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## 7. Description

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**Condition** excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Built in 1861 and 1866, the G. Kerndt & Brothers Office Block reflects the significant contribution of the Kerndt family to Lansing's historical development. The structure is also a good example of nineteenth century commercial building design, and it calls attention to the importance of the general store, grain elevator and bank, and their interrelation in the small town.

The German-born Kerndt brothers built half of the three story, painted brick building in 1861 and expanded to erect a mirror image of it in 1866. The division between the two is visible in the rear brickwork. The building features a simple cornice, two stories of six-over-six windows having flat stone sills and lintels and their original woodwork, and star tie rods. The structure's rounded corner with now removed iron balconies on the second and third floors was once its most remarkable feature.

The Kerndt brothers first opened a general store in the building, then expanded to offer banking. (The grain business was housed in a separate structure.) A doorway connected the store and bank. The building retains much of its original appearance and use, since two businesses now occupy the two commercial areas. The Kerndts lived above the business on the second and third floors, and this space, now little used, is unchanged. An original wood staircase remains in place.

In 1960 the owners covered the old storefront entrances with light-colored brick facing. Over the years, some side and rear openings have been enclosed or bricked up; shutters visible in a turn of the century photograph removed; and the iron balconies taken down.

The building is the oldest structure in a commercial block of smaller buildings. Because of its size and historical associations, it is a local landmark in this picturesque Mississippi River town of 1,200 residents.

## 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" 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** 1861; 1866 **Builder/Architect\*** Gustav, William, and Moritz Kerndt

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Kerndt brothers provide a textbook example of the industriousness and united family effort that has often typified the history of small town commercial development in Iowa. Through a thorough understanding of the financial underpinnings of Lansing, a grain shipment center on the Mississippi River, the Kerndts covered the vital areas of (1) mercantile trade with their general store (2) crop sales with their grain warehouse, and (3) finance with their small private bank.

Gustav was the first member of the Kerndt family to emigrate from Germany in 1849 when he opened a small broom factory in Schenectady, New York. Later he learned cigar making and opened a cigar business in New York City. His brother, Moritz, followed in 1853 and traveled to the Midwest, where the entire family joined him the following year. In 1856 the Kerndts settled in Lansing. Brother Hermann farmed and provided the broom corn for the family's early broom business, while the remaining brothers (Gustav, William and Moritz) opened a broom factory and also a cigar selling business. Soon, in 1858, the brothers were able to acquire sufficient goods to open a small dry goods store and then to purchase a lot on the levee for a grain elevator.

In 1861 the brothers built the first half of the G. Kerndt & Brothers general stores and were sufficiently successful to construct an addition of equal size five years later. The mercantile and grain businesses were related, since farmers patronized both concerns and led to the establishment of the third leg of their financial empire, a bank. Peterson's history of Iowa relates the following:

"Farmers came to town to sell their grain at the Kerndt elevator. They bought groceries and drygoods at the Kerndt store. Rather than carry home the money realized from sale of their products, a large number of farmers fell into the habit of leaving their currency in the large iron safe in the rear of the Kerndt store.

Sometimes, when they needed money for financing their farm operations, they borrowed at the Kerndt store. This was the day of private banks and soon the Kerndt store engaged in this business, in the 12-foot space, railed off in the rear of the building."

The bank was and continues to be a success. The family incorporated the Kerndt Brothers Savings Bank under this, its present title, in 1908.

Besides the triple threat business of the Kerndt family, the brothers participated in other community ventures. Gustav was among Lansing's first city councilmen, or trustees, and Moritz, whose family of eleven children lived above the store and bank, sat on the city council eleven years. All three brothers were officers in the city's original bank, the State Bank of Lansing. (Established in 1859, the bank underwent four name changes and reorganizations with banking law changes.) In 1908 the Kerndts incorporated their formerly private bank, the Kerndt Brothers Savings Bank.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than an acre.

Quadrangle name Ferryville

Quadrangle scale 1/62,500

### UMT References

A 

1	5	6	4	4	3	1	0	4	8	0	2	1	2	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification Lot 7, Block 25, Original Town of Lansing

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N.A. code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Barbara Beving Long and Ralph J. Christian, Architectural Historians

organization Office of Historic Preservation

date August 1982

street & number East 12th and Grand Avenue

telephone 515/281-5111

city or town Des Moines

state Iowa

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Director, Iowa State Historical Department

date August 25, 1982

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the

date



Keeper of the National Register

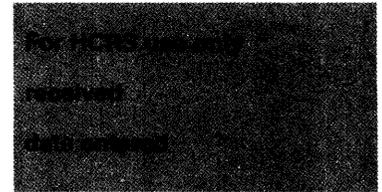
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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



Continuation sheet

Bibliography

Item number

9.

Page

1.

\*William D. Peterson, The Story of Iowa, 4 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1952, 4: 1005-1007.

\*Ellery M. Hancock, Past and Present of Allamakee County, Iowa, 2 vols. (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1913), 2: 252-259 and 441-442.

\*Thomas M. Kerndt, grandson of Moritz Kerndt.

W.E. Alexander, History of Winnishiek and Allamakee Counties, Iowa, (Sioux City: Western Publishing Co., 1882), p. 706.