

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUL 17 1978
DATE ENTERED	JAN 11 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Welch Apartments

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

224 Iowa Avenue

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Muscatine

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Iowa

CODE

COUNTY

Muscatine

CODE

157

**CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- \_\_\_ DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- \_\_\_ STRUCTURE
- \_\_\_ SITE
- \_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- \_\_\_ PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- \_\_\_ BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

- \_\_\_ IN PROCESS
- \_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ UNOCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- \_\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED
- \_\_\_ NO

**PRESENT USE**

- \_\_\_ AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- \_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL
- \_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT
- \_\_\_ GOVERNMENT
- \_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL
- \_\_\_ MILITARY
- \_\_\_ MUSEUM
- \_\_\_ PARK
- \_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- \_\_\_ RELIGIOUS
- \_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC
- \_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION
- \_\_\_ OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

David A. Sinclair

STREET & NUMBER

128 Hillcrest Ave.

CITY, TOWN

Davenport

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Iowa 52803

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Muscatine County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Muscatine

STATE

Iowa

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic Architecture of Muscatine, Iowa

DATE

1977

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Div. Historic Preservation, Iowa City, Iowa

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This four-story apartment block is located in Muscatine's central business district. The building is rectangular, 120' x 80', with a projection off the south side at the rear. The ground floor covers the entire site, while the upper floors are L-shaped in plan. The ground floor is occupied by commercial establishments.

The exterior is faced with rough textured brick, dark brown in color and laid in stretcher bond. Along the Iowa Avenue front, the facade is divided into four bays by wall piers which reflect the 20' module of the structural system. The most striking features of the exterior are the 7 bay windows, four of which are two stories in height and three of which are single-story, appearing only on the third floor. (The latter very likely were originally two-story, but cut back to make room for commercial fronts.) All are constructed of wood, and finished with tiny mansard roofs of sheet metal and mansard pent roofs between levels. Each contains a stained glass transom panel, as well as much fanciful milled detail. On the north facade toward the rear of the building are two large light courts, screened from the street through arched openings. The larger of these provides access to a commercial facility and exterior stairs to the basement. An important visual element on the exterior is the pressed metal cornice which unifies the entire design. Above the cornice on both street facades are high parapet gables in a Flemish Renaissance style.

There are 26 apartments in the building, each quite different in plan, orientation, and access. Corridor access and staircases vary in layout from floor to floor, with many walls and ceilings faced with pressed tin. A principal feature of the building is the series of approximately 60 skylights that shower the interior spaces with light. They are found not only in the stairwell and in hallways, but also in living rooms, bathrooms, and kitchens. The apartments along the Iowa Avenue front on the 4th floor, for example, are dramatically skylit, the ornate enclosure of the lights visible above the cornice (there are no windows on the fourth floor along Iowa Avenue). On the 3rd and 4th floors, the corridors blossom into an open well, basically T-shaped in plan. The stairs here are not stacked, but require one to circumambulate the well. The well is skylit, the lights pierced into a caved ceiling faced with pressed tin. The apartments adjacent to the well contain windows which open onto it, thus providing light for rooms not adjacent to exterior walls.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

## PERIOD

## AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      c. 1900

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Welch Apartment block is principally significant for the well-designed interior, in which the need for special amenities of illumination and convenience of room layout has been successfully and imaginatively addressed. Of note is the stairwell, which lends itself well to being a common meeting place for residents. Exterior features which also contribute to the significance of the building are the protruding bay windows, metal cornice, and the decorative enclosures for the fourth floor skylights. The cornice and window bays are reflective of the High Victorian Italianate, and are pleasingly set off by the plainness of the dark brick walls.

Historical information about the building is so far extremely limited. According to fire insurance maps, the earliest available of which is dated Sept., 1883, the property was for many years the location of the Scott House hotel (on second and third floors), and assorted small commercial concerns. During the period 1883 to at least 1912, the building was a standard, rectangular structure, with four commercial areas on the ground floor. Between 1912 and 1919, extensive additions were made to the rear of the building, one of which included skylights in the roof. By 1928, the plan of the building as it appears today was largely complete.



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Welch Apartments, Muscatine, Muscatine Co., Iowa

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

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Addendum to Statement of Significance:

The Welch Apartment block is representative of a group of structures scattered throughout the downtown commercial area of Muscatine, featuring one- or two-story projecting bay windows, which lend the core of the city a certain distinctive character.\* These are two- or three-story brick commercial structures, with retail stores on the ground floor and apartments above, mostly built in the decade from 1890 to 1900. They were all in a late commercial Italianate style, with elaborate metal cornices, and often with raised, decorative brickwork bands which extended the cornice downward. The facades are generally divided into bays by applied vertical piers. The bay windows are sometimes clad in tin, either mansarded or flat-topped, and often quite fanciful. These window bays, which seem to indicate the presence of people actually living downtown, are one of the more pleasing elements of the townscape. All the characteristics noted here can be seen on the Welch Apartment block, and this building is the largest, and the most elaborate, representative of this group of structures.

The interior layout, described briefly in Section 7 of this nomination, was designed to make maximum use of the large skylights which directly illuminate the wide, open hallways, and indirectly (through windows opening onto the hallways and, in a few instances, of interior overhead skylights) many rooms which do not have access to exterior wall openings. This is most clearly demonstrated in the circulation area of the third and fourth floors (see photographs). The white-painted, metal coved ceiling emphasizes this open feeling, and reflects, rather than absorbs, the illumination from the large skylights.

\* Examples include 353-5 E. 2nd (1895); 315-17 E. 2nd (c. 1900); 208-10 Iowa Avenue (1892). The latter displays decorative elements on projecting window bays almost identical to those of the Welch Apartments.