

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Iowa
COUNTY:	Black Hawk
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	JUL 5 1973

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Lamson House or Russell House

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Rensselaer Russell House *use above*

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
520 West Third Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Waterloo

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
Third

STATE: Iowa CODE: 14 COUNTY: Black Hawk CODE: 013

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" 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 (Specify) _____ _____ _____
Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
People's Mutual Savings & Loan Association

STREET AND NUMBER:  
West Third and Washington

CITY OR TOWN:  
Waterloo

STATE: Iowa CODE: 14

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
People's Mutual Savings and Loan

STREET AND NUMBER:  
West Third and Washington

CITY OR TOWN:  
Waterloo

STATE: Iowa CODE: 14

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

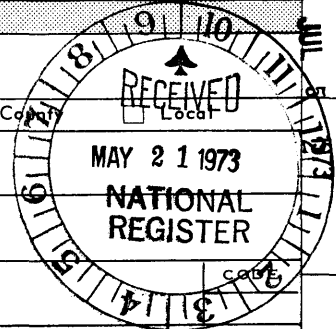
TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE:



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: COUNTY: ENTRY NUMBER: DATE: FOR NPS USE ONLY

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)

Excellent   
  Good   
  Fair   
  Deteriorated   
  Ruins   
  Unexposed

---

(Check One)

Altered   
  Unaltered

---

(Check One)

Moved   
  Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Rensselaer Russell House is a two story rectangular brick building with a small one and 1/2 story wing. A rectangular cupola with round arched windows (three to a side) and a bracketed roof surmounts the main part of the building. Identical brackets support the main roof and that of the wing.

Five windows on the front and four on the side all have tall narrow proportions and four panes to a sash. Shutters and elaborate segmental arched cornices adorn the windows. The main entrance, off to one side on the front, is marked by a small porch with two story-high fluted Corinthian columns, two pilasters a roof and decorative roof cresting. Identical roof cresting appears above the wrap-around porch of the wing. Also supported by fluted Corinthian columns. Small star clamps appear on the exterior of the building. A carriage house at the rear of the house has been removed.

The interior of the house has nine rooms including a kitchen plus one and 1/2 baths. The wing is joined to the main block on the first floor by an entrance from the sitting room to the main hall, a doorway from the dining room into the kitchen and an exit from the sitting room to the basement landing. The connections on the second floor are from the nursery on to the second floor landing and a doorway from the servant's back room to the rear stairway. Only the kitchen has undergone major alterations (in the late 1940's). The second story windows were enlarged at this time and the curving staircase to the cupola removed.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian;       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century  
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) <sup>1855-</sup> **1861 to present**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                      | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |   | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Rensselaer Russell House-Lamson House has remained largely unchanged and in the hands of the same prosperous Waterloo family since its erection in 1861. Grandson of a carpenter, Rensselaer Russell built one of the first substantial brick homes in Waterloo. According to his ledger, Mr. Russell imported certain materials from other locations; the brick from Dubuque, the lumber from Dubuque and Chicago, and the lime from Cedar Falls. A successful real estate investor, banker and dealer in dry goods, Mr. Russell was also responsible for the development of Russell Block in downtown Waterloo, which includes such buildings as the Russell Building, the Russell-Lamson Building (built by a Russell daughter) and the Russell-Lamson Hotel (built in 1914). Directly across from the Rensselaer Russell House is what is now called Washington Square, formerly known as Russell Square and donated by the family to the City in 1871. An Association for the Preservation of the Rensselaer Russell House was incorporated in 1969 and oversees the condition of the building for conducted tours.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

See page 4 of the short history of the Rensselaer Russell House submitted in answer to #8, previous page of this application.

Russell Ledger.

See continuation sheet #4.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		42° 29' 39"	92° 20' 44"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

U M  
15/55378  
4704650

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1/3 acre  
 LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES None

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Mrs. Morris Kinne, Historian

ORGANIZATION: Association for the Preservation of Rensselaer Russell House DATE: 10/15/72

STREET AND NUMBER: 520 West Third (mailing address: Box 843, Waterloo, Iowa)

CITY OR TOWN: Waterloo STATE: Iowa CODE: 14

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Adrian D. Anderson

Title State Historic Preservation Officer

Date 15 May, 1973

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

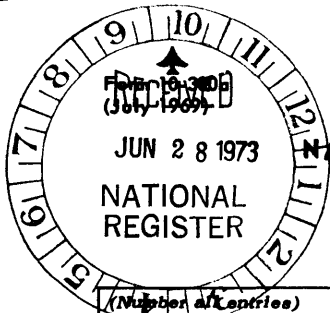
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Robert M. Utley  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 2/5/73

ATTEST:  
Maradford  
 Acting Keeper of The National Register

Date July 13, 1973



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
IOWA	
COUNTY	
BLACK HAWK	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
JUL 5 1973	

(Number of Entries) #8 Significance

Nestled on the fringe of Waterloo's business area is a small jewel of American mid-Victorian architecture. Enjoyed by local citizens and by many out-of-town and school-age groups, the Rensselaer Russell House stands today as an example of stateliness and graciousness long vanished.

Rensselaer Russell built his home in 1861 as a show place for his era. He built sturdily in hopes, perhaps, of keeping something intact for the coming age. A monument to the past age is represented by the Russell House. It will not come again; Waterloo will not have another chance to preserve such an important bit of Victoriana.

Rensselaer Russell's biography, as recorded by the various Black Hawk County historians, notes little specifically of the interest that led to this ambition to erect a showplace in what was then a thriving, but nevertheless very young, prairie town. Russell was born in Otsego County, New York, in June of 1828. His grandfather had come to America almost 75 years prior to this time and, as a carpenter, traded his skills for land. Since his work included the establishment of fine homes for the wealthy, there is little doubt that Russell was familiar with some of the great houses of that period.

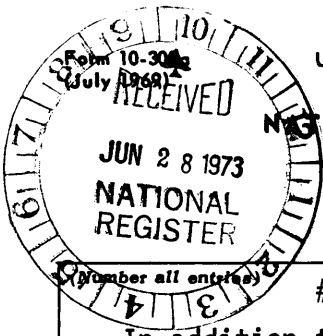
Apparently the many acres of land acquired by the grandparent meant increased comfort for the new generation for Russell attended Hartwick Seminary. Some time thereafter he clerked in a New York City drygoods establishment and acquired a useful background in this business. Much later, his varied businesses in Waterloo had to do with the wholesale and retail drygoods affairs. Having married Caroline Richards in 1853, he left New York City and returned to her father's farm and tried farming for a very short period of time before deciding to go West to the newly developing State of Iowa. His selection of Iowa was probably based on first-hand reports of an area that was rich in fertile land for crops and raw materials for construction.

Arriving in Waterloo in the Fall of 1857, the family lodged on Jefferson Street. Russell immediately began the banking, dry goods and real estate ventures that were to make the family one of the wealthiest in the area.

Although not the first brick house, the Russell House was undoubtedly the most elegant and probably the least suited to what was then essentially a settler community. Construction was begun in 1858. The population of 400 in 1858 grew to 1,800 in 1861, the year the house was completed.

Russell was a methodical man. His personal ledger of the costs of building the house exists today and is on view in the family sitting room. His highly original script is, at times, difficult to read; however, the recorded total cost of the house, including lots, is \$5,878.83.

In addition to the house, Russell developed Russell Block, a downtown property that included the Russell Building where, on the third floor Russell Hall, lodge meetings were held, various church congregations met, and the end of the Civil War was celebrated. Much later, when daughter, Lillian had married Clyde Lamson, the Russell-Lamson Building was erected on Russell Block. The famed Russell-Lamson Hotel was built on this block in 1914 and remains today as an apartment-hotel.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE IOWA	
COUNTY BLACK HAWK	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
JUL 5	1973

#8 Significance

In addition to these properties and to several others purchased as investments, Russell bought Russell Square, directly opposite the house. Memorable celebrations, notably Fourth of July events, for the entire vicinity were held there. That land was given to the City in 1871 and it is now termed Washington Square. Located between West Third and Park Streets and bounded by South Street, a Japanese style pagoda and oriental garden are located in direct view of Russell House, and although in distinct contrast to the period of Russell House, afford a lovely park and pleasant view for the older establishment.

Russell continued to be active in real estate until his death in 1891. His daughter, Lillian, married Clyde Lamson in the following year. She seems to have been very close to her parents; she dutifully and happily kept house for him after the death of Caroline in 1887. Russell and his wife had had an early tragedy, for shortly after moving into the Russell House, their first daughter, Genevieve, six years old, drowned. Lillian, born seven years after, in 1869, must have seemed especially needed by the bereaved household.

Lillian had had the customary young ladies' genteel education and had even studied music in Chicago. After her marriage, however, her grasp of financial matters began to be evident. She graduated from the Waterloo Gates Business College and joined with Lamson in the management of the family affairs. Jointly, they built the Russell-Lamson Building and she continued to be interested in finance and the family businesses after her husband's death. At her demise in 1946 the house was to undergo the first of the extensive renovations that have been done. Her son, Russell O. Lamson, his wife, Pauline, and their three children then made Russell House their home.

Except that the living room ceiling and a portion of the rear of the house needed lifting, major structural changes were unnecessary during these 1947 changes. It was then that a sleeping porch was placed above the kitchen and off the upper child's bedroom. The one fireplace originally in the sitting room, was moved to the more elegant parlor. Other fairly minor changes in the use of the downstairs rooms were made. A major change that will need to be revised in the future of the house was the removal of the iron stairway that circled from the second floor of the curving mahogany stair that winds from the center downstairs hall to the upper landing outside the bedrooms.

The home continued to be known as the Russell Lamson House, or more simply, the Lamson House, although few persons considered the origin of that title. The Lamsons lived in the house until 1963. The property was then purchased by the People's Mutual Savings and Loan with the stipulation that the house be maintained throughout the lifetime of Russell Lamson. People's Mutual Savings and Loan then erected their commercial building on the same block just beside and down the hill from the Russell House. An attempt was made, quite successfully, to link the old and the new structure into a unified picture. The grounds around the house have helped maintain a Victorian dignity in the midst of a busy commercial area.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
IOWA	
COUNTY	
BLACK HAWK	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	JUL 5 1973

(Number all entries)

#8 Significance

People's Mutual leased the home for one dollar a year to the Junior League of Waterloo and Cedar Falls, Iowa. The League then began the restoration of the Victorian furnishings. These restorations were so successful that the establishment of a permanent board of civic volunteers to continue the work was accomplished. The Association for the Preservation of Rensselaer Russell House was incorporated in 1969 and has been continuing the restorations.

The house has been open for tours since the late 1960's. Changes have continued until, with the completion of the kitchen in the style of the 1860's during the summer of 1972, almost all of the major renovations will be completed.

Hostesses are on duty to conduct tours during April through October every Wednesday and Sunday afternoon. Adults are charged 50¢; children we admit free. Tours may also be made at other times by special arrangements.

Among other special groups, a tour was arranged for students from the Vinton School for the Blind. One special writing project for the coming 1972-73 season will be a hostess guide based on the needs of a visually handicapped group.

Enclosed is a current "Hostess Guide." The Guide describes the furnishings of the house as to acquisition, period and significance in the Victorian home. After the final restorations are completed, the guide will be revised and bound.

A more extensive history of the Rensselaer Russell House and the changes that have been made from 1861-1972 is being completed. It is hoped that the Palimpsest will be interested in publishing this history of a Northeast Iowa cultural exhibit.



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Iowa	
COUNTY Black Hawk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER JUL 5 1973	DATE

(Number all entries)

#9 Bibliography

(This is a partial listing of the major reference sources used for this condensed history of the Rensselaer Russell House.)

Harlan, Edgar Rubey. "A Narrative History of the People of Iowa."  
Vol. V. Chicago, 1931.

Hartman, John C. "A History of Black Hawk County and its People."  
Vol. I and II, 1915.

Museum of Science and Industry, Waterloo, Iowa. Files on the Rensselaer  
Russell House (Russell Lamson House); files on the Historic House of  
Waterloo. Spring, 1972.

Newhall, J. B. "A Glimpse of Iowa in 1846; or, the Emigrant's Guide,  
and State Directory; with a Description of the New Purchase."  
Burlington, Iowa, 1846.

Russell, Rensselaer. Ledger. The personal account of the expenses involved  
in building the Russell House, 1861.

Van Metre, Isaiah. "History of Black Hawk County, Iowa and Representative  
Citizens." Chicago, Illinois, 1904.

