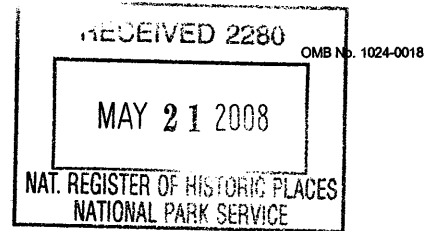


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name J. Schmuck Block

Other names/site number GA03-237

2. Location

Street & number 113 North 5th Street

Not for publication

City or town Beatrice

Vicinity

State Nebraska

Code NE

County Gage

Code 067

Zip code 68310

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Michael J. Smith
Signature of certifying official

May 16, 2008
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall

7-2-08

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

J. Schmuck Block

Name of Property

Gage County, Nebraska

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1	N/A	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- COMMERCE/TRADE/business
- COMMERCE/TRADE/general store
- COMMERCE/TRADE/tavern
- DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- COMMERCE/TRADE/clothing store
- DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/High Victorian Eclectic

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Limestone

Walls Brick

Roof Asphalt and slate

Other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** Removed from its original location.
- C** A birthplace or a grave.
- D** A cemetery.
- E** A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** A commemorative property.
- G** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1887

Significant Dates

1887

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- Previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- Designated a National Historic Landmark
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

J. Schmuck Block

Name of Property

Gage County, Nebraska

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than one

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	691476	4459549	3.			
2.				4.			

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jill E. Dolberg/Historic Buildings Survey Coordinator
organization Nebraska State Historical Society date March 21, 2008
street & number 1420 P Street telephone (402) 471-4773
city or town Lincoln state Nebraska zip code 68508

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Sue and Mike McLain
street & number 113 North 5th Street telephone (402) 223-5121
city or town Beatrice state Nebraska zip code 68310

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Continuation Sheet

J. Schmuck Block

Name of Property

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The J. Schmuck Block is located on Fifth Street, just one half block north of Center Street in Beatrice, within the Central Business District. An alley runs along the south side of the building.

This High Victorian Eclectic style commercial building is a rectangular shaped, three story brick structure with an asphalt and slate, flat roof. It has a limestone foundation and brick veneer exterior. The façade contains a recessed central entrance between two enormous plate glass windows of the storefront and underneath an awning. The windows angle in toward the door slightly, and are set atop a knee-high partial wall of brick. The door itself is oak with a large glass panel. The storefront is not original, when compared to a photograph of the storefront in 1887. It originally had cast iron columns and beautiful stained glass transoms. This "modern" storefront is thought to have been the product of a 1930s remodel.¹ The awning was also added during the remodel, as it does not appear in the original photograph. It looks rather like a heavy theater marquee, and decorative rosettes embellish the sides of the awning. It is supported by two large chains which have been bolted into the cornice between the first and second floors. The cornice has an elaborate denticulated appearance, but the dentils are busy with ornament and feature upside-down hearts. The south side of the cornice ends in a decorative triangular pinnacle. In the midst of the cornice, under the sill and between the scrolled brackets for the projecting bay window, reads the name and date for the building: J. Schmuck, 1887.

The second floor features a pair of projecting double hung windows under what used to be a demilune stained glass window. The stone arch is supported by two columns with decorative capitals that are not representative of any of the classical orders. Rather they appear to be stylistically floral. One over one, double-hung windows flank the projecting windows on either side, and are topped with a stone lintel with a rosette in the center. The base of the windows rests on the cornice of the first floor, using it as a sill. An elaborate stone cornice separates the second and third floors as well, and is stylistically dissimilar from the lower one. It features modillions and beads, and the south side of the cornice terminates in a decorative piece that mimics the rosette of a doorframe.

The third floor is dominated by gabled dormers. From the front of the building the main roofline almost appears to be a mansard roof, which allows the dormers to project out and be flush with the rest of the building. The rest of the building, however, has a flat roof. The gables dormers are rich with ornament. The dominant dormer is the largest central dormer that rests on the projecting window of the second floor. It has a slightly recessed, gothic arched window opening, the stained glass window of which is missing. Two small columns have been set into the stone and support the arch. The peak of the gable contains a metal textured material for visual interest. This dormer projects out away from a secondary peaked roof, the angles of which are not visible from the inside. The other two dormers are also gabled, and are diminutive in comparison to the central dormer. They contain one over one, double-hung windows, and each is missing a demilune stained glass window. The trim on the gable of the dormers is decorative, with rosettes and carved fluting. The three dormers and the soaring peak each have an elaborate finial. A third decorative cornice at the top of the building features a stylized egg and dart motif, and rosettes on the sides.

Like most commercial buildings, the front is this building's glory. The alley side is plain brick, punctuated by windows, or window openings that have been covered over.

Upon entering the storefront door, one enters the existing shop. It has been reconfigured, probably when the storefront was rearranged in the 1930s. There is an open space in the front with a hallway to an open space in the back that would have been for a storeroom. A stairway on the north side of the building leads to the second floor, and judging from the oak treads seems to be original. The ceiling is also original, but instead of being pressed tin or bead board, it is an

¹ *Beatrice Morning Sun*, 19 February 1972.

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J. Schmuck Block

Name of Property

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interesting wood panel that is carved in a wave pattern. Upon ascending the stairs to the second floor, one finds the original configuration of rooms. A long hallway with the original hardwood floors leads from the front of the building all the way to the back rooms. Tall doors with glass transoms, and intact hardware for using them, allow entrance into the office spaces. The doors all have the original door trim, which includes rosettes. Some of the rooms connected with each other historically, and this helps make the space flow as living space for the current owners. Some new plumbing has been added to allow for a kitchen on the second floor, as well as a bathroom.

An additional oak stairway along the north wall leads to the third floor, which was originally the private living space for John and Anna Schmuck. The most impressive room is the front room that has the advantage of the dormers. There is a window seat in the space left by the largest dormer.

The basement is one large room with a tin ceiling, accessed from a stair from the back side of the shop storage space. There is an exterior alleyway entrance as well, which allowed patrons of the tavern to come and go at all hours without needing access to the shop. There is not much evidence left of its tavern history, other than its tin ceiling, as for years it housed the *Beatrice Morning/Daily Sun* newspaper presses. The newspaper has subsequently left more of a mark on this part of the building than the tavern did. There is graffiti in the concrete walls from the men who ran the presses, as well as chutes from the alley that the owners are told allowed for the delivery of rolls of paper.

Historic Integrity:

Considering that the J. Schmuck Block has existed for 121 years, this building has very good historic integrity. There are, of course, some changes that have been made. Its storefront was changed approximately forty or fifty years into its existence, however storefronts are commonly changed in order for a business to show how vibrant and successful they are and this change has gained historical significance over time. In changing the second floor from offices and apartments to a permanent living space for the owners, a kitchen and bathroom were installed, however these changes were sensitively done with minimal impact on the building, and the fact that the space was used for apartments historically makes it all the more appropriate.

The most troubling alteration is the loss of the stained glass windows on the exterior of the building, which happened approximately forty years ago. The building was purchased by a family that wanted to build a new house using old materials, and took the windows for use in their new home. While it is a loss, there is so much decorative architectural wonder left in the Schmuck Block that the building is still very much able to convey its significance. Its other aspects of integrity: workmanship, design, location, feeling, association, and setting are very much intact.

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J. Schmuck Block

Name of Property

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The J. Schmuck Block was constructed in 1887 in Beatrice, Gage County, Nebraska. Beatrice is the county seat of Gage County, which is located in southeastern Nebraska. Beatrice was officially founded in 1857, and welcomed residents the following year. During the period in which the Schmuck Block was constructed, Beatrice was an extremely vibrant community. Three railroads ran through Beatrice: the Burlington, the Union Pacific, and the Rock Island. The town had horse powered street cars, several parks, and other city improvements such as electric lights, telephones and a city waterworks.² A building boom began in 1885 and included much construction using locally fabricated bricks. It was in this context that the Schmuck Block was constructed, one half block off of Central Avenue, which is the main business street, located on an ancillary business street.

John Schmuck was born in Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany on April 2, 1834. He was the son of a shoemaker who emigrated to the United States, and upon completing his apprenticeship and a three year period as a traveling journeyman, he became a shoemaker as well. At the age of twenty, he also immigrated to the United States, living in various states over a twenty year period until he finally settled in Beatrice, Nebraska in 1873. He purchased a farm five miles west of Beatrice just in time to experience the grasshopper plague, and was forced to return to Beatrice to take up cobbling again.³ Real estate transactions in the *Beatrice Express* show that by November 1873 he had purchased the commercial lots associated with the Schmuck building in order to build his first generation frame cobbler's shop.⁴ In the spring, an announcement of his intentions was made in the newspaper.

John Schmuck has bought a lot of Mr. Townsend just north of Reynold's store and has begun the erection of a shoe shop thereon. The building will be a one story frame, which Mr. Schmuck will move to the rear whenever his business demands a larger building.⁵

He continued in this trade until 1887, and developed a thriving business.⁶ He placed an ad in the *Beatrice Express* that stated

People are compelled to have boots and shoes. Mr. John Schmuck is aware of this fact, and sensibly hangs out his sign in the EXPRESS for the information of purchasers. Mr. Schmuck has been engaged in the business here for about a year, and during that time has earned the reputation of being a first class workman. His shop is on Fifth Street, north of Reynold's store, and he invites the public to give him a call, examine his work and prices, leave their orders, and go away satisfied.⁷

As time passed, Mr. Schmuck continued to invest his earnings in real estate. In 1887, John Schmuck built the J. Schmuck Block, a brick building three stories tall and 23 by 94 feet in area.⁸ The building is 8,500 square feet. The first floor was built as retail space, housing at various times the Jones and Smith Dry Goods Store, and the C.E. Smith and Son Dry Goods Store. The second floor was organized as offices, and housed J.H. Broady and J.N. Richards, attorneys, Oliver Ralston, clothes cleaner, and Waldon and Waldon, physicians. There were also occasionally some residential tenants, such as R. A. Swift, who died in the building in 1905.⁹ The full basement offered space for at various times a

² Save America's Heritage, "Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey Reconnaissance Survey Final Report of Gage County, Nebraska," 1 August 1992.

³ *Beatrice Express*, 27 March 1873.

⁴ *Beatrice Express*, 27 November 1873.

⁵ *Beatrice Express*, 19 March 1874.

⁶ Chapman Brothers, eds., *Portrait and Biographical Record of Gage County* (Chicago: Chapman Bros, 1888).

⁷ *Beatrice Express*, 29 April 1875.

⁸ Chapman Brothers, eds., *Portrait and Biographical Record of Gage County* (Chicago: Chapman Bros, 1888).

⁹ *Gage County Democrat*, 12 January 1905.

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J. Schmuck Block

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billiards hall and several taverns, and was able to take advantage of a separate alleyway entrance for late night comings and goings. The third floor was residential space for John and Anna Schmuck, until their deaths in 1916 and 1917 respectively.¹⁰

After Anna Schmuck's death, the disposition of the Schmuck block was in dispute, her family disagreeing with her choice of Dr. Waldon, her long time tenant, as executor of her estate. After several years of legal wrangling, the property was sold in a referee's sale, and was purchased by E.M. Marvin, the editor and publisher of the *Beatrice Morning Sun*. His intent was to use the building for the new home of the newspaper, and so it did from 1918 until 1963. The basement was used for the printing presses, and writers were all upstairs. The graffiti from the printers can still be seen in the concrete ceiling of the basement.

When the newspaper left, an attorney purchased the building. He and his wife removed some of the architectural features of the building, such as pocket doors and stained glass windows, and used them to build their new house. The building languished. The current owners have owned the building since 2006. They have put a great deal of work into the building to make it livable, and now use the first floor storefront as a vintage clothing shop, and the second and third floors and living space. The basement is used as storage.

Significance:

The Schmuck Block is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its architectural significance. The building was built in the High Victorian Eclectic style, which featured the blending of styles to create new looks in an almost confusing and ostentatious manner. In High Victorian Eclectic, features from Gothic Revival, Italianate, Romanesque, or Second Empire were combined, resulting in picturesque facades. High Victorian Eclectic exhibits heavier detailing and more complex massing and polychromatic effects, and these hallmarks of the style are achieved by the use of materials of differing color and texture. According to McAlester, "these exuberant mixtures of detailing, superimposed on generally Medieval forms, mean that more Victorian styles tend to overlap each other without the clear-cut stylistic distinctions that separate the Greek, Gothic and Italianate modes of the preceding Romantic era."¹¹

The J. Schmuck Block is a mixture of stylistic elements from the picturesque period. There is a hint of a mansard roof with dormers punctuating the roofline from the Second Empire. There is a gothic arched window from Gothic Revival. The varied trims, peaks and walls planes of the building hint at the Queen Anne style. The former stained glass windows, particularly the ones visible in the historic photograph of the storefront¹² also are typical of Queen Anne architecture.

¹⁰ *Daily Express*, 19 July 1917.

¹¹ Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 239.

¹² See below. *Beatrice Daily Sun*, 19 February 1977.

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J. Schmuck Block's original storefront, 1887

In many ways, this commercial building is unique for Nebraska commercial architecture. Most commercial architecture of this era in Nebraska is far more austere, perhaps displaying some decorative brickwork or round arches. An effusive façade such as this one is a rarity indeed.

In terms of historic integrity, the J. Schmuck Block has seen some change over course of its history. Its storefront was changed approximately a decade after the Schmuck's deaths, but well within the building's historic period. It has lost its stained glass windows, but enough of its high-spirited stylistic details remain to compensate for the loss. On the interior, the significant spaces of the building remain, such as the shop space, the long hallways on the second and third floors, and the office/apartment spaces on the second floor. The building has very good historic integrity, and is amply able to convey its architectural significance to remain eligible for listing in the National Register.

The J. Schmuck Block is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its architectural significance as a superb example of the High Victorian Eclectic style in Beatrice, Nebraska. Its period of significance is 1887, for the year of its construction, and it is locally significant.

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Chapman Brothers, eds. *Portrait and Biographical Record of Gage County*. Chicago: Chapman Bros, 1888.

Gage County Democrat, 12 January 1905.

Harris, Cyril M., ed. *Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

Save America's Heritage. "Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey Reconnaissance Survey Final Report of Gage County, Nebraska." 1 August 1992.

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 1, 2, 3, Block 48, Original Town, Beatrice, Nebraska.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of the Schmuck Building include all of the property historically associated with the building