
7 Owner(s) Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)  
8 Use Present vacant Original packing company

## Description

- 9 Date of Construction 1910s-40s Architect/Builder \_\_\_\_\_  
10 Building Type  
☐ single family dwelling ☒ industrial ☐ other institutional ☐ religious  
☐ multiple family dwelling ☐ educational ☐ public ☐ agricultural  
☐ commercial  
11 Exterior Walls ☐ clapboard ☐ stone ☒ brick ☐ board and batten ☐ shingles ☐ stucco  
☐ other \_\_\_\_\_  
12 Structural System ☐ wood frame with interlocking joints ☐ wood frame with light members (balloon frame)  
☐ masonry load bearing walls ☐ iron frame ☐ steel frame with curtain walls ☐ reinforced concrete  
☐ other \_\_\_\_\_  
13 Condition ☐ excellent ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ deteriorated  
14 Integrity ☒ original site ☐ moved—if so when? \_\_\_\_\_  
Notes on alterations additions (with dates and architect if known) and any other notable features of building and site  
15 Related Outbuildings and Property ☐ barn ☐ other farm structures ☐ carriage house ☐ garage ☐ privy  
☐ other \_\_\_\_\_  
16 Is the building endangered? ☐ no ☒ yes—if so why? VACANT  
17 Surroundings of the building ☐ open land ☐ woodland ☐ scattered outbuildings ☐ densely built up ☒ commercial  
☒ industrial ☒ residential ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

18 Map



#4506, fr. 21-34, #4507, fr.11A-13A



# Rath Packing

## Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

### 20 Architectural significance

- ☒ a Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register  
☐ b Contributing structure  
☐ c Not eligible/intrusion

A meatpacking operation and adjacent offices, Rath provides a unified appearance, despite regular alterations and additions. The use of matching dark brick and similar contrasting detail, scale and proportion for the changes provides a degree of visual integrity. Change is to be expected for a major Waterloo employer and calls attention to the pivotal economic role Rath played in the community.

### 21 Historical Significance

Theme(s) \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ a Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register  
☐ b Contributing structure  
☐ c Not eligible/intrusion

### 22 Sources (for primary and secondary sources give complete facts of publication author title place of publication date, etc )

Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization \_\_\_\_\_

FAREDA LONG 1984-85  
230 LANTON  
BLOOMING, \_\_\_\_\_

## For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

### 1 Office Information Sources on this Property

- ☐ County Resource File  
☐ Windshield Survey  
☐ National Register  
☐ Grants-In-Aid \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Determination of Eligibility

### ☐ Review and Compliance Project

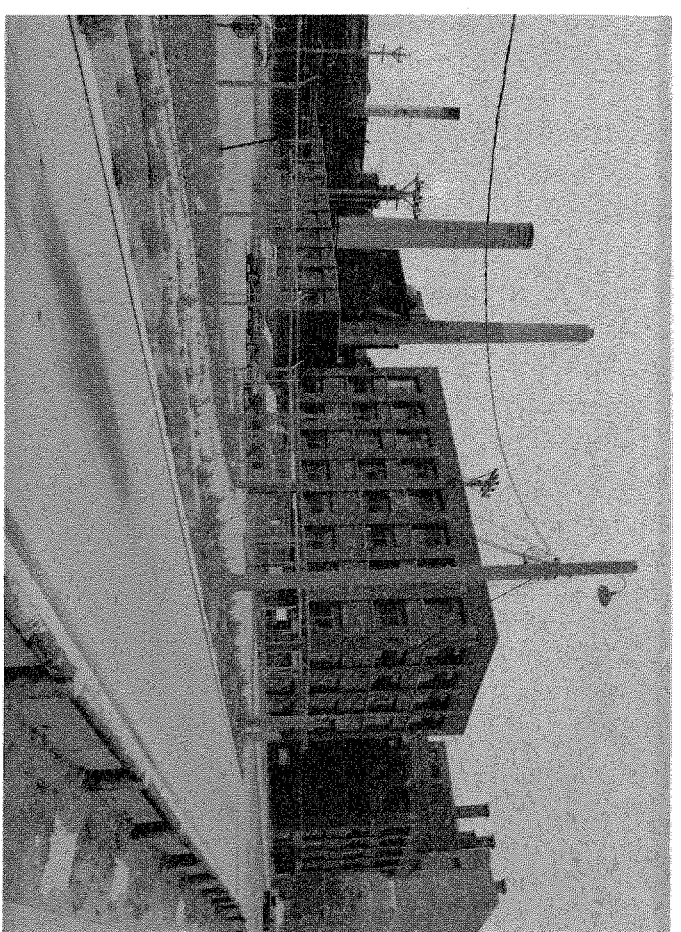
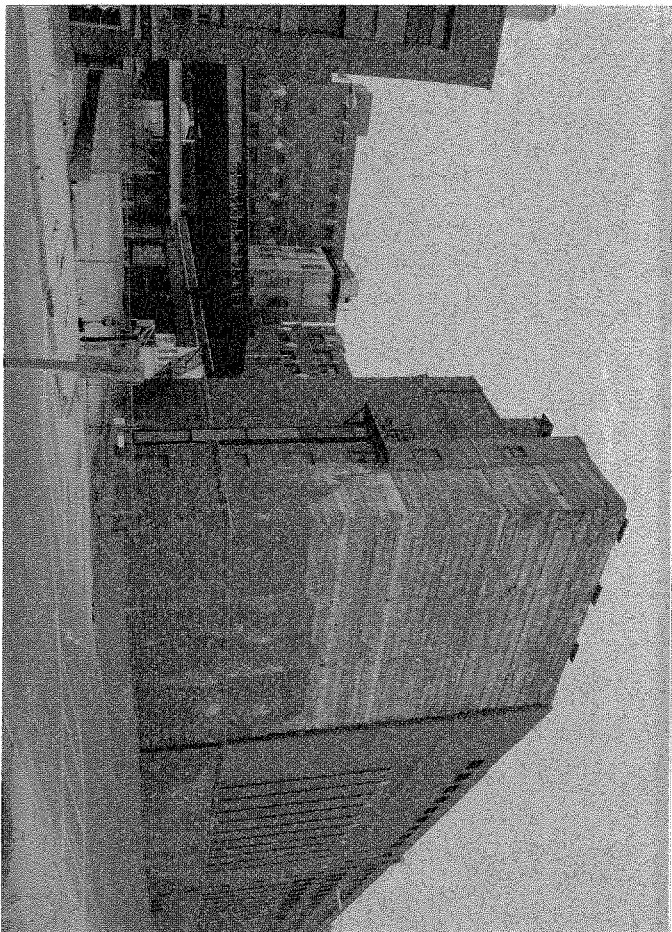
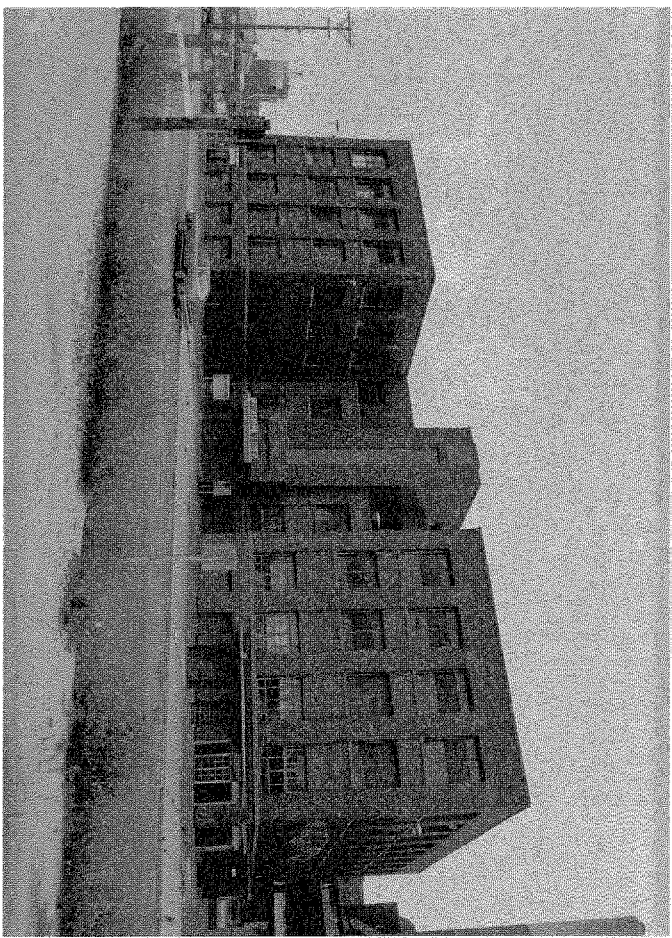
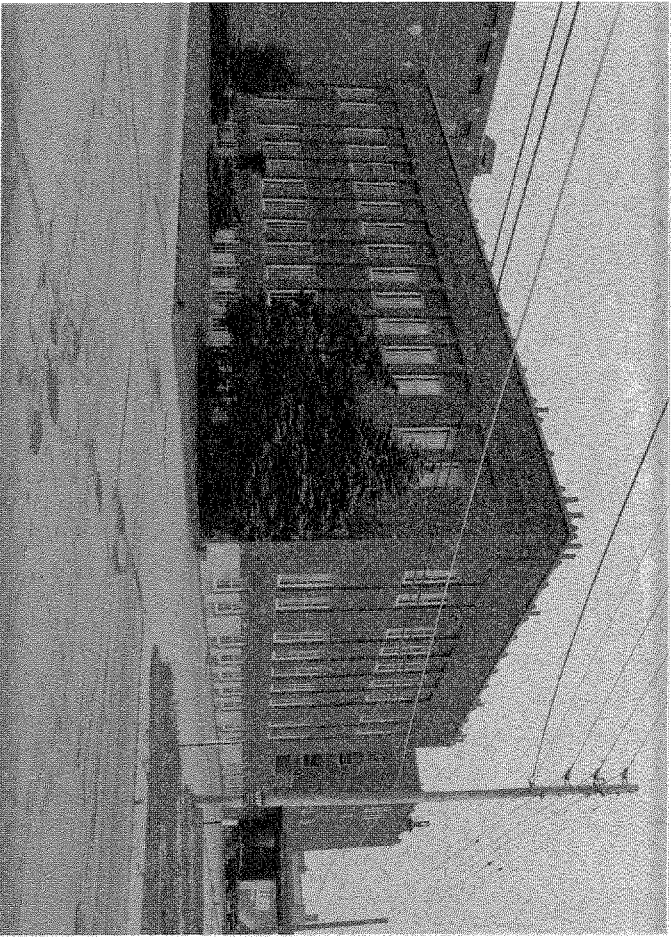
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

### 2 Subject Traces

- a \_\_\_\_\_  
b \_\_\_\_\_  
c \_\_\_\_\_  
d \_\_\_\_\_  
e \_\_\_\_\_

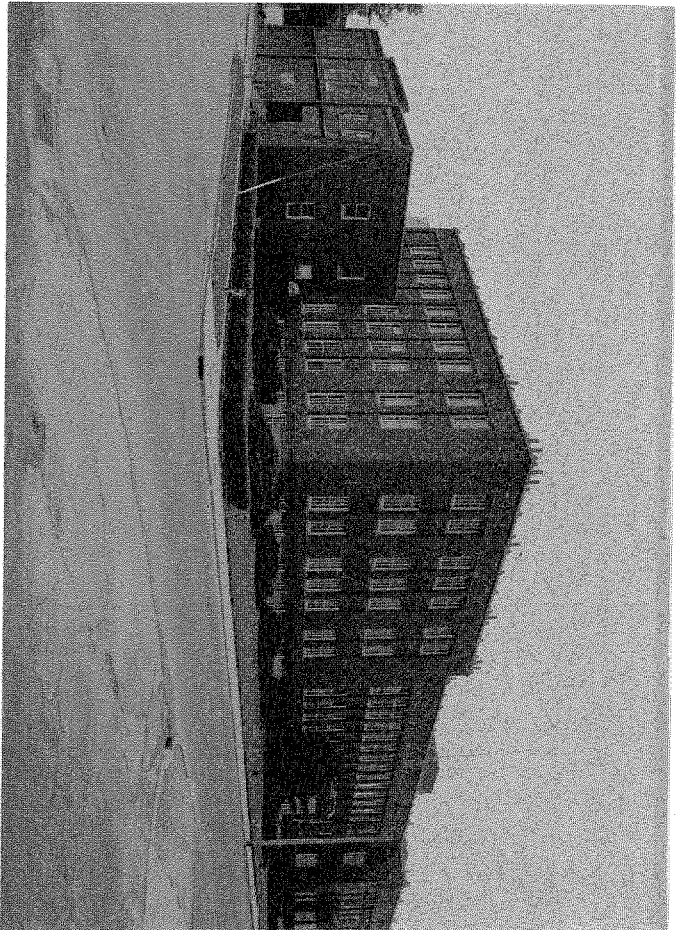
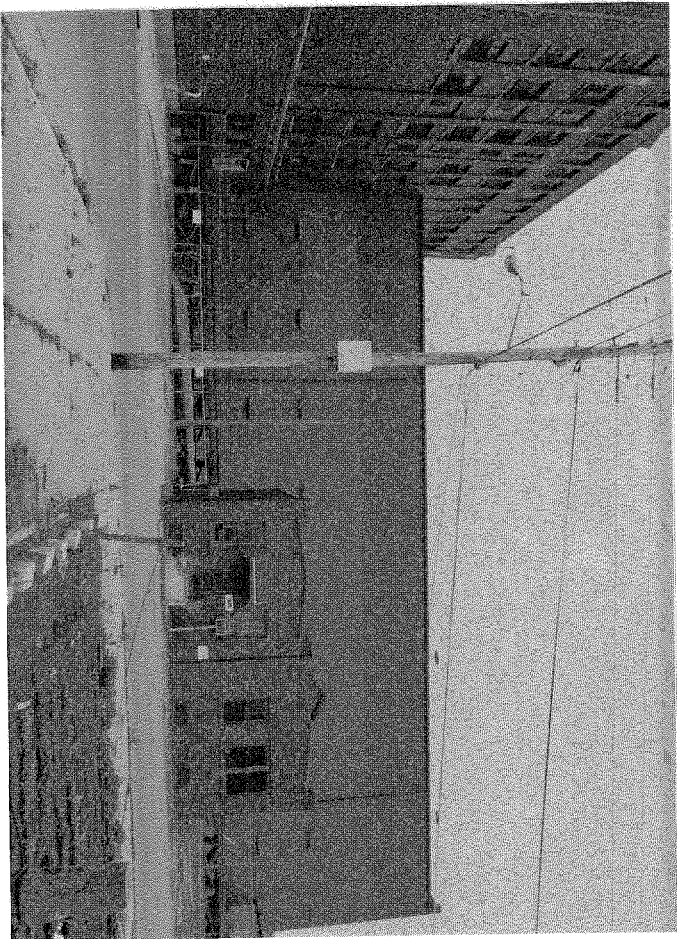
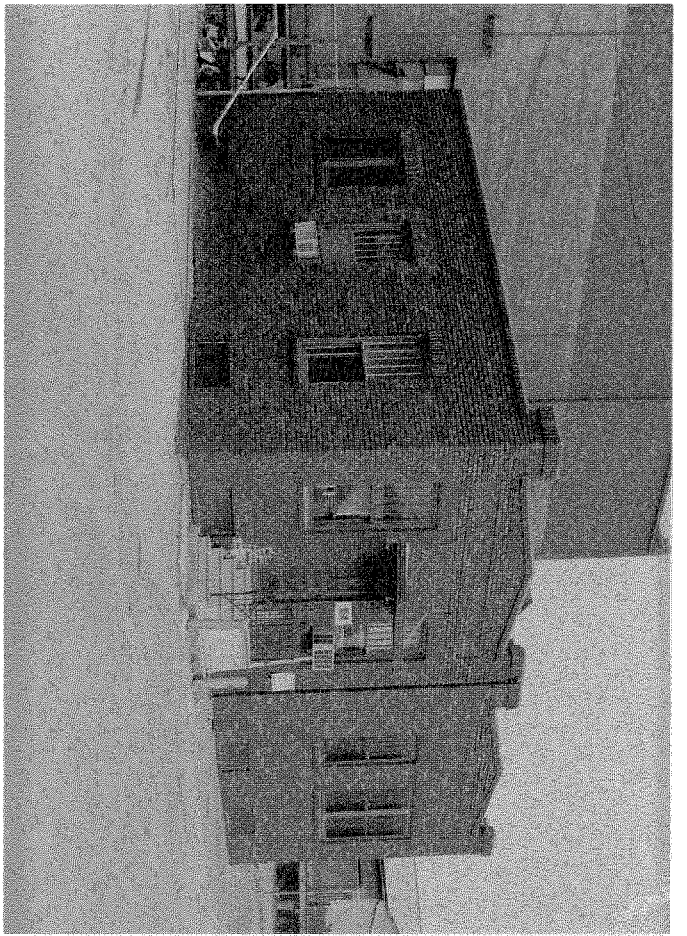
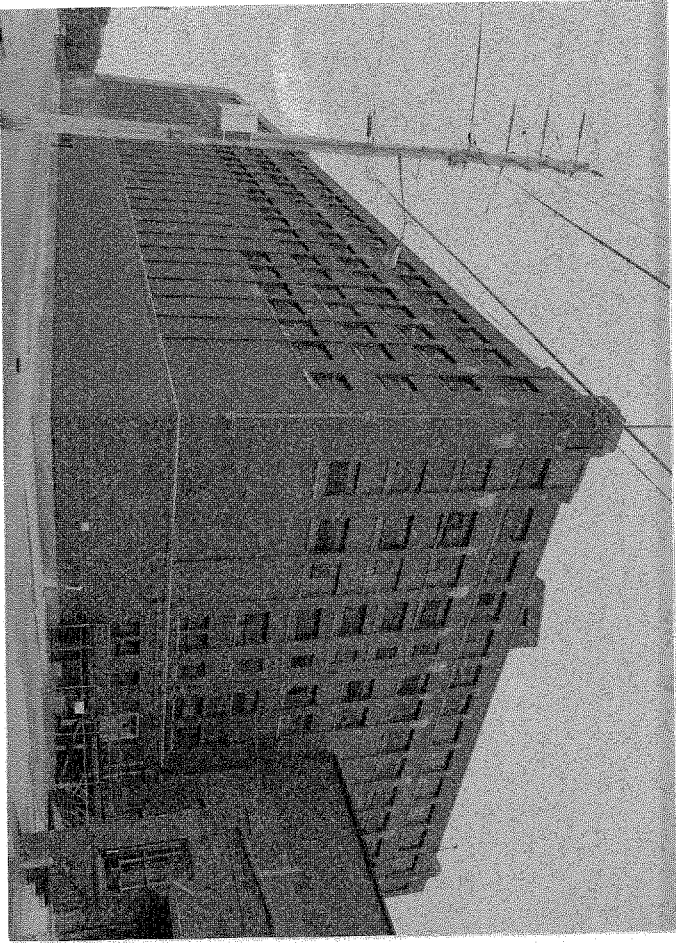
### 3 Photo Images 3 ✓ 10 ✓ 8 ✓ 5 ✓

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



RATH PACKING

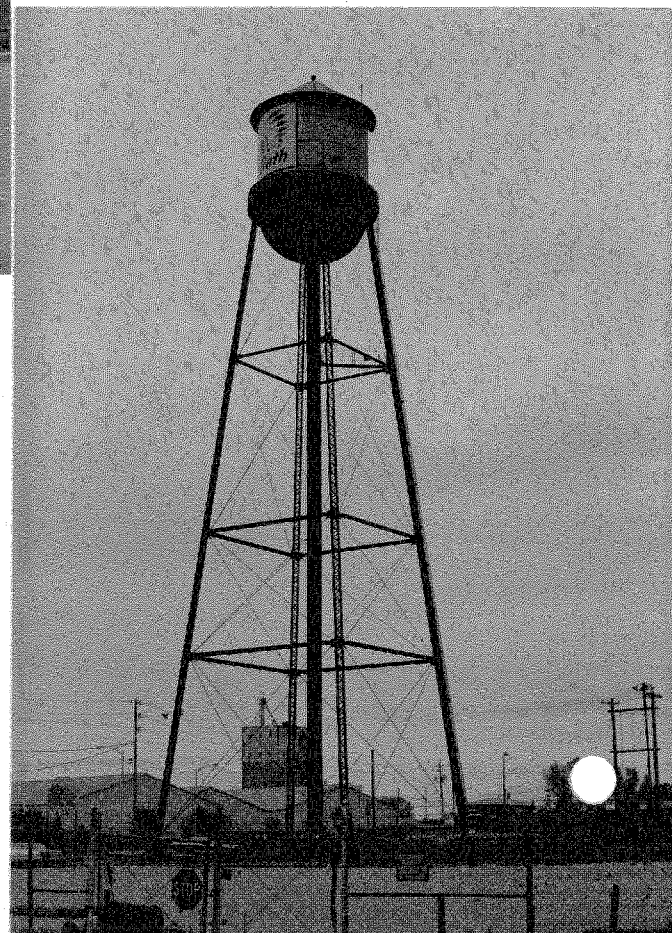
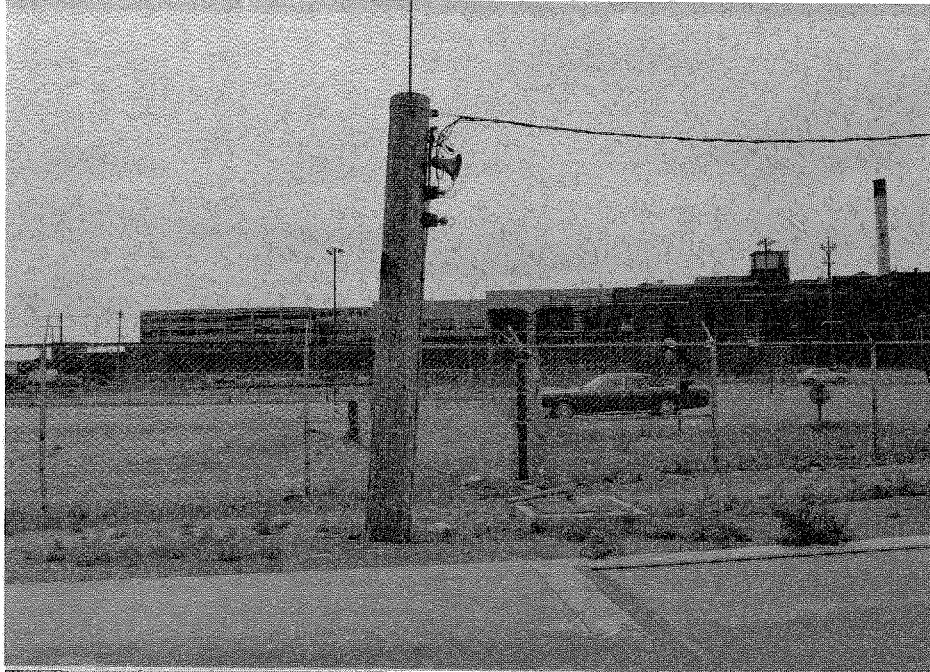




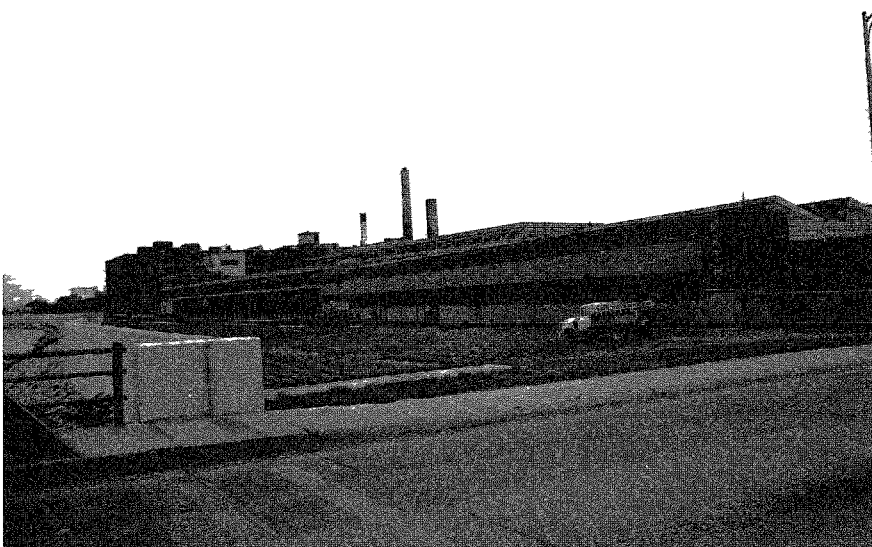
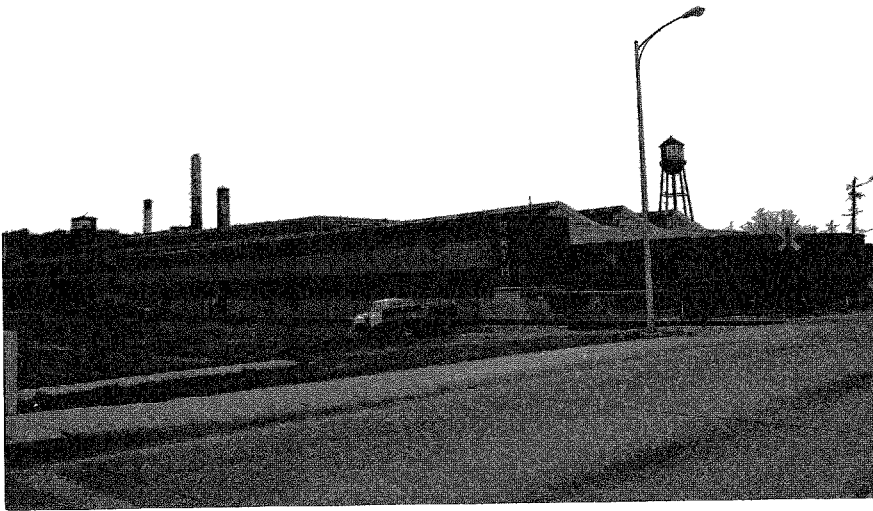
RATH PACKING



RATH PACKING



RATH PACKING





# Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation  
Iowa State Historical Department  
East 12th & Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 07-028-3871  
District Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Map Reference # \_\_\_\_\_

## Identification

- Rath Packing Company
1. Site Name \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Village/Town/City Waterloo Township \_\_\_\_\_ County Black Hawk
  3. Street Address Sycamore & Elm
  4. Legal Location \_\_\_\_\_  

Urban:	subdivision	block	parcel	subparcel
Rural:	township	range	section	1/4 section of 1/4 section
  5. UTM Location: zone \_\_\_\_\_ easting \_\_\_\_\_ northing \_\_\_\_\_; Acreage \_\_\_\_\_
  6. Owner(s) Name \_\_\_\_\_
  7. Owner(s) Address \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
  8. Use: Present \_\_\_\_\_ Original \_\_\_\_\_

## Description

9. Date of Construction \_\_\_\_\_ Architect/Builder \_\_\_\_\_
10. Building Type:  

<input type="checkbox"/> single-family dwelling	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> other institutional	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> multiple-family dwelling	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural
<input type="checkbox"/> commercial			
11. Exterior Walls: ☐ clapboard ☐ stone ☐ brick ☐ board and batten ☐ shingles ☐ stucco  
☐ other \_\_\_\_\_
12. Structural System: ☐ wood frame with interlocking joints ☐ wood frame with light members (balloon frame)  
☐ masonry load-bearing walls ☐ iron frame ☐ steel frame with curtain walls ☐ reinforced concrete  
☐ other \_\_\_\_\_
13. Condition: ☐ excellent ☐ good ☐ fair ☐ deteriorated
14. Integrity: ☐ original site ☐ moved—if so, when? \_\_\_\_\_  
Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site: \_\_\_\_\_
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: ☐ barn ☐ other farm structures ☐ carriage house ☐ garage ☐ privy  
☐ other \_\_\_\_\_
16. Is the building endangered? ☐ no ☐ yes—if so, why? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Surroundings of the building: ☐ open land ☐ woodland ☐ scattered outbuildings ☐ densely built-up ☐ commercial  
☐ industrial ☐ residential ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

### 18. Map

see arch survey

### 19. Photo

Roll \_\_\_\_\_ Frame \_\_\_\_\_ View \_\_\_\_\_

# Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

## 20. Architectural significance

- ☐ a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- ☐ b. Contributing structure
- ☐ c. Not eligible/intrusion

Rath Packing  
Sycamore & Elm

Industry--agriculture  
Meatpacking

## 21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- ☐ b. Contributing structure
- ☐ c. Not eligible/intrusion

KEY STRUCTURE

The source of Waterloo's rise to industrial eminence lay in industries of leading economic significance to the state--steel and iron products and food processing and kindred products. Based on their value, in 1923 (and other times) these categories ranked at or near the top in economic importance in Iowa. Slaughtering and meatpacking accounted for 44 percent of the total value of the food preparation category in Iowa in 1923. In Waterloo Rath Packing is among the very few extant sites associated with this highly significant theme and by the far the most prominent--physically and economically.

## 22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

"H. Peter Henschien--Plan Well Before Building," The National Provisioner (January 26, 1952), p. 319.

Waterloo Courier, August 10, 1941 and December 28, 1942.

Rath Packing file, Grout Museum.

Parsons, Jr., Geoffrey and Yoder, Robert. Waterloo Packer. The Story of the Rath Packing Company. privately printed. 1941.

Prepared by Barbara Beving Long Date 1986

Address 3140 Easton Blvd. Telephone 515-266-4964

Organization Midwest Research, Des Moines, IA

## For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

### 1. Office Information Sources on this Property

- ☐ County Resource File
- ☐ Windshield Survey
- ☐ National Register
- ☐ Grants-In-Aid: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Determination of Eligibility

### ☐ Review and Compliance Project:

- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Subject Traces

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Photo Images \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

# Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation  
Iowa State Historical Department  
East 12th & Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number \_\_\_\_\_

## Continuation Sheet Rath Packing

### Item Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Although Rath Packing moved its operations to Waterloo in 1891, the existing, complex dates primarily from the 1920s and later, the period of greatest growth for the company.<sup>1</sup> In the 1920s, Waterloo was the state's third largest pork packinghouse after Sioux City and Ottumwa. Of special interest is the architect for Rath, H. Peter Henschien, the "first architectural engineer to work extensively in the meat packing field." Trained in Norway, Henschien became involved in American packinghouse design beginning in 1902. Publication of his book on the subject in 1915 dovetailed neatly with the new desire for efficient packinghouse design, one connected with federal pure foods legislation. Henschien also designed for such leading packers as John Morrell & Co., Oscar Mayer & Co., and George A. Hormel & Co.

Henschien advocated adoption of a multi-story plant such as Rath, for it was considered to be more efficient. The killing department was on the top floor, and subsequent activities occurred below. The decision to employ an architect skilled in packinghouse design resulted in a cohesive group of structures at Rath. Most of the buildings are clothed in a dark, blood-red brick with concrete trim providing a dramatic contrast. By the fiftieth anniversary of the company, 1941, there were 150 buildings in the complex, including the unique Hog Hotel built in 1938 and 1939. The four-story structure provided comfortable quarters for the temperature-sensitive hogs--including cooling showers.

By 1966 the company was the ninth-largest meat packer in the nation and the 249th-largest industrial company. By then Rath produced over one thousand meat items. One out of every seven households in the Waterloo area was dependent upon a Rath paycheck. Rath Packing Company thrived well going into the postwar period--despite labor problems and changing buying habits. But a combination of factors spelled its doom in the 1980s, including changing consumer tastes, labor costs and problems, poor management, and an outdated plant. On April 1, 1985, the Rath trademark, the noble Indian chief, was auctioned off, the plant closed.

In addition to its position as an important meat packer and example of packinghouse design, Rath Packing provided substantial employment to Waterloo, second only to Deere & Company. And the factory complex best calls attention to unionization of packinghouse workers in Waterloo.

other sources: (Because of its significance, references to Rath abound.)  
Fred Kercheval, "Why Rath," c. 1986, Grout Museum.  
Waterloo Courier, December 3, 1929.  
Des Moines Sunday Register, July 14, 1985.

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<sup>1</sup>Three structures--part of the engine room and 2 cold storage buildings--date from 1916-18.