

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received NOV 9 1982
date entered

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

1. Name

RAY TOWERS

historic FRANK G. RAY HOUSE & CARRIAGE HOUSE

and/or common RAY TOWERS

2. Location

street & number 912 First Avenue, not for publication

city, town Vinton, vicinity of

state Iowa code 19 county Benton code 011

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 (s)
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<i>N/A</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Ray Towers (partnership)

street & number c/o Thomas I. Bolenbaugh, 333 East 80th Street

city, town New York, vicinity of state New York 10021

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder & Treasurer's Offices, Benton County Courthouse

street & number Benton County Courthouse

city, town Vinton, state Iowa

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

A quiet residential neighborhood is the setting for the Ray House. Although it is older than most of the post-1900 dwellings, the house fits well with these predominantly wood homes. A spirited melange of original and historical motifs, the house is an excellent example of late Victorian/ Queen Anne architecture. Many original interior features, such as ornate built-in wrought iron and glass light fixtures, remain, providing a further insight into nineteenth century tastes. The structure also calls attention to the financial success Frank G. Ray achieved, his working relationship with local lumber moguls Cornelius and A.H. Ellis, and the regional dominance of the Iowa Canning Company, once touted as the largest corn cannery in the world.

From its wraparound front porch with fretwork to its fishscale shingle to its three decorative chimneys, the Ray House displays the complexity of shapes, textures and motifs typical of the Queen Anne style. The three-story round tower, the portecochere and the small porches peeping out from all stories especially contribute to the house's visual complexity. The accompanying carriage house continues such elements as decorative shingles and an irregular roofline and is topped with a cupolacum-weather vane.

A front door etched with the original owner's name opens onto a large and richly textured foyer. Oak wainscoting and balusters, three to a rise, one turned, two smooth provide an opulence as do the curious light fixtures. A large teardrop globe partly ensconced by curly iron ornament is mounted on the newel post; two more lights having ruffly glass shades, curve out below the dominant globe. A similar fixture hangs from the ceiling.

Although the house was converted to apartments in 1935, much of the original flavor of the dwelling persists. Even the exterior fire escape and staircase do not seriously intrude onto the building's integrity. A small side rear porch has probably been enclosed and it seems likely that a side bay once had a railing or other decoration on its roof. A two-stall garage addition was added to the carriage house

The Benton County Assessor's offices places construction of both house and carriage house at 1890, and this is consistent with both their style and the career of Frank G. Ray.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1890

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Frank G. Ray was a dealer in farm machinery and coal and active in various business ventures in Benton County, but it was his association with the Iowa Canning Company that is of primary historical importance. No shoestring operation, the now defunct cannery once had seven plants in the state and owned and operated 1,000 acres of farmland. At its peak it reportedly produced 10 million cans of sweet corn a season.

Illinois native Ray arrived in Vinton in 1873 to join an implement and coal business. The venture prospered, opening a branch in Spencer. In 1884 Ray bought out his partner in the Vinton store, which he operated until selling it in 1909. Despite selling the business, he retained ownership of the related buildings and coalyards. Besides his coal and implement business, Ray invested in the State Bank of Vinton where he was one of the directors.

By far the most successful of his investments, however, was the Iowa Canning Company, "packers and shippers of the famous Iowa sugar corn." Ray was secretary of this, the largest corporation in Benton County and reportedly the largest corn canning business in the world, according to a 1909 county history and the company's fertile imagination. Regardless of the truth of this claim, the business was indeed a major employer in the region from its inception in 1892. Ray and W.C. Ellis, a lumber dealer and prominent Vinton businessman, organized it with H.B. Kelley, who sold out three years later. The cannery was probably the second in the vicinity, after the short-lived effort of Samuel H. Watson in 1880 to establish a corn and tomato cannery. At one time, the Iowa Canning Company advertised 23 different brands of corn.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Vinton

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	5	80	6	4	0	4	6	68	0	30
Zone	Easting			Northing							

B

Zone	Easting			Northing							

C

Zone	Easting			Northing							

D

Zone	Easting			Northing							

E

Zone	Easting			Northing							

F

Zone	Easting			Northing							

G

Zone	Easting			Northing							

H

Zone	Easting			Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 6 & 7, Block 22, Tilford's Addition to South Vinton.
This is the property associated with the building.

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

state Iowa code 19 county Benton code 011

state _____ code _____ county _____ code _____

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James Jacobsen

organization Office of Historic Preservation date October 13, 1982

street & number East 12th & Grand Avenue telephone (515) 281-6825

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 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 D. Anderson

title Executive Director Iowa State Historical Dept. date Nov. 1, 1982

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 12/10/82

for Melvyn Byrum
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Continuation sheet

Item number

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BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Vinton Semi-Weekly Eagle, 10 January 1905.

J.F. Traer, "Benton County, Iowa," typed manuscript, Iowa Historical Library, c. 1940, pp. 12-13.

Luther B. Hill, ed., History of Benton County, 2 vols., (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., c. 1909), s: 425.

"Illustrated Souvenir Booklet of 1909, Vinton, Iowa. County Seat of Benton County. Commercial Center of Benton County in the State of Iowa." (n.p.: Booster Club of Vinton). Ray house is pictured.

*Benton County Assessor's Office.