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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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name Bowery Street Grocery Store

Other names/site number Helmer's Grocery; New Pioneer Food Cooperative

### 2. Location

street & number 518 E. Bowery Street n/a not for publication

city of town Iowa City n/a vicinity

State Iowa code IA county Johnson code 103 zip code 52240

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

   national    statewide   x local

Steve King  
Signature of certifying official  
**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA**

4 FEB 2014  
Date

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

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:)  
Edson H. Beal Signature of the Keeper  
4-7-14 Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Private

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
		buildings
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**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/specialty store**

**DOMESTIC: single dwelling**

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**VACANT/work in progress**

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Other: false front**

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: **WOOD**

walls: **STUCCO**

roof: **METAL**

other: **WOOD: weatherboard**

**Narrative Description**

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

**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.

**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 grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

**COMMERCE**

**Period of Significance**

**ca. 1897-1963**

**Significant Dates**

**ca. 1897**

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

**N/A**

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

**Unknown**

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance)

**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: **State Historical Society of Iowa**

**Bowery Street Grocery Store**

Name of Property

**Johnson County, Iowa**

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 15 622522 4612428  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Mary Bennett

organization \_\_\_\_\_

date December 31, 2013

street & number 1107 Muscatine Avenue

telephone 319-354-2315

city or town Iowa City

state IA

zip code 52240

e-mail Mary-Bennett@uiowa.edu

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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 ████████████████████

street & number ██████████████

telephone ██████████

city or town ██████████

state ██

zip code ██████

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Bowery Street Grocery Store

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## 7. Description

The property at 518 East Bowery Street on Lot 15, Block 6 of Lyon's Second Addition, in Iowa City, Iowa is a representative survivor of small specialty shops from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Known for eighty years as a neighborhood grocery store, this remnant of local history is often referred to as the Bowery Street Grocery. The simple, utilitarian style of the building was suited to commercial purposes, and also had the capacity to serve as a dwelling for the owners or store operators over the years. Constructed in a vernacular style with balloon framing and a steeply pitched gable roof, the rectangular shop originally measured 18' wide by 30' deep. The placement of the building close to the sidewalk, street, and alley indicates it was intended to function as a storefront from the beginning. As noted by architectural historian Marlin Ingalls, the pitch of the roof at 518 E. Bowery "is very steep and matches the two houses to its west, which were possibly built in the mid to late 1860s."<sup>1</sup> The semi-circular false façade rising above the south front, masks the street-facing gable and provides space for signage to attract customers.

The one-and-one-half-story building has a one-story addition on the back of the building on the north side, measuring 18' wide by 10' deep. The addition has a shed roof, sloping downward towards the north. A non-extant gable-roofed shed (perhaps used as warehouse space or as a horse barn) stood on the northeast corner of the lot. The 1899 Sanborn fire insurance map shows the footprint of the store with the addition and the shed on the north, while the 1912 Sanborn map shows another small shed linking the buildings.<sup>2</sup> This configuration of buildings on the narrow lot remained the same from 1912 until the 1980s.<sup>3</sup>

Built at ground level without a basement, an access hole allowed Ingalls to view and describe the building's foundation: Supporting the flooring are the floor joists, which measured 9½" x 1¾". The joist appear to be on 24" centers and run from joist pockets in the outside sill beams to the center of the building where an approximately 6" x 6" beam runs at a right angle to the floor joists. This beam appears to sit atop a post set vertically into the ground. Whether the joist spans the whole distance from wall to wall or has overlapping ends is unknown. The sill beams measured 7" x 9½". This is consistent with the height of the floor joists."<sup>4</sup>

**South side:** The architectural integrity of the false front on the south side has been preserved as the most prominent feature facing the street, reaching the height of 19' 4" at the center top.

<sup>1</sup> Ingalls, Marlin R. 2013. "Wood, Plaster, and Nail Analysis the 518 E. Bowery St., Iowa City, Iowa," T.A.N. Report submitted to State Historical Society of Iowa, March 2013, Page 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Insurance Maps of Iowa City, Iowa*. 1899, 1906, 1912, 1920, 1926, 1933, 1933-1970. New York: The Sanborn Map Company.

<sup>3</sup> Michelle L. Wiegand. Notes from conversation with Richard D. Hugill, Iowa City, Iowa, May 11, 2012. See also Figures 1 and 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ingalls, Page 2.

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Two large display windows face the street, with a southern exposure bringing bright light into the interior. A high ceiling also reflects light towards the back of the store interior. Originally, the framed windows on either side of the front door, each approximately 6' wide by 7' high, were divided into smaller panes of glass. In the early 1980s, the glass was replaced with acrylic windows, and later the windows had panels of stained glass and frosted glass.

An etched glass panel with the address, 518 Bowery, was placed in the lantern window over the front door. At an earlier time, a window air conditioner occupied the transom space above the door (Figure 10). The front door, with manufactured leaded glass panels, will be replaced as it diminishes the historical integrity of the building's front. The renovation underway restores the appearance of the building to the period of significance, ca. 1897-1963.

**East side:** The only other window bringing light directly into the front part of the building is a 32" wide transom window, with two panes, over the door on the east wall leading to the alley. A wood door is visible from the exterior of the building, but access has been blocked off and the interior wall is covered with drywall and wainscoting. This resulted in a re-alignment of the bottom of the staircase. Originally designed to lead directly out the side door to the alley, the base of the stairs is now at a 90-degree angle to the east wall. In former times, the staircase offered a private entrance to the upstairs when it served as a rental unit or one-half of a duplex. Along the east wall of the addition, another door once existed but the opening has been closed off for years. An historically appropriate door will be visible from the exterior after renovation, but it will be closed off due to safety considerations.

**West side:** The west side of the building features one window as part of the addition: a 36" wide rectangular window, with companion storm window, both of which appear to be part of the original building fabric. With three-over-three glass panes, the muntins have a cross section characteristic that may match window millwork dating from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The muntin cross section is characteristically thin and tall when compared with later examples. This element serves as a key to dating the original building materials.

**North side:** The narrow, wood weatherboard siding on the north end of the building is visible on the exterior of the second story, and on the south interior wall of the addition — suggesting that the first version of the building was clad in wood siding, and the addition may have been an open porch area at the back of the store before it was enclosed prior to 1899. As Ingalls observed, "Several reconstructions have taken place over the years with the most obvious being the north addition, which used later lumber, hardward, and plaster. The interior north wall of the building was replastered at that time."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Page 1.

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The north wall of the addition has two windows flanking the door. The larger one, 60" wide but divided into smaller panes, slides on a track with the sashes hanging horizontally, indicating it was possibly a former upstairs window that was reused. The other north window is 32" wide, a rectangle shape similar to the window on the west wall, with three-over-three glass panes. A modern 36" wide door on the north wall of the addition provides access to the open area between the store and the garage. This door will be replaced with a more historically accurate door. Wooden fencing once enclosed a patio area on the west and east sides, with a gate opening towards the west but the fencing was removed in April 2013 to make room for parking.

**Exterior Appearance:** Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, three sides of the exterior of the store were covered in concrete stucco, but probably not before 1920, as the earlier fire maps did indicate other buildings where stucco also appears — on a house two doors down as well as on houses on nearby Johnson Street. A plat map of the property, drawn in 1922 as part of the abstract of title, identifies the concrete stucco on the sketch, as well as a concrete pad in front of the building.<sup>6</sup>

A tin roof with seams protects the main building, as do metal gutters and downspouts. The defining architectural feature of the building, the false storefront, provides clues as to the age of the building and illustrates a prototypical method of construction for mid-19<sup>th</sup> century small scale retail shops. The arch-shaped backside, not visible from the street, is covered with wood weatherboard siding and metal flashing where it joins the roof. Metal flashing also appears at the base of the chimney where the brickwork meets the roof. Richard Hugill, who maintained the building in the 1980s, replaced the shed-style roof on the addition with a recycled metal roof from an old barn in Muscatine County.<sup>7</sup>

The narrow land parcel is 21' wide by 70' deep and the building, measuring 18' by 40', occupies most of that space. Sheds and outbuildings were commonly situated at the edges of lots, as shown on the fire insurance maps. A frame shed with a gable roof, and heavy wooden barn-like door, once occupied the north end of the lot. Former owners report that the space between the back of the grocery store and the shed was covered with a canopy or roof that extended north to connect the main building to the shed. A photograph from 1982 (Figure 2) documents how the property looked along the alley for many decades before the old sheds and rotted wood canopy were torn down by owner Richard Hugill.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Abstract of Title to East 21 ft. of South 70 ft. of Lot 15, Block 6, Lyons 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition, Iowa City, Iowa, 1845-2005. Copy obtained from previous owner, Michelle L. Wiegand, Iowa City, Iowa.

<sup>7</sup> Michelle L. Wiegand. Notes from conversation with Richard D. Hugill, Iowa City, Iowa, May 11, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

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Around 2004, the old shed was replaced by a single car garage, which was situated close to the alley, on the footprint of the original shed. The 12' x 16' garage featured new framing, siding, and roofing, though some of the materials and fabric might have been recycled from the original shed. Only a few inches separated the buildings from the public alley, making public safety a concern. To comply with zoning restrictions, exceptions granted by the local Board of Adjustment, and parking requirements, the garage and adjoining fence were torn down in April 2013 to make room for two parking spaces, including one handicapped parking space. Photographs of the non-extant garage, built around 2004, are including in the nomination papers.

**Interior Spaces:** Part of the appeal of this historic artifact is the sense of place created by an old-fashioned shopping space, so compact when compared with expansive food markets commonly introduced in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Gone are the display racks in the center of the floor, but long wooden shelves line the entire west wall for 23', offering ample space for display of grocery items. Painted wood wainscoting lines the perimeter of the room, 4' high from the floor to the top rail. The interior walls are finished with hand-applied plaster over standardized wooden slats.<sup>9</sup> The ceiling is 8'9" high, and currently electrical lights and a fan are suspended over the main floor. Tongue-and-groove flooring covers the floor on the first level, with faded spots where floor stands stood in the space towards the front half of the store, an area measuring 18' wide by 14' deep.<sup>10</sup> The addition on the north side of the building has a concrete floor.

A well-worn door threshold joins the main room on the first floor to the addition on the north side of the building, leading to an 18' wide by 10' deep room with a shed roof. The interior walls of this addition are covered with 8" wide, horizontal wood siding or paneling on the west, north, and east sides while the north wall shows the exposed narrow clapboard siding originally on the exterior of the building.

A sink was located at the back of the store during part of the building's history according to one store owner, and a recessed opening served as a pass-through window from the rear wall of the store to the addition. According to memories of those who occupied the space, a meat locker and butcher's block were located along the back wall of the store's main showroom.<sup>11</sup> Cattle bones were found underneath the floorboards in this area when examined by Ingalls. A small closet under the staircase provides storage, and the ceiling is slanted outward to accommodate the stairs overhead.

<sup>9</sup> Ingalls, Pages 2-3. Ingalls determined the altered north wall had a different plaster applied at a later date, but plaster on the other walls was "consistent with mid-19<sup>th</sup> century construction" and used "only a single creamy-yellow vegetable fiber" as a binder.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Ingalls writes, "Two distinct layers of tongue-and-groove flooring are present. The top lay appear to date to the 1870s or 1880s and is of yellow pine and, thicker, and better cut. The lower layer is narrower and slightly thinner. It lies atop a sub floor that appears typical of Iowa City sub flooring, which didn't appreciably change from ca. 1850 to ca. 1890."

<sup>11</sup> Michelle L. Wiegand. Notes from conversation with Richard D. Hugill, Iowa City, Iowa, May 11, 2012.



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The half-story upstairs is reached by a staircase on the north end of the first floor, near an exit door to the east that is no longer in use. Besides the transom light over this former door opening, the upper level is illuminated with light from two double-hung sash windows on the north side and one similar window on the south side. All three upstairs windows measure 36" wide by 60" high, though the window casements and sashes have been replaced. The renovation plans call for new four-pane windows in historic character with the period of significance.

As described by Marlin Ingalls, the stairs to the second level resemble "what is referred to as a 'coffin' staircase with very narrow treads and a 45-degree turn as it approached the rear (north) wall from where it ran upward to the garret room." He examined five nails from the staircase tread, which had "a bull-nose front edge."<sup>12</sup>

A brick chimney, likely made of locally manufactured bricks, rises from the main level to above the roofline on the north end. Metal plates covering stovepipe holes are visible along the north wall on the first level, hinting at the use of a pot-bellied stove for heat. Measuring approximately 21 ½" by 21 ½", the brick chimney is exposed to view on the interior of the second level. Slanted ceilings from the gable roof limit the amount of space where people can stand upright to the central area of the second level.

Undoubtedly used for storage of trade goods, the second floor also served as living quarters for some of the building's occupants. Bathroom fixtures on the second floor, including a sink, toilet, and claw foot bathtub, have been removed as they do not meet code requirements. Painted drywall covers the roof rafters and hardwood floors cover the central area. A small walk-in room was created on one side to house a new furnace, air-conditioner, and HVAC ductwork. The furnace and air conditioner unit had been located in the first floor addition on the back of the store until February 2013 when new plumbing, wiring, HVAC system, and bathroom fixtures were installed.

After the grocery store era ended in mid-1975, the property was converted to residential use, and functions of certain parts of the building changed. In order to make the space more livable, minor modifications were made to the interior, mostly in the addition on the north side. Walls or partitions were put up to provide privacy for the bathroom facilities in the addition. The removal of a shower during recent renovations allows a 32" wide window on the north side to be exposed again rather than covered. A 32" wide door on the east side of the addition, leading to the alley, was previously sealed off, and will remain so, but a wooden door will be visible on the exterior.<sup>13</sup> All of the electrical conduits and piping for indoor plumbing are exposed in the addition, rather than hidden behind walls, proof these modernizing elements were installed long after the original construction date.

<sup>12</sup> Ingalls, Page 3.

<sup>13</sup> Abstract of Title, 1845-2005. After sitting vacant for a year, the property was sold to a woman for use as a residence instead of a storefront. Using funds from a city rehabilitation program in 1994, the owner engaged in remodeling the interior — introducing the first major set of alterations to the interior of the building since the addition was placed on the north side in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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**Historic Integrity**

This property retains historic integrity of those features necessary to convey its significance in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

**Location:** There is no definitive way to determine conclusively who built the building or exactly when. The building was constructed at the same location after 1857 and prior to 1868. By narrowing the date of construction to that period, one of two property owners were the persons responsible for the building located at 518 E. Bowery. The visual and forensic evidence for dating the building materials and construction methods to this period, regardless of function or use, is backed up by written documentation to a certain extent. Comprehensive research was conducted using primary sources like the abstract of title for the property, Johnson County deed books and tax records, Iowa City assessor's records, city directories, census records, newspapers, county histories, obituaries, probate records, and maps. Evidence points to either John M. Haas, an immigrant from Baden, Germany, who was involved in the grocery trade and was the first to purchase the newly subdivided Lot 15 in Block 5 in December 1856; or alternatively, but less likely, it might have been Emery T. Seymour, who acquired the land from Haas in August 1864 and held on to it until 1873.<sup>14</sup> By 1897, the building was most definitely being used as a grocery store and a series of owners and renters over subsequent decades were predominately engaged in selling groceries or butchering meat.

**Design:** Integrity of design is apparent, as much of the building remains the same in terms of scale, proportion, organization of space, and materials as when it was built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> The building reflects historic functions and the aesthetics of the time, a period of rapid growth when low-cost, vernacular construction dominated. Adaptations to the original building, such as cladding the roof in metal or adding the stucco finish to the exterior, occurred over time but did not rob the building of a sense of place and continuity. Just as the front façade harks back to an earlier time, walking into the interior space is also a step backwards in time. Visual reference points for original design elements can be seen in the store's open floor space, the way the back of the store is lit by expansive front windows, the high ceiling, and the windowless side walls designed to accommodate shelving for store products.

**Setting:** The setting of the property is important as the building was deliberately built along a main thoroughfare, near a high traffic area, so as to attract business. Like other commercial structures, the front of the building was placed closer to the sidewalk and road, whereas the house next door is set back. Those who lived,

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.; Johnson County, Iowa. 1856, 1857, 1858, 1859, 1860, 1861, 1862, and 1863 Tax Lists, Iowa City, John M. Haas. Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City. In late 1856, John M. Haas (1804-1895) acquired the undeveloped Lot 15 from E. C. Lyon, who sub-divided his large estate after donating land for Iowa City's first railroad depot. Haas could have erected the building at 518 E. Bowery Street and the house next door soon after he and his wife, Anna Maria, purchased lot 15. If not Haas, it is possible the next owners, Emery T. and Sarah Seymour, erected the building next to the alley on Bowery Street.

<sup>15</sup> Ingalls, Page 4.

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worked, or visited the property at 518 E. Bowery were initially part of the neighborhood surrounding the railroad depot one block south, with a livestock yard and plenty of activity. In the 1860s and 1870s, residential construction was burgeoning along streets connecting the neighborhood to the downtown commercial district, and manufacturers established factories on South Gilbert Street, a few blocks away.

As noted by Molly Naumann in her survey of the area, many of the oldest residences built in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries along South Johnson and South Van Buren were later replaced by apartment complexes.<sup>16</sup> Yet, there are still several examples of earlier homesteads tucked in among the streets surrounding the depot — on Lucas, Dodge, Johnson, and Van Buren Streets. A half block west of 518 E. Bowery, an old brick-paved portion of Van Buren Street extends south one block toward the original depot location, suggesting the ambience of earlier days when travelers and townspeople needed a passable road in all seasons. Nearby architectural remnants of the past contribute to the historic setting, including a row of 19<sup>th</sup> century built houses directly to the west of 518 E. Bowery. Either direction from the grocery store on Bowery are significant historical properties: the Close Mansion one-and-one-half blocks to the west; or only a half-block away, the McConnell-Bristol home dating from the late 1870s, which is situated on the southeast corner of Bowery and Johnson. Both of these substantial Italianate-style brick homes date from the mid-1870s and are on the National Register of Historic Places. The original setting for the grocery store is now quite different, but the building stands sentinel to this change and serves as a reminder of how this corridor of Iowa City developed in “The Railroad Era (1856-1898).”<sup>17</sup>

**Materials:** Materials used in the construction of the building remain essentially intact. As with most vernacular wood frame architecture, adaptations were made over the course of one hundred years or more of existence. Although alterations have taken place, the property retains its original identity and the exterior is visually recognizable as a significant representation of an earlier time. Some of the original fabric has been lost through renovations, and the stucco hides the materials used underneath, but the basic physical characteristics are the same. Modern plumbing, newer exterior doors, and renovation of the front display windows are examples of changes made to the building, which ultimately extend it’s life and usefulness.

**Workmanship:** The integrity of the workmanship is apparent in the building as a whole, and in specific components like the wood balloon framing, narrow staircase, hand-applied plaster, wood flooring, brick masonry on the chimney or the methods used to build the curved false front. Construction techniques for vernacular, gable roof buildings were commonly known and practiced on every type of building from house to store, or church to school. The building looks plain and simple, built by the hands of skilled carpenters and laborers. Some elements of the original workmanship, like the roof and front windows were compromised but the overall integrity and quality of the work done by 19<sup>th</sup> century laborers remains.

<sup>16</sup> Molly Naumann. Reconnaissance Survey of the Area Bounded by Gilbert, Burlington and Governor Streets and the Iowa Interstate Railway Tracks in Iowa City, Iowa, HADB report, March 1990, Page 45.

<sup>17</sup> *Iowa City Historic Preservation Plan: Historic Resources of Iowa City*, 1992, Page Q-5.

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**Feeling:** The building itself conveys an overall feeling of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in terms of design and character, and serves as a reminder of the importance of a reliable and familiar grocery to the town's residents, particularly in the days when most transportation was by foot or by horse-drawn vehicles. No convenient parking, other than on the street, was provided for the customers who might drive an automobile in the later years of the grocery's existence, so most customers came from the immediate vicinity. Situated a half-block from a brick-paved street leading to the spot where the depot once was, a strong sense of history can be felt when imagining how the neighborhood might have looked in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Several surviving buildings in the vicinity were constructed in the same era, so preserving this property contributes to the historical feeling already present on Bowery Street and nearby historic districts like the Summit Street neighborhood.

**Association:** Identifying historical integrity through association to events or individuals is possible with this property as demonstrated by previous studies of Iowa City's social history and built environment, including those done by preservationists and scholars like Naumann, Svendsen, and Nash; or local historians like Irving B. Weber, who verified how important neighborhood groceries were to the fabric of the community.<sup>18</sup> The historical context of the various grocery stores located at 518 E. Bowery also helps illuminate how local experiences can differ over time, or from community to community, and thus expands the interpretive possibilities for state and national history. Moreover, it can serve as a vehicle for understanding how architecture can convey the story of a community's development, and how working men and women involved in retail trade can impact a neighborhood by providing a gathering place for socializing and commerce. During the course of eight decades, these entrepreneurs provided daily sustenance and ordinary consumer goods to a wide range of customers over several generations. Preserving this modest storefront will help convey how business was conducted in smaller, decentralized locations across the city, as well as serving as a reminder of how early grocery stores might have looked in other villages and towns in Iowa before larger markets replaced the older commercial buildings.

<sup>18</sup> Nash, Jan Olive. 2002. "Iowa's Main Street Commercial Architecture." Iowa City: Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City, Iowa; Irving B. Weber. "The Way Iowa City Shopped," in *Historical Stories about Iowa City*, vol. 4. Iowa City: Iowa City Lions Club, 1987, Pages 161–63; Irving B. Weber. "When Ma & Pa Minded the Store," in *Historical Stories about Iowa City*, vol. 4. Iowa City: Iowa City Lions Club, Pages 165–68.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Summary of Significance

The Bowery Street Grocery Store property at 518 East Bowery Street is locally significant under **Criterion A** for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to American history, standing as an example of the commercial side of town building. The history of the building showcases the stories of individuals who marketed consumer goods, unified the residents of a neighborhood by giving them a common meeting ground, and created economic opportunities for women working outside the home. The nation's experience with western expansion into the Trans-Mississippi region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is reflected in the history of this building; a local example of how settlers and immigrants came to Iowa City and Johnson County to establish themselves and contribute to the prosperity of the community.

The building is a representative survivor of a small retail store with a false front once common in Iowa's towns and cities. The building retains original design characteristics that match up with the historical context of settlement patterns and the boom in town development in Iowa City in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The initial date of significance for the building is circa 1897, when city directory lists a "Groceries and Meat Market" at this address.<sup>19</sup> An addition with a shed roof was added to the north side of the original gable-roofed building, as shown on a Sanborn fire insurance map dating from 1899. The period of significance extends from circa 1897 until 1963, a date fifty years prior to the date of this nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. For seven decades, a neighborhood grocery store operated out of 518 East Bowery as documented by city directories and fire insurance maps.<sup>20</sup> Until the last grocery at this address closed in 1975, subsequent owners and occupants worked independently as entrepreneurs. Although some were renters not owners, these people chose to establish a small business in order to realize the American dream of supporting themselves and their families. The various grocers contributed to community life and adapted to historical circumstances. Remarkably, the building itself remained largely unchanged in character and became known as a familiar local landmark.

### Origins of the Building

The property at 518 East Bowery Street in Iowa City, known for eighty years as a neighborhood grocery store, is a remnant of the past, often referred to as the Bowery Street Grocery, regardless of who ran it. The building reflects historic functions and retains essential physical features common to a bygone era. Simple in construction, small in scale, utilitarian in function, the building represents a typical wooden false front of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The store exterior and layout of the interior remain largely intact, serving as examples of how a small specialty shop fit into a residential area. Lacking elaborate ornamentation or fancy architectural details, the building is consistent with the functional style and basic construction techniques used by local carpenters

<sup>19</sup> *Smith's Directory of Iowa City for 1897-1898*. Rock Island, IL: Edgar Smith Publishing, 1898.

<sup>20</sup> *Insurance Maps of Iowa City, Iowa*. 1899, 1906, 1912, 1920, 1926, 1933, 1933-1970. New York: The Sanborn Map Company.

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and builders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Very similiarly styled storefronts existed throughout Iowa's small towns and villages for over a hundred years but few remain in good repair, or still retain their original look.

Key characteristics of the building's original fabric are "consistent with mid-19<sup>th</sup> century construction" methods and materials.<sup>21</sup> Architectural historian and archaeologist Marlin Ingalls's analysis of materials through visual observation, use of simple measuring devices, and microscopic examination of plaster samples and nails from the staircase tread allowed comparison of the framing, wood, plaster, and nails in relation to materials in common use in Iowa and the midwest in this time period.<sup>22</sup>

In terms of the wood framing analysis, Ingalls reported:

The building's size, form, and location are consistent with mid-19th century construction and its function as a single proprietor local commercial building. The building is balloon-framed with a combination of local woods and rafted yellow pine from northern forests. Several reconstructions have taken place over the years with the most obvious being the north addition, which used later lumber, hardware, and plaster."<sup>23</sup>

He wrote, "While not conclusive it is also consistent with antebellum design and location in a neighborhood with numerous 1850s buildings."<sup>24</sup>

Analyzing the building's plaster led Ingalls to conclude that "two completely different plasters were used." Sample 1, taken from the west wall's north corner "dates ca. 1855" and sample 2, taken from the altered north wall "dates ca. 1880." He determined that sample 1 "represents the original plaster. Its color, tempering, binder, and application are consistent with a hand-applied plaster from the mid-19th century."<sup>25</sup>

Ingalls examined four finish nails and one framing nail under a microscope, concluding that:

Both types of nails exhibit manufacturing attributes related to the mid-19th century. Three attributes strongly support this conclusion. The first is the grain direction of the iron, which is oriented across the nail and not down its length. The second is the presence of a single manufacturing facet produced as a result of the

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<sup>21</sup> Ingalls, Page 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., Pages 1-2. Ingalls writes: Terms such as mid-19th or late 19th century can be used to generally attribute materials to certain years or time periods. Over time manufacturing attributes change as does their application. The materials used in plaster or the type and dimensions of the wood used for framing can be attributed to their accessibility, periods of growth, places of production, elements of manufacturing, distribution, and application during construction all help for the basis for dating a building or structure."

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., Pages 2-3.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

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pressure of the die. The third is the slightly offset nail head with corner burrs. None of these nails have the faceted shanks that are so common during this period and in this area."<sup>26</sup>

In summary, Ingalls determined that:

- 1) framing and wood is consistent with mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to 1880s construction
- 2) a sample of plaster from the west wall's north corner was consistent with mid-19<sup>th</sup> century construction
- 3) nail examples were consistent with mid-19<sup>th</sup> century construction hardware."<sup>27</sup>

### Historical Background of Commercial Architecture in Iowa, 1857-1898

The Bowery Street Grocery Store building at 518 E. Bowery could easily be overlooked in terms of its historical significance, but the building represents an architectural prototype used for small retail shops and specialty stores in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Unlike existing grocery stores, this building harks back to a time when an 18' x 30' space was sufficient to meet the needs of regular customers seeking a convenient and nearby place to shop.

During "The Railroad Era (1856-1898)" in Iowa City, "the population grew rapidly from 2,570 in 1854 to 6,316 in 1856, before reaching 7,987 in 1900."<sup>28</sup> Fitting the pattern of settlement, the building was constructed in a key location near a busy depot and thoroughfare. The building has acquired significance through association with important historic events, patterns of social behavior, and many representative individuals who built, worked, or lived there. The definitive study, "Iowa's Main Street Commercial Architecture," written by Jan Olive Nash in 2002, provides the necessary background on architectural styles and historical interpretation for understanding the context in which this particular building existed. As Nash writes, "To understand the Main Street landscape, it is necessary to know the forces that created, sustained, and changed Iowa's towns. During

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Page 4. As Ingalls points out on page 1 of his report, when conducting materials analysis, "The dating of buildings by their building materials or by a single building material is difficult. A wide knowledge of local and regional construction, manufacturing attributes, availability, and a wide sample of materials for identification and comparison helps to determine the probable date of a building. One element recognized as especially useful for determining the age of a building is the common nail. Its manufacturing attributes have been used for decades to help determine the period of construction for buildings, furniture, ships, or anything else into which a nail can be driven into, pulled out of, or left behind in the dirt. Nail analysis does not give an absolute date. Temporally there is much crossover in types, use, materials, technology, and application. Any 19th century building is a melding of all of these things.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., Page 4.

<sup>28</sup> *Iowa City Historic Preservation Plan: Historic Resources of Iowa City*, 1992, Page Q-5 An article in the October 31, 1855 edition of *The Reporter* ran a brief notice, "Vicinity of the Depot," which stated "Houses are coming up in this portion of the city in great numbers." Although John M. Haas was in Iowa City by 1853 and he acquired the lot at 518 E. Bowery in December of 1856, there is no direct evidence that he constructed anything on Lot 15 of Block 6 unless he needed a house to live in. His other real estate holdings were located in the downtown district and his construction plans for brick commercial buildings on those lots were carried out by 1865.

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the nineteenth century within the context of a growing and generally westward-moving national population, Iowa was a state of transitions.”<sup>29</sup>

The architecture of this commercial building matches Nash’s depiction of “first generation and settlement period buildings” in Iowa, when false fronts were used to establish “a substantial and regular profile on the street.”<sup>30</sup> Town builders “took the familiar forms and simple shapes of vernacular buildings in the East and old Northwest.” “Wooden store buildings were likely free-standing along a dirt road or convenient trading intersection.”<sup>31</sup> This singular storefront replicated the pattern common to shops of the day as “side walls were left windowless” and “chimney stacks projected above the roofline.”<sup>32</sup> Local materials were used for structural components, and balloon framing was hammered together with hammer and nail. As was probably the case with this building when it was new, “Wooden buildings were covered by wood-shingled gable roofs and siding was sawn planks or later milled clapboard. False fronts with a raised parapet that hid the gable peak were common.”<sup>33</sup>

Nash describes another important attribute of this style of commercial architecture, noting that beyond needing the light from front windows, “Storekeepers relied on glass display windows to exhibit their goods and wares and attract customers.” She explains, “window displays were necessary to catch the eye of sidewalk pedestrians and the occupants of vehicles on the street.”<sup>34</sup> The building at 518 E. Bowery shares these attributes.

Reconstructing the history of the building depends on forensic examination of materials and traces of original workmanship; but research reveals the building definitely existed on the same footprint in 1868, as shown on a bird’s-eye view of Iowa City drawn by A. Ruger.<sup>35</sup> Although an artist’s rendering, many aspects of this layout are remarkably accurate, and owners of individual buildings portrayed in the sketch can often be matched with

<sup>29</sup> Nash, Jan Olive. 2002. “Iowa’s Main Street Commercial Architecture,” Page E-1.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Page E-27. Nash, in describing store buildings similar to the 518 E. Bowery property, wrote that long and narrow lots were common when new railroad town plats were laid out, so stores were deeper than they were wide. Bennett also based her assessment of proto-typical architectural styles and historical context on the many images of Iowa’s built environment in the period of the Civil War and immediately following when Iowa photographers took to the field to create stereograph portraits of main streets and commercial storefronts. Similar buildings from this period of settlement can be seen in three-dimensional form in: Mary Bennett and Paul C. Juhl. *Iowa Stereographs: Three-Dimensional Visions of Iowa’s Past*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997, Pages 37-126, 219-258.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., Page E-2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Page E-27.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Page E-18.

<sup>35</sup> A. Ruger. *Bird’s-eye view of Iowa City, Johnson County, Iowa, 1868*, drawn by A. Ruger. Chicago: Chicago Lithograph Company.



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names and addresses in the city directory from 1868-69.<sup>36</sup> The view shows two distinct buildings on the north side of the 500 block of E. Bowery Street, directly across from E. C. Lyon's large estate<sup>37</sup> and at the exact midpoint between S. Johnson and S. Van Buren Streets. The majority of the houses along Johnson and Van Buren are pictured facing either east or west. Only two buildings face Bowery in the middle of the block, where the alley forms the eastern boundary of Lot 15 — no doubt the frame house at 516 E. Bowery and the storefront at 518 E. Bowery. It is even apparent that one building is very close to the other and may jut out slightly towards the street. More than likely, the same person built both the house and the store, tucked in next to streets and alleys leading to a busy railroad terminal.<sup>38</sup>

Although the precise date of construction is unknown, it is possible the false front, which now disguises the gable front, originated after the building was acquired by William Havard. Beginning in 1897, records show he was the first to rent the building at 518 East Bowery for use as a grocery and meat market.

In 1990, Molly Naumann conducted a survey of the surrounding neighborhood, and took note of the property at 518 E. Bowery. She wrote, "This small gable roofed building does not possess individual significance architecturally, but represents a minority property type in the survey area: a commercial building. Located on the east/west street closest to the railroad depot, it may have commanded a share of its business from travelers." She continued, "However, neighborhood groceries were a common feature in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and most of the customers would have come from the immediate vicinity." Her final conclusion regarding the building was that "While not individually eligible, this building is of interest as a property type."<sup>39</sup> Further research has unveiled the significance and age of the building.

<sup>36</sup> *Holland's Iowa City Directory for 1868-69*. Chicago: Western Publishing Company.

<sup>37</sup> Margaret N. Keyes. *Nineteenth Century Home Architecture of Iowa City*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1966, Pages 66-68. A grand, multi-story brick mansion in Italianate style, with a cupola, stood in the center of an expansive estate called Roanoke. The owner, prominent businessman Ethiel C. Lyon, was the same man who donated land for the depot and sold Lot 15 to Haas in August 1856. Roanoke was used as a fraternity house until it was torn down in the 1940s.

<sup>38</sup> Abstract of Title, 1845-2005. It seems logical that the owners of such a strategically placed lot as Lot 15 might aim to profit from regular customers working and living near the depot, newly arriving immigrants such as hundreds of Mormons heading west, and possibly some Civil War soldiers who passed through town or trained six blocks away at Camp Pope. According to a 1991 Irving B. Weber article, "Soldiers came marching home: Civil War to World War II towns cheered," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, May 25, 1991, Page 1C, the owner of the property at 518 E. Bowery, Emery T. Seymour, donated an ox to be butchered and used at a picnic and homecoming celebration at the fairgrounds for returning Civil War soldiers in August 1865.

<sup>39</sup> Molly Naumann. Reconnaissance Survey of the Area Bounded by Gilbert, Burlington and Governor Streets and the Iowa Interstate Railway Tracks in Iowa City, Iowa, HADB report, March 1990, Page 70. Given the nature of her study, Naumann may not have accessed the Abstract of Title, Iowa City Assessor's Records, Johnson County Tax Lists or Deed Books, which might have offered clues as to the origins of the building.

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The limitations imposed by Naumann's reconnaissance survey of a large segment of Iowa City's south side meant she could not delve too deeply into the historical record for individual buildings, even those that might be potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Though an Iowa Site Inventory Form was completed, Naumann's initial assessment of the building did not include a review of previous owners of the property, or the details found in the abstract of title. Based on visual and basic documentation, she used her experience as an architectural historian to surmise the building at 518 E. Bowery was constructed around 1890.<sup>40</sup> Subsequent research, especially the presence of the building on the 1868 bird's-eye view of Iowa City, seems to prove the building was constructed earlier.

### **The Neighborhood Around Bowery Street**

The story that emerges from examining this property reflects the lives of working-class people who resided in a neighborhood on the outskirts of a developing downtown commercial district. As the economy of Iowa City transformed over the course of one hundred and fifty years, it is important to take note of the different stages of growth and how individuals and families earned livelihoods. The independently run grocery stores that persisted at this location were a far cry from supermarkets or "big box" retail groceries of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. This rather quaint storefront represents a small-scale operation, more reminiscent of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century retail establishments in Iowa's small towns than the larger two-story mom-and-pop grocery stores scattered throughout residential neighborhoods in greater numbers later on (Figure 9).

The historical significance of this building rests in the old style appearance of the exterior of this familiar neighborhood fixture. Known as a grocery store by several generations of Iowa City citizens, the persistence of this building in the midst of extreme modification of the streetscape through apartment construction is simply amazing. Those who pass by this physical reminder of a different era often pay attention to the unusual architecture and wonder how this intriguing place could have survived when so much else has been lost. The grocery stands as a testament to the style of commercial architecture prevalent in other areas of the state, especially in smaller towns and villages, but virtually obliterated from Iowa City's cityscape.

This narrow frame building, with a raised parapet hiding the gable peak and large display windows, coexists with, but differs from the two-story brick buildings that line the main streets and town squares of Iowa towns, including Iowa City's downtown area. Located in the midst of a neighborhood away from the center of commerce, this retail operation is situated near the outskirts of the former Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad depot yard and a few 19<sup>th</sup> century factory buildings. Of particular note are two nearby National Register of Historic Places properties. The C. D. Close Residence was built in 1874 and remains on the National Register of Historic Places, but the Close Flaxseed (Linseed) Oil Factory, built in 1873, has been removed from the NRHP because of remodeling.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., Pages 25-33 and unnumbered page after page 69, with Iowa Site Inventory Form for 518 E. Bowery.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., Page 1.

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As Naumann writes, "The residences along Van Buren and Johnson may well have been housing for workers in the Gilbert Street manufacturing area." The grocery store at 518 E. Bowery would have surely attracted foot traffic from those going or coming to work or school. Naumann continues, "Development along Gilbert, Van Buren, Johnson, and the west part of Bowery, seems to have been reasonably steady during the years the passenger depot was in use."<sup>42</sup> The Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific depot was surrounded by a U.S. Express Office, livestock yard, light industry, lumberyard, and other trades that attracted regular customers. The total number, and placement of houses, in Ruger's 1868 drawing of Iowa City and continual development over the next decades created a neighborhood around Bowery Street that was densely settled and capable of supporting a local grocery. Even after the depot was moved several blocks farther west in 1898, the local population was able to sustain the grocery store at 518 E. Bowery for 75 more years (Figure 5).

### Grocery Store Proprietors at 518 E. Bowery Street

Telling the story of this building means drawing on the personal biographies of the individuals associated with each grocery store operated at this location between the years 1897 and 1975. Historical trends, such as mass marketing of consumer goods or development of brand name products, altered the way Americans shopped over the course of a century. Today's retail trade for groceries is greatly diversified, from natural food cooperatives to huge international corporations like Wal-Mart or Iowa's own employee-owned Hy-Vee. By studying those who operated a small business and devoted their lives and careers to meeting the daily needs of their neighbors, a sense of place and historical context begins to emerge.

Because of its small scale, this particular storefront served as a start-up operation for those who wanted to venture into a trade without much investment, whether they owned the building or not. Even if they were renters, storekeepers operating out of this location could open business without much capital outlay, buying

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., Page 12; Thelma Oelung, Photographs of residences in this neighborhood prior to demolition for apartment buildings, c. 1960-1965, Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City. Not surprisingly, Naumann discovered that only a few of the earliest residences constructed in "The Railroad Era (1856-1898)," lasted long enough to be photographed before they were torn down. A study done earlier than Oelung's photographic survey in the 1960s might have found buildings more compatible to 516 and 518 E. Bowery, in terms of design, age, and construction materials. Since the oldest houses in the neighborhood deteriorated first, usually after years of use as low-cost student housing, few remained for Naumann to consider in her study. In fact, the lack of integrity in the neighborhood meant the area bounded by her reconnaissance survey was determined to be ineligible as a historic district in Iowa City. Naumann did spot more substantial homes on or near Bowery like the McConnell-Bristol House, 606 S. Johnson (c. 1860), or the Swisher-Price House, 917 E. Bowery (c. 1870), which persisted through the ages. She also noted a few smaller mid-19<sup>th</sup> century homes, which appear in pockets along the streets around the store. On page 45, Naumann reported the 1899 Sanborn map showed that S. Johnson "lots between Court and Bowery [were] almost full" of houses, and that the "houses along Johnson appear larger than those on Van Buren." Documenting the encroachment of apartment complexes from the early 1960s onward, she discovered that by the time of her 1990 study "of the thirty-one houses that lined Johnson between Court and Bowery in 1933, eighteen have been demolished." She found a similar pattern on S. Van Buren, remarking on page 40, that "The 1868 Bird's Eye View shows houses on both sides of the street from Ralston Creek south to Bowery (400 and 500 Blocks)," and the 1899 Sanborn map showed the same configuration of wood frame houses. In 1990, she found "Of the twenty-two house shown in the 400 and 500 blocks on the 1933 Sanborn map, only seven remain."

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store goods on credit from wholesalers. Records show the building provided an opportunity for immigrant families coming into the Iowa City area, including Irish-born and Italian-born citizens, to earn a living.

Grocery stores evolved over time with changes in transportation, food storage, or eating habits but in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were many specialty shops as well as grocery stores. Various owners used the property at 518 East Bowery, presumably as a storefront, between 1868 and 1895 when grocer Will Cisne purchased the building. Cisne ran a grocery store around the corner, at 532 Johnson Street.<sup>43</sup>

In December 1895, William L. Havard of Iowa City purchased the properties at 516 and 518 Bowery Street from Will Cisne.<sup>44</sup> Given some of the material evidence uncovered by Marlin Ingalls, showing plaster and nails from the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is conceivable Havard added the false façade to the gable in the front of the building. Also at this time, brick paving was introduced in Iowa City, which meant “paving extended from the downtown east along College to Summit and then south to Bowery.”<sup>45</sup> This facilitated local transportation and fostered residential construction on streets not far from the store on E. Bowery Street.

The significance of the grocery store on Bowery Street as a prototype for a family-run business can be traced for eight consecutive decades beginning with William Havard’s purchase in 1895 and continuing until the last grocery operated out of the building in 1975. Regardless of the proprietor or the owner, the function and use of the building persisted over time. With the commencement of Havard’s ownership and for the next 23 years, Havard rented the grocery store at 518 E. Bowery to other proprietors like Mrs. Catherine Hawley, John A. Mahan and his sister Theressa B. Mahan, and Joshua O. Emmons and Minnie Emmons; until taking over the store himself in 1918.<sup>46</sup>

There is no question that 518 E. Bowery became identified as a grocery starting in 1897, when Mrs. Catherine Hawley, who was born in Ireland around 1844, is listed in the 1897 city directory as the proprietor of a “Groceries and Meat Market” at 518 E. Bowery, although Mrs. Catherine Hawley may have opened up shop a

<sup>43</sup> Abstract of Title, 1845-2005. Documentation of certain years of occupancy, mainly from 1870 to 1895, is unavailable or incomplete. Ownership of the property can be established with the abstract of title but a lack of city directories or biographical information means the uses of the building cannot be determined in that era, even if the physical characteristics suggest the building was best suited for use as a storefront.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> *Iowa City Historic Preservation Plan: Historic Resources of Iowa City*. 1992, Page Q-11. Svendsen writes, “Perennial complaints accompanied Iowa City’s wet seasons when dirt and macadamized streets became rivers of mud. Difficult to negotiate by wagon, the routes were impassable for automobiles.” Brick paving, similar to the bricks still visible on Van Buren Street just south of Bowery, may have increased traffic around the store.

<sup>46</sup> Abstract of Title, 1845-2005. Also useful were city directories, census records, obituaries, probate records, tax lists, and cemetery records as listed in the bibliography, which provided much of the background information on occupants of the building.

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few years earlier, as she was in Iowa City by 1891. Catherine Hawley was age 53 in 1897, and raising two stepchildren ages 14 and 15 years old, so running a grocery store probably helped earn extra income while giving her a chance to watch over the youngsters she was in charge of.<sup>47</sup> The 1899 Sanborn fire insurance map of this part of Iowa City also verifies the presence of a grocery at this location, providing the first site map of the property.<sup>48</sup>

By 1899, another woman with an Irish background, Theressa Mahan, had taken over the grocery store. Miss T. B. Mahan, a 45-year-old schoolteacher<sup>49</sup> lived with her brother John M. Mahan at a boarding house at 520 E. Bowery. She and John ran the grocery and continued to live across the alley for almost ten years, until 1908.<sup>50</sup> The paving of Bowery from Gilbert to Summit was done in 1908; not only making travel on the street easier, but probably helping to keep the dust down and mud from entering the store on the feet of customers.<sup>51</sup> Joshua O. Emmons and his wife, Minnie, took over the facility after the Mahans left, renting it from William Havard and selling groceries until 1914. The Emmons also rented the house next door to the west, at 516 E. Bowery, for a couple of years. Emmons had experience working as a grocery clerk and running grocery stores on College, South Clinton, and elsewhere on East Bowery according to city directories.

Running a retail business was particularly suited to a husband and wife who could trade off duties and work shifts to accommodate their family or other moneymaking endeavors. This historical building, with a false front, is emblematic of family-run retail businesses designed to garner a modest income for hard-working entrepreneurs. As scholars like Mary Allison Farley have found, these business environments were often suitable places for women to find work in the public sector, when few occupations beyond schoolteacher were

<sup>47</sup> *State Census of Iowa*, 1895, Johnson County, Iowa 5<sup>th</sup> Ward; *Smith's Directory of Iowa City for 1897-1898*. Rock Island, IL: Edgar Smith Publishing, 1898; "Pneumonia Takes Mrs. C.W. Hawley," *Iowa City Republican* April 23, 1908; "Mrs. Hawley is Dead," *Iowa City Citizen*, April 24, 1908. Catherine O'Connell Brennan Hawley and her brother David O'Connell, both ended up in Iowa City after emigrating from Ireland. She had two sons and two daughters during her first marriage, to a Mr. Brennan. After she married again around 1881 to Charles W. Hawley, she also raised two stepchildren, Mr. Hawley's young son and daughter. They lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward, where the grocery store was located. Mr. Hawley ran a restaurant on Maiden Lane, on the other side of the railroad depot, and later operated a hotel, saloon, and livery on Dubuque Street near Burlington.

<sup>48</sup> *Insurance Maps of Iowa City, Iowa*, 1899.

<sup>49</sup> "Teaching Staff Has Been Named," *Iowa State Press*, September 23, 1903.

<sup>50</sup> "John Mahan Passed Away," *Iowa City Republican*, September 1, 1908; "Funeral of John Mahan," *Iowa City Citizen*, September 4, 1908; *Twelfth Census of the United States*, 1900, Iowa, Johnson County, Iowa City Township. E.D. 86, Sheet 55, John Mahan and Tressa Mahan. Of Irish descent, John A. Mahan was born in Pennsylvania in June 1841 and lived in Iowa City for 51 years before dying of cancer. His younger sister, Theressa, was born around 1854, only three years before her family settled in Iowa City. John's surviving relatives included six sisters and two brothers. His unmarried sisters worked as schoolteachers, dressmakers, and laundresses.

<sup>51</sup> *Iowa City Historic Preservation Plan: Historic Resources of Iowa City*, 1992, Page Q-11.

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considered socially acceptable. Conveniently, a woman – whether married, widowed, or single – could be a store proprietor, and even have her children on the premises so she could watch over them or enlist their services.<sup>52</sup> Women like Catherine O’Connell Hawley and Theresa Mahan were proprietors who gained experience ordering supplies, keeping accounts, waiting on customers, or creating a special featured item to sell in the store. Typical retail establishments were successful because of the involvement of family members, whether run by husband and wife, adult siblings, or hired managers. With division of gender roles in the period of significance, women were the primary shoppers in the family and probably felt welcome in the environment of a grocery store, more so than in male-dominated establishments like livery stables or lumberyards. A degree of cleanliness and orderliness attracted customers looking for fresh and reliable food, and having a female clerk with compatible sensibilities and familiarity with cooking ingredients might increase sales (Figures 6 and 8).

A few of the grocers who inhabited this space used it as a stepping-stone to storefronts elsewhere in town. After John Mahan died in 1908, his sister Theresa gave up the grocery store they ran together at 518 E. Bowery, but she soon set up a business in the lower level of the Windrem house on the northeast corner of Iowa Avenue and Johnson Street. As local historian Irving B. Weber wrote, Theresa (also known as Tressa or Miss T.B. Mahan) sold groceries and penny candy, catering especially to the school children attending the nearby grammar school and high school.<sup>53</sup>

By 1918, William L. Havard’s grocery store at 518 E. Bowery is listed in the city directory under “Grocer and Meats,” suggesting he had butchering skills. He resided at the same address, along with “Lawrence C. Havard, manager,” and Lawrence’s wife, Mabel C. Havard. Earlier city directories list William L. Havard as a “stock-buyer” in 1907, and his occupation is given as “Livestock” in 1911, both possibly references to Havard’s skills as a butcher and the presence of a livestock yard in the vicinity of the nearby railroad depot. Later, Havard’s home was just down the street from the store, at 510 E. Bowery. In 1919, Jess O. Orris and his wife, Mabel, who also resided at 518 E. Bowery, are listed under “Meats” in the business section. William Havard’s association with the grocery store ended when the property was sold in 1921.<sup>54</sup> There were four owners of the building

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<sup>52</sup> Mary Allison Farley. Wage-earning women in Dubuque, Iowa, 1910-1917: their position in the labor force and how they remember that experience, M.A. thesis, University of Iowa; Mary Allison Farley. “Iowa Women in the Workplace,” *The Palimpsest*, Vol. 67 (1986): 2-16, 21-27; Jan Olive Nash, *Iowa’s Main Street Commercial Architecture*, Page E-11, offers a brief discussion of gender roles in relation to small town business, as does Lewis Atherton, *Main Street on the Middle Border*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954, Page 40; and Mary Bennett. *An Iowa Album: A Photographic History, 1860-1920*. 1990. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990, Page 74.

<sup>53</sup> Irving B. Weber. “School Doors Open Wide in 1905 Iowa City,” in *Irving Weber’s Iowa City*, vol. 4. Iowa City: Iowa City Lions Club, 1987, Pages 57-62; Irving B. Weber. “Clues,” in *Historical Stories about Iowa City*, vol.1. Iowa City: Iowa City Lions Club, 1976, Page 70.

<sup>54</sup> Abstract of Title, 1845-2005; *State Census of Iowa*, 1895, Johnson County, Iowa 5<sup>th</sup> Ward; Johnson County, Iowa. 1903 Tax List, Iowa City, Ward 5, William L. Havard. Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

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before grocer Jacob Goldberg purchased the property. Among those who managed or rented the store was Ezell & Co., Grocers, whose advertising slogan in 1922 proclaimed customers would find “A Thrifty Store for Thrifty People” offering “Service, Quality, Cleanliness.” Listing a telephone number, the ad promised, “You’ll get what you want and when you want it.” Arthur D. Ezell and his wife, Helen M., were the proprietors.<sup>55</sup>

Owners Jacob Goldberg and his wife, Sarah, ran the store on Bowery Street from May 1922 until 1928 when they leased the store to another Iowa City grocer, Jerome L. Schilling, for a couple of years. The language used on advertisements suggests that storekeepers took pride in providing high-quality service to meet the customer’s needs and demands. An ad in the 1930 city directory for Schilling’s Bowery Street Grocery stated “Everybody Knows Who Carries the Best.”<sup>56</sup> The Goldbergs called the store Bowery Street Grocery while operating it between the years 1930 and 1938.

By 1933, Iowa City had 46 groceries, including owners who ran more than one grocery like Jacob Goldberg, manager and owner of both 518 E. Bowery and a location known as Melrose Market on Melrose Avenue, in a much larger space within a new modern brick building near the University of Iowa’s Kinnick Stadium. The Goldbergs almost lost the property at 518 E. Bowery through foreclosure in 1936, and sold it to Anthony Rinnella, the son of a local fruit vendor in October 1938.<sup>57</sup>

City directories indicate the building may have been vacant for a brief time in 1942 and 1943, but Rinella still operated a store on Bowery. According to a newspaper article, “In 1950 he bought three lots in the 400 block of Bowery Street where he raised vegetables across the street from a grocery store he owned, and which he operated for a time.”<sup>58</sup> Rinella eventually decided to sell the property at 518 E. Bowery to Louis P. Helmer and his wife, Leatha, in July 1955.<sup>59</sup> The Helmer family, headed by Louis P. Helmer, also owned grocery stores elsewhere in town. Helmer’s Grocery existed at 518 E. Bowery for the next 15 years, until July 1970. “Open 8 a.m.-10 p.m.” the store offered “Quality Meats, Fruits, Vegetables, Cold Beer, Cigarettes” according to the 1969

<sup>55</sup> *Smith's Directory of Iowa City. 1922.* Dorchester, MA: Edgar Smith Publishing.

<sup>56</sup> *Smith's Directory of Iowa City. 1930.* Dorchester, MA: Edgar Smith Publishing, Page 19.

<sup>57</sup> Abstract of Title, 1845-2005.

<sup>58</sup> *Iowa City Press Citizen.* 1963. “After 56 Years, the End of an Era—Career Over for Tony, the Vegetable Man,” regarding Tony Rinella, October 15, 1963, Page 6.

<sup>59</sup> Abstract of Title, 1945-2005; Obituary for Leatha Helmer, *Iowa City Press Citizen*, February 16, 1970.

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Name of Property Owner, 518 E. Bowery	Proprietor of Bowery Street Grocery Store	Dates
Ethiel C. Lyon and wife Elsie Lyon	N/A	August 1845-October 1856
John M. Haas and wife Anna Maria Haas	N/A grocery store downtown	October 1856-August 1864
Emery T. Seymour and wife Sarah Seymour	N/A	August 1864-March 1873
Nathaniel Scales and wife Nancy Scales	N/A	March 1873-April 1878
Miriam Wilson (widow)	N/A	April 1878-October 1883
Patrick Regan and wife Mary B. Regan	N/A	October 1883-August 1887
Robert C. Stevenson and wife Nancy Stevenson	N/A	August 1887-August 1895
William Cisne and wife Emma Z. Cisne	N/A grocery 532 E. Bowery	August 1895-December 1895
William L. Havard and wife Annie E.		December 1895-September 1921
	Catherine Hawley, Groceries and Meat Market	1897
	Theresa B. Mahan	1899-1903
	Theresa B. Mahan and brother John A. Mahan	1904-1908
	Joshua O. Emmons and wife Minnie Emmons	1909-1914
	Joshual O. Emmons and J.W. Coffey	1915
	William L. Havard, Grocer and Meats	1918
	Jess O. Orris, Meats, and wife Mabel Orris	1919
L.E. Grady and wife Emma, and Frank Grady	Jess O. Orris and wife Mabel	September 1921-May 1922
	Arthur D. and Helen M. Ezell, Ezell & Co. Grocers	1922
Nettie McDonald	Jacob Goldberg and wife Sarah	May 1922-April 1923
Henry G. Walker and wife Signy	Jacob Goldberg and wife Sarah	April 1923-August 1923
Jacob Goldberg and wife Sarah Goldberg	Jacob Goldberg and wife Sarah	August 1923-October 1938
	Jerome Schillig and wife Lydia E, Bowery Street Grocery	1928-1930
	Jacob Goldberg and wife Sarah, Bowery Street Grocery	1930-1938
Anthony J. Rinella and wife Ethel Rinella		October 1938-July 1955
	Elmer V. Wagner and wife Mildred Wagner, Bowery Street Grocery	1940
	Anthony Rinella, Grocery	[1942-1951]
	Leo Gorman, Repair shop	1952
Louis P. Helmer and wife Leatha Helmer	Louis P. Helmer and wife Leatha, Helmer's Grocery	July 1955-July 1970
Donald Griffen and wife Cora Griffen	Luther Dammeman, Bowery Street General Store	1970-1971
	New Pioneer Cooperative	1972-1975



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city directory.<sup>60</sup> Their son, Robert L. Helmer, remembered that a neon sign hung in the front display window, and that the store was robbed in 1961.<sup>61</sup>

Owner Robert Helmer shared his recollections of the store, confirming upon visual inspection that many of the building's physical characteristics remain essentially the same as when his family occupied the space. The long row of grocery shelves along the west wall dates back to at least the mid-1950s, and may indeed be an original fixture of the store. He commented that a similar row of shelving also lined the east wall of the store.<sup>62</sup> Relatively few changes have been made to the basic layout in the past 50 years, and the history of the building is enriched through stories that provide a human dimension.

After the Helmer family retired from the business in 1970, the Bowery General Store was operated for two years by Luther Dammeman of West Liberty, Iowa, who rented the storefront.<sup>63</sup> This tenancy signaled the end of privately-run and family-owned grocery stores at this location, although commerce would return for a short time under the auspices of New Pioneer Food Cooperative, Inc. The building was suitably designed to function as a small grocery store all those years whether the owner operated the business or rented it out to others.

### Historical Context of the Retail Grocery Trade in Iowa and Iowa City

Over the course of a century, the commercial aspects of providing food to a community evolved into very diverse types of enterprises. Looking backward to the period when the corner grocery prevailed, a portrait of how families shopped, and what they shopped for, can reveal historical patterns and trends. Preserving this building allows a visual record and community memory to live on, so that minor aspects of everyday life can be considered.

For example, imagining what might be sold in a grocery, like the ones at 518 E. Bowery Street over the years, brings to mind sources like historical photographs, newspaper advertisements, or the grocery receipts sometimes found in manuscript collections. Store patrons shopped primarily for staples such as sugar, flour, coffee, tea, rolled oats, beans, rice, canned goods, biscuits, potatoes, and onions. They could also find spices, pickles or olives, baking soda, preservatives, candy, bottled beverages, soaps, and often meat products and baked goods if a butcher and baker worked there. Depending on the season, grocers might procure locally grown vegetables and

<sup>60</sup> *Iowa City Directory, 1969*. Kansas City, MO: R.L. Polk & Co.

<sup>61</sup> Michelle L. Wiegand. Notes from conversation with Robert L. Helmer, Iowa City, Iowa, May 10, 2012; "Third Grocery Store Robbed in Iowa City," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, January 21, 1966.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Iowa City Directory, 1970*. Kansas City, MO: R.L. Polk & Co.; Abstract of Title, 1845-2005.

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fresh fruit like strawberries or apples from area farmers, who also brought live chickens into some Iowa City groceries in order to barter for goods.

Many food items are perishable, making routine shopping a necessity. More exotic fruits like bananas or oranges had to be shipped in from faraway places, made possible by railroad transportation. The availability of canned goods on the shelves of grocery stores was quite common by the time this grocery store was established. In the early decades of the grocery store on Bowery Street, customers shopped frequently, perhaps daily, as home refrigeration was limited to an icebox, which required the use of large blocks of ice that had to be delivered to the home on a regular basis. The butcher at the grocery would provide fresh cuts of meat or fish, and meat grinders were often present at the back of the store — as they were at 518 E. Bowery Street as remembered by one owner. Milk and dairy products were sold by milkmen making door-to-door deliveries using a horse-drawn wagon or, later, motorized trucks. Electric-powered refrigeration and other technological factors revolutionized the grocery trade, altering food processing, storage, packaging, and delivery, as well as changing the habits of food consumption by the general public.

Urban areas had merchants besides grocers who were selling food — meat markets, bakeries, and confectionaries — and often with a wider array of items. Selling groceries as a specialty developed out of the earlier era of general stores, which commonly stocked everything a household might need, from hardware to dry goods to groceries. Local neighborhood grocers provided a variety of products, but not in great volume and with fewer choices than their urban counterparts. Residential neighborhoods spread out from downtown commercial areas, and as people came to depend on streetcars and automobiles to transport themselves around larger communities, grocers found new markets.

Eventually, the advancement of the automobile age and mass marketing would irrevocably alter the American scene and lead to the proliferation of brand names, grocery store chains, larger supermarkets, and ultimately the “big box” retail grocery stores of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The extended heyday of the grocery store on Bowery Street began around 1895 and lasted until the mid-1970s, well past the period when similar stores declined in number before disappearing altogether.<sup>64</sup>

Running counter to this national trend was the persistence of the little mom-and-pop grocery at 518 E. Bowery. For almost eight decades, a grocery store survived at this location — during America’s Great Depression when money was tight, and throughout the 1950s and 1960s when this type and style of store was all but disappearing from Iowa towns. In the 1970s a new generation re-invented the concept of the grocery store and mass consumption of food. Claiming ownership of product quality and seeking alternatives to capitalism, a group of Iowa City folks turned the clock back on modern concepts of supermarket shopping and “conveniently”

<sup>64</sup> Atherton. *Main Street on the Middle Border*, Pages 41-48, 53-55, 62, 217, 222-229; Bennett. *An Iowa Album*, Pages 72-132, 160, 261-297; Photographs of grocery store exteriors and interiors in Iowa, 1860s-1950s, Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, provided insights about typical grocery stores in Iowa’s small towns and what they offered to their customers.

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packaged goods. It was fitting the founders of New Pioneer Food Cooperative chose 518 E. Bowery for their first home, establishing their store in a neighborhood setting and seeking success by starting out on a small scale. The building offered the perfect environment for the retail grocery cooperative to flourish during its first four years, before the operation moved down the street to another historic building that offered more space. For a time, they were allied with a wholesale natural foods distributor named Blooming Prairie, who used the back portion of New Pioneer Food Cooperative's "warehouse" or shed for their operation.<sup>65</sup>

Started in July 1971 as a buying club, New Pioneer Food Cooperative, Inc. is known as one of the most successful, long-lasting cooperatives in the United States. Founded over forty years ago, it has contributed to the commercial and intellectual livelihood of Iowa City in myriad ways. From humble beginnings on Bowery to current times when major expansions are planned, New Pioneer Food Cooperative has demonstrated the value of protecting and enhancing our food supply and distribution system, supported community non-profits, educated people about environmental and health issues, and offered the benefits of member ownership and participatory democracy.<sup>66</sup>

Still, for the general population, historical trends and patterns in consumer spending steadily transformed grocery shopping. Research into population figures for Iowa City demonstrates the constant growth of the community, and the commensurate need for more grocery stores.<sup>67</sup> Living in a relatively small town before World War II, customers supported local stores close to their homes, usually within walking distance. Larger supermarkets, like the employee-owned Hy-Vee grocery stores, came to town around 1961. At the same time Randalls, Eagles, and A&P operated groceries. The major trend to alter the way Americans shopped was the proliferation of convenience stores, which expanded the range of products sold at gas stations. Retail chains like Seven-Eleven, QuickTrip, Handimart, and Casey's redefined the cultural landscape and led to the demise of small neighborhood groceries.

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<sup>65</sup> Michelle L. Wiegand. Notes from conversation with Barbara Bailey, Iowa City, Iowa, May 11, 2012. New Pioneer Cooperative and Blooming Prairie reportedly experienced problems with insect infestation when storing flour and foodstuffs in the shed.

<sup>66</sup> "History of NPCA." New Pioneer Cooperative, Inc. Records, 1971-2006. Box 33, f. 14. State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

<sup>67</sup> Population figures came from Census of the Population:1950. Volume II: Characteristics of Population. Part 15 Iowa. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952; Census of the Population:1960. Volume I: Characteristics of Population. Part 17 Iowa. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1961; Census of the Population:1970. Volume I: Characteristics of Population. Part 17 Iowa. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1973; Census of the Population:1980. Volume I: Characteristics of Population. Part 17 Iowa. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1982; Fourteenth Census of the United States. State Compendium Iowa. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1924; and John A.T. Hull, Census of Iowa for 1880, with Other Historical and Statistical Data 1836-1880. Des Moines: F.M. Mills. City directory lists were used to count the number of grocery stores in Iowa City during this period.

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Other scholarly works have focused on the wholesale trade in groceries and the large firms that distributed goods to grocers around Iowa.<sup>68</sup> Local historian Irving B. Weber offered his own assessment of the popular grocery stores in Iowa City from 1900 to 1940, including references to people associated with the store at 518 E. Bowery.<sup>69</sup> Quite often, both published and unpublished personal reminiscences will include stories about corner groceries, providing another avenue for exploring this topic. An examination of the history of one particular commercial building — where various owners operated a grocery store — provides evidence of the turnover rate in ownership or management, and the importance of geographical location for maintaining a stable customer base. Grocers have always been a mainstay of society, but needed to adapt to changing economic, technological, political, and social circumstances to maintain any longevity in the retail market.

In counting the total number of grocery stores listed in city directories over this period, it becomes apparent that small-scale operations prevailed until the early 1960s, when the numbers began to steadily decline. By no means a definitive summary of the retail grocery trade in Iowa City, the story that emerges from these figures does provide a microcosm of one community's experience with this line of business.

Year	Population	Number of Grocery Stores in Iowa City
1854	2,570	# of stores unknown
1860	5,214	# of stores unknown
1870	5,914	20 stores in 1868-69, plus specialty shops like butchers
1880	7,123	25 stores in 1880
1890	7,016	17 stores in 1891
1900	7,987	# of stores unknown
1910	10,091	29 stores in 1909
1920	11,267	31 stores in 1919-20; including one next door at 532 E. Bowery
1930	15,340	46 stores in 1933
1940	17,182	45 stores in 1940
1950	27,212	42 stores in 1949
1960	33,443	32 stores in 1961, including the first Hy-Vee
1970	46,850	21 stores in 1970, including Hy-Vee, Randalls, Eagles, and A&P
1980	50,508	17 stores in 1980, including 5 Hy-Vee, 2 Randalls, 2 Eagles
1990	59,735	33 stores in 1990, including 5 Hy-Vee, 13 gas station/convenience stores

<sup>68</sup> Louis D. Volpp. "The Changing Functions of the Grocery Wholesaler in Des Moines, 1929-1954," M.A. thesis, University of Iowa, 1956.

<sup>69</sup> Irving B. Weber. "The Way Iowa City Shopped," in *Historical Stories about Iowa City*, vol. 4. Iowa City: Iowa City Lions Club, 1987, Pages 161-63; Irving B. Weber. "When Ma & Pa Minded the Store," in *Historical Stories about Iowa City*, vol. 4. Iowa City: Iowa City Lions Club, Pages 165-68.

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**The Grocery Store Era Ends: Post-1975 Occupants of 518 E. Bowery**

Beginning in July 1975, the historic function of the building changed, thus ending the grocery store's long period of significance as a specialty store. In the intervening years since New Pioneer Food Cooperative moved to bigger quarters, the building at 518 E. Bowery housed a retail establishment, House of Jade, but remained essentially unchanged in appearance. Richard Hugill Jr. and his wife, Barbara Bailey, formerly a manager at New Pioneer Coop, acquired the property in 1981.<sup>70</sup> For a brief interim in 1983, the Helen Caldicott Community School held classes for children ages six to nine years old, engaging the students in interactive, hands-on learning.<sup>71</sup> Hugill occupied the property from 1981 to 1988. From that point forward in time, the building was used as a residence.

Remarkably, despite the modifications made in the last twenty years of its existence, the building retains the main characteristics from its time of significance, with many authentic elements from the original construction date still in place. As a prime example of false front commercial architecture on a modest scale, the Bowery Street Grocery Store reflects the historical context of the times. It helps preserve the story of hard-working individuals who represent different parts of the economic and social spectrum. Although often not wealthy enough to own real estate or a storefront, these merchants and grocery clerks prevailed — even if only for a few years — earning a livelihood to support themselves and their families.

Uses of the building evolved after traditional neighborhood grocers vacated the space and a community cooperative established a grocery, forming the last chapter of the store's history as a center for commerce. Later inhabitants of the space, even for a few years, seem to share the independent, entrepreneurial spirit of their predecessors. Although outside the period of significance, in terms of historical context for small grocery stores, part of the history of the building reflects the lives of individuals associated with 518 E. Bowery from the mid-1970s through 2012. Drawn to the charm of this quaint, antique-looking storefront, a variety of people pursued alternatives in food merchandising, built handcrafted items, explored new teaching methods, expressed themselves through artistic creation, or simply called the place home.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Abstract of Title, 1845-2005; Michelle L. Wiegand. Notes from conversation with Barbara Bailey, Iowa City, Iowa, May 11, 2012; Michelle L. Wiegand. Notes from conversation with Richard D. Hugill, Iowa City, Iowa, May 11, 2012.

<sup>71</sup> "Children Draw Visions of Peace," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, June 22, 1983, Page 4D.

<sup>72</sup> "Selling, but not selling out," *The Daily Iowan*, April 28, 2005, Page 4C. The prevailing attitude towards this historic building is that represents a highly unusual, almost funky environment because of the old-fashioned design. Residents like Matthew Sullivan Wiegand enjoyed living in unconventional quarters, which offered space for painting large works or performing music. Figure 11 features Wiegand's colorful painting of 518 East Bowery Street. Sustaining the future of this building will depend on the level of interest in the community for preserving unique pieces of Iowa City's past.

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American and midwestern social and economic history can be understood through the history of the users and occupants of 518 E. Bowery, even if the building does not seem architecturally significant or lacks association with a particular individual of significance. A community comprised of several generations — representing men and women of diverse ethnic groups, different economic classes, and distinct backgrounds — converged on this location seeking sustenance and human interaction with people who had common interests. Standing in front of this building or inside it, admiring the open space, can remain a pleasurable experience for years to come if rehabilitation and investment protect the historic fabric and original style of the store.

Zoned as a single-family dwelling for twenty-five years, the property was designated a local landmark in 2012 so the building can return to retail use a coffee shop or a similar business, which might attract a walk-in trade from the surrounding neighborhood residents. The Iowa City Historic Preservation Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment, City Council, and staff in the city's planning and community development department were involved in determining the future of this historic building and how to best preserve the historic integrity and meet current code standards. On November 21, 2013, the Iowa City Historic Preservation Commission gave the property a historic preservation award in the category of Commercial Rehabilitation. Restoring the original character to the exterior would assist the revitalizing of the neighborhood and create a sense of place rooted in history, which both serves and defines the neighborhood around 518 E. Bowery Street. The scale of this building juxtaposed against the massive apartment complexes and dehumanizing homogeneity of the architecture brings a sense of wonder about the past and conveys meaning about the lives of those who lived in this community.

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National Park Service

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Section number **10**

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## 10. Geographical Data

### Verbal Boundary Description

East 21 ft. of South 70 ft. of Lot 15, Block 6, Lyons 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition, Iowa City, Johnson County, Iowa.

### Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the grocery store.

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Bowery Street Grocery Store

Johnson County, Iowa

Section number **Photographs**

Page **34**

**The following information is common to all of the photographs:**

Name of Property: Bowery Street Grocery Store  
City or Vicinity: Iowa City  
County: Johnson County  
State: Iowa  
Name of Photographer: Charles A. Scott  
Date of Photographs: May 5, 2012 and October 14, 2013  
Location of Original Digital Files: State Historical Society of Iowa, 600 E. Locust, Des Moines, IA 50319  
Type of digital ink and paper used: Epson Ultra Chrome ink; Epson Premium Glossy Paper

**Photographs taken May 5, 2012, prior to renovation:**

Photo #1 – Exterior south façade, camera facing north. Digital image number 52-00675-0001.

Photo #2 – Exterior showing south front and east side along alley, camera facing northwest. Digital image number 52-00675-0002.

Photo #3 – Detail of false front showing where sign used to hang, camera facing north. Digital image number 52-00675-0003.

Photo #4 – Detail of back side of false front showing wood siding, camera facing southeast. Digital image number 52-00675-0004.

Photo #5 – Detail of original six-pane window on west side, camera facing east Digital image number 52-00675-0005.

Photo #6 – Detail of windows and chimney on north side, camera facing southeast. Digital image number 52-00675-0006.

Photo #7 – Interior showing 23 feet of wooden shelving and wainscoting, camera facing west. Digital image number 52-00675-0007.

Photo #8 – Interior of north side; note stovepipe vent, staircase, and window, camera facing north. Digital image number 52-00675-0008.

Photo #9 – Interior of second level, taken from top of stairs, camera facing south. Digital image number 52-00675-0009.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Bowery Street Grocery Store

Johnson County, Iowa

Section number **Photographs**

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**Photographs taken October 14, 2013, after renovation:**

Photo #10 – Exterior south façade after renovation, showing new front display windows, camera facing north. Digital image number 52-00675-0010.

Photo #11 – Exterior showing west side and south front after renovation, camera facing northeast. Digital image number 52-00675-0011.

Photo #12 – Exterior showing south front and east side along alley after renovation, camera facing northwest. Digital image number 52-00675-0012.

Photo #13 – Detail of false front showing new lighting for commercial sign, camera facing north. Digital image number 52-00675-0013.

Photo #14 – Exterior east side after renovation, showing two doors permanently sealed due to proximity of alley, camera facing west. Digital image number 52-00675-0014.

Photo #15 – Exterior north side showing rear entrance and parking area after renovations, camera facing south. Digital image number 52-00675-0015.

Photo #16 – Interior showing west window after renovations to addition on north side, camera facing west. Digital image number 52-00675-0016.

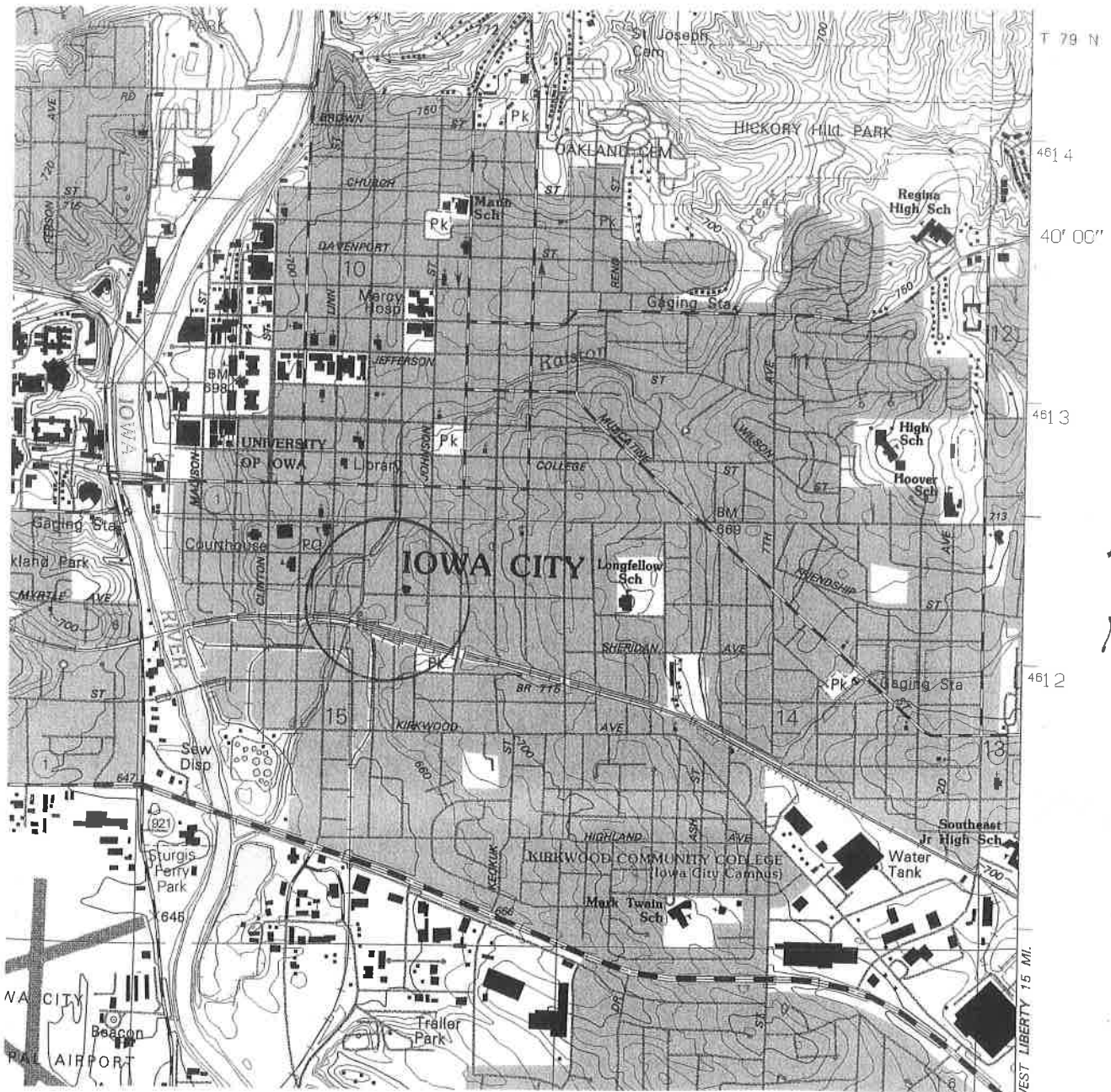
Photo #17 – Interior showing renovations including replacement windows on front of building, camera facing south. Digital image number 52-00675-0017.

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Bowery Street Grocery Store

Johnson County, Iowa

Section number **Additional Documentation** Page **36**



USGS map indicating property's location on E. Bowery Street in Iowa City, Johnson County, Iowa.  
Scale 1:24000



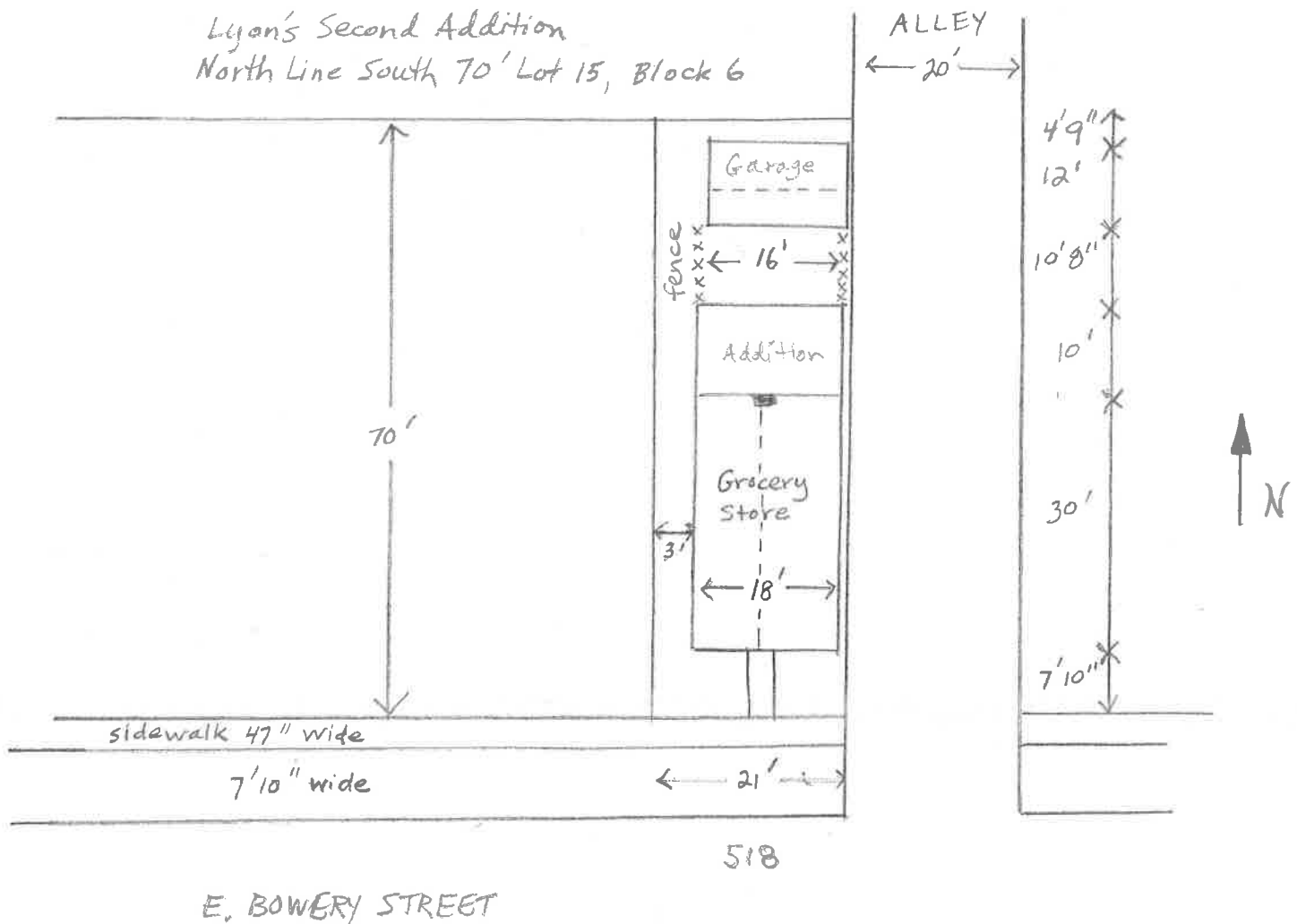
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Bowery Street Grocery Store

Johnson County, Iowa

Section number **Additional Documentation** Page **37**

SITE MAP  
518 E. Bowery  
Iowa City, Iowa  
Drawn by Mary Bennett



scale  
1" = 20'



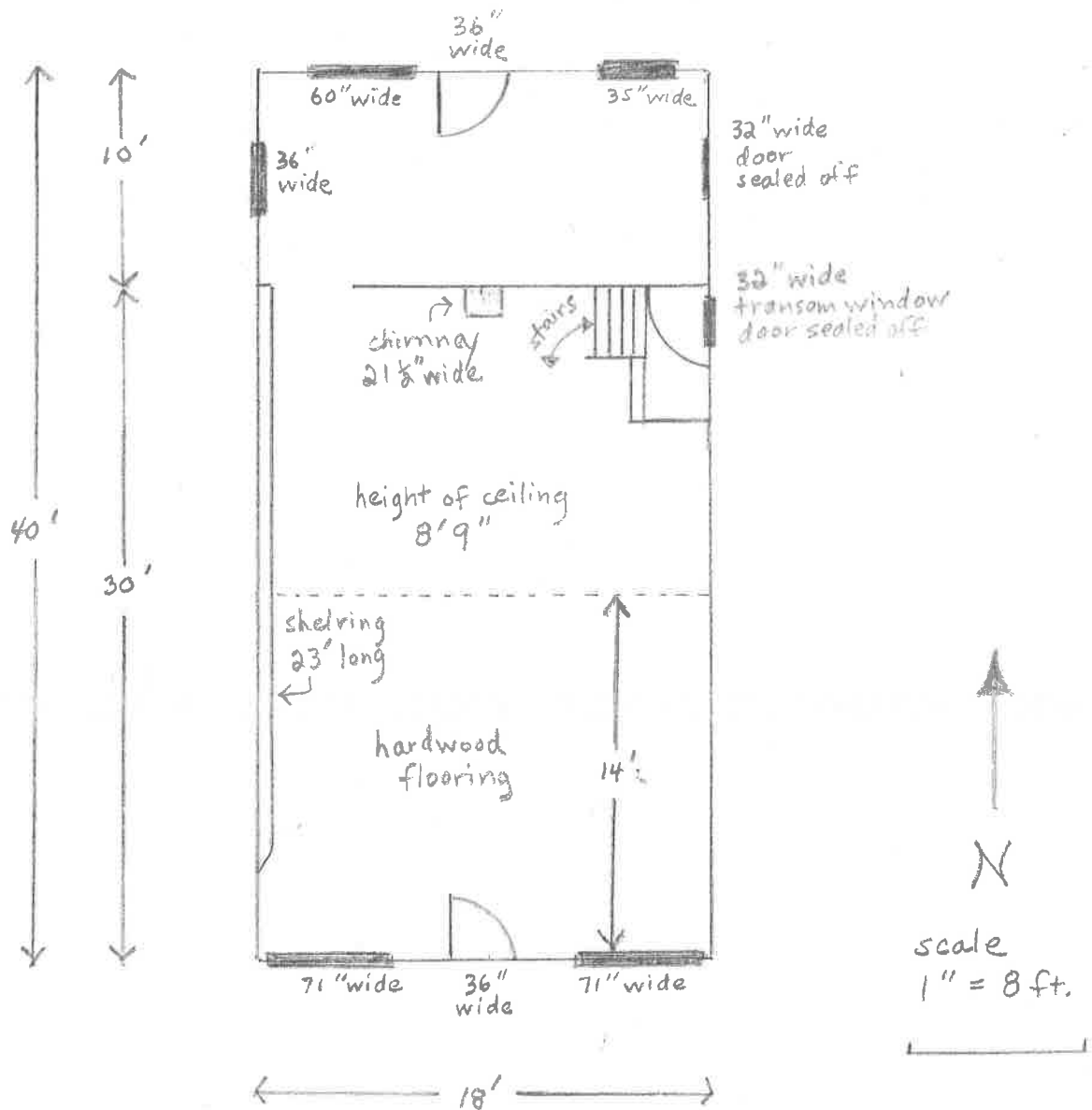
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Bowery Street Grocery Store

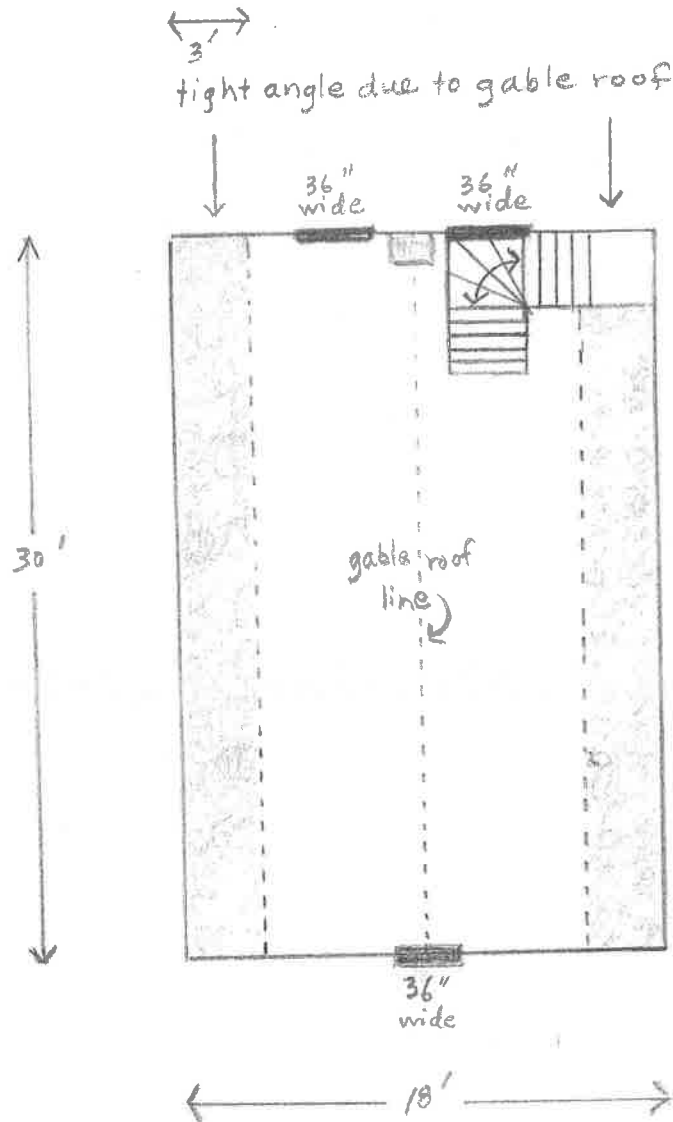
Johnson County, Iowa

Section number Additional Documentation Page 38

FLOOR PLAN - Level One  
518 E. Bowery  
Iowa City, Iowa  
Drawn by Mary Bennett



FLOOR PLAN - Level Two  
518 E. Bowery  
Iowa City, Iowa  
Drawn by Mary Bennett



National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Bowery Street Grocery Store

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Figure 1: Exterior of 518 E. Bowery in about 1982.

Figure 2: Exterior of addition and original sheds on north side of lot at 518 E. Bowery in about 1982.

Figure 3: A portion of A. Ruger's 1868 bird's-eye view of Iowa City.

Figure 4: Sanborn fire insurance map, 1899, showing location of grocery at 518 E. Bowery.

Figure 5: Map of South Iowa City in 1917 shows location of Lot 15 of Block 6 of Lyons 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition.

Figure 6: Typical small-scale grocery store interior with woman storekeeper, March 1897.

Figure 7: Interior view of the Sangster Grocery on College Street in Iowa City around 1910.

Figure 8: Interior of grocery store in Sheffield, Iowa, photographed in February 1920.

Figure 9: A new generation of neighborhood grocery stores (Hunter's Grocery, Iowa City, 1938).

Figure 10: Exterior of 518 E. Bowery, Iowa City, when the building served as the first home of  
New Pioneer Food Cooperative, 1971.

Figure 11: Painting of 518 E. Bowery by Matthew Sullivan Wiegand, 2005.

Figure 12: South and east elevations of 518 E. Bowery showing window and door treatments as proposed to  
the Iowa City Historic Preservation Commission by the owners and renovators in 2013.

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Bowery Street Grocery Store

Johnson County, Iowa

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Figure 1: Exterior of 518 E. Bowery in about 1982. Original color slide owned by Richard Hugill. The false front created the illusion of a larger store, while hiding the gable roof line. Typically, a sign appeared on the upper façade and large display windows facing the street showcased products for sale, thus enticing customers into the store.

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Bowery Street Grocery Store

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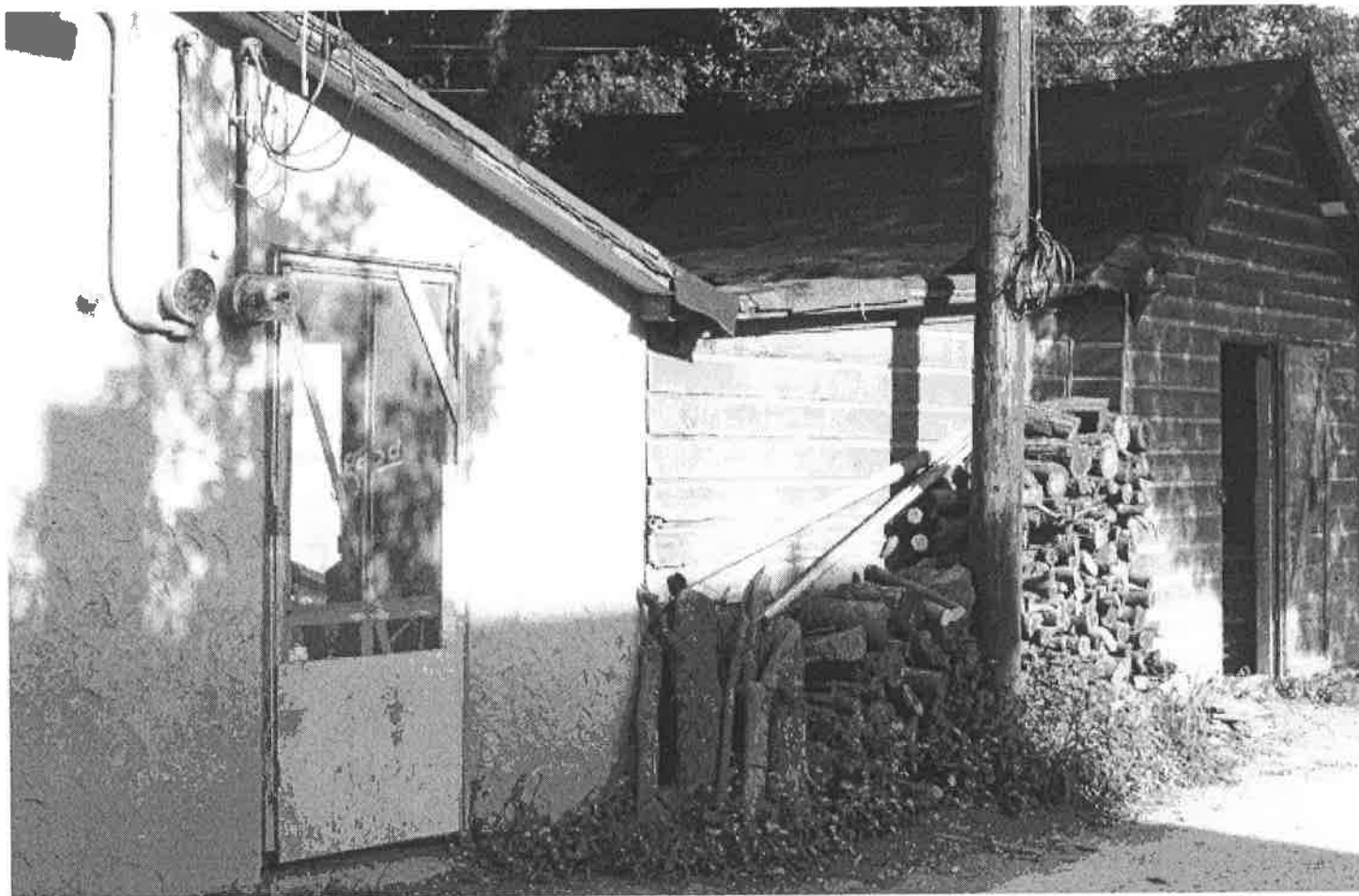


Figure 2: Exterior of addition and original sheds on north side of lot at 518 E. Bowery in about 1982. The door on the alley is now sealed shut. Owner Richard Hugill tore down the shed behind the pile of firewood and the overhead canopy between the store and sheds. In 2004, a garage was built on the footprint of the larger shed on the right. Original color slide owned by Richard Hugill.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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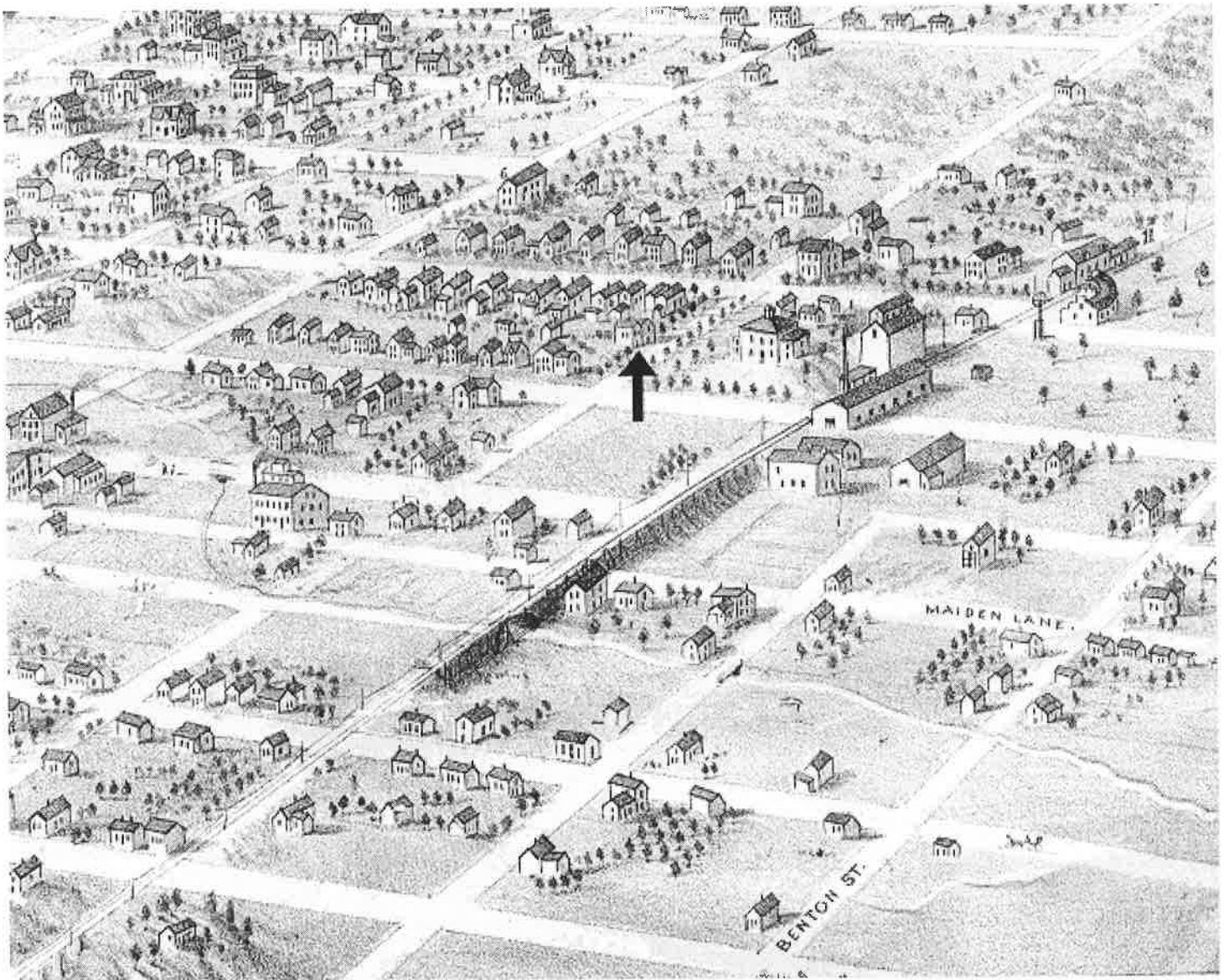


Figure 3: A portion of A. Ruger's 1868 bird's-eye view of Iowa City, showing the location of the railroad depot, bridge, and tracks as well as the factories, mills, and residential areas in the south side of Iowa City. Ralston Creek is pictured in the foreground. Bowery Street, to the left of the railroad tracks extended eastward. Along this main thoroughfare can be seen E.C. Lyon's cupola-topped house standing across the street from the companion house and grocery store buildings at 516 and 518 E. Bowery. *Bird's-eye view of Iowa City, Johnson County, Iowa, 1868*, drawn by A. Ruger. Chicago: Chicago Lithograph Company. Original in Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

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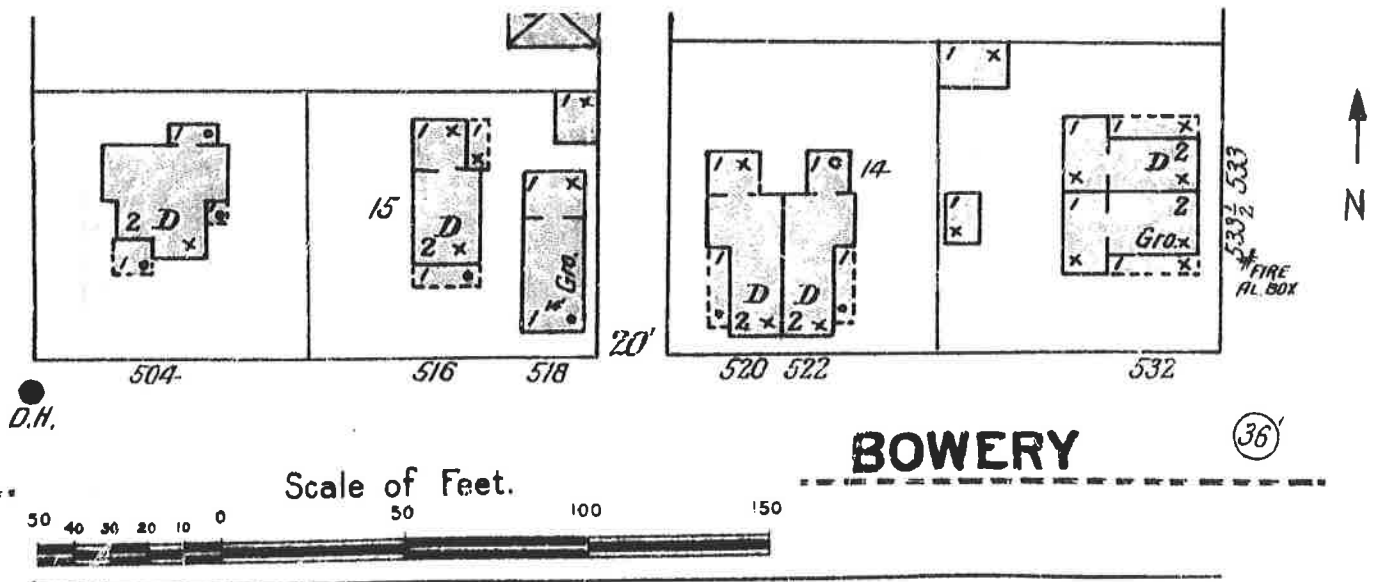


Figure 4: Sanborn fire insurance map, 1899, showing location of grocery at 518 E. Bowery, Iowa City, Iowa. *Insurance Maps of Iowa City, Iowa*. New York: The Sanborn Map Company, 1899.



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Bowery Street Grocery Store

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Figure 5: Map of South Iowa City in 1917 shows location of Lot 15 of Block 6 of Lyons 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition, which E. Lyon sold to John M. Haas in 1856. The storefront built at 518 E. Bowey was right next to the alley, halfway between South Van Buren and South Johnson. Lyon's mansion, Roanoke, and remaining estate were across the street (Lot 8). Lyon donated the land for the depot built by the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad (later Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad), and sold lots to the north for commercial and residential development. In 1898, the passenger depot was moved west of Dubuque Street, but a freight depot and stockyards remained close to Bowery Street. Original in Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

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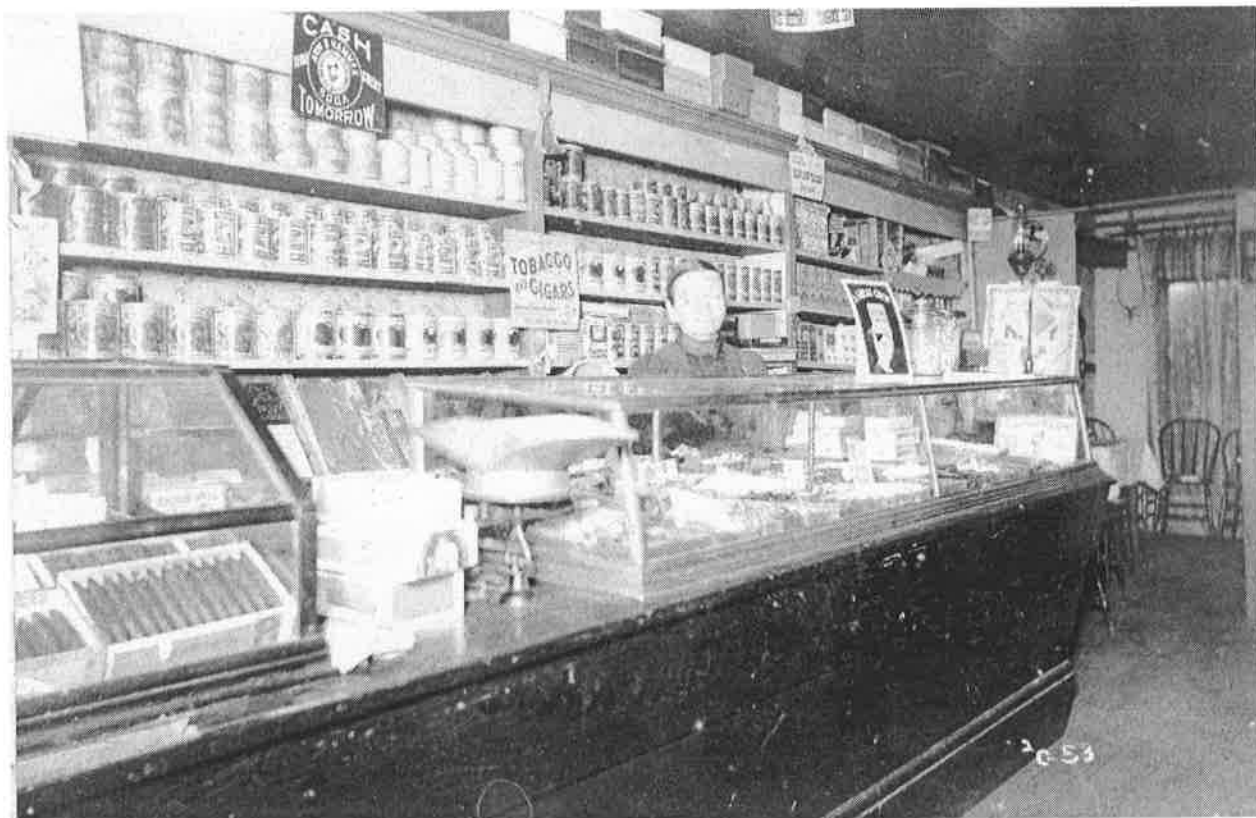


Figure 6: Typically, small-scale grocery stores in Iowa had female proprietors or store clerks like this woman posing in an unknown Iowa town, March 1897. In the back of the store are chairs and a table with a tablecloth, suggesting a small dining area for either customers or family members using the building as a residence. Robert Helmer, whose family owned the grocery at 518 E. Bowery from 1956 to 1969, recalled a table and chairs in the addition at the back of the store, where they could sit down to eat and rest between customers. Original in Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

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Bowery Street Grocery Store

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Figure 7: This interior view of the Sangster Grocery on College Street, in the midst of downtown Iowa City, shows a larger scale operation from around 1910. Located on the first floor of a two-story brick building, the height of the ceiling and depth of the store was greater than the small structure on Bowery Street. Support columns running the length of the store. Original in Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

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Bowery Street Grocery Store

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Figure 8: The interior of this grocery store in Sheffield, Iowa, photographed in February 1920, is not unlike the layout of the store at 518 E. Bowery. On the right side of the photo, the stovepipe from a pot belly stove helps heat the room before venting through a hole in the fireplace. A refrigerated meat locker, cooled by blocks of ice, can be seen in the left back corner. Large windows at the front of the store provide illumination. Original in Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

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Figure 9: A new generation of neighborhood grocery stores sprang up around Iowa City once automobiles were in widespread use. Pictured in 1938, Hunter's Grocery, was situated at the busy intersection of Muscatine Avenue and Court Street in Iowa City. It featured gasoline pumps and a parking area so cars could pull up and park in front of the store. As had been the tradition, owners and operators often occupied living quarters on the second floor, although 20<sup>th</sup> century grocery stores were often more spacious. This brick store on Muscatine Avenue was later covered in stucco. Known as the popular family-run Seaton's Grocery, the store persisted until the mid-1990s, in part because of the high quality meats butchered in-house. Notice the wooden shed used for storage and a little porch area with trellises along the side of the building. The property at 518 E. Bowery had one or two sheds on the north end, joined to the building by a shed roof or canopy. Original in Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

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Figure 10: Exterior of 518 E. Bowery, Iowa City, Iowa, when the building served as the first home of New Pioneer Food Cooperative, 1971. A phone booth can be seen to the right. Photograph taken by Mark Des Meules. Original owned by New Pioneer Food Cooperative.

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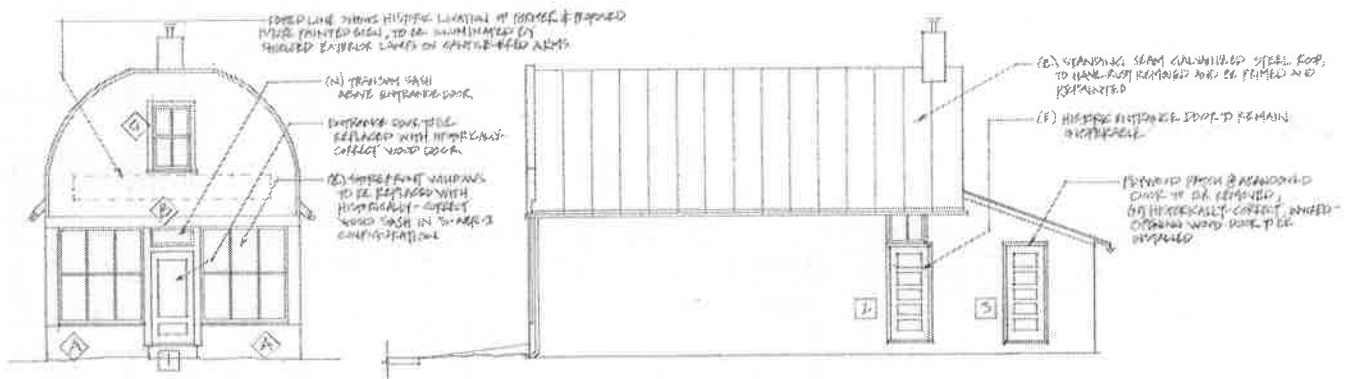
Figure 11: Painting of 518 E. Bowery by Matthew Sullivan Wiegand, 2005. Privately owned.

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SOUTH ELEVATION  
1/24/13

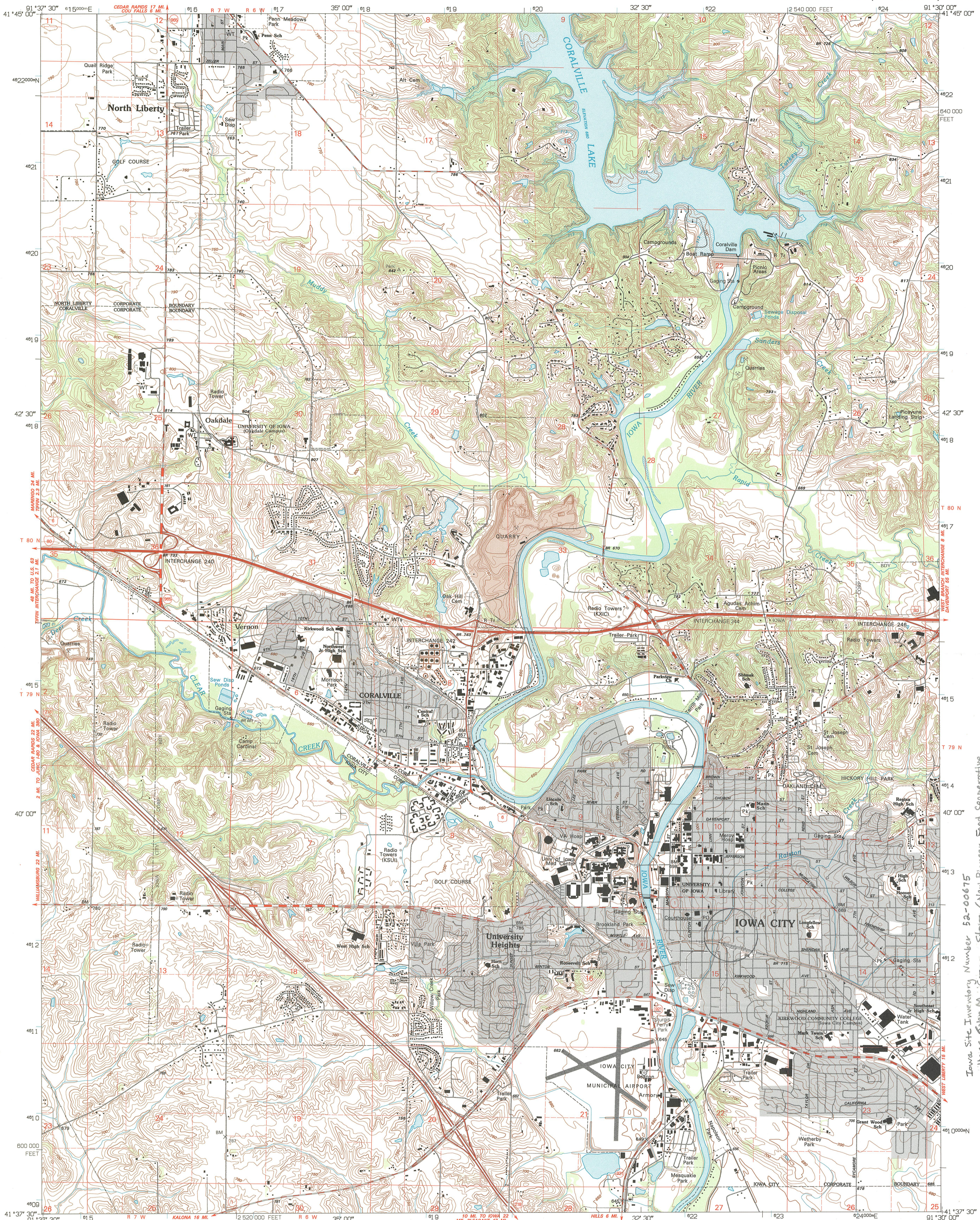
EAST ELEVATION  
1/24/13

518 BOWERY STREET, IOWA CITY, IOWA  
5 FEBRUARY, 2013

KEITH EAKIN & STEVEN ROSENBERG, OWNERS  
PROPOSED EXTERIOR RECONSTRUCTION

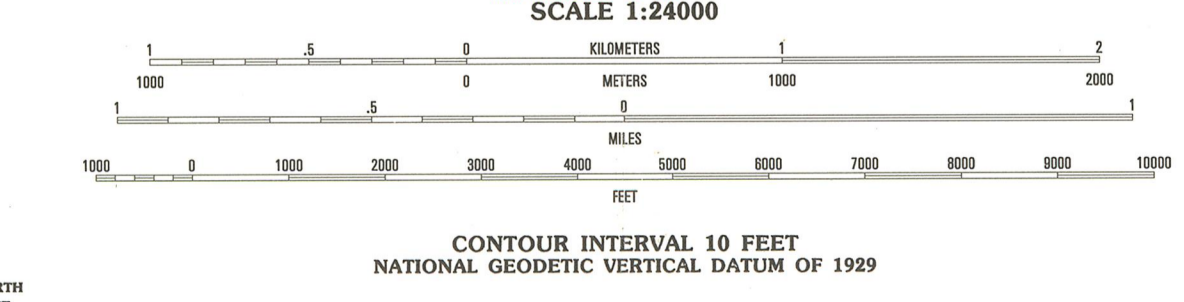
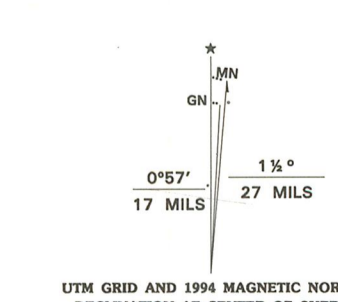
Figure 12: South and east elevations of 518 E. Bowery showing window and door treatments as proposed to the Iowa City Historic Preservation Commission by the owners and renovators in 2013.





Iowa Site Inventory Number 52-00675 Haas, John M., Grocery Store / New Pioneer Food Cooperative 518 E. Bowery Iowa City, Iowa Johnson County

Produced by the United States Geological Survey in cooperation with Iowa Geological Survey Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1964. Field checked 1965. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1990. Field checked 1992. Map edited 1994 North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and blue 1000-meter ticks: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 15 10 000-foot ticks: Iowa coordinate system, south zone North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software Areas covered by dashed light-blue pattern are subject to controlled inundation Gray tint indicates areas 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 unchecke



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

QUADRANGLE LOCATION 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

IOWA CITY WEST, IOWA 41091-F5-TF-024 1994 DMA 7667 II NE-SERIES V876

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092 AND IOWA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



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