

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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received FEB 22 1984

date entered

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic John H. Shoemaker House

and or common Shoemaker-Muhl House

## 2. Location

street & number 116 Second Avenue West  not for publication

city, town Oskaloosa  vicinity of

state Iowa code 019 county Mahaska code 123

## 3. Classification

| Category  | Ownership                                   | Status  | Present Use  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district               | <input type="checkbox"/> public             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied        | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum                       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied                 | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | <input type="checkbox"/> both               | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress           | <input type="checkbox"/> educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                   | <b>Accessible</b>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <input type="checkbox"/> in process         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific                    |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered   | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted          | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation                |
|   | <u>N/A</u>                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> no                         | <input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:                          |

## 4. Owner of Property

name Mrs. Irene Muhl

street & number 116 Second Ave. West

city, town Oskaloosa  vicinity of state Iowa 52577

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk's Office

street & number Mahaska County Courthouse

city, town Oskaloosa state Iowa 52577

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

### Condition

\_\_\_ excellent  
xxx good  
\_\_\_ fair

\_\_\_ deteriorated  
\_\_\_ ruins  
\_\_\_ unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

xxx original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The John H. Shoemake House (1852) is one of two surviving "I-house" designs from the period of original settlement in Mahaska County.\* The house's interior retains early and perhaps original woodwork.

The Shoemake-Muhl house is a good example of early, vernacular architecture. It exemplifies the "I-house" model (single story width, two stories tall, with central hall flanked by single rooms on each floor). The main block faces north and measures 17' by 38'6"; the one story brick wing is at the southeast corner and measures 16' by 27'6". Brick is used throughout. A board and batten lean-to joins the main block and wing on the east; a clapboard addition extended the lean-to in the 1950's; the back porch was also enclosed. An attached, brick garage was added in 1941. Exterior brick is painted white; exterior woodwork is painted green. There is no basement.

The five bay wide facade is symmetrical. Window sash are double hung (6/6). The front entry has transom and two sidelights. The wooden story dorm is of early origin, being possibly original. Lintels and sills are of stone. The front porch is an addition built between 1869 and c. 1880.

An 1869 lithograph of Oskaloosa pictures the house with a low pitched flat roof. Sometime after 1869 the roof was gabled. To make way for rafters, the surrounding parapet was removed on the main facade and rear. Remnants of these rudimentary parapets remain today on the sidewalls. Two courses of corbelled brick form an architrave. The original undeveloped frieze remains.

Four inside-end chimneys with corbelled crowns are symmetrically placed on each gable of the main block (the two southerly ones being false). A fifth, inside-end chimney stands at the gable end of the wing.

The floor plan is central hall, two flanking rooms per floor. Living room and west bedroom have fireplaces. Door trim is plain except living room with corner blocks and parlor with architrave trim. Hardware is mostly box lock and butt hinges.

The Shoemake House impinges on the downtown Oskaloosa business district. The public square is one block diagonally northeast. The Shoemake house is extant today due to its owner's refusal to sell the property for commercial expansion. A matching house located nearby has been lost.

\*The Daniel Nelson Farm house, constructed 1852-3, located northeast of Oskaloosa, is the other example (NHRP 10.11.1979).

## 8. Significance

| Period  | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below    |                            |                            |                     |
|---|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| ___ prehistoric                               | ___ archeology-prehistoric                       | ___ community planning     | ___ landscape architecture | ___ religion        |
| ___ 1400–1499                                 | ___ archeology-historic                          | ___ conservation           | ___ law                    | ___ science         |
| ___ 1500–1599                                 | ___ agriculture                                  | ___ economics              | ___ literature             | ___ sculpture       |
| ___ 1600–1699                                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | ___ education              | ___ military               | ___ social/         |
| ___ 1700–1799                                 | ___ art  | ___ engineering            | ___ music                  | ___ humanitarian    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899 | ___ commerce                                     | ___ exploration/settlement | ___ philosophy             | ___ theater         |
| ___ 1900–                                     | ___ communications                               | ___ industry               | ___ politics/government    | ___ transportation  |
|   |  | ___ invention              |                            | ___ other (specify) |

**Specific dates** 1852 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Shoemake House (1852) is one of two surviving "I-house" designs from the period of original settlement in Mahaska County. The house is a good example of early vernacular architecture influenced by the Federal style. It is the only surviving example of this plan type, executed in brick, in Oskaloosa.

John H. Shoemake (b. 1821) was a successful dry-goods merchant in Oskaloosa. He was born in Tennessee and arrived in Iowa in 1848 via Illinois. Shoemake was also a local politician. He served as Mahaska County Treasurer and Recorder between 1857 and 1860. The importance of the Shoemake house rests on its architectural merit, as Shoemake's historical importance is insufficient for significance on historical grounds.

The census of 1856 testifies that brick was an uncommon building material in Oskaloosa. It counted twenty carpenters, one mason and one bricklayer. Interpolation suggests the ratio of frame to the "better class of buildings." To insure that the residence made a social statement, Shoemake employed the I-house plan, symbolic of economic success in rural society.

Great strength characterizes the brick, load-bearing walls and corbelled brick foundation. The use of near-flat roofs was a technique frequently used in early Oskaloosa. At least six residences in the 1850's were so constructed. The Smith-Johnson House (NHRP) built in 1853 is the only unaltered, extant example, but the material culture of the Shoemake house indicates a similar design. The low pitch of the latter's new roof is a direct result imposed by the constraints of height at the stepped gables. This roof was constructed before living memory.

The Daniel Nelson Farmhouse (NHRP), built 1852–53 is the other example of a brick "I-house" construction in Mahaska County. In comparison, the floor plan of the Shoemake house contains the added luxury of a dining room in its wing.

The Federal style of architecture has influenced the Shoemake house. The stepped gables are similar to the non-extant David Rorer house in Burlington and to the architecture at Nauvoo, Illinois (a Mormon settlement of the same era, largely executed in brick). The Federal style also influenced the massing of chimneys in pairs and an overall concern for symmetry. These elements combine in the Shoemake house to form a rare, surviving example which combines vernacular and Federal architecture.

Inside, the woodwork of the Shoemake house is unusually well preserved. One door exhibits a device whereby its sash slides open along a wooden track to provide ventilation with the outside. The door is very old, and is possibly original from the time of construction. Other doors are hand chamfered and appear worked up from the rough. Window sash appear manufactured and probably are imported.

The present owners, Selmer and Irene Muhl, have lived in the residence more than forty years, longer than any other occupant. Their efforts to preserve the house have resulted in its continued existence today.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheets 9-2, 9-3

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Oskaloosa

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

### UTM References

A 

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|------|---|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|----|---|---|----|
| 1    | 5 | 5 | 2       | 9 | 6 | 8 | 10       | 4 | 5 | 7 | 11 | 1 | 6 | 10 |
| Zone |   |   | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |    |   |   |    |

B 

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| Zone |  |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Zone |  |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

H 

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| Zone |  |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 4, Block 36, Original Plat, City of Oskaloosa.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Text, William Page  
Form, James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Iowa SHPO date 14 February 1984

street & number Historical Building  
E. 12th & Grand Ave. telephone 515-281-4137

city or town Des Moines, state Iowa 50319

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

     national      state XXX local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Adrian A. Anderson*

title Executive Director Iowa State Historical Department date 2/14/84 (see letter)

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*for Melores Byers*  
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the National Register date 3/22/84

Attest: Chief of Registration date

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet

Bibliography

Item number 9

Page 2

P R I M A R Y

- Abstract of Title; Property Mr & Mrs Selmer Muhl; Oskaloosa, IA.  
History of Mahaska County, Iowa; Union Historical Company; Des Moines, IA; 1878; pp 316, 460, 462, 537.
- \* "A Bird's Eye View of the City of Oskaloosa;" Chicago Lithographing Co; Chicago; 1869; drawn by Augustus Koch. Pictures buildings, streets, & landscapes in Oskaloosa. Framed lithograph, Oskaloosa Public Library. Pictures Shoemake-Muhl House with flat roof & without front porch. Also pictures Moreland-Rhinehart House.
- Phillips, Semira A; Proud Mahaska; Oskaloosa, IA; Privately published; 1900; pp 303-4.
- # Iowa Census of 1856; Manuscript Book; pp 904, 988, 998, 1,019; Bureau of Census; Iowa State Historical Dept; Des Moines, IA.
- "Our Town--its Prospect, Advantages, etc.;" The Oskaloosa Herald; 27 August 1852; p 2 c 3.
- "New advertisement of Messrs Shoemake & Kinsman;" The Oskaloosa Herald; 22 Oct 1852; p 2, c 3.
- "Two Old Oskaloosa Dwellings Sold At Auction;" Oskaloosa Daily Herald; 4 Nov 1948; p 1, c 3-5. Pictures M-R House. Photographic image (small snapshot); Views house looking SE. "July 1956/north side/Irene & Selmers house" in pencil. Pictures brick streets; non-extant Dr Wilcox offices; Shoemake-Muhl House without English ivy. Property Mr & Mrs Selmer Muhl.
- Direct Measurements of House; W C Page; 12 July 1983.

S E C O N D A R Y

- "Quaint Houses;" "Oskaloosa, IA: Buildings of Architectural Interest;" Mahaska County Folder; Box 28; Federal Writers' Project; Works Progress Administration; Special Collections; University of Iowa Library; Iowa City, IA. Relates local traditions about the Shoemake-Muhl and Moreland-Rhinehart Houses as current in the 1930s.

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Letter of Correspondence; Charles A Russell to W C Page;  
21 January 1982. Discusses the abstract research  
of Emily Russell. Attachments outline warranty  
deeds concerning Shoemake-Muhl House and Moreland-  
Rhinehart House. Research compliments Johnson Ab-  
stract Company; Oskaloosa, IA.

Kniffen, Fred; "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion;" Annals of the  
Association of American Geographers; December 1965;  
Vol 55, Number 4; pp 549-577. Discusses the American  
"I-House" as diagnostic of settlement patterns.

Informant Interviews: Mr & Mrs Selmer Muhl with W C Page;  
Winter 1982; Summer 1983. The Muhls have lived in the  
Shoemake-Muhl House longer than any other occupant.

@ Hedge, Manoah; Past & Present of Mahaska County, Iowa;" S J Clarke  
Publishing Co; Chicago; 1906; p 115.