



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" on the appropriate line or by entering the information requested. If an 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 ODD FELLOWS BLOCK
other names/site number ODD FELLOWS HALL, IOOF HALL

2. Location

street & number 175 E. KANSAS STREET N/A not for publication
city or town AFTON N/A vicinity
state IOWA code IA county UNION code 175 zip code 50830

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (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 (meets does not meet) the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant (nationally statewide locally). (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Signature of certifying official Bruce A. Smith DSHP Date 11/20/2013
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
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 certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 Edson H. Beall Date of Action 1.15.14

Odd Fellows Block
Name of Property

Union County, Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property **Category of Property**
(Check as many lines as apply) (Check only one line)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local | <input type="checkbox"/> district |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State | <input type="checkbox"/> site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal | <input type="checkbox"/> structure |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> object |

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>		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**

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/MEETING HALL
COMMERCE/TRADE/BUSINESS

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/BUSINESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/ITALIANATE

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/LIMESTONE

walls BRICK

roof _____

other _____

Narrative Description

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

Odd Fellows Block
Name of Property

Union County, Iowa
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" on one or more lines 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.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" on all the lines 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 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1883-1963

Significant Dates

1883

1898

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

HUNTER, W.R.

Narrative Statement of Significance - (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliography 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):

- previous determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Record
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historical Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository

Odd Fellows Block
Name of Property

Union 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.)

1	<u>15</u>	<u>399377</u>	<u>4542587</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	
3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	

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 Alexa McDowell, Architectural Historian with Davis Breen, Research Assistant
organization AKAY Consulting date October 28, 2013
street & number 103 West Island Avenue telephone 515-491-5432
city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55401

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Jere Busenbarrick
street & number 121 N. 1st Avenue telephone
city or town Winterset state Iowa zip code 50273

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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Site Description

The Odd Fellows Block is located in the historic commercial district of Afton, which is centered around the town square – once the location of the county courthouse. As is commonly the case, commercial buildings grew up along the streets facing the courthouse; the Odd Fellows Block is sited on the south side of the town square on E. Kansas Street, with its façade facing the town square on the north.

The Odd Fellows Block is located near the middle of the block. The building is bounded on the west by a two-story commercial building of a similar construction era, on the east by a one-story commercial building, and on the south by a small yard between the building and an alley. A public sidewalk runs flush to the building on the north, providing access to the building's multiple entrances.

Property Description

The Odd Fellows Block is comprised of the original 1883, two-story, single bay building and the 1898, two-story, double bay addition on the west. Both sections of the Odd Fellows Block are brick on a limestone foundation.

The Odd Fellows Block exemplifies the Italianate style applied to commercial buildings, which was commonly utilized in Iowa's downtown commercial areas in the 1880s. The commercial Italianate is characterized by the use of tall and narrow upper story windows with ornate hoods or window surrounds, a prominent cornice with elaborate details, a highly decorative storefront cornice capping the storefronts, and equally ornate structural elements in the storefront (e.g. cast columns). Further, the style was one of the first to successfully utilize manufactured materials such as cast iron.¹

Exterior

The Italianate is fully expressed in both sections of the Odd Fellows Block. However, as one might expect given its later construction date, the addition on the west is somewhat more restrained in its decorative expression than the earlier building.

The façade of the original (1883) building retains its historic storefront. In keeping with the Italianate style, the storefront utilizes cast iron pilasters with molded fluted faces and rosette embellished capitals. The

¹ Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings, *American Vernacular Buildings and Interiors 1870-1960* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2009) 238-240.

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structural members frame the large expanses of display windows that flank the central, recessed entrance. Each display window is a single pane of glass stretching approximately 15-feet high. The original entrance opening has been diminished and its historic doors removed. The transom, however, remains intact. Typical of the commercial Italianate, the historic storefront is capped by a bracketed cornice complete with a variety of decorative embellishments.

The upper story of the 1883 building features three, tall and narrow windows spaced evenly across the wall plane. Each window has a stone window surround with a center, incised rosette, a zigzag patterning, and additional decorative incising. A stone beltcourse connects the three window surrounds with the stone piers at either corner of the upper wall. A stone beltcourse likewise connects the windowsills with the corner piers. The incised patterns used in the window surrounds are reiterated in the elaborate metal cornice that tops the façade. Those details are combined with brackets and dentils into an entablature organization (architrave, frieze, and cornice). The letters I.O.O.F. are mounted on the façade just beneath the cornice.

The 1898 addition to the building follows the rhythm and design influence established in the original building. Like the original, the 1898 doublewide storefront features a cast iron structure, large expanses of display glass, a decorative storefront cornice, and recessed entrances with transoms. The 1898 storefronts also utilize cast iron sills, wood panel bulkheads and simplified decorative elements in the cornice.

The upper façade of the 1898 addition is likewise a simplified version of the original. The lintels and sills of the four upper story windows are simply stone without embellishment. The bracketed cornice, while including the basic elements of an architrave and complete with elaborate decoration, is less massive. This contrast is particularly apparent in the historic image found on page 36 in which the cornice of the original building still retains the hood of its center, raised parapet.

From the rear (south elevation) of the Odd Fellows Block, the differentiation between the original building and the addition is also apparent. The original building features the flat roof typical of commercial constructions. A one-story addition (ca.1893) is attached to the rear of the original building. The building's upper story windows have been retrofitted and most of those on the one-story section have been closed. With the exception of the west elevation of the one-story section, the original building has been covered in an insulating paint.

In contrast to the original building, the 1898 addition sports a gable roof. The brick on this elevation is laid in a striated pattern. The three windows of the upper floor have been partially bricked, as have the three on the first level. An upper story doorway remains in place, but boarded. An iron staircase that provided access to that doorway was recently removed by order of the City of Afton due to safety concerns. Owing to the sloping site, entrance into the rear of each first floor storefront is made via wooden stairs. Each doorway

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa.

retains its original opening. Access to the basement is made via doorways on both the east and west end of the rear elevation.

Interior

As reflected on the exterior, the first floor interior of the Odd Fellows Block is divided into three storerooms², each of which retains its open floor plan.

The east storeroom is a long and narrow space, which includes the ca.1893, one-story addition at the rear (south). The space retains much of its historic plaster and 4-inch strip flooring. The ceiling is covered with beadboard, but it is possible that pressed metal was the historic finish material. In addition, the window and door openings at the south end of the building (which, at the time of the 1883 construction, opened to the outdoors) remain. Although the windows themselves have been removed and filled with salvaged stained glass windows, the historic double door and transom remain intact. A freight lift (likely utilized by the hardware store which occupied the storeroom for many years) remains in place at the south end of the space.

The east storeroom is connected to the middle storeroom by a wide, uncased opening. The middle storeroom is also long and narrow with historic plaster, pressed metal ceiling, 4-inch wood strip floors intact, and baseboards. Some alteration of the plan may have been made, but its impact on the historic plan is minimal,

No interior opening exists between the middle and the west storerooms. The west storeroom is generally open with a non-historic wall separating the main store and a second room at the rear. The entire space retains much of its historic plaster, 4-inch wood strip floor, door trim, and its baseboard. The ceiling appears to be plaster.

The interior stairways providing access from the street to the upper floor, retain their historic treads and railings. Although the plaster walls are damaged, the stairway on the east remains in fair condition with its historic stenciling and color scheme apparent.

The upper floor of the Odd Fellows Block is dominated by the meeting hallway, which retains its plan, pressed metal ceiling, historic light fixtures, 4-inch wood strip flooring, millwork, dais, and some of its plaster. Some secondary spaces on the upper level have been converted to apartment space, but the anteroom and cloakroom remain intact with ceiling heights, millwork and plaster retained. Sections of historic stenciling are hidden inside storage cupboards.

² The term "storeroom" is used to designate the interior space behind the storefront. The term was in common usage at the time the Odd Fellows Block was constructed and its use remains relevant today as a means of differentiating between the interior and exterior (storefront) of the property's ground floor.

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa.

STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

The Odd Fellows Block retains a high level of historic integrity as it relates to all seven aspects of integrity: location, association, setting, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling.

Retention of building's original site results in a high level of historic integrity as it relates to location.

Further, retention of the resource's physical and functional relationship to the historic commercial area within which it was constructed results in a high level of integrity related to association. Although the composition of business has changed over time, the Afton downtown remains dominated by commercial interests. The first floor storerooms of the Odd Fellows Block were historically part of the commercial sector, responsible for generating income for the lodge. Although only one of the storerooms is currently occupied, rehabilitation plans will facilitate occupation by new businesses and enhance integrity of association.

As for setting, the Odd Fellow's Block remains within the commercial district with its surroundings remaining much as they did at the time of the building's construction in 1883 and 1898 addition. Although a number of commercial buildings have been altered, the loss of the courthouse building (demolished ca.1960) is the only glaring breach of integrity related to setting. However, the retention of the former courthouse site as a city park with the historically open yard retained, diminishes the adverse impact resulting from the loss of the building. As a result, integrity of setting is very good.

The retention of the exterior design elements that define it as an example of the Italianate applied to a commercial building results in a very good level of integrity as it relates to design. Of particular note is the retention of tall and narrow window and door openings, cast iron structural elements of the storefronts, window hoods, and most all of the historically, elaborate cornices. Retention of integrity of design is of particular import because the building is National Register eligible under Criterion C as an intact example of the Italianate.

Retention of the interior plan on both floors further elevates integrity of design: the lodge hall complete with pressed metal ceiling, dais, anteroom, and secrecy "eye" portal, are of particular value as they relate directly to the building's historic function as Afton's Odd Fellows lodge. A high level of design integrity specific to that function is important as a resource significant under Criterion A in association with the history of the Odd Fellows.

As it relates to materials, the Odd Fellow's Block retains a high level of historic integrity. Retention of exterior, iron structural elements, storefront materials (wood bulkhead, display glass), and the historic brick

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa.

façade with its various stone details positively impacts integrity of materials. Further, the retention of interior materials, particularly the pressed metal ceiling in the lodge room, original stenciling in the stairwells and rooms on the second floor, wood trim throughout the second floor, and wood flooring through the building all enhance integrity of materials. The addition of insulating paint on the rear elevation negatively impacts integrity of materials. However, that impact is mitigated by its limited use on the rear only.

Integrity of workmanship is likewise high, with retention of the historic masonry, iron structural elements of the storefront, and portions of the Italianate cornice standing as evidence of the construction methods of the period and the skill of the craftsman.

With the retention of integrity of location, setting, association, design, materials, and workmanship a sense of time and place is retained, resulting in a very good level of integrity of feeling.

FUTURE PLANS

The current property owner is in the planning stages of an historic rehabilitation of the Odd Fellows Block. The owner arranged with the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office for a TAN (Technical Assistance Network) visit by an Architectural Historian who made general recommendations regarding rehabilitation of the property and submitted an Iowa Site Inventory to the Iowa SHPO for a preliminary determination of Register eligibility. Listing of the property on the National Register of Historic Places will allow the property owner to apply for State and Federal historic tax credits for the property's rehabilitation.

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Odd Fellows Block is considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The building is locally significant as a well-preserved example of a late nineteenth century commercial building in the Italianate style.

The Odd Fellows Block exemplifies the Italianate style applied to commercial buildings, which was popular in the 1870s through the 1890s. The commercial Italianate is characterized by the use of tall and narrow upper story windows with ornate hoods or window surrounds, a prominent cornice with elaborate details, a highly decorative storefront cornice capping the storefronts, and equally ornate structural elements in the storefront (e.g. cast columns). The Italianate is fully expressed in both sections of the Odd Fellows Block, although, given its later construction date, it is not surprising that the addition on the west is somewhat more restrained in decorative expression than the earlier building.

By the mid-1880s, the Afton commercial area, which grew up along the perimeter of what was historically the courthouse square and is now a city park, was populated by a mix of one and two story commercial buildings. At that time, the streetscapes were in various stages of development with some vacant lots remaining. However, the streetscape on the south side of the square was fully developed by 1886, with the original section of the Odd Fellows Block situated amid a line of one and two story buildings. In 1898, with the Odd Fellows Block addition in place, the building stood within a streetscape that included two other block buildings and an adjoining two-story building – all of which utilized the Italianate in their facades (Figure 9.). Although the south streetscape retains the buildings from that period, all have seen significant alteration of facades, with particular impact to the historic storefronts.

With the retention of its style-defining elements including the tall and narrow window openings of the upper story, stone window hoods, elaborate cornices (albeit with the loss of the center raised parapets), iron storefront structure, large display windows, elaborate storefront cornice, paneled doors to the upper story, and the retention of the historic masonry, the Odd Fellows Block is the best remaining example of the commercial Italianate in Afton.

The Odd Fellows Block is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The resource is locally significant in association with the history of the International Order of the Odd Fellows, Afton Lodge, No. 130. The Odd Fellows were active in communities across Iowa during the latter years of the 19th century and much of the 20th. The organization, with its motto of “Friendship, Love and Truth,” typically had an important role in the social development of their community. The lodge was both a place for socialization and a vehicle for organizing community events. In Afton the lodge membership included a number of the growing town’s most ardent boosters who focused their efforts on advocating for a number of civic improvements.

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa.

The Period of Significance for the Odd Fellows Block is 1883 through 1963 - the year in which the building was placed in service through the 50-year window recommended by the National Park Service. Significant dates are 1883 (the year the original building was placed in service) and 1898 (the year the addition was placed in service).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The small town of Afton, Iowa (pop. 845) is located in Union County in south-central Iowa. The community was platted in 1854, becoming the county seat in February of 1855 (a status lost to Creston in 1869).¹ By April 1855, the city saw the construction of its first house, which also served as a retail store. Several other houses followed and, by the end of 1855, many of the town's lots had been sold by public sale. Several other buildings followed, including a large store.²

Despite losing the county seat, Afton commercial area continued to thrive through the last half of the 19th century.³ The 1886 fire insurance map (Figure 5.) documents the configuration of the Afton downtown, with the county courthouse at its center. The streets on the south (Kansas Street) and east (Webster Street) facing the square were fully developed, with that on the west (Douglas Street) nearly so, while that on the north (Railroad Street) retained some available lots for construction. Occupants of the day were typical of the era including a dry goods store, a grocer, a jeweler, a tailor, a barber, an agricultural implement dealer, and a hardware store. A library and a skating rink were also located around the courthouse square. Two houses remained in the commercial area. The trend of commercial growth continued through 1893, and then remained fairly constant through 1899. The reasons for Afton's commercial growth during the last two decades of the 19th century are unclear because the city experienced a 4% net population loss between 1880 and 1900.

By the time of the survey for the 1893 fire insurance map (Figure 6.), the county seat had moved to Creston and the former courthouse was occupied by the Normal & Business College. The north streetscape was filling in, although multiple buildings stood vacant, and two large buildings were under construction on Webster Street.

By 1913 the commercial area was in a state of decline, with many storefronts standing vacant. The decline evident in the commercial area at that time is reflective of the larger community: between 1900 and 1910, the

¹ *Biographical and Historical Record of Ringgold and Union Counties, Iowa* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing, Company, 1887), 714-716.

² *Ibid.*

³ Joseph Frazier Wall, *The WPA Guide to 1930s Iowa* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1986), 406.

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa.

city experienced a 14% decline in population and between 1910 and 1920 the city experienced a 9% population decrease.⁴

Union County was an active participant in the Good Roads Movement, with the Blue Grass Road (officially registered in 1917) routing east to west through the southern portion of the state and running through Afton along what is now Kansas Street (in front of the Odd Fellows Block). Although no resources directly related to the establishment of the Blue Grass Road through Afton have been identified in this nomination, it is likely the rise in number of travelers typically associated with roadway development impacted the town's commercial area.

Afton remained a small town throughout the 20th century, its loss of county seat designation assuring it would never flourish in the manner typical of a government center. The composition of its commercial area remained relatively unchanged through the 1932 Sanborn fire insurance map (1913 revision). Further, its proximity to Creston stunted commercial development, particularly in the years after the automobile made travel to larger communities for shopping, entertainment, and social activity easy and attractive.

History of the Odd Fellows

While many early members of Odd Fellowship date the order to antiquity, connecting it to entities such as Roman soldiers, Jewish priests, and even to Adam, all of these assertions are false.⁵ The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) was founded in England. Although the date of its organization remains uncertain, the Odd Fellows were certainly well established in England by end of the 18th century with the mission to "improve and elevate the character of mankind."⁶

Like many other aspects of Odd Fellowship, the origin of the name Odd Fellows is a mystery. Numerous theories exist, including the idea that early Odd Fellow groups consisted of people from a wide (i.e. odd) assortment of trades, specifically made up of apprentices who had been disenfranchised from the trade guilds by the master craftsmen. Another assertion is that it was the members' behavior, namely their goals of mutual aid (an uncommon idea in the 18th century) that caused the order's members to be considered "odd."⁷

⁴ Willis Goudy, "Population of Iowa's Incorporated Places: 1850-2010" (Electronic document, <http://www.iowadatabase.org/archive/2011/02/citypop.pdf>, accessed August 01, 2012).

⁵ Grosh, 17-19.

⁶ "Odd Fellows History," *Grand Lodge of Tennessee* (Electronic document, <http://www.ioofn.org/history.htm>, accessed April 26, 2012).

⁷ Ibid.

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa.

The earliest lodge in America was probably New York City's Shakespeare Lodge No. 1 that was established in 1806.⁸ Other start-ups followed soon after. Of the early lodges, however, only one succeeded on a long-term basis, the Washington Lodge, No. 1 of Baltimore. This lodge was granted a charter by the Duke of York's Lodge, making the Washington Lodge the Grand Lodge of both Maryland and the United States, and giving it the authority to grant Charters.⁹

Prior to the American Civil War, most American fraternal orders, including the Odd Fellows, allowed only a select few members into their ranks. This trend began to change after the end of the war, however, as the existing orders began to see the success of several newly founded, and much more open orders, namely the Grand Army of the Republic (G. A. R.) and the Knights of Pythias. As a result, older orders such as the Odd Fellows began to copy the openness of the new groups, creating the opportunity for membership numbers to surge.¹⁰

The post-Civil War period provided the perfect opportunity for the expansion of fraternal organizations in America. At war's end, the scores of troops returning home missed the sense of companionship and support, as well as the regimented lifestyle that came with being in the military. Fraternal organizations, with their basic tenants as social organizations and their somewhat rigid structures and rituals, became important replacements for military life.¹¹

Other aspects of the post-war period also aided in the expansion of fraternal organizations, including Odd Fellowship. The influx of new immigrants into the country created a class of people who were looking for social opportunities in their adopted homes. Thus, the fraternal organizations of the day helped the immigrants by providing them with social opportunities and by giving them the opportunity to learn about American culture. Fraternal organizations also helped their members (immigrants included) gain prestige.¹²

Fraternal organizations had many other social benefits for their members. For example, due to the openness of post-Civil War fraternal organizations, men were able to socialize with men of other social classes. This socialization created the illusion of social mobility for those who were of the lower classes.¹³

⁸ Ibid., and Grosh, 27.

⁹ Grosh, 27-29.

¹⁰ McBride, 9.

¹¹ McBride, 9.

¹² Richard Sisson, Andrew Robert and Lee Cayton, *The American Midwest: an Interpretive Encyclopedia* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 626.

¹³ McBride, 24.

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa.

A significant benefit associated with Odd Fellowship and many other fraternal organizations was insurance. Around the turn of the 20th century, insurance companies were rare, and price, as well as a complex system of underwriting, made basic insurance almost unattainable for the average person.¹⁴ In addition, many families, especially blue-collar families, were at high risk of needing insurance due to the nature of their work. Approximately 60% of industrial workers lived below the poverty line; the average industrial worker was unemployed between 9% and 25% of the year. In addition, the average worker had very little (an average \$75.00) saved in case of emergencies, and the average worker who died left no money to his family.¹⁵ In a time before government aid programs and private insurance, the Odd Fellows and other fraternal organizations filled an important gap in people's financial lives. In addition to formal insurance such as health, life, and burial insurance, members of fraternal organizations like the Odd Fellows provided each other with forms of informal insurance, including helping member's families in times of emergency and providing loans.¹⁶

The height of America's fraternal organizations was short lived. The rapid growth experienced by organizations such as the Odd Fellows following the Civil War was countered by a rapid decline beginning in the 1930's. Two reasons commonly cited for the decline are new types of recreation and changes to the nation's insurance structure.¹⁷

History of the Afton Odd Fellows Block and Lodge

Odd Fellowship in Afton had a relatively early start, with the Afton Lodge, No. 130 being founded on August 21, 1860. The lodge experienced difficult times in its early existence, and the possibility of disbanding was suggested. According to early member B.T. Nix, the lodge was in debt in the beginning, but another Odd Fellow, D. Davenport, settled the debt.¹⁸ These early difficulties seem to follow the national trend experienced by many fraternal organizations, namely the difficulties and limited expansion that were experienced by many organizations during the Civil War.¹⁹ The lodge met in three different buildings before constructing their own hall.²⁰

The Afton Odd Fellows acquired a lot on the east side of the town square in about 1880. In 1883 they traded that lot for one on the south side of the square that was owned by E.F. Sullivan, borrowed \$2,500 and

¹⁴ Glenn, 638-639.

¹⁵ Glenn, 640-641.

¹⁶ Ibid., 638-639.

¹⁷ Ibid., 639.

¹⁸ "Constitution and By-Laws of Afton Lodge, No. 130 Rebekah Lodge, No. 30 Afton Encampment, No. 61" (Afton, IA), 5-7.

¹⁹ McBride, 3.

²⁰ "Constitution and By-Laws of Afton Lodge, No. 130 Rebekah Lodge, No. 30 Afton Encampment, No. 61" (Afton, IA), 5.

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charged a committee with the task of securing bids for the erection of a building. The building contract was let to W.R. Hunter, with the building completed in October of 1883. The new building, which measured 24-feet by 80-feet, had a single storeroom on the first floor, a full basement, and lodge rooms on the second floor.

The 1886 fire insurance map (Figure 5.) indicates that the storefront was occupied by a drugstore with a "hall" located on the second. An interior staircase was located on the east wall. There were no openings on the west wall (a 2-story building was located adjacent on the west). By the time of the survey for the 1893 fire insurance map (Figure 6.), the storefront in the Odd Fellows Block was occupied by a boot and shoe store. A one-story building was recorded at the rear of the lot, adjacent to the alley.

The development and construction during the period between the 1886 and 1893 fire insurance maps suggests growth in Afton, a trend supported by an increase in membership to the Odd Fellows lodge. That growth required more space and the group purchased the two lots west of their building for the purpose of constructing an addition. The lots, owned by Odd Fellow J.W. Cherry, had two wooden buildings located on them. Those buildings burned prior to the start of construction, causing some damage to the 1883 lodge building.

Lodge histories indicate that the 1898 addition to the 1883 building was two-stories measuring 36-feet by 80-feet, with a full basement and two storerooms. The upper story lodge included a 36-foot x 60-foot lodge room with 14-foot ceilings, an anteroom, a candidates' room, a paraphernalia room, an 18 by 20-foot reception room, a 22-foot by 56-foot dining room, and a large kitchen with lockers for the necessary cookware.²¹

The 1898 addition to the 1883 building created a single, two-story, three-bay block (Figure 10.). The visual unity was created on the façade through consistency of style, materials, storefront scale, and notation of the name "Odd Fellows" on both cornices. Function unity was created on the interior through the physical connection of interior spaces, particularly on the second story where a fire door was located to provide passage between the anteroom located in the original building and the paraphernalia room, located in the addition. Both of those spaces were directly related to the function of the entire upper story and their interconnection was critical to the activities of the Odd Fellow lodge. Further, connection of the anteroom and the paraphernalia room facilitated circulation to other rooms including the dining room, the candidates' room, and the lodge room (Figures 3. and 4.).

At the turn of the 20th century, Iowa's Odd Fellows held a strong foothold in the State. With a total membership of 35,748, Iowa had the seventh highest number of Odd Fellows in the country, representing

²¹ "Constitution and By-Laws of Afton Lodge, No. 130 Rebekah Lodge, No. 30 Afton Encampment, No. 61" (Afton, IA), 5-7.

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around 4.7% of the 755,508 Odd Fellows members across the nation. In 1899, the Odd Fellows were also the third largest fraternal organization in Iowa.²²

Afton's Odd Fellows helped their community in a variety of ways. They paved 600 square feet of Afton's sidewalks and contributed \$100 towards the \$1000 construction of a sidewalk connecting the city to the cemetery. In addition, they assembled a library available to all Odd Fellow and Rebekah members.²³

Two other fraternal organizations utilized the Odd Fellows Block in Afton, at least for a time. The Daughters of Rebekah was the woman's branch of the Odd Fellows. Created in Baltimore in 1851, the order was originally an "honorary degree" which could be given only to wives and daughters of Odd Fellows members. In 1868, the system of honorary degrees was replaced with a lodge system, similar to that of the Odd Fellows. Under this system, women could elect officers, but all meetings had to be overseen by men. This requirement was dropped around the end of the 19th century.²⁴

Afton's Daughters of Rebekah, Ivy Lodge, No. 39 was founded in January of 1883 and had around sixty members. The lodge did well in the early years but began to struggle as many original members moved or passed away. Due to declining membership, the lodge disbanded in 1892, only to organize again in 1896 under the same name.²⁵

The Knights of Pythias also utilized the Odd Fellows Block in Afton. The Knights of Pythias, which originated during the later stages of the American Civil War, was founded by a Union soldier named Justus Rathbone in 1864.²⁶ Like the Odd Fellows, the Knights of Pythias was designed to help "promote friendship" and "to relieve suffering." The group's name came from the legend of Damon and Pythias, a Greek story about two friends who were willing to die for each other. The Knights' ideology centers on the principles of "Friendship, Charity, and Benevolence."²⁷

The decline of the Odd Fellows in Afton is not well documented. According to the current property owner, declining membership forced the Afton Odd Fellows to consolidate with the Odd Fellows lodge in Creston in

²² Ibid., 114.

²³ "Constitution and By-Laws of Afton Lodge, No. 130 Rebekah Lodge, No. 30 Afton Encampment, No. 61" (Afton, IA), 7.

²⁴ Roberta Lee, "Our Rebekah History," *Rebekah Assembly of Idaho* (Electronic document, <http://www.rebekahsofidaho.org/history.htm>, accessed April 26, 2012).

²⁵ "Constitution and By-Laws of Afton Lodge, No. 130 Ivy Rebekah Lodge, No. 39 Afton Encampment, No. 6," (Afton, IA), 41.

²⁶ McBride, 7-8.

²⁷ "History of the Knights of Pythias," *Supreme Lodge Knights of Pythias* (Electronic document, <http://www.pythias.org/about/pythstory.html>, accessed August 16, 2012).

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or around 1979. The organization owned the building, however, until 1991 when it was sold to a private interest.

Afton Annual Population²⁸	
1870	961
1880	1231
1890	1045
1900	1178
1910	1014
1920	926
1930	1013
1940	987
1950	936
1960	773
1970	823
1980	985
1990	953
2000	917
2010	845

Architecture of the Odd Fellows Block

“Even if it was no more than a dozen facing structures across a wide space, Main Street was a magnet for human activity. Residential, religious, civic, educational, reaction, commercial and ceremonial use took place side by side.”²⁹

Rifkind’s statement certainly applies to Afton’s Main Street, centered around the courthouse square, where a wide variety of activities utilized its buildings – the Odd Fellow Block, being a prime example. Today the buildings of the downtown accommodate a cross-section of functions and represent a variety of architectural

²⁸ Willis Goudy, “Population of Iowa’s Incorporated Places: 1850-2010” (Electronic document, <http://www.iowadatabase.org/archive/2011/02/citypop.pdf>, accessed 08/01/2012).

²⁹ Carole Rifkind, *Main Street: The Face of Urban America* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 63.

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styles, which, on the whole, follow the relatively predictable evolution of Iowa's historic commercial districts.

The Odd Fellows Block exemplifies the Italianate style applied to commercial buildings; the Italianate style being a broad term applied to a variety of building types. The style in America dates to the 1840s through the 1890s, with Iowa examples falling into the latter years of that period (c.1870-1890s).³⁰

The Commercial Italianate is characterized by the use of tall and narrow upper story windows with ornate hoods or window surrounds, a prominent cornice with elaborate details, a highly decorative storefront cornice capping the storefronts, and equally ornate structural elements in the storefront (e.g. cast columns). With storefronts utilizing cast iron pilasters framing the large expanses of display windows and a bracketed storefront cornice complete with a variety of decorative embellishment; upper story windows that are tall and narrow in form with decorative stone surrounds; and an elaborate metal cornice capping the façade. Both the 1883 building and the 1898 addition epitomize the Commercial Italianate.

Commercial buildings dating to the 19th-century appear in a number of configurations, with most falling in the categories of a common brick-fronted store or an Italianate, which utilized metal elements. Buildings were commonly single-fronted, with later additions created in response to commercial success or, in the case of the Odd Fellows Block, a need for addition space unrelated to commerce. When additions were made to existing buildings, each unit generally retained its commercial autonomy, but shared stylistic elements and a firewall.³¹

The interior of a single-fronted store was dictated by the building's long, narrow shape, with partitions and store furniture used to define the floor plan and to provide display, storage, or office space specific to the occupant. Lighting of the long and narrow interiors was a challenge first met by the introduction of transom lights and later by electric lighting.

In the case of the Odd Fellows Block, the storefronts retain three, autonomous interior spaces - each of the three being long and narrow, and each relying on the large storefront windows and transoms to provide natural light. Of course, the advent of electric lighting did much to illuminate the once-dark recesses of these storefront interiors.

By the mid-1880s the Afton commercial area, which grew up along the perimeter of what was historically the courthouse square was populated by a mix of one and two story commercial buildings. At that time, the streetscapes were in various stages of development with some vacant lots remaining. However, the

³⁰ Cyril Harris, *American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), 184.

³¹ Gottfried and Jennings, 234.

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streetscape on the south side of the square was fully developed by 1886, with the original section of the Odd Fellows Block situated amid a line of one and two story buildings. In 1898, with the Odd Fellows Block addition in place, the building stood within a streetscape that included two other block buildings and an adjoining two-story building – all of which utilized the Italianate in their facades (Figure 9.). Although the south streetscape retains the buildings from that period, all have seen significant alteration of facades, with particular impact to the historic storefronts.

It has been said that the history of commercial building design is about both the original construction of the buildings along a Main Street or surrounding a courthouse square and the subsequent alterations made to the original design in response to changing functions and taste.³² Casual observation of most commercial areas in Iowa communities of all sizes supports that assertion. However, there are exceptions to that prevailing trend and the study of such a building provides the increasingly rare opportunity to examine original design. Although the Odd Fellows Block is not unusual in its use of the Commercial Italianate style – the style being widely utilized in Iowa’s downtown commercial areas, including in Afton where three other buildings in the style are located on the same block – the retention of a high level of historic integrity related to design, materials, and workmanship stand it as a well-preserved (and clearly Afton’s best-preserved example) of the Commercial Italianate.

³² Gottfried and Jennings, 234.

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RELEVANT CULTURAL RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

Prior to the preparation of this National Register of Historic Places nomination, the Odd Fellows Block in Afton, Iowa was the subject of an intensive level survey and evaluation, made possible by a TAN (Technical Advisory Network) grant through the HRDP grant program administered by Iowa State Historic Preservation Office. The property was determined by the Iowa SHPO to be eligible for listing on the National Register at that time.

At the time of the preparation of this nomination, the town of Afton has no resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

POTENTIAL FOR HISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY

The potential for historical archaeology was not assessed as part of the present National Register nomination. The relatively undisturbed condition of the site's rear (from the south wall to the alley) may suggest the potential for historic archaeology. As a result, any significant excavation and/or grading should take into consideration the possibility that archaeological and/or sub-grade historical resources may remain.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This National Register nomination utilizes an array of reference resources in an attempt to create a full picture of the architectural significance and historical associations of the Odd Fellows Block in Afton, Iowa. Previous National Register nominations of Iowa's Odd Fellows Halls have focused the case for significance on the architecture of the building that housed the organization. While the nomination of the Afton resource addresses the significance of the architecture, a particular effort was made to develop an understanding of the importance of the Odd Fellows organization and membership in the history of Iowa's social history. To that end, contextual research was directed at the establishment of the organization and its rise in Iowa's small towns. Getting at specifics of membership in Afton proved challenging, but considerable effort was made to provide a comparative analysis that would begin to shed some light on the composition of the Odd Fellows assemblies, the role of the group in Iowa community's, and its impact on a community during its existence. This nomination only begins to shed light on these issues.

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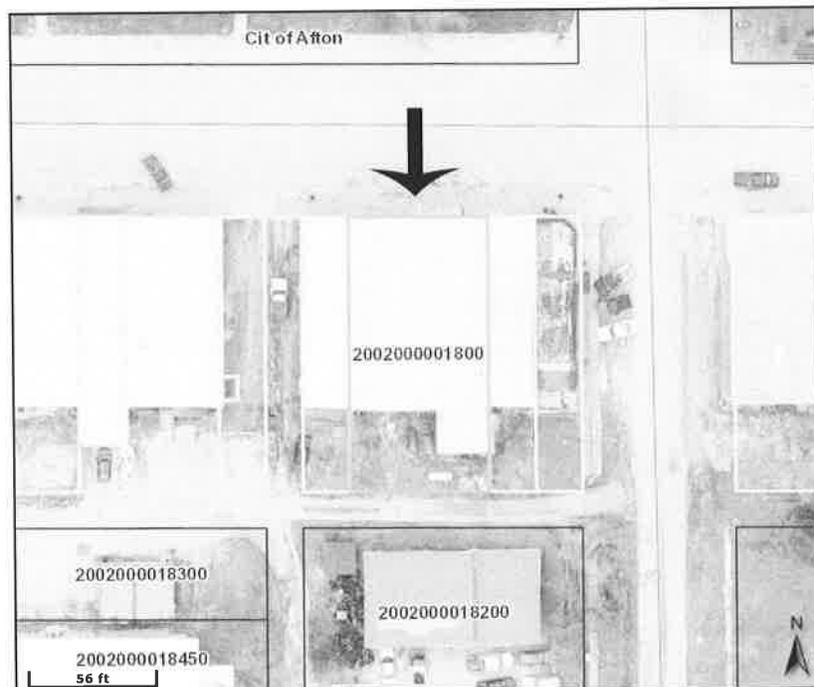
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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

ORIGINAL PLAT, LOT 17 & E-2 LOT 18



(MAP SOURCE: www.beacon.schneidercorp.com. Accessed October 10, 2011)

The location of the resource is indicated by the arrow and marked as parcel 2002000001800.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the building itself and the yard stretching directly south of the building to the public alley.

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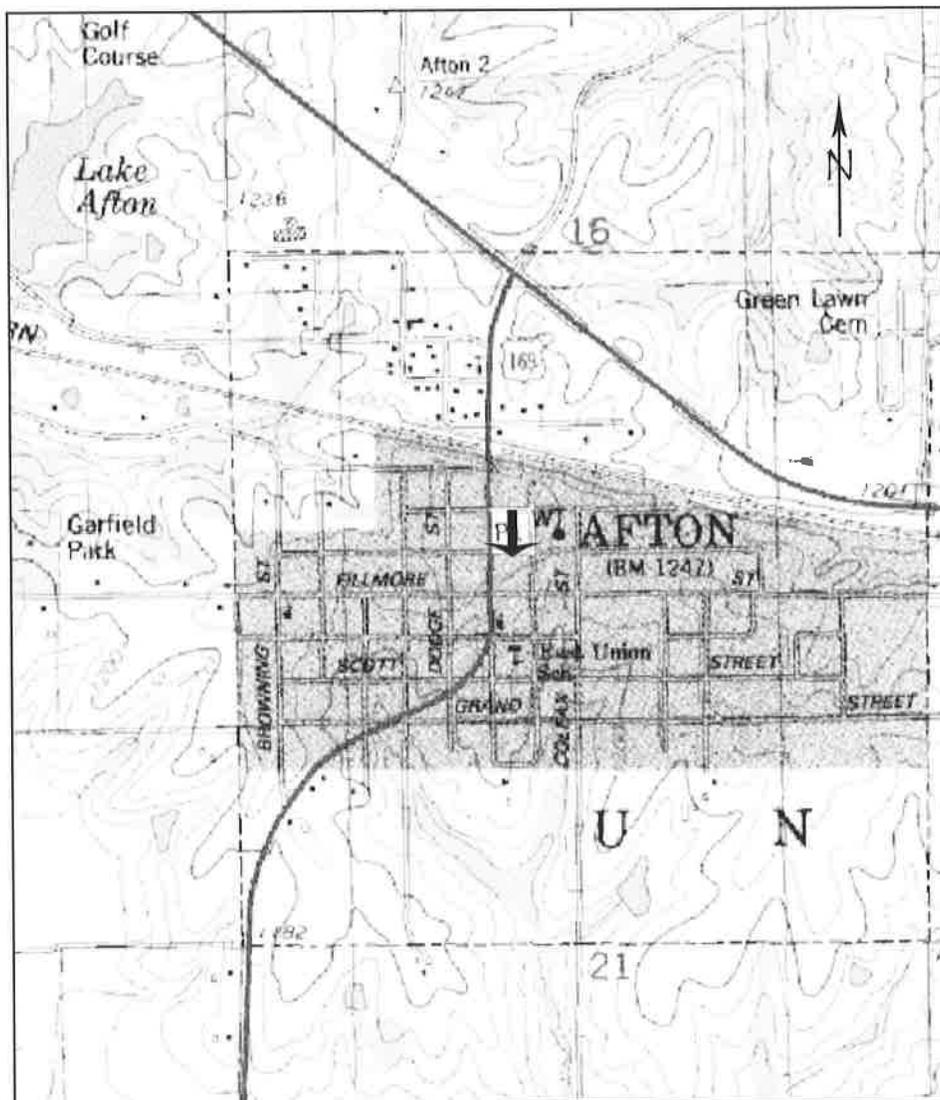
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Figure 1. USGS 7.5 MINUTE TOPOGRAPHIC MAP – AFTON (1983)



(SOURCE: <http://www.trails.com>. Accessed October 10, 2011.)

The location of the Odd Fellows Block is indicated.

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Figure 2. AERIAL MAP – 2011



(Map Source: <http://mapquest.com>. Accessed October 10, 2011.)

The location of the Odd Fellows Block is indicated. The courthouse was formerly located on the block immediately north of the Odd Fellows.

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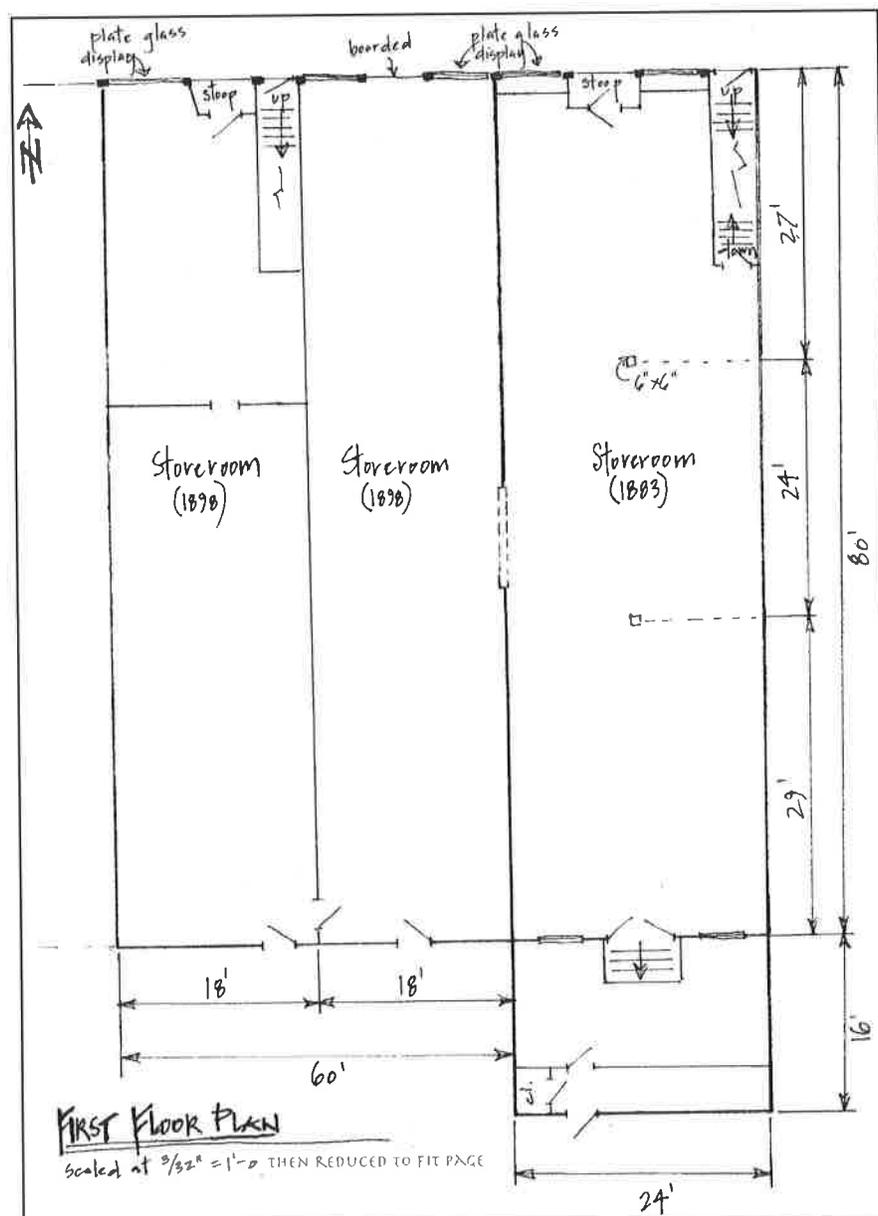
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Figure 3. FIRST FLOOR PLAN – 2013



(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting, May 2013.)

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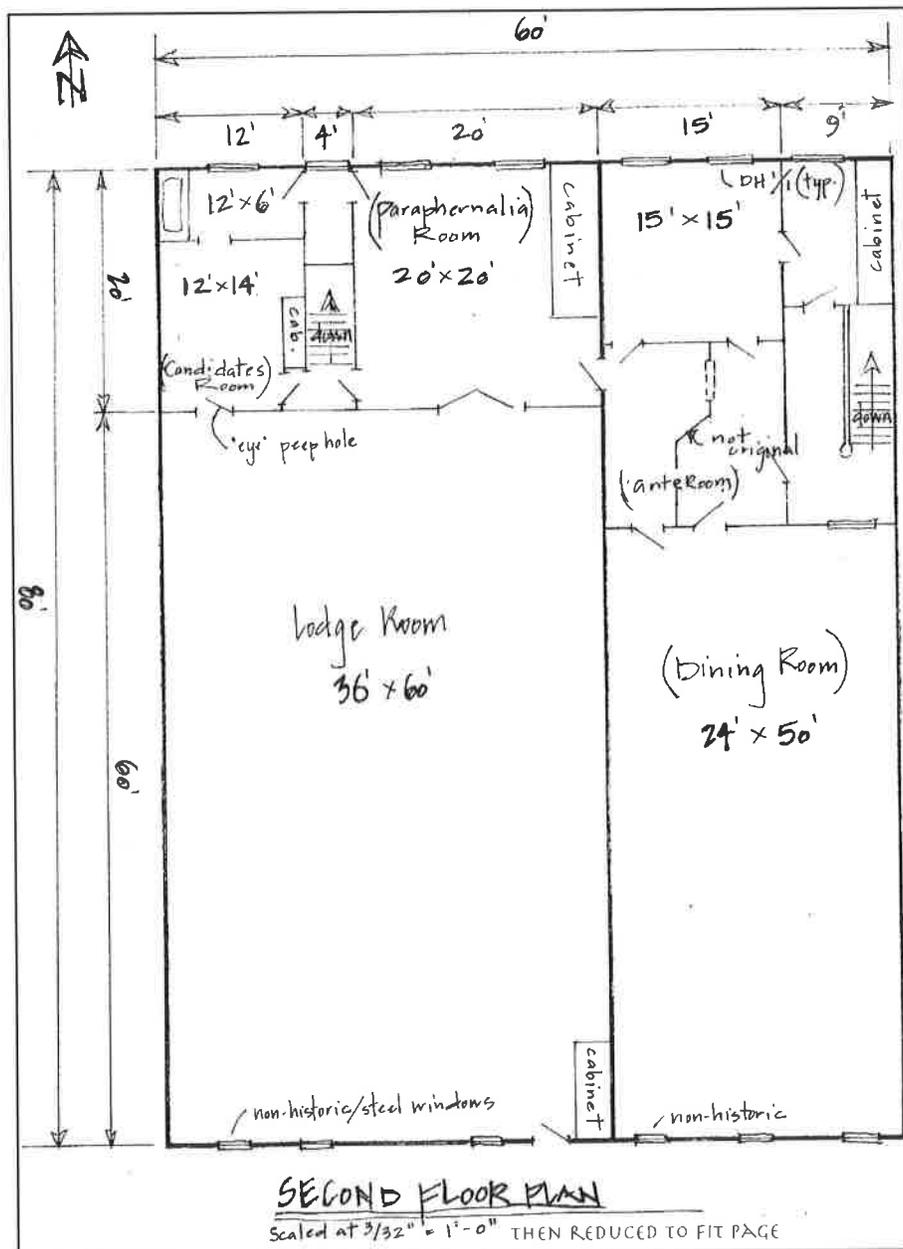
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Figure 4. SECOND FLOOR PLAN – 2013



(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting, May 2013.)

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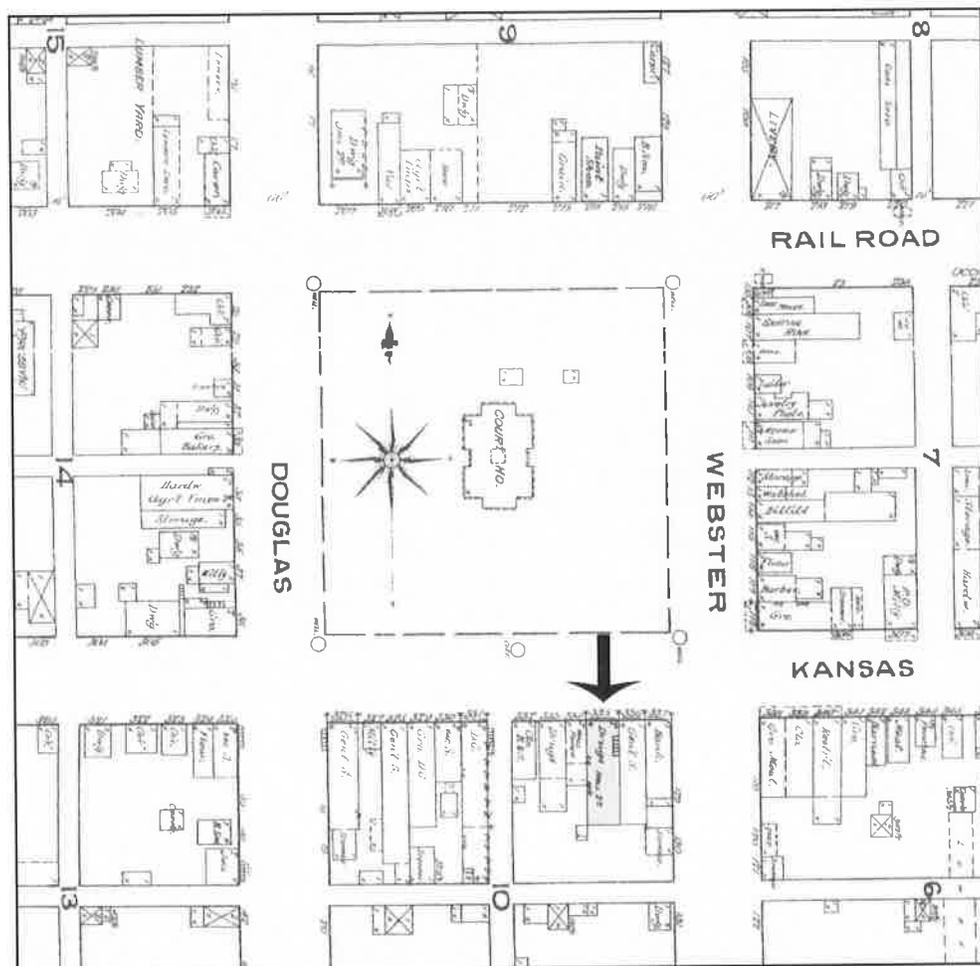
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Figure 5. FIRE INSURANCE MAP – 1886



(SOURCE: <https://catalog/cbpl.lib.ia.us/research/>. Accessed 09/15/2011.)

The location of the original section (1883) of the Odd Fellows Block is indicated.
In 1886 the building's storefront was occupied by a drugstore.

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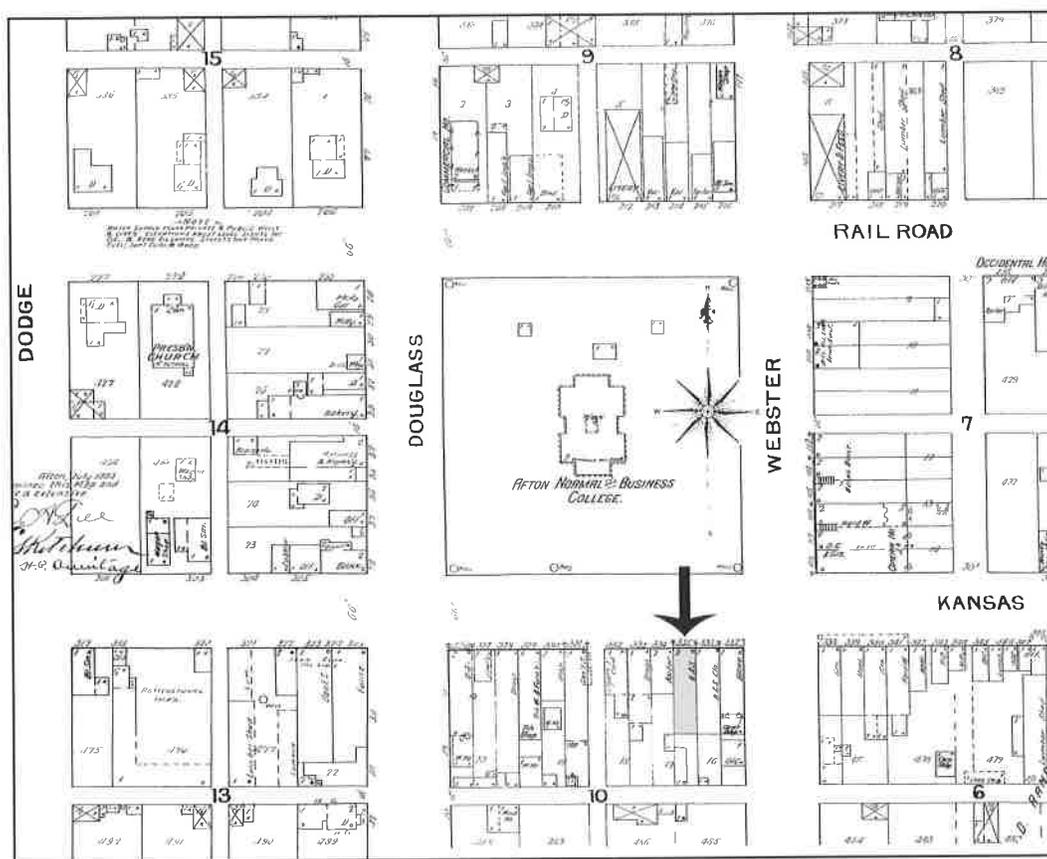
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Figure 6. FIRE INSURANCE MAP – 1893



(SOURCE: <https://catalog/cbpl.lib.ia.us/research/>. Accessed 09/15/2011.)

The location of the original section (1883) of the Odd Fellows Block is indicated. In 1893 the building's storefront was occupied by a boot and shoe store.

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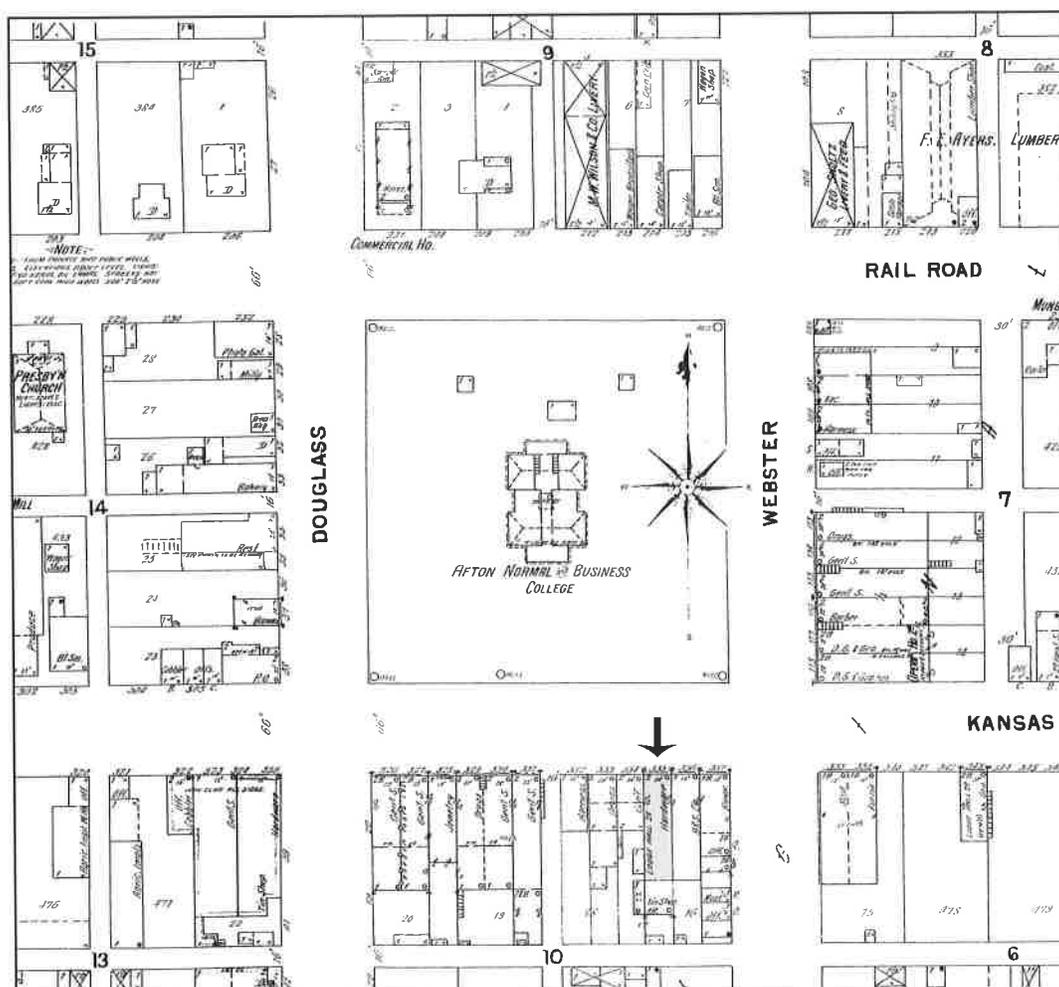
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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa

Figure 7. FIRE INSURANCE MAP – 1899



(SOURCE: <https://catalog/cbpl.lib.ia.us/research/>. Accessed 09/15/2011.)

The location of the original section of the Odd Fellows Block is indicated. In that year the building's storefront was occupied by a hardware store. In contradiction with the written history and the historic image which includes the building's cornice noting the building date as 1898, the two-bay, west addition does not appear on the 1899 fire insurance map.

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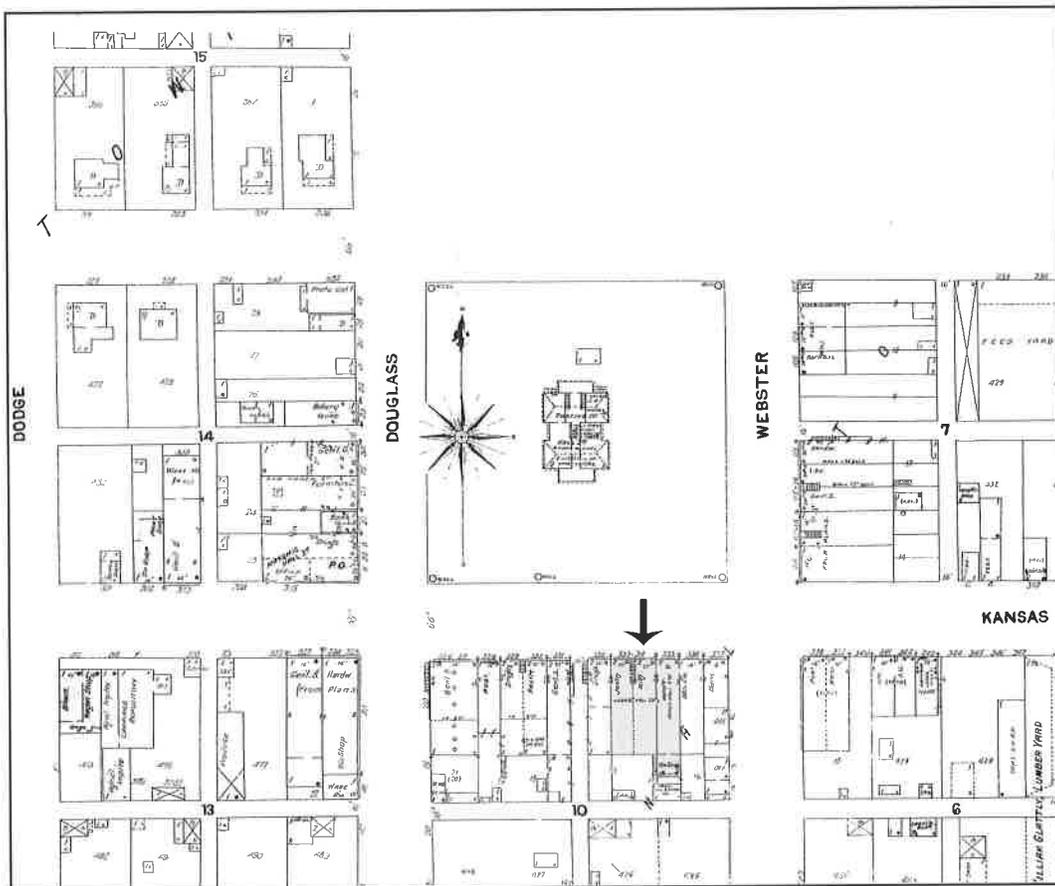
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Figure 8. FIRE INSURANCE MAP – 1907



(SOURCE: <https://catalog/cbpl.lib.ia.us/research/>. Accessed 09/15/2011.)

The 1898 addition to the original building first appears on the 1907 fire insurance map (indicated). In that year the original storeroom (retail space) is occupied by a hardware store, the center storeroom by a milliner, and the east storeroom by a jeweler. The upper story housed the Odd Fellows lodge.

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa

Figure 9. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca.1900



(SOURCE: Union County Historical Society.)

View of the south side of the square, looking to the southeast with the Odd Fellows Block near the far end of the block and identified by the raised ornamentation of its cornice.

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa

Figure 10. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca.1900



ODD FELLOWS BLOCK, AFTON, IOWA

(SOURCE: *Constitutions and By-Laws of Afton Lodge, No. 130*. Property of the Union County Historical Society.)

This historic image documents the Odd Fellows Block shortly after the 1898 construction of the addition, which is seen here at right and marked by the I.O.O.F and the 1898 date seen in the cornice. The original 1883 building is at left, its occupant identified on the upper wall surface.

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Figure 11. HISTORIC IMAGE – 1954



(SOURCE: *Afton Centennial Book*, 1954. Union County Historical Society.)

Although the raised, center section of the 1898 addition's cornice (right) had been removed by 1954, that on the original building remained intact.

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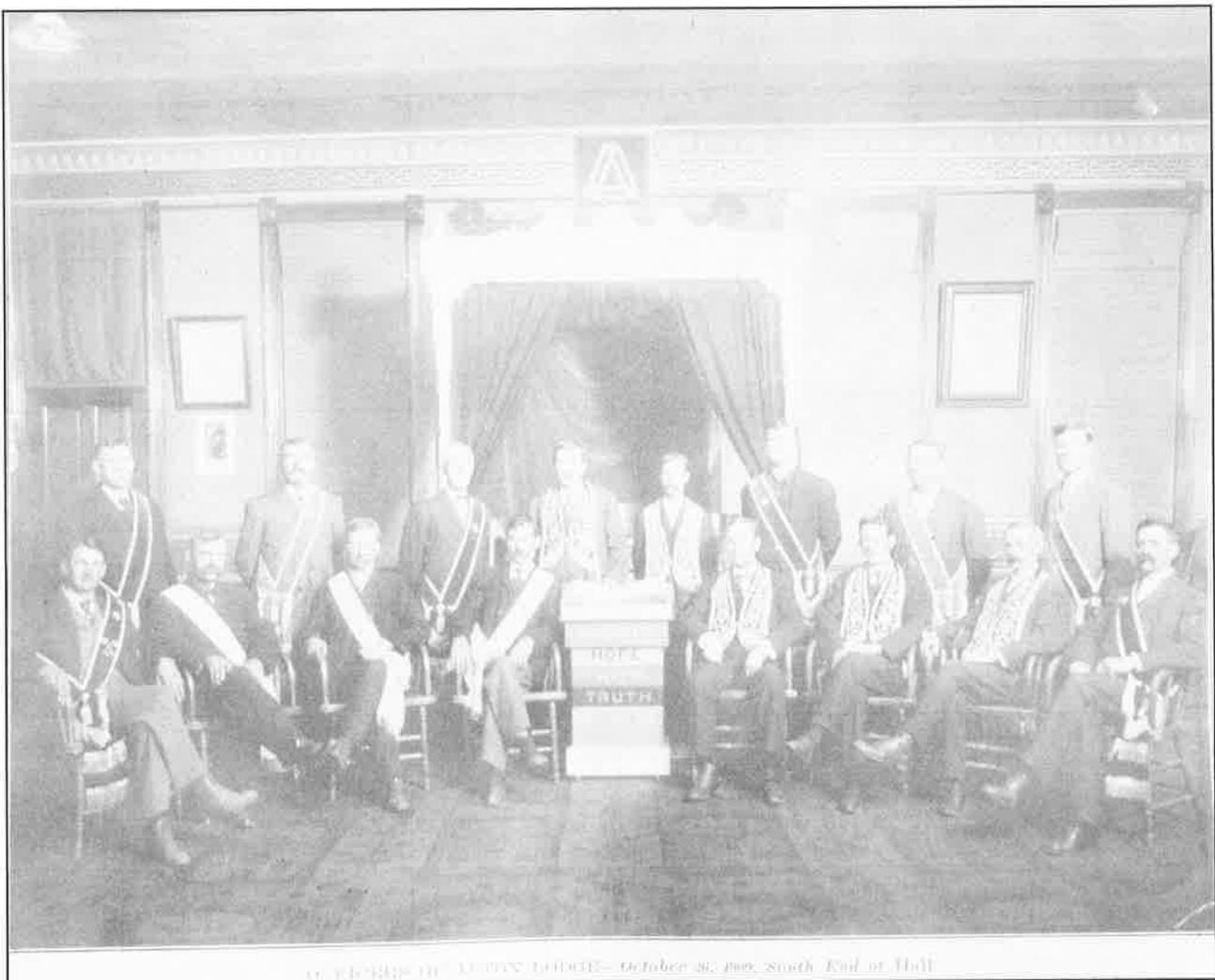
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Figure 12. HISTORIC IMAGE – Interior - 1909



(SOURCE: *Constitutions and By-Laws of Afton Lodge, No. 130*. Property of the Union County Historical Society.)

This 1909 image documents the officers of the Afton Lodge No. 130 seated at the south end of the meeting hall. The image records the historic appearance of window and door placement, wood trim, lighting fixture, and ceremonial canopy. The image also provides documentation of the historic carpet (laid over the existing wood flooring) and the appearance of the crown molding, which appears to be stenciling on the upper wall plane just beneath the cornice of the pressed tin ceiling, which is intact.

United States Department of the Interior
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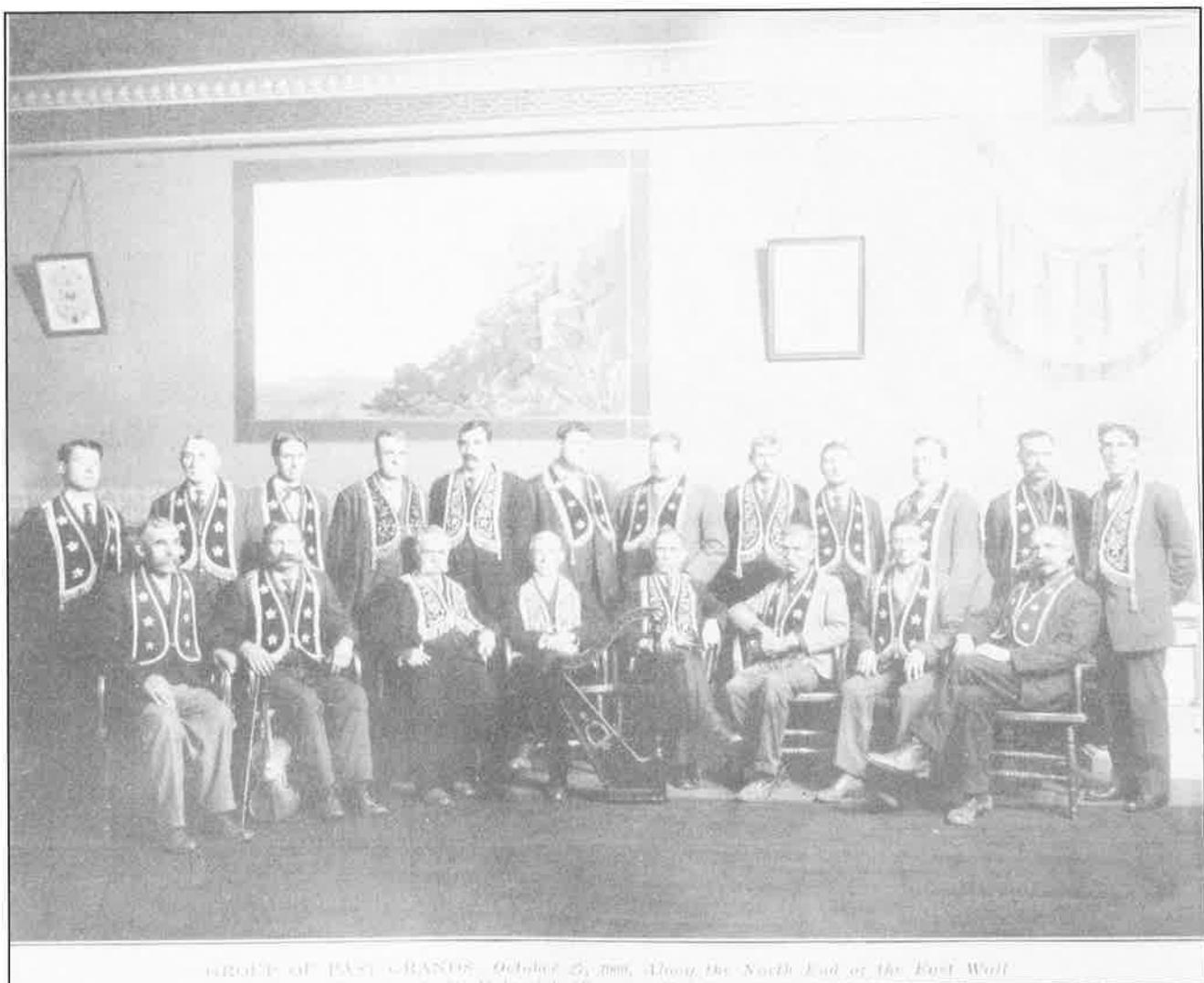
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa

Figure 13. HISTORIC IMAGE – Interior - 1909



(SOURCE: *Constitutions and By-Laws of Afton Lodge, No. 130*. Property of the Union County Historical Society.)

This group picture captures the north end of the meeting hall's east wall. Note that the large, framed landscape, as well as the draped fabric at right, appear to be trompe l'oeil paintings (painted on the wall to appear like real, 3-dimensional objects).

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa

Figure 14. HISTORIC IMAGE – Interior - 1909



(SOURCE: *Constitutions and By-Laws of Afton Lodge, No. 130*. Property of the Union County Historical Society.)

This image's text "south half of the dining hall" indicates this space was adjacent to the meeting hall, placing it in the original building, at the rear (south) of that portion of the 1883 building.

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Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa.

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Odd Fellows Block
175 E. Kansas Street
Afton, Iowa
Union County, Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Boone, IA
October 6, 2011

4 x 6" images printed on Canon Premium Photo Paper using Canon Chromalife 100+ ink
CD-ROM on file with property owner and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

0001. Context: View looking southeast along Douglas toward E. Kansas Street.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0001.tif
0002. Context: View looking northwest along Douglas from the Odd Fellows Block, with the former
courthouse site (now city park) at right.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0002.tif
0003. Context: View of the north side of E. Kansas Street showing the commercial streetscape.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0003.tif
0004. Exterior: View of the façade (north) of the Odd Fellows Block, looking southwest.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0004.tif
0005. Exterior: View of the rear (south) elevation, looking northeast.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0005.tif
0006. Exterior: View of the original (1883) building façade, looking south.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0006.tif
0007. Exterior: View of the addition (1898) façade, looking south.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0007.tif
0008. Exterior: View of the original (1883) upper façade.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0008.tif
0009. Interior: Original (1883) first floor storeroom, looking south.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0009.tif
0010. Interior: Original (1883) first floor storeroom, looking north.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0010.tif

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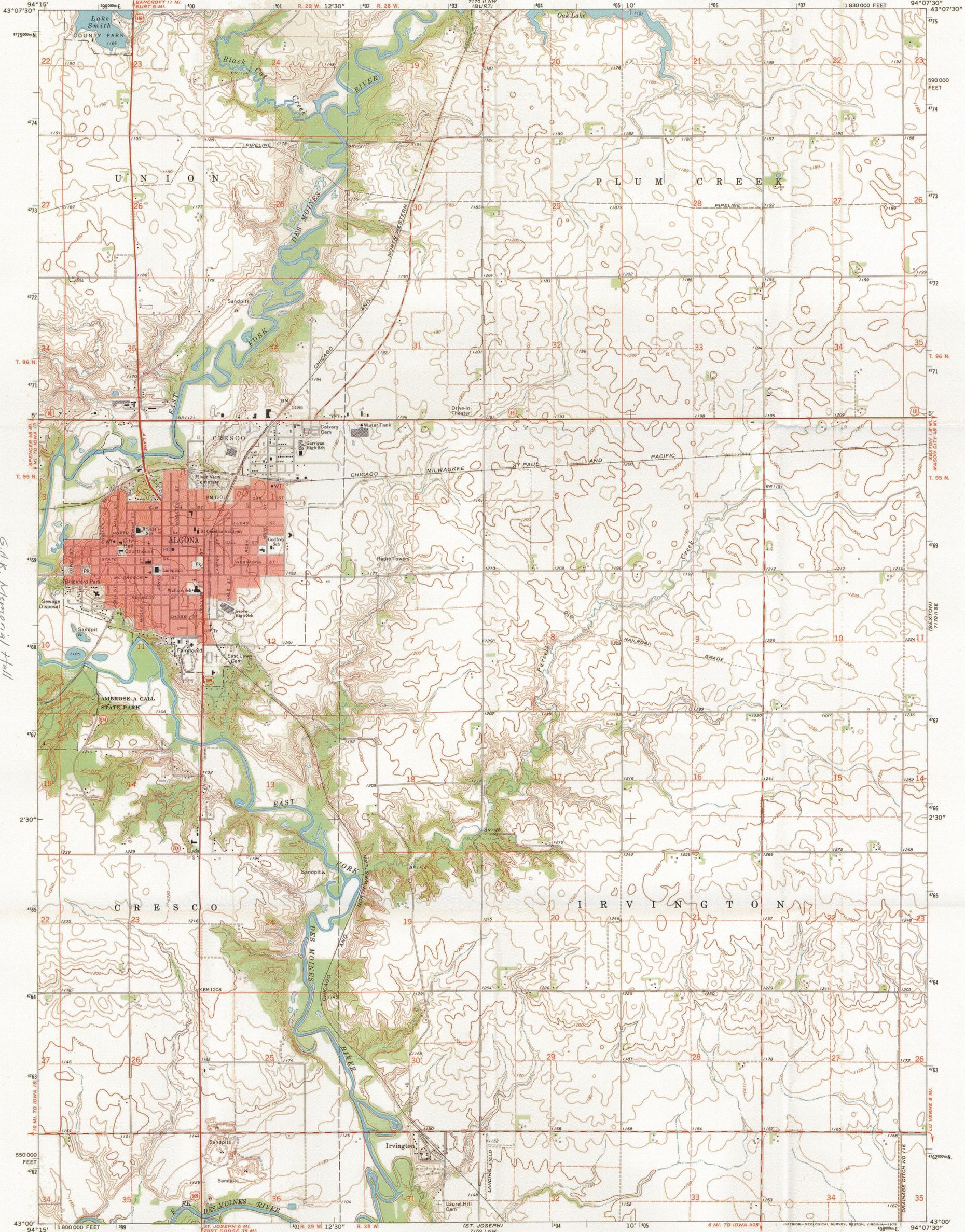
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number _____ Photographs _____ Page 36

CFN-259-1116

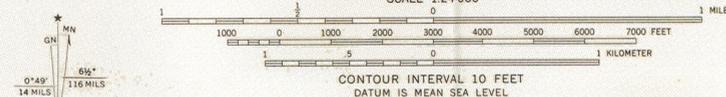
Odd Fellows Block, Union County, Iowa.

- 0011. Interior: 1898 addition, west first floor storeroom, looking north.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0011.tif
- 0012. Interior: Second floor hallway (in original building), showing intact stenciling, doors with transoms, and trim.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0012.tif
- 0013. Interior: Second floor original building, south room (historic dining room), looking northwest.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0013.tif
- 0014. Interior: Second floor addition, north room (historic paraphernalia room), looking northwest.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0014.tif
- 0015. Interior: Second floor addition, lodge room, looking northeast.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0015.tif
- 0016. Interior Detail: Second floor, lodge room, pressed metal ceiling with embossed "F L T" in rings.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0016.tif
- 0017. Interior: Second floor addition, paraphernalia room, stenciling.
IA_Union_OddFellowsBlock_0017.tif



*S.H.R. Memorial Hall
Algona, Kossoth County, IA
UTM References:
15 392935 E 4769110 N*

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1972. Field checked 1972
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Iowa coordinate
system, north zone (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue. 1927 North American datum
Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, hard surface ——— Light-duty road, hard or improved surface ———
Secondary highway, hard surface ——— Unimproved road ———
Interstate Route ——— U. S. Route ——— State Route ———

USGS HISTORICAL
MAP ARCHIVES
AUG 4 1995
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ALGONA, IOWA
N4300—W9407.5/7.5
1972
AMS 7170 II SW—SERIES V876

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NCE

SPEED
LIMIT
20

STOP



I.O.O.F

BLEND

GRASS

ROAD

HARRIS APARTMENTS

Pavell DRUGS



100.F

BLUE
GRASS
ROAD

El Panadero
RESTAURANT & CAFE

1038

KONNE'S
BERRY BREAD
FOR DELIVERY

Handicap Accessible Sign





I.O.O.F

BLUE

GRASS

ROAD

Lite

Budweiser
OPEN





I.O.O.F.

GRASS

ROAD

Lite

Budweiser

OPEN

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FLAS
IRES

BLUEGRASS

Bill THE FAMOUS



BLUEGRASS RIVER

← OMAHA 104
← SEATTLE 1796
CHICAGO 394 →
MT. PISGAH 10 →

roud of It

MIST

ALAS TIRES













