

ARCHITECTURAL/HISTORICAL SURVEY

DAVENPORT, IOWA

The Architects Office

Wehner, Nowysz, Pottsichull and Pfiffner  
301 City Building, Iowa City, Iowa 52240

DAVENPORT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
IOWA DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

SITE # 82-10- BR-808 MAP #

HIST. DIST.

NAME B. J. Palmer House H C

ADDRESS 808 Brady S

LEGAL DES. Goldsmith's Add. Lots 1, 2, 3 & S. 8' of Lot 4  
SUB-DIVISION BLOCK PARCEL SUB-PARCEL

UTM 15 1102343 416101151 ACREAGE -1 ZONE

OWNER Palmer College Foundation  
1000 Brady Street, Davenport, IA 52803

TITLE H. Same  
(IF DIFF)

PHOTO

see continuation sheet

MAP

SITE SHEET

DESCRIPTION

FORM 3 stories with addition 1874, CONST. c. 1915

MATERIALS Brick, Stone ARCH STYLE Second Empire

FENESTRATION Addition-9/1 D.H.S.; leaded beveled glass transoms & fixed lights

DIST. FEATURES 3rd story tower-main house; interior "theme rooms", wrought iron fence; slate roof

ALTERATIONS Wrap around addition-c.1915

SITE & RELATED STR. contiguous with other college buildings, courtyard, green area on S.

ARCHITECTURE

STATEMENT

The Palmer House includes the original Dessaint Second Empire house and the wrap around 1 story addition built by the Palmers. The addition is an odd assortment of institutional form with residential features ie. leaded, beveled glass. The interior contains thematic rooms which reflect Palmer's eclectic taste, world travels, and special interests; they include an organ room (containing the WOC radio station's organ used for broadcasting); log room (similar to a mountain lodge complete with whole trees) and oriental room (containing a sunken floor and housing Palmer's extensive oriental collection). The alterations to the original Dessaint House reflect Palmer's peculiar personality, disassociation from the traditional taste of Davenport elite. Viewed in this light, the addition to the house is significant in its own right rather than an alteration.

SOURCES

**SIGNIFICANCE**

This building focuses attention on the career of a founder of Chiropractic treatment and the country's largest educational institution associated with it - Palmer School of Chiropractic. B.J. Palmer first occupied the building as a residence during the era of the school's founding. Palmer expanded and altered the house during his life, the alterations are a unique reflection of Palmer's eccentric and worldly interests. The period of significance recognized is 1912 (date of occupancy) to 1949 (B.J.'s death).

**DESCRIPTION**

Louis C. Dessaint, local lumber mill owner, built this house in 1874. Later owners were F.H. Hancock in 1886 and Wm. D. Petersen in 1895. In 1912 B.J. Palmer and his wife Mabel moved into the house which was located adjacent to the first classroom building (now razed) for Palmer School of Chiropractics.

B.J. Palmer was instrumental in establishing chiropractics as a treatment involving manipulation of the spine to promote healing. D.D. Palmer, B.J.'s father, was the discoverer of the philosophy & treatment and B.J. was Chiropractic's main promoter, developing a scientific chiropractic philosophy and technique. B.J. published 35 books that remain the basis of Chiropractic theory today.

Chiropractics gained in popularity dramatically after W.W.I. Enrollment in Palmer school peaked at 2,000 before the Depression. Hard times set the school back and by 1936 only 300 students were in attendance. After W.W.II the school experienced renewed growth. Today, Palmer College is the largest institution of Chiropractic instruction in the world. CON'T.

**SOURCES**

Wilk, Chester A., Chiropractic Speaks Out, Park Ridge, ILL: Wilk Publishing Co; 1973.  
 "Chiropractic School Tops Seven Enterprises marking Dr. Palmer's Accomplishments during 41 years," Centennial and Fiftieth Anniversary Edition, Davenport Times, 7/11/36.  
 Palmer, David D. Three Generations: A Brief History of Chiropractic, Davenport: Palmer College of Chiropractic, 1967.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN: TODD R. MOZINGO | HISTORIAN: MARLYS SVENDSEN-ROESLER | SURVEY COMP. 1980

**EVALUATION**

**ARCHITECTURAL**

- I. ARCH. EVALUATION \_\_\_\_\_
- II. ENVIR. STATURE \_\_\_\_\_
- III. INT. OF CONTEXT \_\_\_\_\_
- IV. INT. OF FABRIC \_\_\_\_\_

**LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

- NAT.  STATE  LOCAL  N. ELIG.

**HISTORICAL**

**I. THEME(S) OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

- A. PRIMARY Education
- B. SECONDARY \_\_\_\_\_

**II. LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

- NAT.  STATE  LOCAL

**III. N.R.H.P.**

- ELIGIBLE  NOT ELIGIBLE

**HISTORIC DISTRICT CLASSIFICATION**

- A.  B.  C

**FOR DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION USE ONLY**

1. DATE RECEIVED \_\_\_\_\_

2. DATE OF STAFF EVALUATION \_\_\_\_\_

- |                           |                                     |                                     |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                           | A. ARCHITECTURAL                    | B. HISTORICAL                       |
| ELIGIBLE FOR N.R.H.P.     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| NOT ELIGIBLE FOR N.R.H.P. | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

**3. N.R.H.P. ACTION**

- |                       |                               |                                  |                                 |            |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| A. STATE REVIEW COMM. | APP. <input type="checkbox"/> | DISAPP. <input type="checkbox"/> | TABLED <input type="checkbox"/> | DATE _____ |
| B. FEDERAL REVIEW     | APP. <input type="checkbox"/> | DISAPP. <input type="checkbox"/> | TABLED <input type="checkbox"/> | DATE _____ |

**4. D.H.P. SOURCES**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> COUNTY RESOURCES | <input type="checkbox"/> DET. OF ELIGIBILITY             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> W'SHIELD SURVEY  | <input type="checkbox"/> R. B. C. _____                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> N.R.H.P.         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DAVENPORT A/H SURVEY |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GRANT _____      | <input type="checkbox"/> _____                           |

**5. SUBJECT TRACES**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. PHOTO**

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 \_\_\_\_\_

The Architects Office

Wehner, Nowysz, Pottschiull and Pfiffner

201 day building Iowa city Iowa 52240

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Besides Chiropractics, B.J. was also an avid investor in the new radio - television industry after W.W.I. He was the owner of WOC radio station, the first licensed station west of the Mississippi, in 1922. In 1930 Palmer acquired the Des Moines station, WHO. A communications dynasty developed around these two holdings during the 1930's & 40's.

