

PH# 367257

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 7 1977
DATE ENTERED	SEP 19 1977

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

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Johnston/Muff House

AND/OR COMMON

Charles Algermissen House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

1422 Boswell Ave

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Crete

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF

First

STATE

Nebraska

CODE

31

COUNTY

Saline

CODE

151

**3 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
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Algermissen

STREET & NUMBER

1422 Boswell

CITY, TOWN

Crete

STATE

Nebraska

\_\_ VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Saline County Courthouse, County Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Wilber

STATE

Nebraska

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_FEDERAL \_\_STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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	(interior)	

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Johnston/Muff house is a 2½-story Queen Anne structure located on the crest of a hill in east Crete.

The exterior of the house is dominated by a 2½-story tower on the south side of the house and a 2-story bay on the west (front). A frontal porch occupies the space adjacent to the 2-story bay. It is of frame construction, enclosed by a spindle-work railing. Atop this first-floor porch is a second-story covered walk-out surrounded by balusters and columns which match the lower porch.

In typical Queen Anne fashion, there were a variety of materials used in the construction of this house. The first story exterior is stone trimmed with brick, the second story is brick with some stone trim, and the gable areas are frame with patterned shingles.

Interesting decorative features of the house are the large finials located on the roof at the gable peaks and on top of the tower. There are also two large arched windows and several stained and leaded glass windows adding to the character of the house.

The interior of the house was converted to apartments in 1938 by the present owners, who have lived there for all but two of their seventy-two years of marriage. (Mrs. Algermissen is a daughter of Catherine Muff, the second owner of the house.) Except for the necessary partitioning, the home remains in close-to-original condition. The woodwork and open stairway have never been painted, and the six Italian marble fireplaces are in excellent repair. The slate roof is in perfect condition.

The grounds around the home still retain their historic integrity even though most of the original 15 acres have been sold through the years. Mature trees and a large expanse of grass surround the house, which is set back from the street.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input 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		

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SPECIFIC DATES	1885-1888	BUILDER/ARCHITECT
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In 1870 John R. Johnston, a native of Canada, arrived in Nebraska and homesteaded in Saline County near the site of the future town of Crete. When the railroad company platted Crete in 1871, Johnston became an avid supporter of the new community. He was appointed postmaster of Crete in November of 1871 and built several commercial buildings for rental purposes. Johnston formed a partnership in the Crete Mills in 1875 with his father-in-law, G. W. Bridges, an endeavor which lasted until 1882 when Johnston sold his interest to C. C. White and apparently moved to California for a few years. Returning to Crete about 1885, he joined the Crete State Bank. In May of 1885, J. R. Johnston bought a 15-acre parcel of land which at that time was just outside the eastern boundary of the city limits. He began to build what the local newspaper described as "one of the pleasantest half village and half rustic homes that can be found in Nebraska." By November his large horse barn was completed, a building which is no longer extant.

J. R. Johnston had very progressive ideas for his estate. In November of 1885, he built an 800-barrel water reservoir on his land for fire prevention. He suggested at that time that it would not be too costly to enlarge the facility and run a pipe down the hill west to the Crete business district for the same purpose.

In the summer and fall of 1886, he led a fund-raising drive for the improvement of Boswell Avenue, the street which fronts the house on the west. His proposal was to grade that street and improve it to a quality constituting a thoroughfare.

By July 5, 1888, the State Vidette newspaper of Crete commented that the Johnston residence was "getting far enough along to give a person an idea that it is destined to be the finest building in the city when completed." Later that month, the newspaper reported that one of the contractors for the house went to Omaha to purchase electric appliances for the residence, which was nearly ready for occupancy.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet, Item 9

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,4	6,7,3,3,0,0	4,4,9,9,1,1,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Janet Jeffries, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

January 1977

STREET & NUMBER

1500 R Street

TELEPHONE

(402) 432-2793

CITY OR TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

## 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

*Marian E. Kinnell*

1/26/77

TITLE

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Wood*

DATE

9/19/77

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*Charles*

DATE

9-16-77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Johnston/Muff House

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**CONTINUATION SHEET**    Significance    ITEM NUMBER    8    PAGE    2

In May of 1892, Johnston sold out his interest in the Crete State Bank and in November of that year sold his residence to Mrs. Catherine Muff.

Catherine Hier Muff, a native of Prussia, came with her parents to Nebraska in 1870. In July 1871, she married Joseph Muff, a Swiss immigrant, in Seward. The Muffs lived in Lincoln during their first year of marriage, where Mr. Muff had a contract to raise hay for the first Nebraska State Fair. In 1872, they moved to Crete and founded an ice business which Mr. Muff operated for nearly twenty years. Other business endeavors of the Muffs were real estate and restaurant, bakery and meat market investments. Mr. Muff also owned half interest in the Western Brewing Company of Crete.

Joseph and Catherine Muff were staunch Catholics. They contributed in 1879 to the purchase of 40 acres of land west of Crete for use as a Catholic cemetery, and in 1887 donated a vacant block in Crete to the St. James Parish for the erection of a Catholic church and school.

When Joseph Muff died suddenly in 1891, his wife Catherine continued to successfully manage the family's business affairs. She acquired more farm land and built several commercial buildings in the downtown area for rental purposes.

Mrs. Muff bought the Johnston mansion on October 17, 1892, for \$20,000 and moved there with her family. In the Lewis Publishing Co.'s Biographical and Genealogical History of Southeastern Nebraska, 1904, there is a descriptive account of Mrs. Muff's home: "Her present residence is one of the finest in this part of Nebraska, being a very extensive and palatial residence, built of brick and stone. It is situated in one of the most desirable residence portions of the city and contains eighteen rooms, supplied with every modern convenience. It occupies a fine building site, commanding a splendid view of the town and the farming districts to the northwest and south of the city. The house is surrounded by beautiful and well-kept lawns, shaded with ornamental trees, while upon the place is an orchard of five acres. The grounds cover altogether, fifteen acres, and most effective effort has been put forth to benefit the home which in its furnishings indicates the cultured and refined taste of the inmates."

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CONTINUATION SHEET    Significance    ITEM NUMBER    8    PAGE    3

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Architecturally, the house is a rather unique example of the Queen Anne style. While employing the usual variety in building materials and roof lines, this particular structure has a side tower rather than the typical corner tower found on most Queen Anne houses in the area. This style was a most popular one in the eastern half of Nebraska in the late 1880's and through the 1890's. Built at a time when the town of Crete and this portion of the state as a whole were enjoying a boom period, it is a fine, well-preserved example of the style.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

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