

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Black Hawk County Soldiers Memorial Hall and Park
other names/site number Memorial Hall

2. Location

street & number 194 West Fifth Street
city, town Waterloo
state Iowa code IA-19 county Black Hawk code 013 zip code 50703

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal
Category of Property: building(s), district, site, structure, object
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing (1), Noncontributing (0 buildings, 4 sites, 4 objects), Total (4)

Name of related multiple property listing: Multiple Properties Nomination, Waterloo, Iowa

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: James E. ... Date: July 13, 1988
Chief, Bureau of Historic Preservation, State Historical Society of Iowa

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
[checked] entered in the National Register.
[] See continuation sheet.
[] determined eligible for the National Register. [] See continuation sheet.
[] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[] removed from the National Register.
[] other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation/Culture,
Landscaping/park
Monument/marker/social, meeting hall

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

same

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
walls brick
roof tile
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2**Black Hawk County Soldiers Memorial Hall****Description**

Memorial Hall, a one-story rectangular building with a raised basement, is an exceptionally fine example of the work of local architect John G. Ralston. The composition is a refined display of circular and linear motifs resulting in a compact well-proportioned and well-defined design. The design compares favorably with other Ralston designs such as his Carnegie libraries. Points of comparison include the compact but good proportions, hipped tile roof, bands of windows, interesting centered entrance, use of dark brick with contrasting trim, and geometric detail. This building is an example of the Property Types, Industrial Era Institutional Buildings and Works by Local Architects as set forth in the Multiple Properties Cover Document, Historical and Architectural Resources of Waterloo, Iowa.

The hipped tile roof provides textural contrast with the dark brown brick and contrasting stone trim. Slightly projecting rows of brick differentiate the basement section from the main floor. A stone course acts as both a sill for the bands of windows and to separate further the floors. Another course occurs just below the overhanging eaves, an additional horizontal element uniting and enlivening the surface. Sturdy square piers at the corners pierce the roofline and visually anchor the composition.

Another linking motif are the round-arched windows. They occur in bands of three on three sides and of five on the southeast side. Again, a horizontal line of stone connects the groups of windows, about one-third of the way down from their tops. The rounded shape culminates in large semi-circular windows above the entry and on the opposite, riverfront side. The riverfront side has a dormer (with a round window) above the large semi-circular window of the facade. (Blueprints show a matching dormer, never built, on the entry side.)

Familiar Ralston motifs--use of decorative squares (below the sills, at the entry, and in the interior) and contrasting stone courses--mark and divide the composition. The entry repeats the squared pier effect of the building's corners. A stone sphere tops them, another circular shape. Decorative stonework identifies the building and variously carries "19" and "15" (the year of construction), and "Soldiers Memorial Hall." Other rectangular panels have military motifs. On the riverfront side is "Veterans Memorial Hall" in neon letters above the upper windows.

Significant original features, notably the Craftsman Style woodwork, remain in the interior of Memorial Hall. Above the stairs to the main floor a solid wood railing with decorative panels runs along the hallway (floored with mosaic tile having a geometric border). Woodwork stained a dark brown occurs throughout and is used for picture and chair rails, doorways and transoms, and window molding on the main floor. The Ralston squares motif is found at the southeast end where four dark wood squares are placed in the

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space between each of the five windows. The basement rooms also have original woodwork. The northwest meeting room has wood strips on the ceiling and wood paneling. The southeast meeting room has dark wood strips, surprisingly left unpainted.

Memorial Hall measures approximately forty feet by seventy feet. On the basement level are the kitchen, meeting rooms (labeled Club Room and Smoking Room on the blueprints) and the dining room. The main floor has a large meeting hall (which now includes the original Ladies Parlor), and a museum. File drawers and display cases with uniforms and memorabilia ring the museum space. The original plans apparently called for the meeting hall and museum spaces to be the reverse from how they were built.

The building enjoys a river front site, complete with a landscaped park. Some of the landscaping and benches are recent, but the large circular fountain, shown in an undated postcard, is earlier. A 1930 clipping states only that the memorial fountain for Union Civil War veterans was dedicated May 30, 1930. However, the plaque at the park says that Soldiers and Sailors Park was dedicated on that date. In deteriorating condition, the white stone fountain has three lion's heads which support a smaller upper basin. Incised in the lower fountain is "In Memory of the Union Soldiers of the Civil War. 1861-1865," and the Daughters of Union Veterans were responsible for the fountain.

Three other smaller monuments dot the park, including a 1954 monument to the unknown soldier, a 1950 Boy Scouts replica of the Statue of Liberty, and c. 1930 dedication for Soldiers & Sailors Park. Two mature shade trees flank the southeast side of the hall, providing a buffer from traffic on West Fifth Street and framing the large but simple flagpole.

Memorial Hall currently sits in the shadow of a large parking garage, but contemporary photographs reveal that such a less than ideal setting has always been the fate of the hall. At its construction, the hall shared the site with a commercial block, complete with a large billboard for its immediate neighbor. However, the openness of the riverfront provides an escape from the confines of other buildings.

An unobtrusive concrete, metal, and glass enclosed entrance for the handicapped has been added to the northwest side of the hall. Although there are only three exterior steps, access to both the main floor and the basement requires use of steep stairs immediately inside. New double entry doors and storm windows are other additions. The storm windows were placed over the original multiple pane windows. The upper semi-circular panels of the bands of windows have been covered over. This probably occurred when the dropped ceiling with recessed lighting was installed in the interior. In an attempt to continue the feeling of the original ceiling, this new ceiling has dark decorative strips. The asphalt flooring of the meeting room is not original. The hall was reroofed in 1986, but care was taken to reuse the clay tile.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Social History/Architecture

Period of Significance

1915

Significant Dates

1915

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Ralston, John G., Architect

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet 9.2

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	5
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5	5	4	3	8	0
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4	7	0	4	7	9	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Unplatted filled riverfront land owned by the county. Defined as a parcel bounded on the east side by the West Fifth Street and right of way, on the southeast by an alleyway access to the hall, on the west or northwest by public parking, and on the northeast by the river retaining wall.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Contains subject building and associated river front and landscaping.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By Research/writing by Barbara Beving Long, Midwest Research

name/title James E. Jacobsen, Chief, Bureau of Historic Preservation
organization State Historical Society of Iowa date July 13, 1988
street & number 600 E. Locust telephone 515-281-4137
city or town Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50309

United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2**Significance**

Memorial Hall is an important example of two areas of significance. It is a well-executed example of the design work of local Waterloo architect John G. Ralston and thus an example of the Property Type, Works by Local Architects. It is also the best example in Waterloo (and Black Hawk County) of a building designed to be a memorial to honor veterans who served in the military and therefore an example of the Property Type, Industrial Era Institutional Buildings.

John G. Ralston

Ralston (and other local architects whose practice dated from the industrial era) contributed directly to the physical development of Waterloo. The early twentieth century construction boom lured architects to the "Factory City," and their work is among the prominent legacies of that period. The career and designs of John G. Ralston illustrate architectural practice in Waterloo and northeast Iowa at the turn of the century.

Ralston, or his firms of Murphy & Ralston and Ralston & Ralston, enjoyed a wide variety of commissions, including residences (single- and multiple-family), commercial buildings, factories, churches, schools, and public and semi-public (fraternal) buildings—on both sides of the city. John G. Ralston's firm was responsible for many major Waterloo buildings, (see pp. 25-27 and 45, Multiple Properties Nomination). In addition, Ralston designs papered northwest Iowa, making the firm an influential regional design force, especially around the turn of the century.

By 1912 Murphy & Ralston or John G. Ralston had designed 100 Waterloo residences, 90 out-of-town houses, and 33 Waterloo and 46 out-of-town commercial and public structures. Significant commissions from the period included both Waterloo Carnegie libraries, the first two City fire stations, halls for the Masons, Knights of Pythias, and Moose, stores and office buildings such as the Syndicate Block, the Lafayette Building, and the Cutler Hardware Building, factories, churches such as the Orange Township Church of the Brethren, the Waterworks offices, and the Dairy Cattle Congress Hippodrome. The firm also designed most of the schools (at least twelve) for the west side school district. The Ralston firm designed double houses, flats, and single-family residences, a number of the latter in the prestigious Prospect Hills area.

Outside Waterloo, the Ralston firm designed courthouses (in Iowa and South Dakota), banks, and schools (at least twenty of the latter). Lists from the firm believed to date from 1912 also show commissions for libraries at Waverly, Iowa and in Bolivar, New York; and for small banks in Dunkerton, Denver, Williams, Garrison, Ackley, Rockwell City, Crowley, and Lake Park, Iowa. (It has not been determined if all the designs were built and what is the state of their present condition.)

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The firm traced its beginnings to Murphy & Wallace, architects and contractors in Vinton in the 1890's. During this period members of the building trade frequently did double duty--designing a structure, then acting as general contractor for the project. With increasing professionalism and competition between architects and contractors, many formerly combined architectural and contracting firms selected one route of specialization. William F. Murphy and John G. Ralston, an employee of Murphy & Wallace between 1892 and 1897, chose to become architects.

Murphy & Ralston was established in 1897 in Vinton, Iowa, and moved to booming Waterloo by the next year. During their early years in Waterloo, the firm was responsible for such important structures as St. Joseph's Church, the Russell-Lamson Block, and the extensive remodeling of Brown's Opera House.

By 1904 Murphy had died, leaving Ralston to carry on alone. In 1927 his son Glen joined the firm, renamed Ralston & Ralston. Both registered with the Iowa Board of Architectural Examiners, the fifty-first and fifty-second Iowa architects to do so. John G. Ralston maintained a practice until his death in 1956.

Besides his experience with Murphy & Wallace, the elder Ralston graduated from a one-year course at Vinton's Tilford Academy. He received architectural training through a mail order course from the International Correspondence School of Scranton, Pennsylvania, a common training ground for Iowa architects.

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Memorial Hall

Memorial Hall is among the few institutional-type structures extant in the city, sharing the category with a former fire station, an armory, and two libraries. Memorial Hall is the only institutional structure that continues to fulfill its original purpose. Largely unaltered, it is an unusual property type dating from Waterloo's industrial era. It is associated with Waterloo's position as county seat, making it a leading choice for the location of a hall commemorating county veterans.

The establishment of memorial halls was part of the American desire to remember those who served in military engagements, especially the Civil War. The Grand Army of the Republic was a leader in calling for monuments to commemorate veterans. Throughout the 1910's, calls appeared in such publications as The American City for establishment of suitable memorials. Buildings were deemed preferable, since they combined utility--a meeting place--with sentiment.

Although a host of Iowa communities established memorials to the war dead, most took the form of statuary in cemeteries or parks. Between 1911 and 1918, the key period, at least 27 Iowa towns erected monuments (statues). It appears that only Black Hawk County constructed a memorial building during this period.

Black Hawk County Soldiers' Memorial Hall in Waterloo was both a meeting place for county patriotic organizations and also served an important position in caring for emergency needs of the public after World War I. The hall served as a hospital on two occasions for residents felled by influenza, part of the global epidemic after World War I. There were 108 patients in 1918, sixteen of whom died, and 105 more in 1920, fifteen of them casualties.

The Grand Army of the Republic led in calls for a suitable memorial in Black Hawk County beginning in 1909. But they were unsuccessful in persuading the voters to approve funds for it in 1910. Two years later, however, the GAR joined with the Spanish-American War Veterans and the Sons of Veterans, and the measure for a memorial building received voter approval for a building tax.

Disputes over the location for the memorial hall delayed construction and also necessitated special legislation, apparently to allow construction along the Waterloo riverfront. In 1915 Clayton E. Bronson, legislator for Waterloo, introduced a bill permitting the erection of monuments or memorial halls in parks. During this period in Iowa, riverfront improvement commissions sought to gain public ownership of riverbanks. In Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, and Waterloo, lengthy lawsuits and special legislation were necessary before the cities gained control of their riverfronts.

Bronson's measure passed in 1915, and Black Hawk County veterans were free to choose a site. By the time Waterloo was chosen over Cedar Falls as the site on April 13, 1915, over \$16,000 had accrued from the building tax. The west side riverfront site was

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selected on June 17, in conjunction with riverfront improvement plans dating from 1910. Construction commenced June 24, 1915. John G. Ralston designed the compact but well-proportioned memorial, and the Waterloo-based H.A. Maine Company was contractor. Waterloo Monument Company donated the small granite cornerstone, and Black Hawk Decorating Company decorated the interior.

On December 10, 1915, the first meeting was held in Memorial Hall when the Robert Anderson Post, No. 68 of the GAR convened. The newspaper hailed its construction as "next in importance to the erection of the Leavitt & Johnson National Bank skyscraper" in 1915. Memorial Hall has become home for some fifteen patriotic organizations, including the Vietnam War Veterans.

Memorial Hall opened in 1915, but the City of Waterloo did not gain legal title to the land until 1918. The River Front Improvement Commission began a lawsuit in 1910 against all property owners along the river. The goal was to determine the boundary line between city-owned riverfront property and private property owners. A complicating factor was that the Cedar River is a meandering stream as it passes through Waterloo, its banks subject to change. And some private property owners had built out into the river.

Memorial Hall illustrates the progressive booster spirit which pervaded Waterloo during its industrial period. The west side riverfront site was selected in conjunction with beautification efforts such as removing unsightly businesses and constructing riverwalls. The same progressive businessmen (and their wives) who joined together to bring new industry to Waterloo also worked to improve their surroundings. They led in such reform efforts as riverfront improvements, legislating prohibition, and trying to change the form of government. Residents worked to improve their surroundings by acquiring new Carnegie libraries, sprucing up the riverfront, and hiring a nationally known city planner (Charles Mulford Robinson).

Among Robinson's recommendations was to improve the riverfront and build public buildings along it; Memorial Hall was the only public building constructed along the riverfront. Robinson termed the Cedar River ". . . once (Waterloo's) greatest industrial asset and still its greatest aesthetic asset." He recommended that the River Front Improvement Commission determine the meander line (which prompted the 1910 lawsuit), then prepare a comprehensive plan for riverfront development. He also suggested removal of unsightly billboards along the river, planting a willow screen along the Illinois Central tracks, a small park at Third Street, and a small strip of landscaped "parking" in the area of Memorial Hall.

By 1926 several important recommendations of Robinson had been instituted. The city had a building code, a new park (Gates Park), and improvements to Cedar River Park. Along the river, concrete riverwalls had been constructed and one public building, Memorial Hall, graced the riverfront. The new city hall, which Robinson had hoped would be on the river, was built inland. The Robinson plan encouraged construction of Memorial Hall on the riverfront. It also gave the outside expert's stamp of approval on locally conceived improvement plans.

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Sources

Soldiers Memorial Hall

Waterloo Courier, March 23, 31, April 17, June 17, 18, 23, 1915, May 22, 1926; May 30, 1930, March 1, 1964.

Cedar Valley Historical Society, "The Story of Black Hawk County Memorial Hall."

Waterloo Evening Courier and Reporter, Improvement Number, 1915.

Grand Army of the Republic. "Civil War Monuments in Iowa." Scrapbook, Historical Library.

Robinson, Charles Mulford. The Well Being of Waterloo. Report to the Civic Society of Waterloo, Iowa. Waterloo: Matt Parrott & Sons, 1910.

Interview with Hazel Gilbert, Daughters of Union Veterans, Waterloo, Iowa, April 9, 1987.

Judgment and Decree, District Court of Iowa, River Front Improvement Commission of Waterloo, Iowa vs. Sans Souci Association, et al., November 11, 1915. (Entire law suit dates from 1910 to 1918.)

Report of the River Front Improvement Commissioners. No. 6663, Miscellaneous Record, No. 3, pp. 146-148, October 11, 1917.

Brice, Petrides & Associates. Exhibit and Description for Report #343656, March 24, 1982.

Long, Barbara Beving. "Waterloo. The Factory City of Iowa." Architectural and historic sites survey for City of Waterloo," 1986. Chapters 3 and 10.

John G. Ralston photographic scrapbook in possession of Glen Ralston.

Photograph collection, Grout Museum.

Corwin, Margaret and Hoy, Helen. Waterloo. A Pictorial History. Rock Island: Quest Publishing Co., 1983, p. 172.