

MISSISSIPPI RIVER MEN:
LE CLAIRE, IOWA 1850-1880

Name: "Old Mill House"

Address: 419 N. Cody Road

Owner: Martin Hanson

Address: 127 S. Second

Legal Description: That part of Mill
Lot of Davenport and Rogers addition
to Le Claire described as follows:*

Acreage: less than one

UTM: 15/721400 4608740

Physical Description:

A two-story, five-bay clapboard house, built in 1851, with gable roof ridge parallel to the front facade. In the center bay on the first story is a wide door enframingent with sidelights and transom. At either end of the roof is a pair of chimneys, on either side and near the ridge of the roof. It has been stripped of much detail, and windows have either been boarded up or covered with (perhaps original) shutters. The house sits on a stone foundation, which, at the rear (river side) forms a walk-in basement.

*Beginning at a point on the west side of said Mill Lot 190 feet south of the NW corner, then running in a southerly direction and along the west side of said Mill Lot 60 feet, then east to the west line of the Iowa and Illinois Railway Company 72 feet more or less, then northerly on and along the west side of the said right of way of Iowa and Illinois Railway Company 96 feet thence west to place of beginning.

Significance:

This house, built by Alfred Jansen, was acquired c. 1865 by J.W. Van Sant, along with the adjoining boatyards. Van Sant began his river career at Rock Island in the 1840's as a ship carpenter and boatbuilder. In 1862 he came to Le Claire, to take over the boatyards originally established by the Davenport and Rogers Co. The yards, which occupied nearly two blocks along the river and employed about 100 men, built boats as well as repaired them. Following the success of his son Sam's "J.W. Van Sant" as a raftboat, the yards produced a number of boats of this type, including the "D.A. McDonald", "Le Claire Belle" and "Silver Wave". Many of them were also owned and operated under Van Sant auspices, through the Van Sant-Musser Navigation Co.

Despite years of neglect, this house still displays a fine reflection of Greek Revival architecture, with its symmetrical front, handsome door frame, and the pairs of chimneys on each end of the gable roof. With the destruction in October, 1978, of the Smith-Parrick House (also on Cody Road, and originally intended to be included in this nomination), the "Old Mill House" is now the community's finest example of the Greek Revival influence in domestic architecture.

