

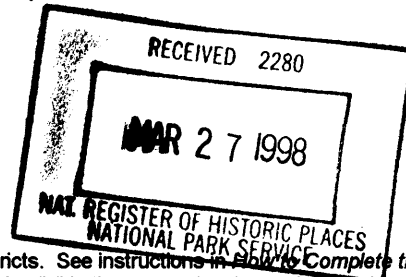
FEB 19 1998

NPS Form 10-900  
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



386

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in **NPS Form 10-900a**. Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Witwer Grocery Company Building

other names/site number OSADA

### 2. Location

street & number 905 3rd Street, SE N/A  not for publication

city or town Cedar Rapids N/A  vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Linn code 113 zip code 52403

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( see continuation sheet for additional comments).

Patricia Oulertkin DSITPO 2-26-98  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA**

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Jude McClelland

5/1/98

determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Witwer Grocery Company Building  
Name of Property

Linn County, IA  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

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

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

Commercial & Industrial Development of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, c.1865-c.1945

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: manufacturing facility

COMMERCE: warehouse

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof SYNTHETICS: rubber

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

COMMERCE

**Period of Significance**

1946

**Significant Dates**

1946

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Blahnik & Berger

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

Witwer Grocery Company Building  
Name of Property

Linn County, IA  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** less than 1 acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 [1] [5] [6] [1] [0] [9] [8] [0] [4] [6] [4] [7] [3] [7] [0]  
Zone Easting Northing

2 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]  
Zone Easting Northing

3 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

4 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

[ ] See continuation sheet

**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 Marlys A. Svendsen, Svendsen Tyler, Inc.

organization for Metro Area Housing Program, Inc. date 9/97

street & number N3834 Deep Lake Road telephone (715) 469-3300

city or town Sarana state WI zip code 54870

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the complete form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Metro Area Housing Program, Inc.

street & number 701 Center Point Rd., NE telephone (319) 362-3297

city or town Cedar Rapids state IA zip code 52402

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

**Narrative Description**

*Site:* The Witwer Grocery Company Building is located on Lots 3, 4 and 5 of Block 13 of Carpenter's 2nd Addition. This parcel comprises a level lot measuring 140 feet by 162 feet located at the southwest corner of the intersection of 3rd Street SE and 9th Avenue SE. It is adjacent to the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad corridor that follows the alignment of 9th Avenue as it approaches the railroad bridge that crosses the Cedar River connecting east and west Cedar Rapids. An abandoned railroad spur line is immediately adjacent to the building. The Milwaukee Railroad corridor is south of the central business district in a section of the city containing commercial and industrial structures dating from the 1880s through the 1970s. Across the railroad tracks to the north is the yard of the former Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific RR and several one-story automobile repair garages. To the west is a six-story masonry building erected as a wholesale drug warehouse in 1925. An abandoned railroad siding extends along the south edge of the Witwer Grocery Company Building with the half-block to the south containing a parking lot and open space. This area formerly contained Monroe School which was adapted for use as the Witwer Grocery Company's first warehouse in 1923. Across Third Street to the east are a series of one and two-story storage buildings and the diagonal right-of-way of the Rock Island RR connecting the Fourth Street railroad corridor to the former Rock Island RR yard north of the Witwer Grocery Company Building.

Third Street is a two-lane, two-way street with concrete sidewalks, standard curbs and gutters, parallel parking spaces along both sides of the street. It provides the principal access route between the downtown and the Bohemian business district located between 11th Avenue SE and 14th Avenue SE along 3rd Street. Cedar Rapids' central business district lies to the north between 1st Avenue and 6th Avenue SE and between the riverfront and 5th Street SE. The neighborhood is more completely described in Chapter E-ii. ("Industrial Corridors in Cedar Rapids, 1865 - 1945: Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Corridor," p.39) in Section E of the Multiple Property Documentation Form for "Commercial and Industrial Development of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, c 1865-c.1945."

*Building:* This 5-story building has an exposed steel frame with 12" brick curtain walls laid in a running bond, a concrete foundation, and concrete floors set on steel decks. The rectangular floor plan is 120 feet by 158 feet. A simple cast stone or concrete beltcourse separates the first floor from the upper levels and five rows of projecting brick above a course of soldier bricks set off the cornice. Brick pilasters divide the 3rd Street facade into six bays and 9th Avenue facade into eight bays. Along the east facade (3rd Street), the first floor has four-light plate glass windows topped by two-light transoms in the three bays south of the entrance. A horizontal glass block transom extends above the entrance for the full width of the bay. Immediately north of the entrance, is a single opening containing a metal window with 8 lights. The next two bays to the north contain pairs of 32-light metal sash. All of the sash of the first floor are replacement sash matching the design of the original windows. In the upper levels, matching replacement sash are of two types. Along the second floor facing 3rd Street are wood 1/1 double-hung windows with transoms above. The other windows have metal frames with metal muntins and contain 32, 28, 24 or 20 lights depending on which level they are located (32-lights - first floor; 28-lights - second floor; 24-lights - third floor; and 20-lights - fourth and fifth floors). The bottom two rows of lights are grouped into two awning windows with the balance of the lights fixed. All of the

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Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

windows were installed as a part of the Certified Rehabilitation of the property completed during 1996 and 1997.

The south facade contains the new entrances for the building. They are located to the left and right of the original elevator shaft in former window openings with transoms above the plate glass doors similar in configuration to the original window sash. Openings that formerly served as railroad freight loading doors along this facade have been retained with fixed corrugated metal panels installed in place of the movable doors. One of the new doors enters the atrium near the center of the wall and the second opens into the community room. Separate corrugated metal shed roofs extend above each of the openings and the windows to either side. A ramped concrete deck extends along approximately one-half of the building providing handicapped access to both the atrium entrance and the community room entrance. A simple painted steel pipe balustrade extends along the concrete ramp. Like the east facade, multi-light windows fill all of the upper levels except the bay containing the freight elevator and the south bay of the fifth floor.<sup>1</sup>

The north facade faces 9th Avenue, the Milwaukee Railroad corridor, and the railroad spur built to the building's original eight freight loading doors. Each of these openings originally contained overhead wood plank doors. These have been filled with a fixed panel containing four lights (upper lights taller than the lower lights). A low profile, corrugated metal shed roof extends over the rail freight loading doors along the right half of the north facade. Three metal window sash containing 16 lights (2x8) provide light for the rail loading area. Horizontal four-light windows provide light to the basement level in this area as well.

Three truck loading bays were originally built at the east end of this facade. The original paneled overhead doors have been restored and maintained as operable. The wood and glass panels are configured in seven rows with the middle three rows glass and the balance wood. Each door is eight panels wide. The truck loading bays have glass block transoms extending their full width. Together the transoms and door lights provide considerable interior light in the loading bays when the doors are closed. A fourth bay near the center of the building was altered during the period of ownership by the Witwer Grocery Co. but has now been partially restored. The bottom two rows of wood panels are not installed in this opening leaving the raised concrete floor level exposed. The fourth bay's transom has been restored to match the three intact bays. On the upper levels of the north facade multi-light windows fill the bays with dimensions matching those described earlier. The only exception is the bay containing the stairwell.

The west facade faces an adjacent 6-story warehouse. Window openings are the same size and located in the same spots as on the other three walls. Penthouses located midway along the west and east sides house elevator equipment and on the west side, a stair case to the roof. The flat roof is

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<sup>1</sup>At the time the Witwer Grocery Company Building was constructed, it faced the 1-story warehouse built around the former Monroe School to the south. An opening between the two buildings once provided a corridor for a rail spur connected to the main line of the Rock Island Railroad which followed 4th Street one block away.

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Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

covered with a tar and aggregate stone finish with four multi-light hipped skylights in the center above the building's atrium. This is an added feature of the 1996-1997 rehabilitation.

Prior to its closure as a food factory and warehouse the interior floor plan of the building had bottling, storage and loading areas located on the first floor; office areas and processing space on the second floor; and cold storage and processing spaces on the upper floors (see "How the Building Operated" in Section 8 below). On the first floor, interior loading bays were at ground level with one bay walled off from the other three for inclement weather delivery. Entrance to the building was by a door off 3rd Street located mid-way along the wall. Two freight elevators were located mid-way along the east and west walls and stairs were located mid-way along the south wall and set in about 20' midway along the east wall (3rd Street).

The building was originally designed to have floor-to-ceiling height reduced for each of the five levels in the building beginning with the first floor - 16' ; second floor - 14' ; third floor - 12' ; fourth & fifth floors - 10' . A compressor for the cooling system was located on the fifth floor which provided a chilling system for storage of perishable food products in cold storage rooms located on the fourth floor. The bottling works operation was originally located on the first floor. No equipment from any of the food products factory operation remained prior to the commencement of the current rehabilitation. Interior room spaces were created on the first and fifth floors along the 3rd Street side. Except for these rooms, the cold storage spaces, restrooms, elevators, and stairwells, the floors consisted of open areas interrupted only by the structural steel support system.

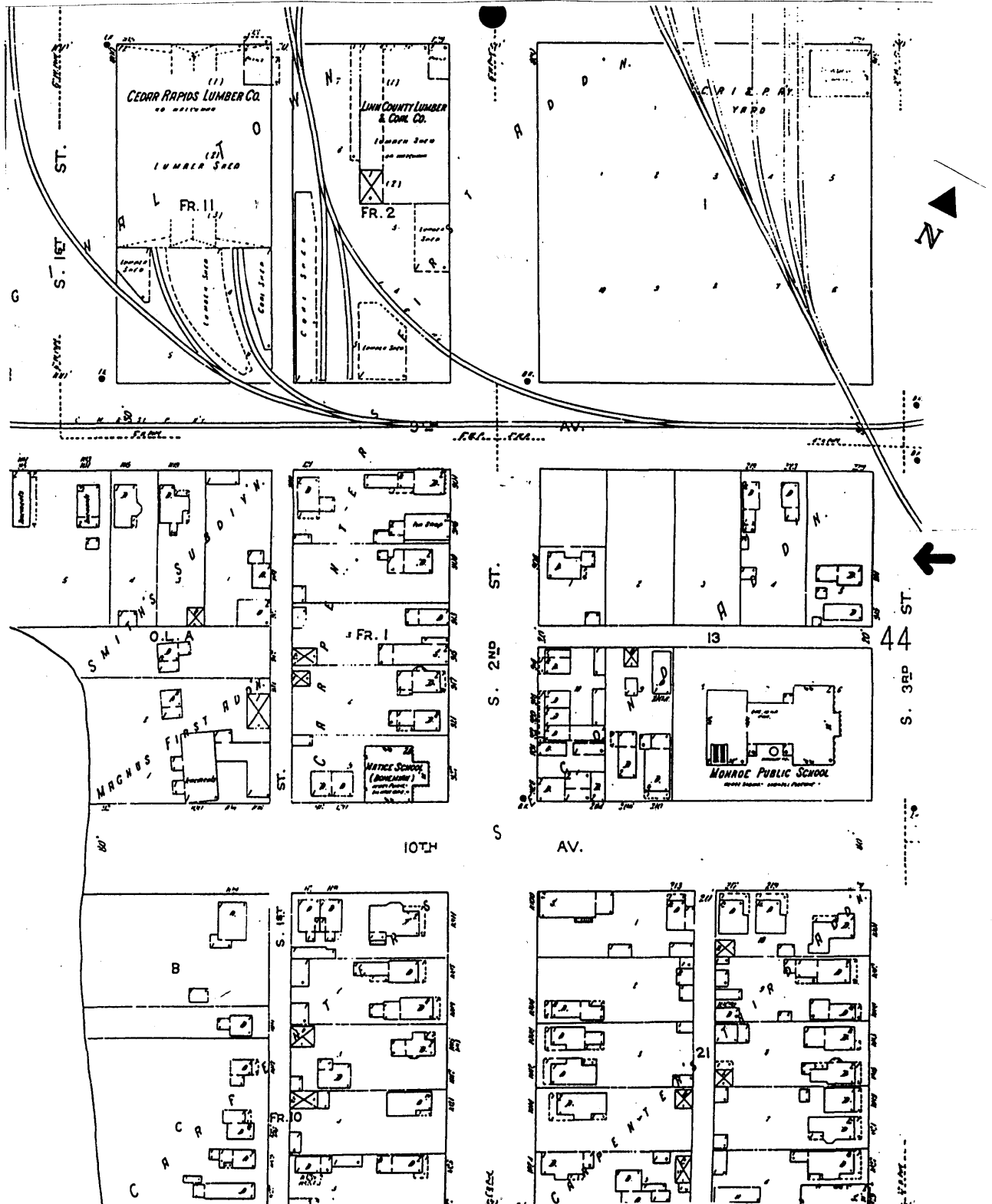
In the early 1990s plans began for the redevelopment of the Witwer Grocery Company Building as low and moderate income apartments. Work was completed in 1997 with the current floor plan creating 67 efficiency, one, two and three-bedroom apartments of various configurations including 11 two-level units on the first floor and mezzanine level. The center of the building now has an atrium extending from the first floor to the fifth floor with a skylight above. Other spaces provided in the building include a triangular shaped entrance vestibule facing south, a public rest room and elevator nearby, laundry rooms on each floor, a maintenance room in the northeast corner of the first floor, and a community room occupying the southeast corner of the first floor and mezzanine level facing Third Street. Architects for the project were Brown, Healey, Stone & Sauer of Cedar Rapids with Rinderknecht Associates, Inc. of Cedar Rapids as general contractor.

The overall condition of the Witwer Grocery Company Building following rehabilitation is excellent. The total cost of the rehabilitation was \$7,256,549 (excluding site development) with the project creating much needed housing in Cedar Rapids' commercial core. All work was completed in conformance with *The Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Historic Buildings* and reviewed by the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service.

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

## 1913 Plat Map View, Sanborn Map Company, Cedar Rapids.

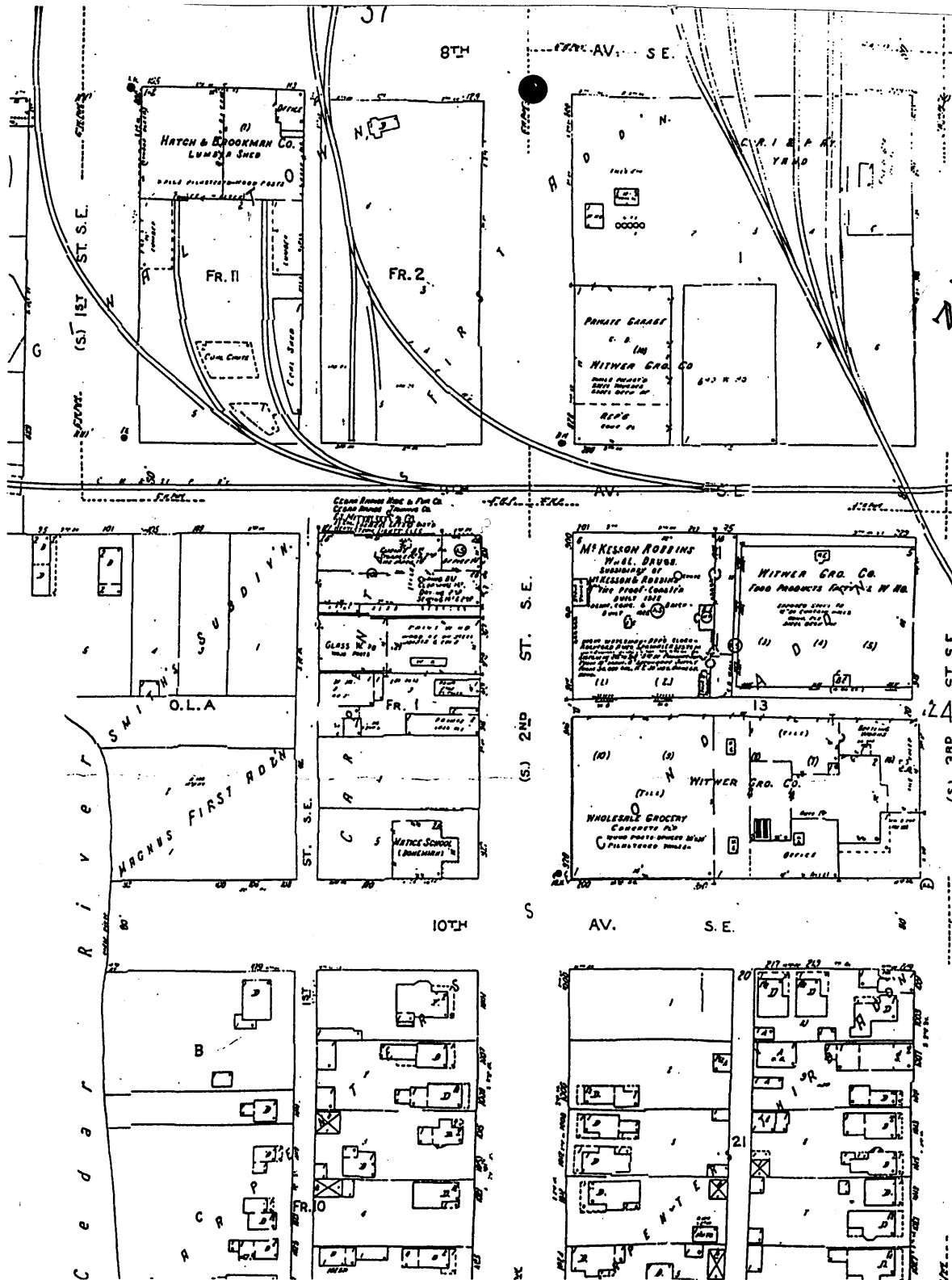




National Register of Historic Places  
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Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

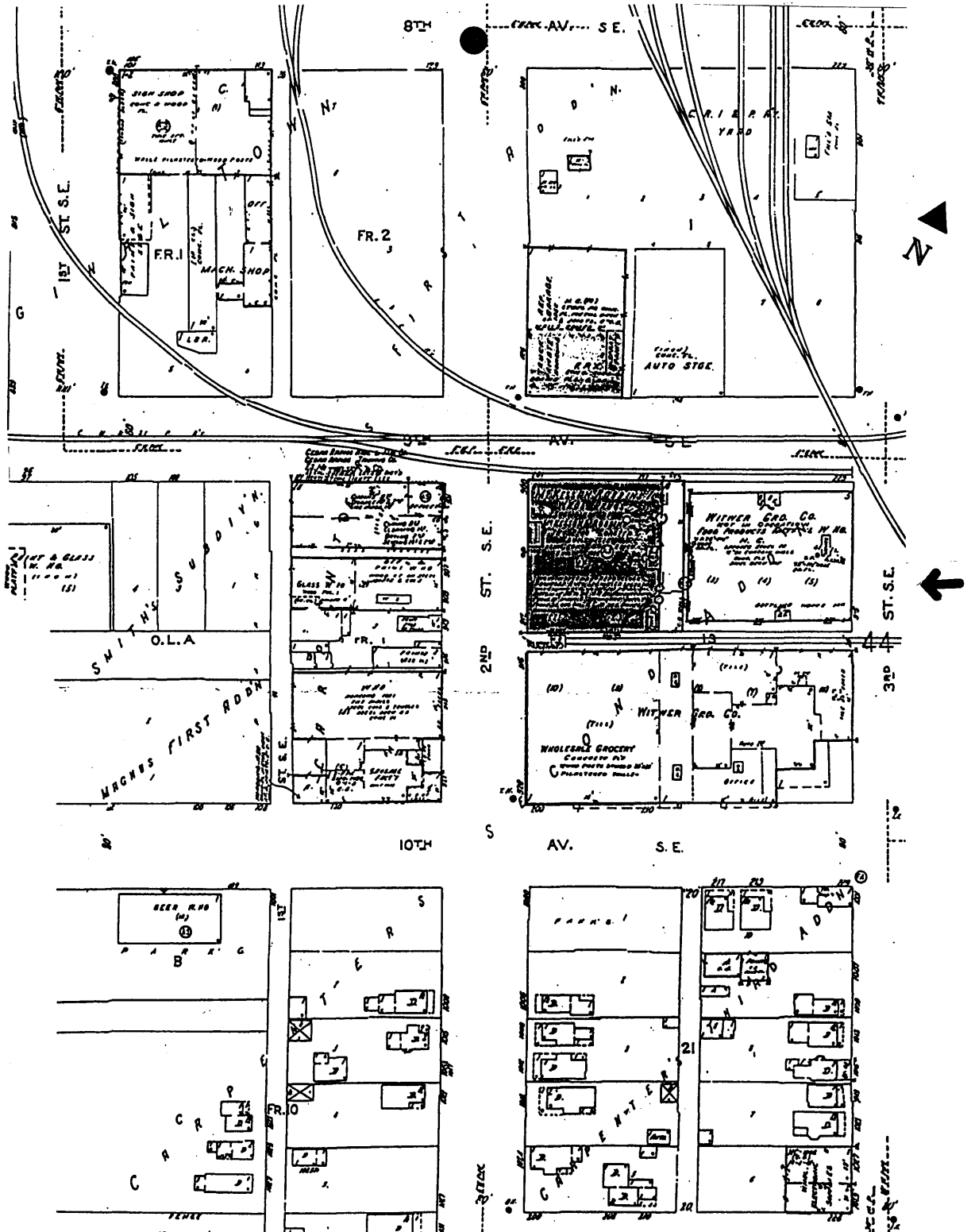
1949 Plat Map View, Sanborn Map Company, Cedar Rapids.



# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

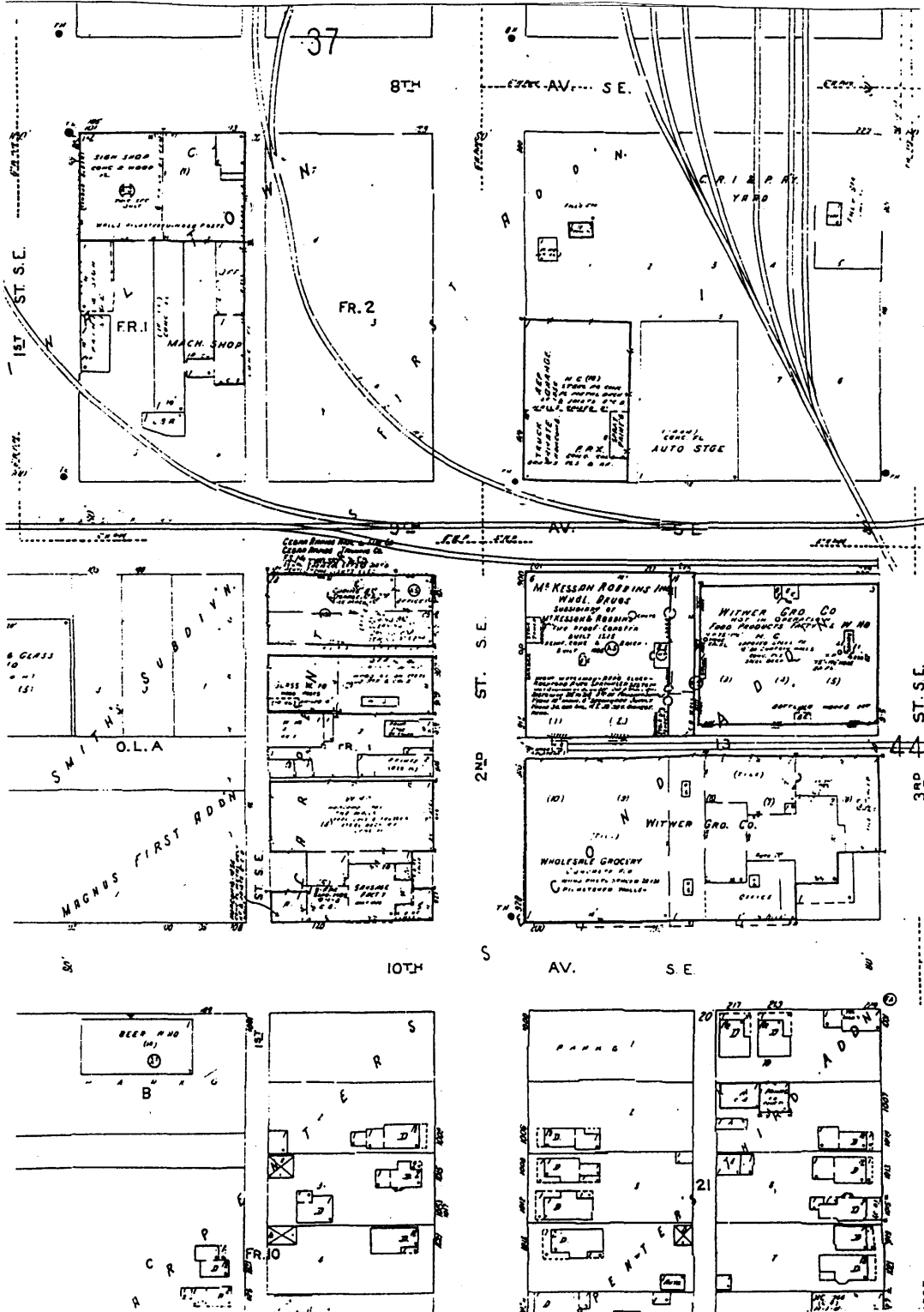
### 1970 Plat Map View, Sanborn Map Company, Cedar Rapids.



# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

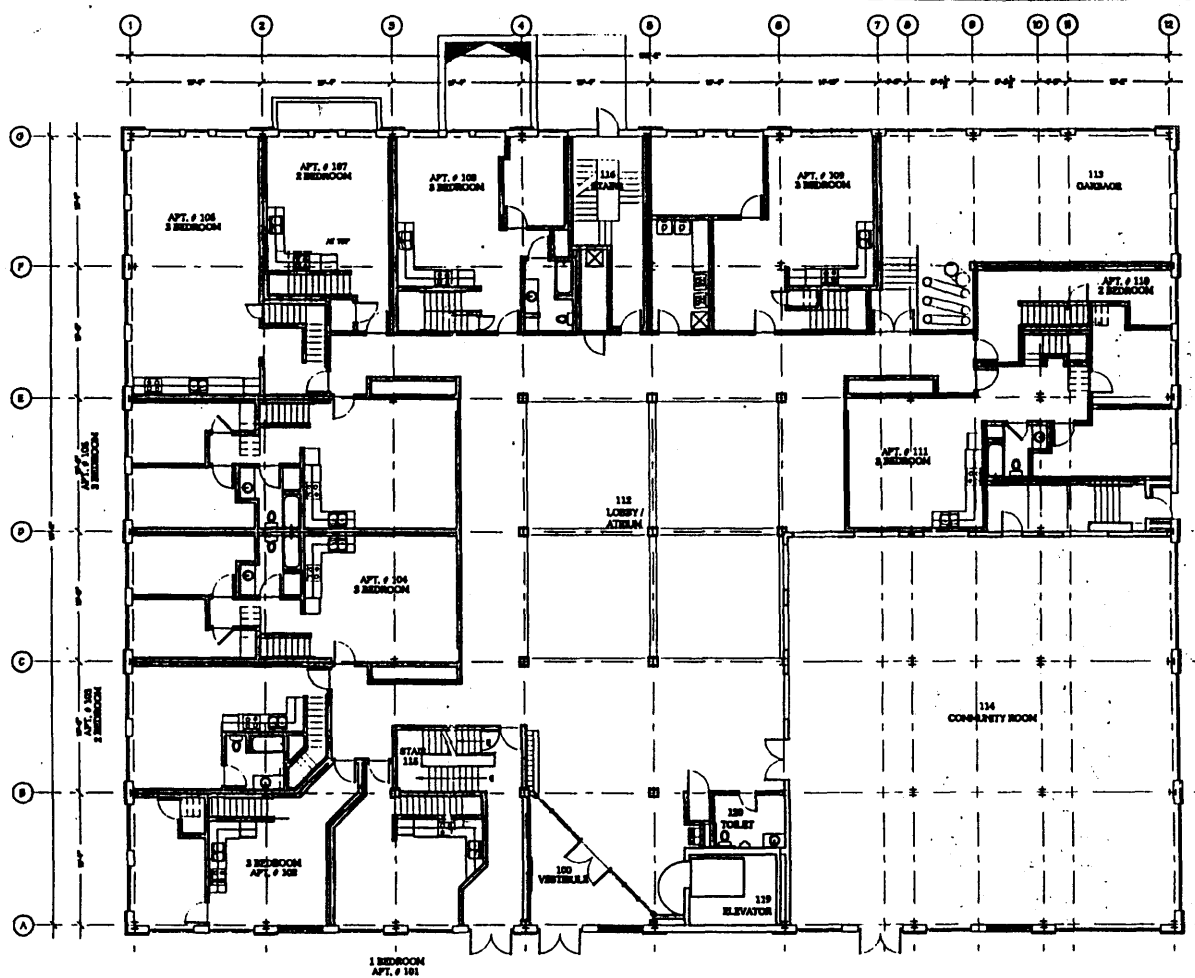
## 1996 Plat Map View, Sanborn Map Company, Cedar Rapids.



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Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

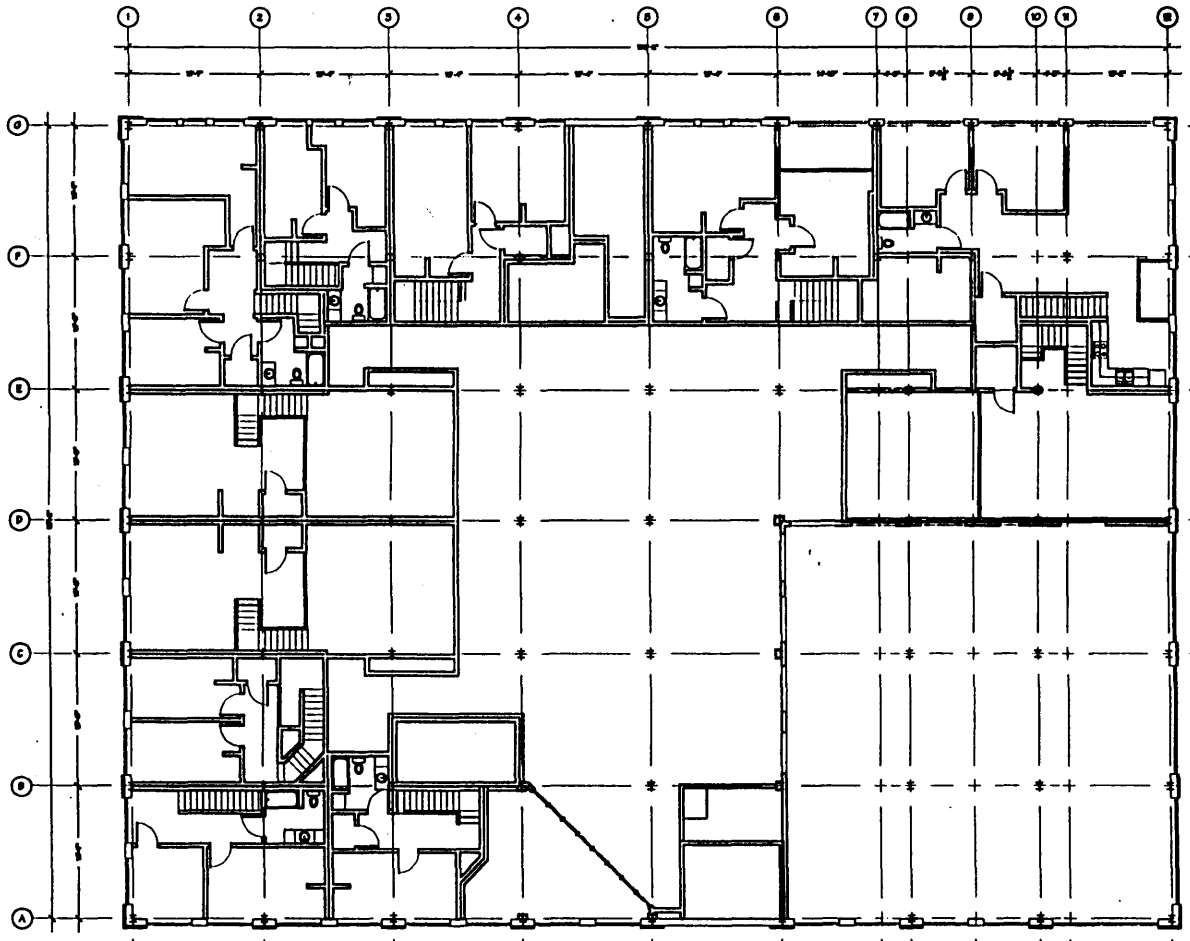
**First Floor, Apartment Building Adaptive Reuse Plan**  
Brown Healey Stone & Sauer, Architects, 1997



National Register of Historic Places  
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Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

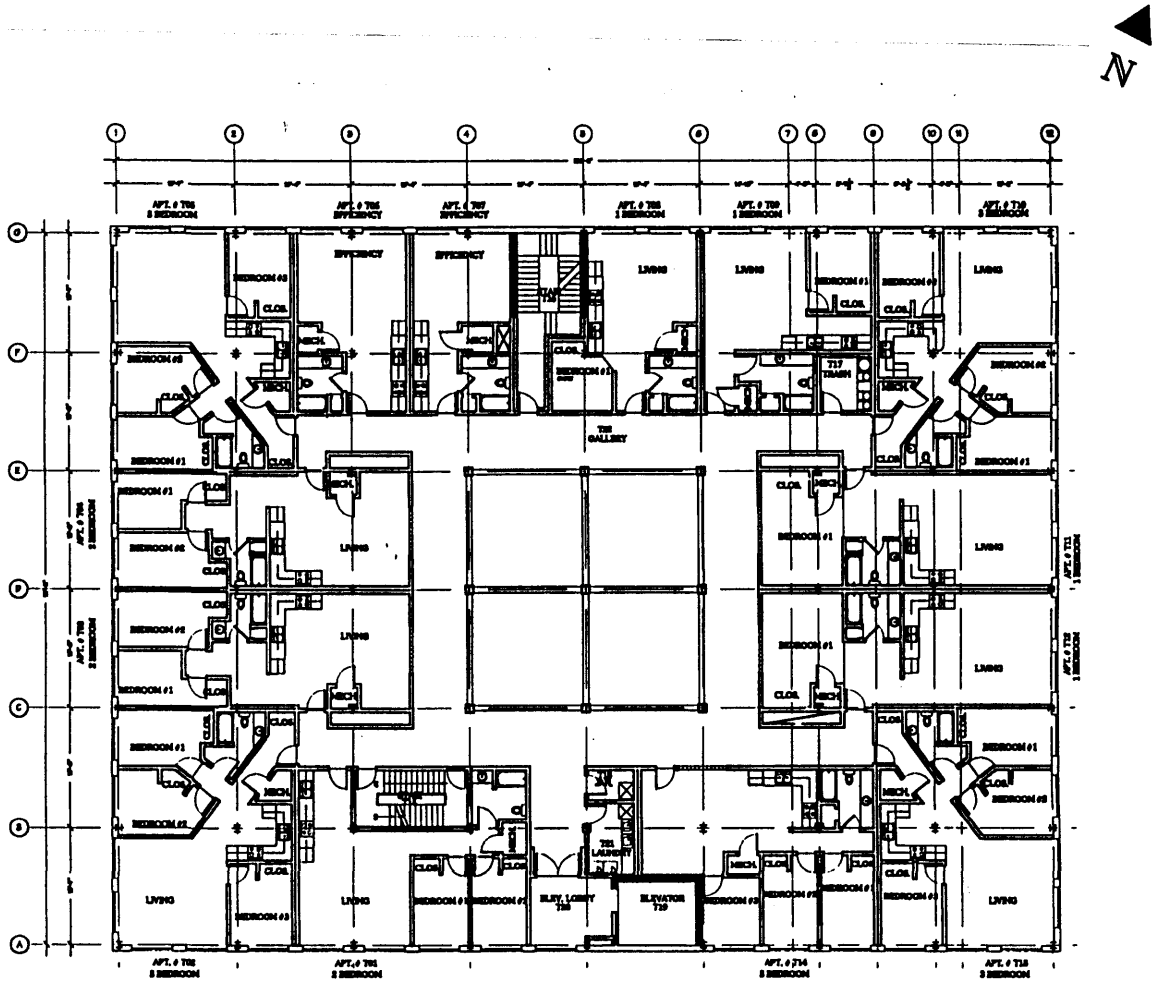
**Mezzanine Level, Apartment Building Adaptive Reuse Plan**  
Brown Healey Stone & Sauer, Architects, 1997



# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

## Typical Floor, Levels 2-5, Apartment Building Adaptive Reuse Plan Brown Healey Stone & Sauer, Architects, 1997

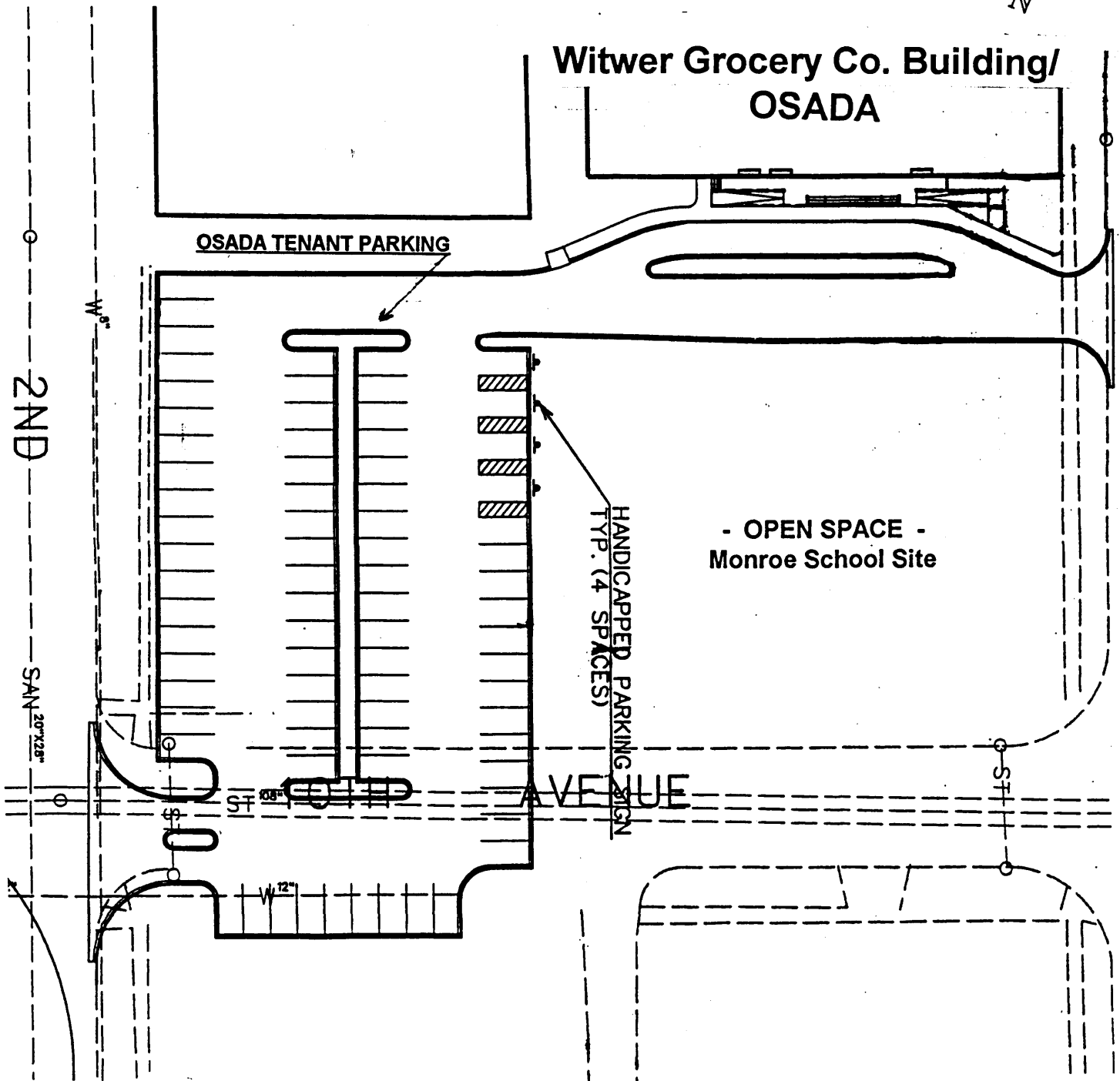


National Register of Historic Places  
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Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

Site Plan, Apartment Building Adaptive Reuse Plan

Brown Healey Stone & Sauer, Architects, 1997



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Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

**Statement of Significance**

*Summary:* The Witwer Grocery Company Building is significant locally under National Register Criterion A within the historic context of industrial railroad corridor development discussed in Chapter E-ii. ("Industrial Corridors in Cedar Rapids, 1865 - 1945: Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Corridor") in Section E of the Multiple Property Documentation Form for "Commercial and Industrial Development of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, c 1865-c.1945."

Under Criterion A, the Witwer Grocery Company Building is significant as the last multi-story factory/warehouse built along any of Cedar Rapids' railroad industrial corridors. Built at the end of World War II under the direction of Weaver Witwer, the most important locally-owned grocery wholesaler in Cedar Rapids, it housed a variety of modern food processing operations as well as packaging facilities, cold storage areas, a bottling works and general warehousing space. Unlike other wholesale grocery operations in the city, this building integrated Witwer's farm production and retail supermarkets in the decades that followed its construction.

*Historical Background:* Weaver and Frank Witwer started the Witwer Grocery Company, a wholesale grocery business in ca. 1921.<sup>2</sup> The first location for the Witwer Grocery Company was in the former Monroe School located south of the nominated building. In 1923 following the closure of Monroe School, the School Board made the decision to sell the building and quarter-block site to the Witwer Grocery Company. The Witwers paid \$43,500 for the property. The company used the Monroe School building for warehousing a wide range of food stuffs including cold storage. The building's former class rooms were sub-divided, ceilings lowered and walls insulated in cold storage areas, the bell-tower removed, and door and window openings closed on the lower level. By the 1940s a new one-story quarter block addition was added on the west side to house the expanding business. After three decades of vacancy and serious deterioration, the half-block Monroe School complex was razed in 1996.

The Witwer Grocery Company was eventually involved in a wide range of food processing operations, wholesaling and retailing under the direction of Weaver Witwer as president. He invested extensively in Iowa farmland during the 1920s and 30s with his holdings totaling more than 7,000 acres and 32 farms in Linn and Benton Counties. After his brother Frank's death in 1933, Weaver took over exclusive operation of the business.

During World War II plans were made to construct a modern food processing factory and warehouse on land adjacent to the former Monroe School site. In March 1945, the Witwer Grocery Company announced plans for construction of a new \$500,000 food factory. The building was to be completed as soon as war building restrictions were lifted. The nameplate on plans drawn for the building by the construction firm of Blahnik and Berger in January 1946 shows the building as "I.O.A. Foods."

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<sup>2</sup> An earlier unrelated grocery wholesale and retail business had been operated in Cedar Rapids by three uncles of Weaver and Frank under the name "Witwer Brothers Grocery."



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Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

Construction on the building began by summer.<sup>3</sup>

When the five-story factory/warehouse was built next door to the former Monroe School, connecting access was provided through an addition erected along the front facade of the school facing 3rd Street, SE. A railroad spur was maintained between the two buildings and a doorway was placed in the north end of the addition opposite an entrance on the south side of the new Witwer Grocery Company Building. The school continued in use as a warehouse as long as the grocery company was in operation.

In 1932 Weaver Witwer opened the first of a chain of "Me Too Stores" - a series of supermarkets operated in partnership with W.A. Drake and located in Cedar Rapids and Marion. The company became involved in all aspects of the food business from raising cattle and meat processing to bottling and packaging in the 3rd Street building. The company thrived from its new location with their distribution system extending into adjacent states. As many as forty employees worked from the plant with additional salesmen and truck delivery men transporting Witwer goods throughout Iowa and the surrounding states. In 1963, Witwer sold his interest in seven "Me Too" supermarkets while continuing to head Witwer Grocery Co.'s wholesale operations. The stores continued under the "Me Too" name for a number of years. The wholesale grocery company operations ceased in 1967.

The Witwer Grocery Company Building alternated between short term tenants and a vacant state during the 1970s and 1980s. By the early 1990s a group of local residents along with the Metro Area Housing Program (MAHP) began plans for the development of an apartment complex that would address the growing residential needs of residents of the Cedar Rapids' city center, especially low income families and artists. The name "Osada" was chosen for the project because it is a contemporary translation of a traditional Czech word for "village" or "community." Project planners hope that OSADA will serve as a gateway to the cultural corridor extending between the downtown and the Czech Village some ten blocks to the south.

*How the Building Operated:* The Witwer Grocery Company Building operated as a full-service food processing plant and materials warehouse.<sup>4</sup> Shipments were received along both the Rock Island RR spur on the south side and the Milwaukee RR spur on the north side of the first floor. A freight elevator located midway along the south wall (Room 119) served all five levels and the basement. A pipe in the southwest corner of the building drained corn oil directly from tanker cars into a holding tank in the basement.<sup>5</sup> From here the oil was conveyed to the fifth floor where potato chips were processed. On

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<sup>3</sup>One set of Blahnik and Berger plans are dated January 16, 1946 and the permits for the building were dated in October, 1946..

<sup>4</sup>Information contained in subsequent paragraphs regarding the building's operations was provided by interviews conducted by Martha Aldridge with Harold Fortner and Glen Florence, former employees of the Witwer Grocery Company. The interviews were conducted prior to October, 1997.

<sup>5</sup>In 1997, this area was adapted to hold the pumping system for the building's ground loop heating and cooling system.

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Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

the opposite side of the first floor, finished products were shipped to Me Too Grocery Stores through a series of truck loading docks. A second elevator located in this area was used for conveying reprocessed food products from the upper floors to the shipping area.

A variety of bulky foods were off loaded from both rail cars and trucks and processed on the first floor. Milk from the Witwer Farm and other dairies was pasteurized and converted into a variety of dairy products in the northwest corner of the building (Apartments 105 and 106) while vinegar was stored and rebottled for retail sale along the west wall (Apartments 103 and 104). The brick floors in this section were planned to survive the deteriorating effect of the stored vinegar. The company's well-known carbonated beverage, "Life Soda Pop," was produced in the southeast corner of the building (Community Room, 114) and stored in the southwest corner of the first floor (Apartments 101 and 102) before being shipped.

The second floor held the company offices staffed by two secretaries and a manager were located along the 3rd Street side (Apartment 212) The ladies rest room and the break room were adjacent (Apartment 210) and the company's test kitchen where brands were developed and refined, occupied the northeast corner of the building (Apartment 213) In the northwest corner, Witwer workers produced griddle mix and packaged it in 3-pound bags for resale. The second floor was also where coffee was put into vacuum packed tins and where cherries (received in pre-packaged tins) was given the company's "Me Too" label.

The balance of the second floor (Apartments 201, 202 and 203) was where piston driven pumps and conveyor systems operated to fill glass jars with the company's warm fruit preserves, honey, peanut butter, salad dressing or mustard. Workers joked that this was where peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were invented one day when someone forgot to clean the machine thoroughly after the peanut butter line was switched to a jelly line.

The third floor contained areas where various foods were processed before being piped to the second floor to be packaged. Apartments 301, 302 and 303 were where peanut butter, salad dressing and jelly were made. Apartment 313 contained the area where "Life Soda Pop" was mixed using sugar, carbonated water pumped up from storage tanks in the basement and various flavors. When mixed, the finished product was piped to the bottling plant on the first floor. Two dry mix products - angel food cakes and gelatin desserts - were also produced on this floor in what is now Apartment 305.

The third floor also contained the maintenance shop where anywhere from two to six workers kept the various machines in the building operating at peak performance. Two oil tanks that held heating oil were drained during the 1997 rehabilitation and filled with sand. Large circles were left in the ceilings of the living rooms of apartments 106, 206, 306, 406, and 506 where the furnace pipe ran up from the basement.

The fourth floor housed the bakery for the "Me Too" breads, donuts, rolls and cookies. Apartment 405 was where the cookie machine took in raw ingredients at one end and delivered uniform baked cookies at the other end. Apartments 408, 409 and 410 held other sections of the bakery while Apartment 402

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Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

processed raw ingredients into pancake mix. Coolers for storage of dairy products used in the bakery were located in the four bays occupying what is now the atrium space in the center of the floor.

The balance of the fourth floor was used for other food processing. Peanuts were roasted in Apartment 403 and coffee beans were roasted in the adjacent Apartment 404. In Apartment 412 water was purified and then stored in tanks that extended to the fifth floor. The purified water used in making "Life Soda Pop" some of which was mixed in Apartment 413 and the balance directly below.

The fifth floor held the processing area for making "Me Too" potato chips. Conveyor belts took the fried chips through Apartment 510. The water purification tanks extended through the floor of what is now Apartment 513. The living room in Apartment 502 was used to sterilize flour for packaging or for use in the bakery below. The balance of the fifth floor held compressors that ran the coolers on the fourth floor and for storage of products awaiting shipment to various Me Too Grocery Stores.

The basement housed several critical functions in the food processing operation. Here empty bottles were returned for washing and sterilizing before being refilled with "Life Soda Pop." Carbonation tanks were located along the north wall with one of two wells and a storage tank abutting. A second well was located beneath the sidewalk in front of the former Monroe School. The balance of the basement housed bulk storage for vinegar along the west wall and corn oil in the southwest corner.

*Neighborhood History:* The neighborhood surrounding the Witwer Grocery Company Building saw a transition from a residential neighborhood to a factory and warehousing district in the years immediately following the turn-of-the-century. In 1900 many of the neighborhood's residents were first or second generation immigrants from Bohemia or the modern day Czech Republic and Slovakia. The first Bohemians arrived in Cedar Rapids in the early 1850s in the wake of revolutionary activities in central Europe. Even greater numbers arrived after the Civil War and the end of the Prussian War in Austria in 1880. By the end of the century, Bohemians were well-represented in elected positions in local government and the city's bustling economy.

Early Bohemian immigrants populated the city's southeast neighborhoods south of 5th Avenue, SE. Hundreds of small cottages and bungalows were built and occupied by Bohemian families who worked in nearby factories and packing plants or the businesses that grew up along 3rd Street and 12th Avenue, SE. Most of the houses were of modest frame construction with a handful made of brick.

Cedar Rapids' Bohemian commercial center was located along 3rd Street, SE with a series of related institutional buildings in this corridor as well. At the turn-of-the-century, the commercial area included three grocery stores, a butcher shop, a bakery, pharmacy, two shoe stores, a furniture store, print shop, two dry goods stores, a milk depot, the Czech Library, restaurants, two theaters, several saloons, a jewelry store, and the Bohemian-American Hose Company serving properties on the east side of the river from its 11th Avenue, SE and 3rd Street, SE location.

After 1900 proposals to redevelop the neighborhood as an industrial district were met with little resistance. Good railroad connections to and through the neighborhood enhanced the area for use as

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Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

manufacturing facilities and warehousing operations. The most favored sites were those with ready access to multiple lines for both north-south and east-west shippers. The Milwaukee Railroad corridor was one of five railroad corridors through Cedar Rapids which had multi-story warehouses and manufacturing plants line its tracks beginning in the late 1800s. This pattern of railroad corridor construction continued into the twentieth century with newer and larger facilities replacing some of the older ones. The last generation of multi-story buildings constructed along these corridors appeared at the end of World War II and included the Witwer Grocery Co. food factory/warehouse.

By the 1940s many of the residential blocks had been displaced by small to medium factory sites, warehouses, railroad tracks and sidings, and retail/wholesale commercial operations. By the time the Witwer Grocery Co. closed its operations in the late 1960s, trucking was replacing rail shipping and highway locations were becoming preferred locations for distribution facilities such as the Witwer building. Today, many of the buildings along Cedar Rapids' rail routes remain but with new occupants.

*Period of Significance:* The period of significance under Criterion A is 1946. The date marks the year the building was constructed and put in service by the Witwer Grocery Company doing business as I.O.A Foods.<sup>6</sup> Planning for the project began during 1945 and, as a result, this resource is considered part of the period of significance for "Industrial Corridors in Cedar Rapids, 1865 - 1945: Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Corridor" in Section E of the Multiple Property Documentation Form for "Commercial and Industrial Development of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, c 1865-c.1945."

*Resources Nominated:* The property contains one resource for this nomination. The archeological potential of buildings previously on this property have not been determined and are not been addressed in this nomination.

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<sup>6</sup>"I.O.A." is the colloquial pronunciation of "Iowa."

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For Additional Sources See: Section I, "Bibliography," Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Commercial and Industrial Development of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, c 1865-c.1945."

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Witwer Grocery Company Building, Linn County, Iowa

**Verbal Boundary Description**

East 42.1 feet of Lot 3 and all of Lots 4 and 5 in Block 13 of Carpenter's 2nd Addition to the City of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

**Boundary Justification**

This parcel includes the quarter block of land developed by Witwer Grocery Company for its new building in 1945.

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**Photographs:** Photographs taken November, 1997 by David Van Allen, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Negatives stored with David Van Allen

1. Exterior, looking northwest
2. Exterior, Looking north
3. Exterior, looking west
4. Exterior, storefront at southeast corner of building, looking west
5. Exterior, looking southwest
6. Exterior, looking south
7. Exterior, truck loading bays, looking southwest
8. Exterior, window and cornice detail, east facade, fifth floor, looking west
9. Interior, former bottling works, now community room, looking northwest
10. Interior, first floor, atrium, looking south rowards entrance vestibule
11. Interior, first floor, atrium, looking northwest
12. Interior, fourth and fifth floors, atrium, looking south