



# CITY OF WATERLOO, IOWA

## WATERLOO PLANNING, PROGRAMMING & ZONING COMMISSION

715 Mulberry St. • Waterloo, IA 50703 • (319) 291-4366 Fax (319) 291-4262

NOEL ANDERSON • Community Planning & Development Director

### Memorandum

Mayor  
TIMOTHY J.  
HURLEY

DATE: April 24, 2009  
TO: Planning, Programming and Zoning Commission

COUNCIL  
MEMBERS  
.....

FROM: Adam Poll, Associate Planner *AP*  
RE: National Register Nomination – Fowler Building

REGINALD A.  
SCHMITT  
Ward 1

As you are aware, the historic Fowler Building has recently been restored at the corner of Lafayette Street and East 4<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown Waterloo. Since the building has been restored, it has been further redeveloped with Screaming Eagle restaurant moving into the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the building, Silos and Smokestacks relocating their offices to the second floor of the building, as well as new apartments being created within the historic building. The developer has utilized Historic Tax Credits to restore the building, and in order to receive the full tax credit available, the building needs to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

CAROLYN  
COLE  
Ward 2

HAROLD  
GETTY  
Ward 3

QUENTIN M.  
HART  
Ward 4

At the April 21, 2009 regular meeting of the Waterloo Historic Preservation Commission, the Commission voted to recommend approval of the nomination of the Fowler Building to the National Register of Historic Places. As a part of the Historic Preservation Ordinance requirements (Ord. 3727), Section 18 1/2-8, (a), (2), Identification and Designation, *"A public hearing by the Historic Preservation Commission shall be held prior to submission to the Planning, Programming and Zoning Commission for their review"*. After review by the Planning, Programming and Zoning Commission, the application will then be sent to the Mayor and City Council for their review before it is then forwarded to the State Nominations Review Committee in Des Moines for their June 12, 2009 meeting.

RON  
WELPER  
Ward 5

BOB  
GREENWOOD  
At-Large

STEVE  
SCHMITT  
At-Large

If you should have any questions, you can contact our office at the number listed above.

CITY WEBSITE: [www.ci.waterloo.ia.us](http://www.ci.waterloo.ia.us)

WE'RE WORKING FOR YOU!

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Request for Nomination of the Fowler Building at  
226-228 East 4th Street to the National Register of Historic Places

Building Proposed to be Nominated

C-3

East 4th Street

Lafayette Street

Sycamore Street

East 5th Street

50 25 0 50  
Feet





PLANNING & ZONING COMM.  
RECEIVED  
APR 10 2009

WATERLOO, IOWA

April 7, 2009

Mr. Tim Andera  
Waterloo HPC  
Community Planning and Development Department  
715 Mulberry  
Waterloo IA 50703

RE: The Fowler Co. Building, 226-228 E. 4th Street, Waterloo, Black Hawk County

Dear Mr. Andera:

The State Nominations Review Committee (SNRC) plans to consider the property referenced above for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places during their June 12, 2009 meeting. As a participant in the Certified Local Government Program, Waterloo HPC is required to review and comment on proposed National Register nominations of properties within its jurisdiction. The State is required to provide you with a 60-day period for the review, unless we mutually agree to expedite the process. I am contacting you to ask that you initiate the review process for the Historic Preservation Commission. Enclosed are copies of the nomination, photographs, and the review form. The review process will require the following:

- ◆ The Historic Preservation Commission should review the nomination during one of their meetings. Send a formal invitation to the Mayor with a copy of the nomination. Send a formal invitation to the property owner/owners. If they are not familiar with the National Register, be sure to include an explanation. Make sure that a copy of the nomination is available for public review before the meeting. For example, leave a review copy at the courthouse or public library. Indicate in your meeting announcement that a review copy of the nomination is available and where the review copy can be found.
- ◆ The question to answer when reviewing the nomination is whether the nominated property meets the National Register of Historic Places significance criteria. If the Commission feels that the nomination makes the case for meeting significance criteria, the Commission should check the box recommending that the property be listed. If the Commission feels that the property does not meet the significance criteria, then check the box recommending that the property not be listed. The Mayor should use the same approach when reviewing the nomination.
- ◆ You might want to invite the individual who prepared the nomination to attend the public meeting and present the nomination. Keep a record of the meeting (copy of notice, agenda, minutes, list of attendees). At the conclusion of the meeting, the Commission should make a motion regarding their recommendation. The Chairman of the Commission will complete Item #1, the Commission's portion of the review form. Be sure to fill in the date of the public meeting, sign the signature line

and record any comments that were made. If the Mayor attended the public meeting, inquire if he/she is prepared to complete Item #2 on the review form.

- ◆ In the event that the Mayor was unable to attend the meeting. The Commission Chairman should forward the Review form to the Mayor for review and comment. Have the Mayor sign the form and return it to the Historic Preservation Commission.
- ◆ Item #3 on the Review form asks for the review and comment of a preservation professional. If your commission does not have a professionally qualified historian or architectural historian who can complete this part of the form, you may leave Item #3 blank and I will arrange to have a State staff member complete that part of the form.
- ◆ After you have completed Items #1 through #2 (through #3 if a preservation professional is available), please make a copy of the completed review forms for your file and send the original copies of the completed forms to me.
- ◆ The Commission should keep the nomination and photographs. File them together in your inventory, as you will need the information for future reference. If a State preservation professional was needed to complete Item #3 on the review form, I will return a copy to the commission for filing.

If the Historic Preservation Commission and the Mayor disagree with one another on the property's National Register eligibility, both views will be presented to the SNRC for their consideration during review of the nomination. If both the Historic Preservation Commission (by Commission majority) and the Mayor do not consider the property eligible for National Register listing, we must halt the nomination. Be advised that when a nomination is halted, the property owner, the person who prepared the nomination or any interested party may appeal the decision. In addition, the nomination will still go forward to the National Park Service for an official "Determination of Eligibility."

Please contact Paul Mohr at 515/281-6826 with any questions or concerns regarding the CLG program or the process for this review.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Foster Hill  
Tax Incentive Programs Manager/  
National Register Coordinator



**CLG NATIONAL REGISTER REVIEW**

**CLG Name** Waterloo **Date of Public Meeting**

**Property Name** The Fowler Co. Building, 226-228 E. 4th Street, Waterloo, Black Hawk County

1. For Historic Preservation Commission:

- ☐ Recommendation of National Register eligibility  
☐ Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Reason(s) for recommendation:

2. For Chief Elected Local Official:

- ☐ Recommendation of National Register eligibility  
☐ Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Reason(s) for recommendation:

3. Professional Evaluation:

- ☐ Recommendation of National Register eligibility  
☐ Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Reason(s) for recommendation:

**RETURN TO:** State Historical Society of Iowa, ATTN: National Register Coordinator, 600 E. Locust, Des Moines, IA 50319

MAR 10 2009

NPS Form 10-900  
No. 1024-0018  
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB

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 any 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 The Fowler Co. Building

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number 226-228 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street not for publication N/A  
city or town Waterloo vicinity N/A  
state Iowa code IA county Black Hawk code 013 zip code 50703

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets        does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant        nationally        statewide X locally. (        See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or 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 commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



The Fowler Co. Building  
Name of Property

Black Hawk County, Iowa  
County and State

### 5. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

#### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

#### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing Noncontributing

1 0 buildings  
      sites  
      structures  
      objects  
1 0 Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register

0

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/warehouse

#### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

#### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/Limestone

roof WOOD

walls BRICK

other   

#### Narrative Description

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

The Fowler Co. Building  
Name of Property

Black Hawk 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.

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

ARCHITECTURE

#### Period of Significance

1884-1937

#### 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 a 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.

#### Significant Dates

1884

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### 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: \_\_\_\_\_



The Fowler Co. Building  
Name of Property

Black Hawk County, Iowa  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing		Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>554644</u>	<u>4705374</u>	3	<u>          </u>
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>

           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 Jan Olive Nash, Historian & Architectural Historian

organization Tallgrass Historians L.C. date January 2009

street & number 2460 S. Riverside Drive telephone 319.354.6722

city or town Iowa City state IA zip code 52246

**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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Fowler Project L.L.C. (c/o James E. Walsh, Jr.)

street & number 315 E. 5<sup>th</sup> St. telephone 319-287-5389

city or town Waterloo state IA zip code 50703

=====  
**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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section 7 Page 1

## 7. Description

### *Summary Paragraph*

The Fowler Co. Building (Fig. 1) is a three story, flat roofed, commercial edifice constructed in 1884 on a busy corner of the two-block long eastside business district in Waterloo, Iowa.<sup>1</sup> The building is situated at the southeast corner of the intersection of Lafayette and East 4th streets, not far from the Cedar River, the historic power source for a generation of nineteenth-century mills along East 4<sup>th</sup>. The Fowler Co.'s decision to build at this corner put its new offices and wholesale grocery warehouse at the heart of the robust and growing eastern Iowa prairie town. Though no building current exists along Lafayette between the Fowler building and the alleyway behind it, The Fowler Co. Building has handsome brick commercial buildings of a similar age and style as its immediate neighbors along East 4<sup>th</sup>. Constructed of red brick and trimmed with limestone details, the Fowler building's pattern of windows, stonework, and ornate pressed metal cornice render this building not only stylish and visually interesting, but also a lasting tribute to the wholesale grocery business and the local family who grew the business and constructed the building.



Figure 1 The Fowler Co. Building in 2008, rehabilitation complete. Photo by Douglas J. Steinmetz, 2008

<sup>1</sup> The historic name of this building best reflects the way the public would have viewed the name, from the still prominent name block on the building itself, to the company's signage and its frequent advertisements (see Figs. 5 and 10).



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEETBlack Hawk County IowaSection 7 Page 2Exterior

Though generally rectangular in shape, the corner of the Fowler building that faces the center of the intersection is canted in a width sufficient to accommodate the front entrance at ground level and a single window on each floor above. The building's common red brick walls sit on a limestone foundation. Its window sills are also limestone. At the roofline, the walls are capped with a highly ornamental metal cornice. The stamped metal cornice on the primary 4th St. façade and the canted corner have central pediments flanked by taller finials and supported by massive brackets with smaller interstitial brackets (Fig. 2). Between each small bracket and on the face of each large bracket are circular designs, mildly floral in nature. The large, 4th St. cornice pediment bears the date "1884" (Fig. 3). Under this on the masonry wall are the words "The Fowler Co." Segmental-arch window headers throughout are composed of soldier bricks separated by stone keystones, with flat stone drops incised with circles on either side. Wall surfaces along the Lafayette St. elevation are decorated with widely-spaced horizontal courses of single bricks turned to expose a corner, which creates a dark contrasting shadow on both sides and results in an animated visual pattern across the wall. Wide, deep, brick corbels above the top floor windows on both streetside elevations form a strong, rhythmic horizontal band and draw the eye towards the ornate metal cornice at the roofline. The brickwork on the primary East 4<sup>th</sup> St. façade and canted corner is further differentiated by pilasters. Windows are located within inset brick panels between these pilasters.



Figure 2 Detail of metal cornice atop the canted corner. Photo by Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2008

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National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section 7 Page 3

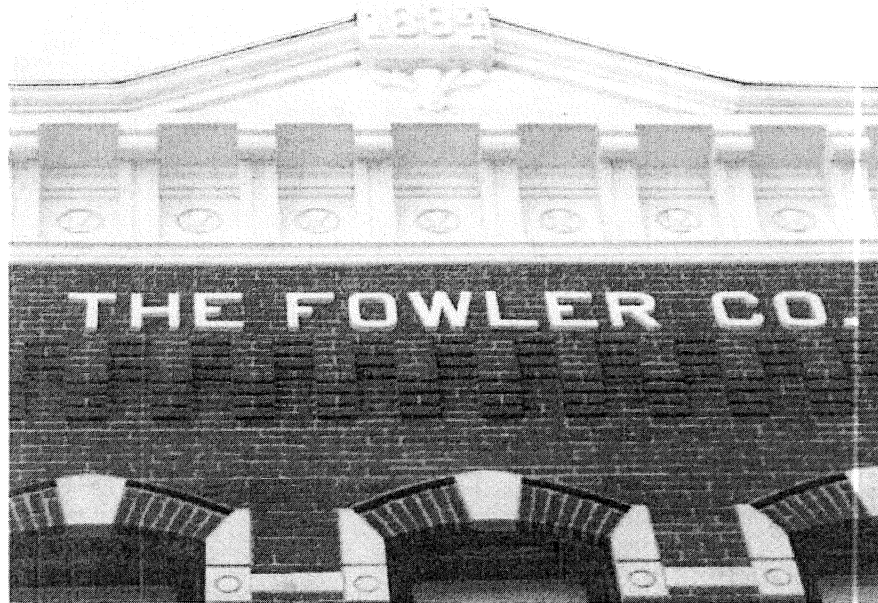


Figure 3 Detail of signage and metal cornice atop East 4<sup>th</sup> Street façade. *Photo by Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2008*

Upper floor fenestration on the 4th St. façade is regularly spaced on the top or third floor. On the second floor, the historic 4<sup>th</sup> St. fenestration pattern has been restored by removal and replacement of two large windows that replaced the four original windows, probably in the 1930s (Fig. 4). Upper floor fenestration on the long elevation fronting Lafayette Street is vertically balanced but not horizontally symmetrical. The windows on the rear half of the Lafayette side are widely spaced, but the spacing on the front half becomes irregular. Also one of the windows here is wider than all the others on this side of the building and once accommodated or illuminated a doorway (nonextant) reached by an exterior side stairway (nonextant). Ground floor fenestration on the 4th and Lafayette streetsides was altered, probably in the 1950s, by replacement of the original pilasters, wall surfaces, and windows with modern plate glass display windows supported by steel posts. Over these new sidewalk display windows, a concrete-clad rigid awning was attached to the building, also probably in the 1950s. On the roof, the tall crown chimneys seen in a historic photograph (Fig. 5) were removed at an unknown date.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section 7 Page 4

As a result of the current rehabilitation project (for which tax credits were sought), the awning was removed and the sidewalk level fenestration was returned to a more historically appropriate configuration, though the Lafayette St. side remains open and glazed (refer back to Fig. 1). Fenestration on the rear wall, which was once narrowly separated from The Fowler Co.'s other building (nonextant), was irregular and lacked the ornamentation of the two public sides. Most of these have been filled in and the entire wall is painted a brick red color. There is no fenestration on the 4th side, a party wall shared with the adjacent "Haffa Building" (1880s). Windows on both public elevations were replaced recently with new units approved by the Iowa State Historic Preservation Officer and the National Park Service as acceptable matches to the historic windows.



Figure 4 The Fowler Co. Building in 2005, before the present rehabilitation. The building's brick and stone walls were painted gray with the ornate cornice a darker battleship gray. Note the large second story window on the East 4th Street façade (right) and the heavy-looking hanging canopy over the sidewalk on both elevations. All these alterations were reversed. *Photo by Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2005*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section 7 Page 5



Figure 5 This well-known historic photograph of The Fowler Co. Building existed by 1894, when the second Fowler building at the far left was constructed. The same photograph, with its distinctive team of gray horses and push cart, also appeared on the front page of the *Waterloo Daily Reporter's* November 23, 1896 issue illustrating an article about a fire in the second building. Taken from *Souvenir [of] Waterloo, Iowa (1899)*, Leonard Katoski Collection, Grout Museum of History and Science

Interior

Over the years, most of the interior surfaces throughout the building had been remodeled and modernized. Some of this work was required after a fire in the building in 1896; other renovations were probably needed after an 1899 fire in the adjacent Fowler building due to smoke and water damage.<sup>2</sup> Various tenants long had occupied parts of the building and, especially after 1937 when the Fowler Company moved to a new location beyond the downtown area, tenant requirements would have resulted in additional interior changes.<sup>3</sup> Prior to the current rehabilitation project, the basement housed the lower floor of the bar that occupied the street level floor. The second floor remained open warehouse space in the rear of the building, with 1930s vintage partition walls for office space in the front part facing East 4th St. Above this, on the top or third floor, the space lacked partition walls but the

<sup>2</sup> *Iowa State Reporter*, November 27, 1896; *Iowa State Reporter*, October 17, 1899.

<sup>3</sup> Fowler Company entries in the Waterloo city directories indicate the business moved to Center Street in 1937.

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National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section 7 Page 6



Figure 6 The rear wall of The Fowler Co. Building once closely faced a second Fowler warehouse and office building, erected in 1894. Bridgeways were created between the two buildings and their locations are faintly visible in this photograph. The second brick Fowler building was damaged by fire and is nonexistent. The bridgeway openings and the remaining upper level windows on this rear wall have been filled in. *Photo by Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2008*

exterior walls were plastered and the windows trimmed with early twentieth century woodwork. The current rehabilitation project saved, restored, and reused remaining historic materials where possible. This included the first floor's pressed metal ceiling, which was consolidated to cover as much ceiling area as the available historic material permitted. Now this ground floor remains largely open space, with a line of metal columns down the center for support. Between the second and third floors, a historic stairway and walls surrounding it were preserved. Beams and columns on the second floor were left exposed. This is true on the third floor also, where the historic wood ceiling was preserved in the new public hallway. In the basement, the wood joists at the ceiling were left exposed and the stone foundation walls and stone structural piers remain exposed as well. The basement utility room has a bricked-in entrance to a tunnel or perhaps an old boiler room under Lafayette Street. A bar business occupies the ground floor currently and makes use of the canted corner doorway as its entrance. The upper floors were converted to offices and residential space, with historically sensitive designs in the woodwork and fenestration arrangements (Figs. 7 and 8).



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National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section 7 Page 7

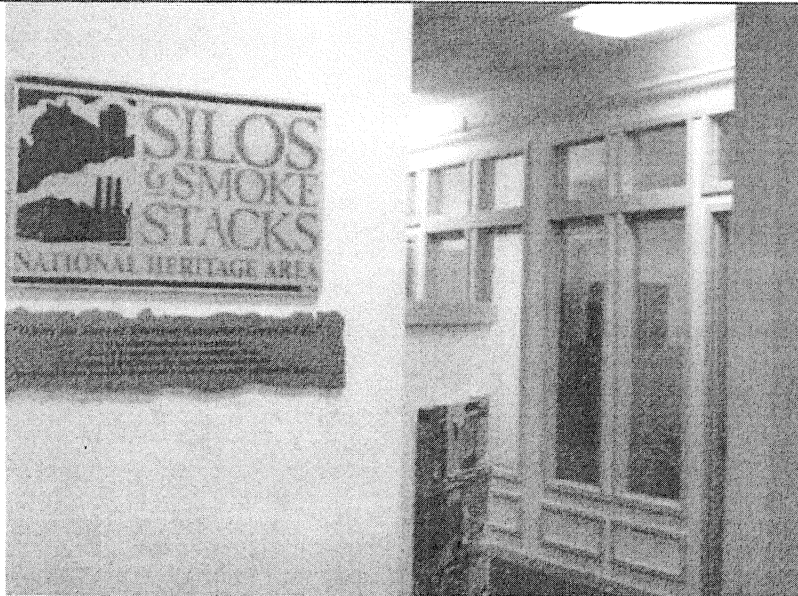


Figure 7 Current 2<sup>nd</sup> floor interior, looking northwest toward offices overlooking East 4th St. Photo by Douglas J. Steinmetz, 2008

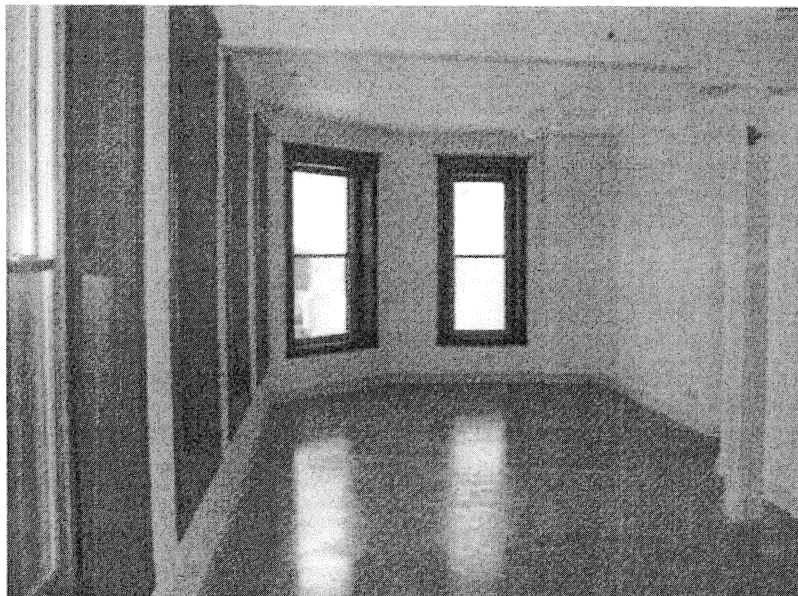


Figure 8 Current 3<sup>rd</sup> floor interior, front corner room, looking toward Lafayette St. Photo by Douglas J. Steinmetz, 2008

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section 7 Page 8

Integrity

All seven aspects of integrity (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association) are maintained at or have been restored to good to excellent levels. The Fowler Co. Building sits in its original location and, because it shares a historic 4<sup>th</sup> Street landscape, the building also has excellent integrity of setting and feeling as well. The Fowler Co. Building's design elements and materials are largely intact, or where necessary have been renovated with historically appropriate replacements. The recent rehabilitation project removed a number of inappropriate street-level storefront alterations and additions, as well as the large second floor windows where the window pattern was returned to the original pattern. Double hung windows are new and date to the recent rehabilitation but are historically accurate replacements. Because the gray paint on the exterior walls was removed, the stylish masonry combination of red brick and pale stone trim has been revealed for the first time in decades, resulting in excellent integrity of workmanship. Though the mason and/or architect-designer of the building is unknown, The Fowler Co. Building is the best and only extant commercial building associated with the important Fowler Co. wholesale grocery business during the peak of its business life, leaving the building with excellent integrity of association as well. A comparison of historic and current photographs of The Fowler Co. building suggest the current condition of the building's exterior closely resembles the historic building when constructed.



Figure 9 East 4<sup>th</sup> streetscape. *Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2008*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section 8 Page 9

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## 8. Narrative Statement of Significance

### *Summary Paragraph*

The Fowler Co. Building is locally significant under Criteria A and C as a fine example of commercial Queen Anne architecture executed in brick and stone and constructed in 1884 by one of Waterloo, Iowa's pioneering and most successful wholesale businesses, which occupied the building until 1937. As constructed, its red-brick wall surface is richly decorated with pilasters, corbelling, and canted-brick courses. Contrasting stone trim in the window headers, window sills, between the windows, and at the street level set up a lively visual pattern that even the casual observer cannot miss. The building's ornate metal cornice adds overscale pilasters, finials, pediments, floral and circle imagery, and quilted surface textures. Overall, the decorative treatment results in an animated surface on a solid-looking building of a size and scale that proclaimed the success of its owner, The Fowler Co. grocery business. The cornice and masonry patterns make this building a remarkable one in downtown Waterloo, where it is one of the oldest buildings of its kind remaining.

### The Fowler Company at Its Downtown Location

The history behind The Fowler Co. Building reveals an important chapter in the evolution of Waterloo as a regional *entrepot* and wholesale distribution center. The company—the owners persistently and formally called it The Fowler Company or The Fowler Co. with a capital T—was incorporated in 1879. However, the enterprise began a decade earlier as a modest grocery business run by two enterprising brothers from New York state, Courtland Fowler and Joseph A. Fowler. The brothers had arrived in town shortly after the Civil War, while a third brother, George, stayed behind in New York to ship barrels of vinegar as well as fresh and dried apples to Waterloo.<sup>3</sup> The foodstuff sold well and in 1873 George relocated to Waterloo and the brothers began to buy or produce more of their foodstuffs locally.

They established a nursery, though it was probably less to produce fruit for sale than to grow the trees themselves for sale. The latter is suggested by the ads placed in the newspaper in 1879 (the same year the company incorporated) when the nursery was closed and the company offered “large quantities of apples and crab trees, also grape vines, ornamental trees, shrubs, etc. at low prices.”<sup>4</sup> A few weeks later, the company placed another ad that offered “all types of trees” for sale.<sup>5</sup> In May, 1883, The Fowler Co. “broke ground for a cheese factory in Janesville,” a small town a few miles upstream on the Cedar River from Waterloo revealing the brothers' continuing entrepreneurial tendencies and suggesting that their company was enjoying some degree of financial success.<sup>6</sup> By the turn of the century, The Fowler Co. also had a vinegar factory at yet a third location. The company operated with

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<sup>3</sup> Courtland F. Fowler arrived in Waterloo in 1868 at the age of 23. John C. Hartman, *History of Black Hawk County, Iowa, and its People* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1915), 162.

<sup>4</sup> *Iowa State Reporter*, April 9, 1879.

<sup>5</sup> *Waterloo Courier*, April 23, 1879.

<sup>6</sup> *Iowa State Reporter*, May 30, 1883.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section 8 Page 10

only limited competition as the town was served by just one other general wholesale grocer, an offshoot run by former employees and Louis E. Fowler (likely a member of the same Fowler family). According to one historian who has studied and written extensively about the economic development of Waterloo, the "Fowler Company was Waterloo's *pioneer grocery wholesale business*. Besides apple products, they had a small cheese factory from 1880 until 1916. In 1884 the Fowler Company built a warehouse on East Fourth and Lafayette [the extant building being nominated], and ten years later built a connected warehouse on Lafayette Street. By 1908 forty employees busily stocked the five-story wholesale house with 'an excellent stock of staple and fancy groceries'" (emphasis added).<sup>7</sup>



Figure 10 This advertisement is from a 1901-1902 Waterloo City Directory and is based on a second, slightly newer photograph that is not the one in Figure 5. The photograph itself has been published in Corwin and Hoy's *Waterloo: A Pictorial History*.

The original Fowlers, Courtland and Joseph, and their sons and grandsons not only operated the successful wholesale grocery business, but also rose in the ranks of Waterloo's most important and influential businesses. Courtland Fowler was involved in the Waterloo & Cedar Falls Union Mill Company (nearby at East 4<sup>th</sup> Street on the river), the First National Bank of Waterloo, and the Waterloo Canning Company (located a few blocks south of downtown near the industrial district

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Beving Long, "Waterloo: The Factory City of Iowa" (unpubl. report prepared for the City of Waterloo, 1986) 150-151.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section 8 Page 11

dominated by the Rath Packing Company). In 1910, Frank J. Fowler, who was either Courtland's brother or a member of the next generation (sources conflict), was vice president of The Fowler Co. At the same time he served also as president of the First National Bank, president of the Waterloo Canning Company, vice president of Concrete Stone Company, vice president of the Waterloo Malleable Iron Co. [sic], and vice president of Rath Packing Company.<sup>8</sup> It is clear that as the Fowler family of wholesale grocers prospered at their business, they also expanded their civic roles as community leaders and Waterloo boosters.

The Fowler Co. business did not, however, operate without financial crisis, especially as a result of fires in their downtown brick buildings. The first major conflagration occurred in the building being nominated herein. Construction of this building had been a notable community event followed by the local press. In March, 1884, one Waterloo newspaper noted that "The Fowler Co., extensive wholesale dealers in groceries, supplies of all kinds, and whose necessary business has compelled them to secure larger quarters, purchased the Howland property on the corner of East Fourth and Lafayette streets last Friday, the consideration being \$3500. They talk of and will, probably, erect a three story brick building 40x100."<sup>9</sup> This was followed by a short press notice in June that "The Fowler Co. has commenced work on their new building."<sup>10</sup> In July, 1884, work was underway on the foundation and by the end of August, the newspaper announced that "the walls of the Fowler Co., block are going up rapidly under the leadership of Mr. N. Roebuck."<sup>11</sup> It is unclear whether Roebuck was a construction superintendent, a builder, a mason, or an architect, but no other person was identified in the press with the construction of the building. By the middle of December, 1884, the newspaper noted with satisfaction that "The Fowler Co. are getting settled in their new building. It is one of the handsomest blocks in the city."<sup>12</sup>

A few years after its construction, The Fowler Co.'s first major fire occurred in November, 1896. The attached rear 4-story building constructed by Fowler just two years earlier to accommodate the growing business—referred to in the papers as the Lafayette building—was not damaged by this first fire, which started in the ground floor of the 1884 building and spread north. The fire was extinguished but smoke and water virtually destroyed the sundries, foodstuffs, and other contents on all floors. The company survived this fire and in the spring of 1899, moved its office into the Lafayette building. Later the same year, nearly three years to the day of the first fire, a bigger fire struck the Lafayette building too. This time, the fire started on the top fourth floor and caused it to collapse down to the third floor below it. Smoke and water further damaged the floors below but the Queen Anne building on East 4<sup>th</sup> St. was largely spared.<sup>13</sup>

After The Fowler Co. moved its offices into the Lafayette Street in early 1899, it continued to use the rear portion of the 1884 Queen Anne building as warehouse space. The front part of the building, with its fine location for retail shops along busy East 4<sup>th</sup> St., housed a variety of tenants in the two

<sup>8</sup> *McCoy's Waterloo City Directory*, 1910.

<sup>9</sup> *Iowa State Reporter*, March 27, 1884.

<sup>10</sup> *Waterloo Courier*, June 25, 1884.

<sup>11</sup> *Iowa State Reporter*, July 3, 1884; *Iowa State Reporter*, August 28, 1884.

<sup>12</sup> *Iowa State Reporter*, December 18, 1884.

<sup>13</sup> *Waterloo Daily Courier*, October 16, 1899.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section 8 Page 12

storefronts at 226 and 228 East 4<sup>th</sup>. According to city directory listings, at various times the storefront tenants included the B.L. Gates Jewelry Co.; B.W. Schuneman, druggists; Sam Frank Co., clothiers; the Fonda Mae Shop; and Dixie Frocks. Tenants also occupied the front part of the second floor, which carried the address of 228½ and may have been accessed by the substantial set of stairs on the Lafayette St. side, which may have been seen in historic photographs (see Fig. 5). Upstairs at 228½ East 4th St., tenants included the Waterloo College of Commerce, run by Miss Mary Rice (1910); and Sam Lipkin, a tailor (1920). There are no city directory listings for the 228½ address in the 1930s, reflecting perhaps the nationwide economic depression and the reduced activity on and above "main street." In 1937, The Fowler Co. abandoned its downtown location and moved away from the East Fourth/Lafayette Street region entirely, probably because of changing transportation delivery modes.<sup>14</sup> The building's street level stores continued to be occupied by retailers, including, in 1950, Dixie Shops (women's clothing) and Shanks Jewelry and Music Store.

With the demolition of The Fowler Co.'s second building, on Lafayette Street, the Queen Anne building at the corner of East Fourth and Lafayette, which first housed the company and which still prominently displays its name, is clearly the best extant building to reflect the establishment and growth of one of Waterloo's most important wholesale businesses and most influential business families. It also stands as a notable example and rare survivor of Waterloo's 1880s commercial Queen Anne architecture. The corner location, combined with the prominent cornice high above most of the surrounding buildings, especially make this building stand out from its neighbors. Today, the building has been rehabilitated successfully and houses retail and office tenants. Likewise other buildings along this block have been rehabilitated and the entire block is being studied for potential as a historic district.

<sup>14</sup> City directory listings in 1937 put The Fowler Co. on Center Street, about three quarters of a mile northwest of downtown. There is a building at this location today that appears to date from the early twentieth century and could be the Fowler building. It is a long, low, single story brick building with truck loading docks on one end, reflecting a horizontal work flow within and use of trucks rather than horse-and-wagon or rail modes for shipping and deliveries.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section 9 Page 13

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*Waterloo Courier*, various dates as noted in text.

*Waterloo Evening Courier*, various dates as noted in text.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section 10 Page 14

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property is the commercial parcel located at the southeast corner of the intersection of East 4<sup>th</sup> and Lafayette Streets, in Waterloo, Black Hawk County, Iowa, which parcel forms a rectangle that extends 40 feet along East 4<sup>th</sup> Street and 100 feet along Lafayette Street, all of which lies in Block 14 of the Original Plat of Waterloo East.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the entire extant building constructed by The Fowler Co. at this corner location.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

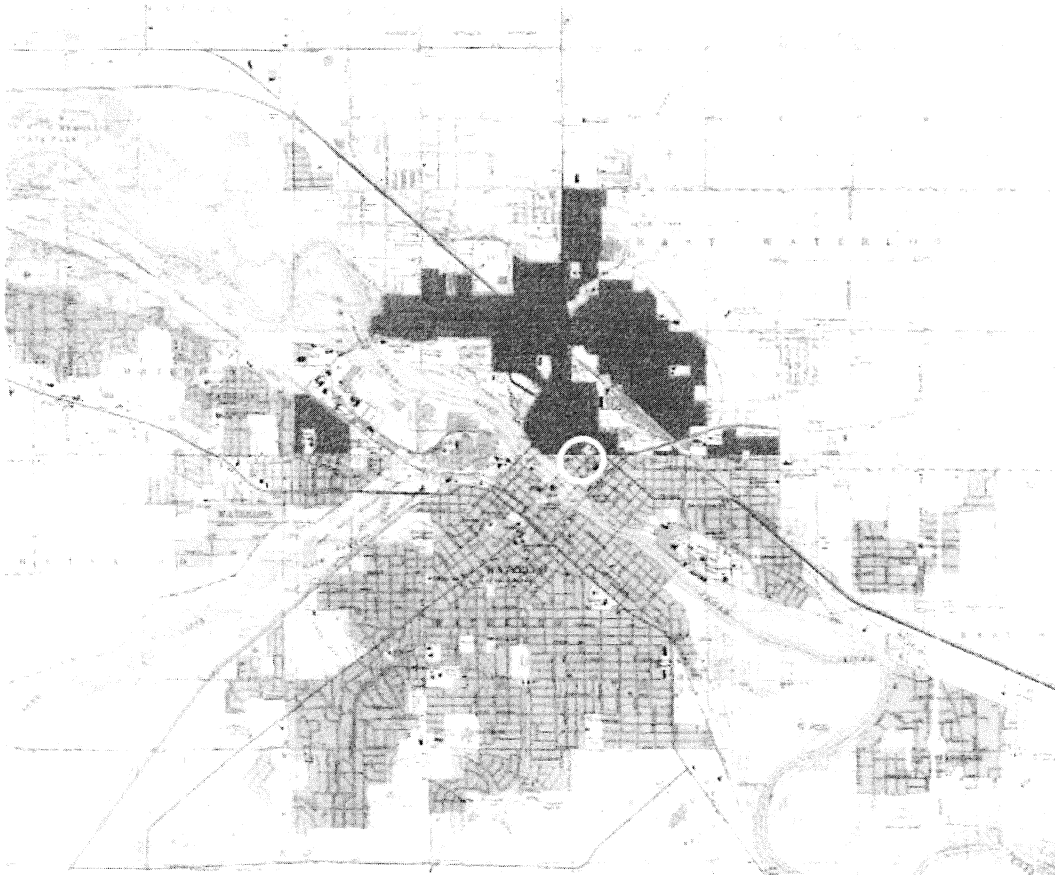
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County, Iowa

Section Additional Documentation Page 15

City of Waterloo, Black Hawk County, Iowa with the general location of the property  
circled.

(Source: Map obtained from <http://cairo.gis.iastate.edu> on December 23, 2008)



United States Department of the Interior  
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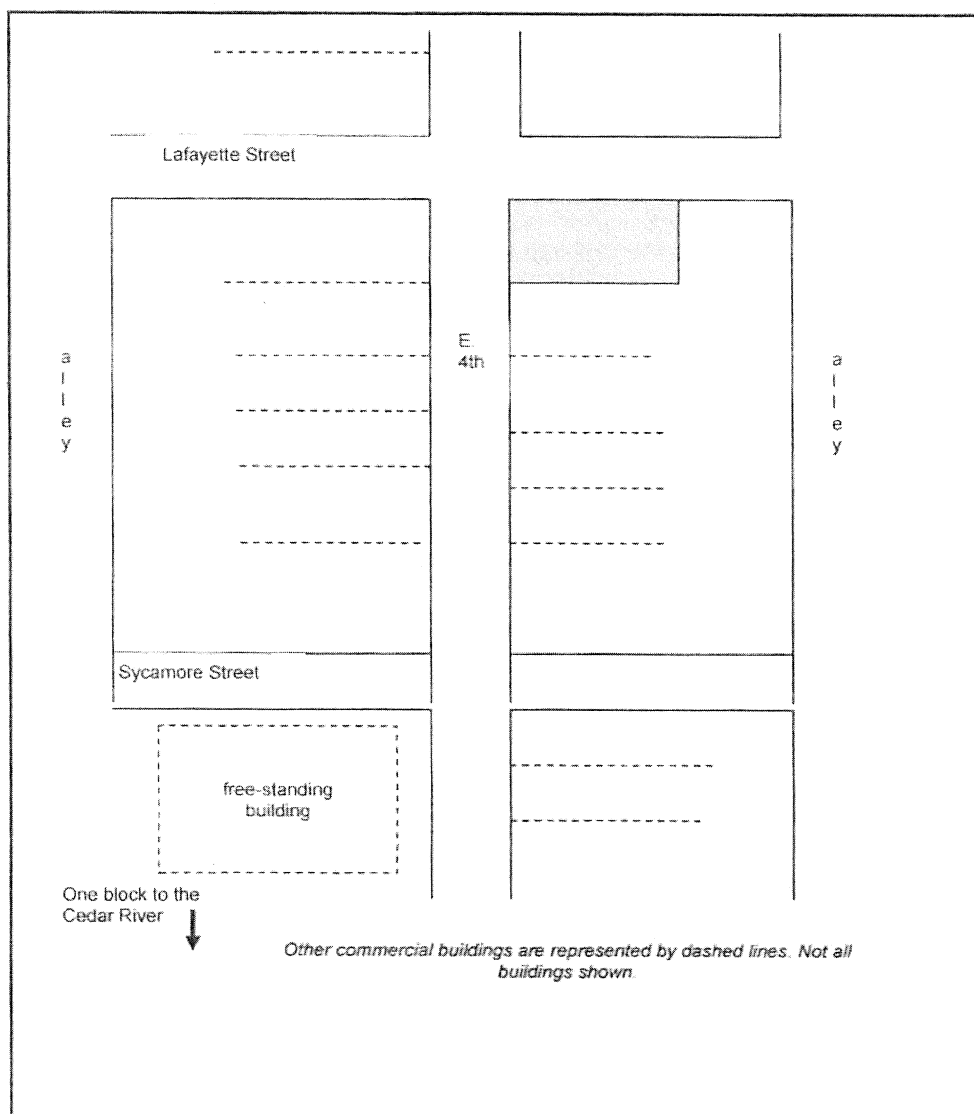
The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section Additional Documentation Page 16

Site Plan (Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2008) (not scaled; gray shading =nominated property)



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National Park Service

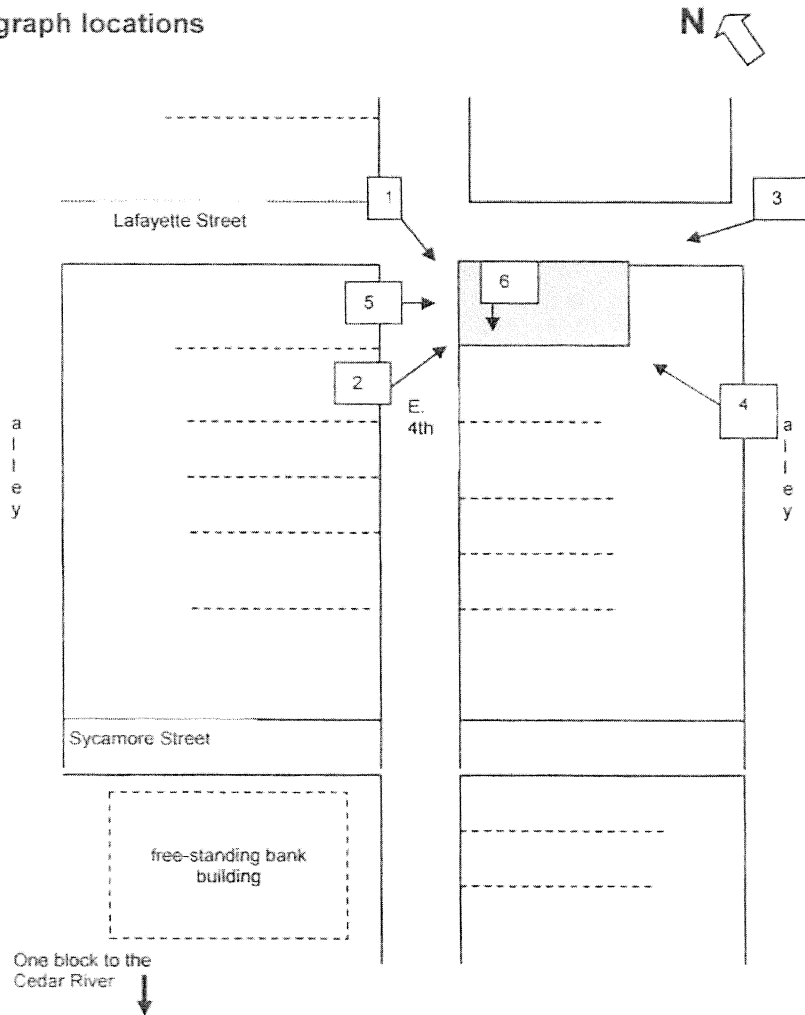
The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section Additional Documentation Page 17

Photograph locations



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National Park Service

The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section Additional Documentation Page 18

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Photograph Label Information (## 1,2,3,4,& 5, share information)

1. The Fowler Co. Building
2. Black Hawk County, IA
3. Tallgrass Historians L.C.
4. November 19, 2008
5. Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City, IA
6.
  - Photo #1: Streetscape looking south at canted corner of the building
  - Photo #2: Streetscape looking northeast at East 4<sup>th</sup> St. facade
  - Photo #3: Streetscape looking southeast at rear of building and Lafayette St. side
  - Photo #4: Streetscape looking north at southwest side and rear of building
  - Photo #5: Detail of East 4<sup>th</sup> St. cornice area
  - Photo #6: Interior view of 2<sup>nd</sup> floor hallway with offices on right side, facing southwest



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The Fowler Co. Building

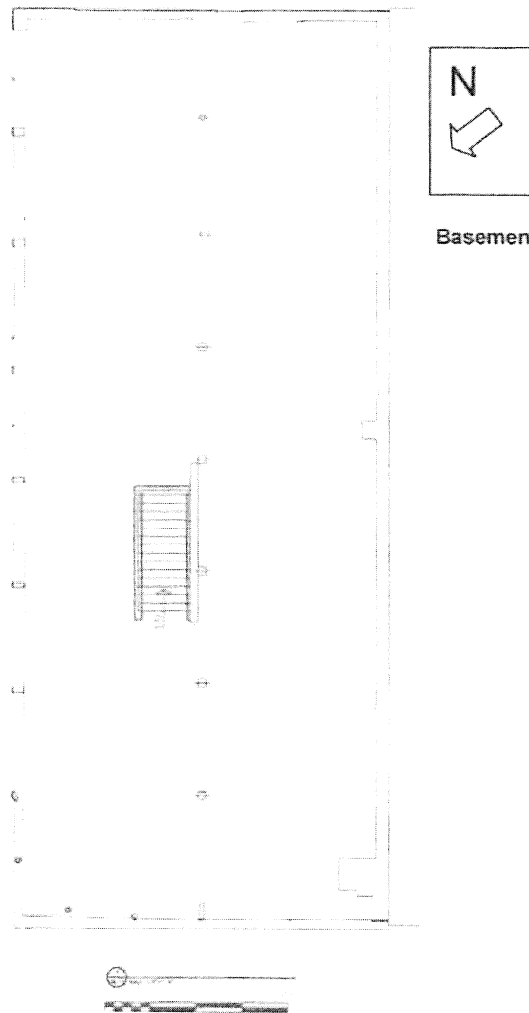
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section Additional Documentation Page 19

**Floor Plans**

*(baseline drawings by Douglas A. Steinmetz, c. 2005, modified by present wall positions provided by property owner)*



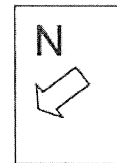
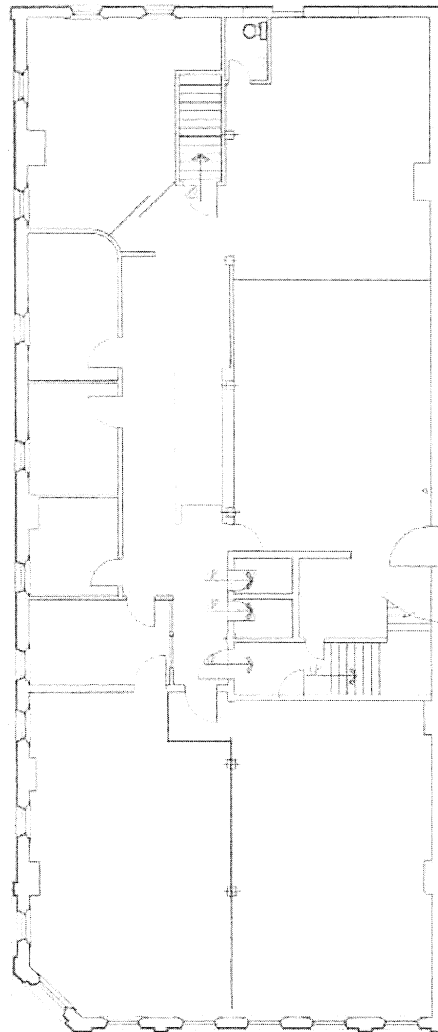
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The Fowler Co. Building

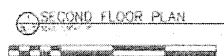
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section Additional Documentation Page 21



Second



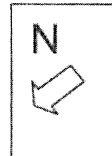
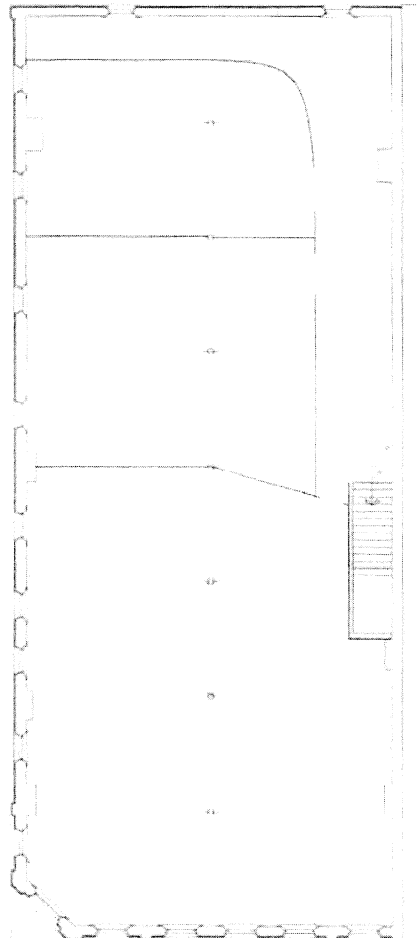
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The Fowler Co. Building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Black Hawk County Iowa

Section Additional Documentation Page 22



Third

THIRD FLOOR PLAN  
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