

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

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received MAR 11 1986

date entered 4-28-86

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

1. Name

historic Economy Advertising Company

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 119-23 N. Linn _____ not for publication

city, town Iowa City _____ vicinity of

state Iowa code 019 county Johnson code 103

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Towncrest Investments Associates

street & number 2405 Towncrest Drive

city, town Iowa City _____ vicinity of state Iowa 52240

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Johnson County Courthouse

city, town Iowa City _____ vicinity of state Iowa 52240

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title North Side Commercial Survey has this property been determined eligible? ^{N/A} yes no

date 1981 _____ federal _____ state _____ county local

depository for survey records Iowa OHP

city, town Des Moines _____ vicinity of state Iowa 50319

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

Samuel W. Mercer (1858-1928) had this building constructed in 1923 to house the Economy Advertising Company of which he was president. The builder is undetermined. The company continues today, as in the past, to specialize in quality commercial printing.

The Economy Advertising Company Building faces east. It comprises one rectangle measuring 80' x 158'. Short side serves as facade. The rectangle is divided into two sections. Front section measures 80' x 140', has two stories, and houses offices. Rear section measures 80' x 118', is one story, and houses the print room. Floor of rear section is approximately 4' higher than front section. (The lot slopes upward east to west).

The building is a simple architectural design, an asymmetrical two story block which in its design tends toward the modern commercial front. Decoration is restrained throughout the building.

Foundation and first floor are poured concrete. Brick piers and wood posts support the roof. Curtain walls are tile block faced with red brick.

Facade appears nearly symmetrical. Window frames are fixed, steel, and commercial design. Sills are cast concrete; lintels are steel plates. Each window frame has an inset awning window with six lights. First floor features four windows and one entryway penetrations. Two window penetrations flank entryway to the south. Each contains triple frames. Two window penetrations flank entryway to north but here only one contains a triple frame while the other is single frame. Such window arrangement offsets entryway to north and injects a note of asymmetry to facade. The aluminum entryway replaced the original, wooden one in 1973. Each window frame on first floor contains 25 lights.

Second floor of facade features eight window penetrations. Frames are grouped singly and in pairs and form a symmetry. Each frame contains twenty lights and an inset awning window of six lights.

A shallow, stepped parapet surmounts the second floor. A name plaque of cast concrete is located centrally in the step. Plaque reads "Economy Advertising Company." A line of outset brick frames the plaque and also features corner blocks of cast concrete. This latter material repeats the color of the plaque and together with window sills contrasts with brick color.

South and north walls have an exposed portion of foundation along the one story section of the building. Walls are tile block faced with brick. Walls have many window penetrations. Window frames are intermixed, original steel frames remaining in some penetrations and other infilled with plywood and small, modern awning windows of wood.

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	xx literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	___ architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	humanitarian
___ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
xx 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1923–33 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion A: History/trends.

The Economy Advertising Company Building best calls attention to The Midland literary magazine (1915-1934) and its founder/editor, John Towner Frederick (1893-1975). The Midland gave voice to regional literature in the Middle West at a time when the East Coast dominated literary life in America. The Economy Advertising Company (c1896-present) typeset, printed and bound every edition of The Midland.

Frederick pursued a peripatetic career in academics. He used many sites to house The Midland's offices, none of which obtains particular merit in calling attention to the magazine. Economy Advertising Company provided him a base of operations and reliable source for the physical composition of the magazine. Economy Advertising also provided financial support. The company can rightly claim considerably credit for The Midland's life and success.

John Towner Frederick was born in Adams County (Section 33 west of Corning, Iowa; no original structures extant on land) the son of Oliver Robert Frederick and Mae Towner Frederick.

In 1915, at age 23, John Frederick completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Iowa, served as minister for the Congregational Church in Centerdale, married Esther Paulis, and founded the literary magazine, The Midland. In subsequent years, Frederick "set what is probably a record for lengthy and diverse teaching career" (Reigelman, p. 58). In a fifty-seven year period, Frederick was to serve as Professor of English at four major universities (University of Iowa 1923-30; University of Pittsburgh 1922-23; Northwestern University, 14 years; Notre Dame, 14 years and head of English Department). He received his BA (1915) and MA (1917) at Iowa, his PhD at Notre Dame. He retired in 1963 but continued to serve as a visiting professor at Iowa until his death in 1975.

Frederick's accomplishments were many. Most notably, he founded and edited The Midland, which was noted for its consistently high quality. The magazine outlived eleven other contemporary journals founded that same year. Its endurance is credited to Frederick's "...thorough going dedication of his aim of producing a significant and high quality magazine" (Bush, p. 14). The magazine was founded with the goal of establishing a "forum" for Midwestern writers who were not then being accepted by the Eastern Literary journals which dominated that national literary scene. H. L. Menken, the sage of Baltimore, considered--characteristically in hyperbole--The Midland "... probably the most important literary magazine ever published in America" (Bush, p. 15). According to Sargent Bush in "The Achievement of John T. Frederick," The Midland "...was never the place where major midwestern authors published their material... it was still an important forum for writers of less promise who were less well established and who lacked influential contacts in the publishing world."

Frederick critiqued each submitted manuscript personal and in great detail. A notable poet described Frederick's letters of rejection as "lyrical" (Engle

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Iowa City West

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	6	2	2	2	6	10	4	6	1	3	2	4	10
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

Refer to Continuation Sheet 7-2.

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 Form by James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator
Text by William C. Page, Public Historian, Richland, Iowa

organization Iowa Office of Historic Preservation date February 26, 1986
Iowa State Historical Department

street & number 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 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 *Rowell G. Soike*

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date February 28, 1986

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

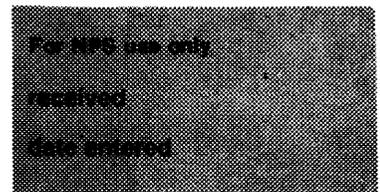
J. Nelson Byers date 4/28/86
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet Description Item number 7 Page 2

West wall has four window penetrations infilled with plywood and seven small, modern awning windows of wood. Heavy ivy vegetations covers west all and westerly portion of south wall.

Over the years, the north wall of the Economy Building has been tied into the south wall of the neighboring Union Brewery Building through the construction of a one story shed at rear of building, a two story unit midway along wall, and a loading dock covered by a 20' x 55' second story near facade. These additions have provided a needed access between Economy and Union, which, indeed, were both owned and used by the printing company for its operations.

A brick parapet surrounds the north, east, and south walls. Parapet is stepped down once between two story front and one story rear section. Parapet is also stepped down once along east-west walls about midpoint along the rear section. Tie coping caps parapet along its total length.

Roof has two, flat-surfaced levels which reflect the bi-story configuration of the building. Rear roof slopes downward from east to west. Rear roof also has four skylights. Roof surface is stand built-up system of paper, tar, and gravel ballast.

A brick chimney stands at west wall and measures approximately 39' high. Scale of chimney and design are industrial.

North Linn Street runs nearly level in front of the Economy Advertising Building; the lot slopes upward to the west. There is a small, grass dooryard in front of the building with two maple trees. St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church (National Register of Historic Places) stands south of the Economy Building separated by an alley. The mass of St. Mary's and of Union Brewery anchor visually this city block. The Economy Building sits lightly on the ground and its linear feeling provides an interesting contrast. The broader neighborhood is a mix of commercial and residential buildings.

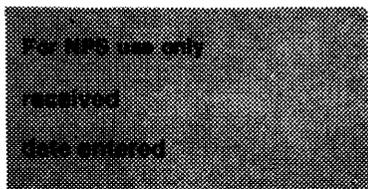
10-2 Geographical Data:

Beginning at the southeast corner of Lot 1 of Block 67 of the Original Town Plat of Iowa City, Iowa, thence north approximately 80 feet, thence west approximately 57 feet along a brick wall, thence south approximately 20 feet along a brick wall, thence west approximately 22 feet along a brick wall, thence north approximately 5 feet along a brick wall, thence west approximately 24 feet along a brick wall, thence north approximately 20 feet along a brick wall, thence south approximately 11 feet along a brick wall, thence west to the west boundary line of Lot 2 of Block 67, thence south to the southwest corner of Lot 2, thence east to the southeast corner of Lot 1, the point of beginning.

Includes the subject building, structurally free standing, including those portions of that building which connect it with the Union Brewery Building due north. A small parking area is included to the west rear of the building. Any portion of the Wesleyan Campus Ministry building, due west is excluded as being intrusive to this nomination (a bay window of same is said to intrude onto this property).

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interview). Frederick's coaching and encouragement of countless young authors and writers influenced the careers of many more writers than were actually accepted by The Midland. (Over the years, a total of 454 writers' works were published). In addition to poetry and short stories, The Midland was noted for its book reviews, editorials, and columns, which were written by Frederick and his various co-editors.

By 1923 Frederick considered the original goal of The Midland to have been accomplished, and he broadened the geographic scope of the magazine to include other regions. Seven years later, in 1930, he moved the magazine to Chicago when he went to Northwestern. By 1933, when economic factors finally doomed the magazine, The Midland was truly a national literary magazine.

The first eight years of publishing produced the greatest portion of short stories of publishing produced the greatest portion of short stories and poetry. Many of these early, young authors either faded from the literary scene or died before they acquired notariety. Of a toal of 337 stories printed in The Midland, 324 were considered to be of high merit, and 105 of the highest ranking. The magazine was never financially self-support and Frederick personally covered yearly deficits.

Frederick was the first educator to originate and teach an "American Literature Course" at a major Amercian university. He did this at the University of Iowa in 1923. Following his return from the University of Pittsburgh in that same year, Frederick, along with Frank Luther Mott (The Midland's sometime co-editor), organized a literary forum, the Saturday Luncheon Club. This organization was a forerunner of the Iowa Writer's Workshop and hosted noted writers in America to speak. During this period Frederick defended the rights of controversial speakers to appear at these meetings. Further research will provide additional context for Frederick's activity in this regard.

Frederick was a writer himself and authored several novels. He credited his direct experience with farming for providing the inspiration and realism that characterized the "regional" nature of his writing. During his writing career, his summer farm in Glennie, Michigan provided refuge and inspiration for his work (purchased 1919).

Frederick's life was closely tied to Iowa City, both in his early years and his years of retirement. He had a continuous, although fluctuating relationship with the University of Iowa. His residence changed as his faculty positions changed with the following addresses in Iowa City:

1915-16	Research Assistant, English	1105 N. Summit
1916-17	Instructor, English	1105 N. Summit
1921-22	Faculty Lectuer, English	14 E. Court Street
1923-25	Assistant Professor, English	707 N. Dodge Street

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1925-29	Associate Professor, English	502 Iowa (non-extant)
1929-30	Professor, English	809 Iowa

None of these Iowa City houses was owned or built by Frederick. The house with the longest period of occupancy, 502 Iowa, was demolished in July 1975. The 1005 Summit building served as Frederick's first Iowa City residence and was his home when he founded The Midland. There is no evidence that Frederick's homes served any significant role in his literary work. University space housed his personal office, meeting room, and The Midland office while he lived in Iowa City. Living memory associates this office as on the ground floor of University (now Jessup) Hall (Maxwell and Engle interviews). Throughout the existence of The Midland, the Economy Advertising Company Building provided a base of operations for the magazine. Frederick clearly valued this business relationship highly as he chose to retain this company's services throughout The Midland's life.

Frederick's first wife died in 1954 and he remarried (Gertrude Carberry Paulis) in June 1960 in Iowa City. He retired in 1963 and moved to his wife's farm ten miles southwest of Iowa City. He died 31 January 1975, age 81, leaving four sons and six grandchildren. Frederick was buried in Glennie, Michigan.

As noted in the opening paragraph, the Economy Advertising Company Building best calls attention to Frederick's career with The Midland. Frederick had worked at Economy as an apprentice while a student at the University of Iowa. He later wrote in The Midland "at the very beginning of The Midland's history, I was an apprentice for a time in this establishment. Then I became acquainted with John Springer, a true printer in the finest old tradition of the craft; and in the years that have followed I have owed much of my interest and pleasure in typography to him. The typographical design of The Midland in its earlier years was due in large part to Mr. Springer" ("Typographical Note," The Midland; Vol. IXXX No. 1).

Part of The Midland's appeal was its physical beauty. "Some little magazines of the era, like Yvor Winger's Gyroscope, were mimeographed. But Midland was a painstakingly designed, carefully made magazine with watermarked, deckle-edged octavo pages bound in an attractive tan cover. John Springer, an ex-legislator, book collector, and master printer in what Frederick called 'the finest old tradition of the craft,' was responsible for the magazine's initial design and for maintaining its printed quality. Even though Frederick was to move around frequently, throughout Midland's existence it was always printed under Springer's direction in the Economy Advertising Company, an Iowa City printing firm still in existence: (Reigelman; The Midland, A Venture in Literary Regionalism; p. 5).

Frank Luther Mott, a sometime co-editor of The Midland, says that Economy advertising also supplied important financial support for the magazine. Willis Mercer, president of the company, "was the most generous of printers, and took a deep personal interest in the magazine; we paid him what now seems the unbelievable

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small sum of a hundred dollars a month, which certainly allowed him little or no profit" (Mott; The Midland; Palimpsest; 1962; p. 141).

The Economy Advertising Company Building obtains some historical significance in its own right. Samuel W. Mercer (1858-1928) founded the company about 1896. Mercer had settled in Iowa City in the early 1890s. He bought a newspaper print shop and became involved in the advertising speciality business. The business was incorporated in 1904. In the early years, Economy printed calendars, yardsticks, lead pencils, gas dip sticks, newspaper carrier bags, carpenters' aprons, and other items with advertising. The printing of advertising calendars with attractive, quality graphics was a speciality. (It remains the business' staple product today).

Samuel Mercer was a businessman with reputation in Iowa. He was one of the founders in 1903 of the Iowa Manufacturers Association. He was also the organization's first treasurer. In 1907 Mercer served as president. This organization is now known as the Association of Business and Industry and remains located in Des Moines. The Association continues to pursue its original goal: to promote business in Iowa. It is a voluntary trade association. Economy Advertising Company is one of several charter members still in business.

In 1923 Mercer built the present office and printing house for Economy. He also purchased the adjacent Union Brewery for a storage and print room facility.

Economy Advertising has published hard back books under the "Clio Press" imprint. It printed for many years The Palimpsest, organ of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Economy published an important series of literary works, "The Whirling World," under the editorship of Frank Luther Mott. These included:

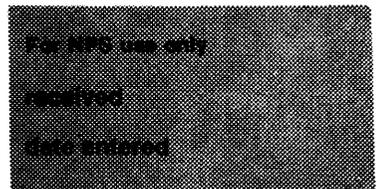
- #1. Revolt against the City by Grant Wood.
- #2. Shroud My Body Down by Paul Green.
- #3. Carter Any Pilgrims by Edwin Ford Piper.
- #4. Iowa, O Iowa! by Hamlin Garland.

In 1986 the Economy Advertising Company continues to pursue a healthy business. Raymond L. Bywater, grandson of Samuel W. Mercer, is now Chairman of the Board. William Bywater, Raymond L. Bywater's son, is president of the firm. Economy is building a new office/printing house complex in Iowa City and plans to relocate there in Spring 1986. The printing of calendars remains the business' staple product. The firm has sold its book binding equipment.

In conclusion to this statement of significance, the Economy Advertising Company Building best calls attention to John Towner Frederick's The Midland. The magazine's editorial office followed the peripatetic career of Frederick but no one of his personal offices can claim more importance than another. Because of

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Economy's reliability and financial assistance, the Economy Advertising Company Building can legitimately claim direct significance to The Midland for National Register of Historic Places listing. Concerning Frederick's importance other buildings might qualify in this respect, but these would probably be at Northwestern University or Notre Dame where Frederick spent his most active teaching years.

for more than a quarter century.....

**The Economy
Advertising Co.**

Iowa City, Iowa

HAS PRINTED AND BOUND

*De Luxe Editions
College Annuals
Periodicals.*

Every issue of *The Midland*
has been printed and
bound in our plant.

Back Page of back cover, The Midland ,
IVII:2, March/April 1931.

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"John Springer, Iowa City, Hurt in Fall, Is Dead;" (Obituary); Democrat; Davenport, IA; 23 March 1937. "Because of his reputation as one of the state's best proof-readers, he was often consulted by University of Iowa professors, lawyers and public speakers on the wording of their manuscripts and writings."
"Willis W. Mercer, Business Leader Here, Dies Today;" (Obituary); Iowa City Press-Citizen; 12 December 1956; p. 1 with photo portrait. Prominent placement of obituary indicates stature of Mercer in the community.
"Prominent Business Man Dies in South/Samuel Mercer Dies in Florida;" (Obituary); The Daily Iowan, Iowa City, IA: 13 January 1928. "In 1904 Mr. Mercer, W. D. Canon and Walter I. Pratt, established the Economy advertising company of which Mr. Mercer has been president ever since."
City Honors S. W. Mercer;" (Obituary); Iowa City Press-Citizen; 14 January 1928; p. 7, c. 1.
"Final Rites for Samuel W. Mercer; Many Groups Pay Tribute to Local Man;" Iowa City Press-Citizen; 17 January 1928; p. 2. c.3.
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- Frederick, John Towner; Editorial Note; The Midland; Vol. VII #1, January 1921; pp. 63-64. "The editor cherishes an ambition, perhaps inconsequential, some day to print with his own hands certain of the books he likes best... although the pages which he reads show too plainly the mark of the machine and too little of the workman, he cannot but give thanks for them to all living and dead masters of that great craft in which he is the most humble of apprentices."
Advertisement; The Midland; Vol. XVII #2; March/April 1931; Back cover; "Every issue of Midland printed and bound by Economy."
Announcement; "We Have Moved our office to the New Building on Linn Street, just North of St. Mary's Church. Economy Advertising Co. Phone 98." Iowa City Press-Citizen; 14 December 1923; p. 14, c. 1-2. Same announcements 15 December 1923.
Frederick, John Towner; "Typographical Note;" The Midland; Vol. XIII #1; May 1931; p. 36. Praises John Springer as a master typographic craftsman.
Iowa City City Directories; 1915; 1924; 1926; 1928; 1930.

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ORAL INFORMANTS

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- Paul Engle, Poet and Professor Emeritus, University of Iowa; Telephone interview with W. C. Page; 21 January 1986.
- Baldwin Maxwell, Professor Emeritus and sometime Chairman Department of English, University of Iowa; Telephone interview with W. C. Page; 21 January 1986.
- Wilber Schramm; Professor Emeritus; Department of English; Stanford University. Source of potential information. Currently: East-West Center; Honolulu, HI.
- Frank Paluka; Director Special Collections; The University Libraries; University of Iowa; Telephone interview with W. C. Page; 28 January 1986.