

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 06000848

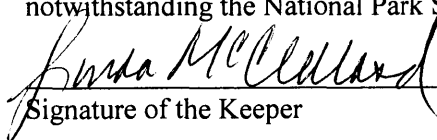
Property Name: Sheaffer, Walter A. , House

County: Lee State: Iowa

N/A

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.


Signature of the Keeper

Sept. 19, 2006
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 3: Certification. The SHPO's recommendation is, hereby, revised to indicate significance at the national, state and local levels.

Section 8: Significance. Under the Period of Significance, the entry "1930" is, hereby, changed to 1930-1946 to correspond to the years of Walter Sheaffer's residency.

The Iowa Historic Preservation Office provided clarification for the level of significance and has been notified of the revised period of significance.

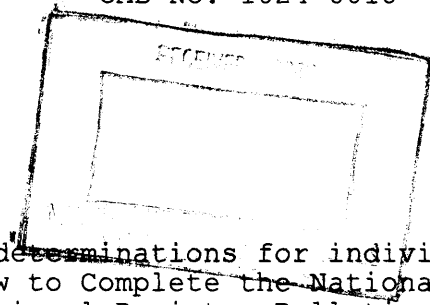
DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

200

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Sheaffer, Walter A., House

other names/site number Abolt, Craig & Margaret, House

2. Location

street & number 11 High Point NA not for publication
city or town Fort Madison vicinity NA
state Iowa code IA county Lee code 111 zip code 52627

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Rowell G. Locke, Deputy SHPO
Signature of certifying official

August 3, 2006
Date

STATE HISTORIC SOCIETY OF IOWA

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 commenting or other official

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):

James McChesney 9/19/06

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	<u>Domestic/Single Dwelling</u>	Sub:	_____
	<u>Domestic/Secondary Structure</u>		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	<u>Domestic/Single Dwelling</u>	Sub:	_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals/Tudor Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>Concrete</u>
roof	<u>Stone/Slate, Metal/Copper</u>
walls	<u>Brick</u>
	<u>Stone</u>
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.)

- 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Invention
Industry
Commerce

Period of Significance 1930

Significant Dates 1930

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
Sheaffer, Walter A.

Cultural Affiliation N/A

W. A. Sheaffer House
Architect/Builder Mayo & Mayo

Fort Madison, IA

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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 of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 8 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>644860</u>	<u>4499320</u>	
2				
	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 Hansman, John, Dr., (Ph.D.history & archaeology), F.S.A., F.R.G.S.(UK)

organization Associate Fellow, Cambridge University, UK date _____

street & number 408 7th Street telephone 319-372-4015

city or town Fort Madison state IA zip code 52627

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 Abolt, Craig & Margaret

street & number 2879 Chalk Ridge Road telephone 319-372-5494

city or town Fort Madison state IA zip code 52627

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine 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 (16 U.S.C. 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.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 1

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

Architectural Description

House Exterior

Built in 1929-30, the 16,000 square foot, 18-room W. A. Sheaffer residence was designed by the noted architectural firm of Mayo and Mayo of Chicago, Illinois. Set in eight acres of partly-wooded grounds on a 200 foot bluff overlooking the Mississippi River in the rural, High Point addition to Fort Madison, the house displays many diagnostic architectural features of the Tudor Revival style. One common Tudor element is a steeply-pitched (here slate) roof, and the use of common bond for all exterior brickwork.

Tudor features of the north-facing entrance front include two stone-parapeted gables; two third-story dormers with half-timbered gable ends and a two-story stone-framed bay window. An entrance porte cochere utilizes three flattened arches in the Tudor style.

An eclectic feature of the north and all other facades of this house is the use of both corner and window quoins which are not Tudor components, but decorative elements associated with the Italian Renaissance, in accepted architectural nomenclature. This classification is derived historically, from Italian Renaissance building styles of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; periods contemporary, in part, with that of the English Tudor style. It would, therefore, seem more appropriate to identify the use of quoins at the Sheaffer house with the Italian Renaissance rather than Italianate or French Empire, both of which utilize quoins derived ultimately from Italian Renaissance models. This resolution would agree with the twentieth-century building period of the Sheaffer house which also utilizes Renaissance-style quoins for the porte cochere and entrance-door arches.

Technically, however, a combination of Italian Renaissance-inspired architectural features, such as quoins, and traditional Tudor elements, are defined in Britain as a separate architectural style designated for post-Tudor England as Jacobean (after James I successor to the last Tudor monarch, Elizabeth I). A mix of Tudor architectural features and Renaissance quoins identified as Jacobean are utilized, for example, at Blickling Hall (1625) in England. But Jacobean is listed only as "Other Stylistic Terminology" in National Register Guidelines for architectural identification, and not as a separate subcategory. Accordingly, as guidelines allow up to three separate architectural styles to be identified for a nominated property, we reference generally both Tudor Revival and Italian Renaissance influences represented at the Sheaffer house, but include only Tudor Revival – the predominant style – in Section 7, "Architectural Classification," in the National Register form.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 2

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

In continuing our description of the Sheaffer house facades, we shall defer from referring further to quoins which frame some 24 house windows attested variously on all four sides of this building.

The east façade of the house displays one stone-parapeted gable and one dormer window with half-timbered gable end. An engaged brick chimney extending above the roof line terminates with Tudor-style, terra-cotta chimney pot flues. The ground floor on this facing features a narrow brick porch leading from the kitchen.

The south face, which overlooks the Mississippi River flowing two hundred feet below the adjoining cliffside, features two stone-parapeted gables and two dormer windows with half-timbered gable ends. A one story wing at the west end of this facade, houses a sun room which accesses a slate-paved terrace through two sets of French doors set into the south wall of that unit.

The west façade features two, stone-parapeted gables segmented by an engaged chimney pierced at second-story level with a window and surmounted by two terra-cotta chimney pots of Tudor stylistic derivation.

House Interior

The principle house entrance, on the north face, accesses a large reception hall that extends the width of the main building. The hall walls are fitted with oak, linen-fold paneling derived from Tudor prototypes. The hall ceiling, divided into three sections, displays raised, molded-plaster patterns of Tudor derivation.

To the far left, just beyond the entrance to the hall, is the library, a small room that measures 16 by 13 feet. Three walls of this chamber are fitted with oak, built-in book shelves. The north wall carries the ground floor segment of the bay window referenced earlier.

Further along the hall's left facing is a corridor leading to the kitchen, a plain room which adjoins the butler's pantry fitted with glass-door cupboards above, on the north and south facings, and cabinets below.

Continuing along the left side of the reception hall we arrive at the dining room which merges into a breakfast room. Together, these units measure 31 by 17 feet. Folding double doors, on metal floor runners located 21 feet within the dining room, may be closed off to create the separate breakfast room when a larger space is not required. The ceilings of both units are decorated in raised, molded-plaster, geometrical patterns derived from traditional Tudor designs.

A large, flattened limestone arch at the south end of the reception hall leads to the sun room which forms a one-story extension to the main house in that area. The sun room is paved with small ceramic tiles of varying size and subdued colors as are the side walls of this unit, to a height of two and one half feet. At the center of the sun room's south wall is a stone fountain in the form of a cherub's head that protrudes from

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 3

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

a tiled backing. Beneath this feature is a small tiled basin to drain water flowing from the fountain's head. The sun room ceiling is coved, but otherwise lacks decorative elements.

Turning from the sun room on the west side of the entrance hall, is an opening into the drawing room, the principle chamber of the ground floor which measures 31 by 17 feet. The north wall of this room features a three unit, small-paned, leaded-glass window. At the center of the west face is a stone chimneypiece with pointed arch opening giving access to a brick-lined fire box. A boarder of quatrefoil lobes extend along the chimneypiece immediately above the arched opening. In common with the sun room, the drawing room displays a coved ceiling along all sides, but is otherwise plain.

At the reception hall's north end on the west side, a broad stair of oak treads and wrought-iron balustrade, accesses the second floor of the house. The stair rises toward a landing leading at right to a further stair segment that rises south to the level of a large second-floor hall. The ceiling of this space and that extending over the stair and lower landing, is decorated in raised, molded-plaster designs similar to those utilized for the ceiling of the ground-floor reception hall. A large three-panel, leaded window, fitted at the center of the north wall at the stair landing, admits light for this entire area. A bronze chandelier, original to the house, is suspended from the ceiling within the stairwell.

The second floor contains five bedrooms, all of similar design and of no special architectural distinction. Three of these rooms are provided with adjoining private baths; two share a bath. A small sitting room of plain walls and ceiling is also located in the second floor. The north face of this room accommodates the upper level of the bay window referenced earlier.

The third story of the Sheaffer house may be reached either by stair or an elevator that services all floors including the full basement used largely for storage and utilities.

The dominate chamber at the third floor level is a 43 by 32 foot ballroom constructed with open, gable-beamed ceiling reminiscent of the Craftsman architectural style. The square pillars and engaged pilasters of similar form, together with the square-shaped, hanging light fixtures of metal and leaded glass, reflect the Prairie style, as does the plain, golden-beach-wood wall paneling with perpendicular, beveled edges.

The third floor also accommodates a cloak room (for ballroom guests), men and ladies wash rooms, a walk-in cedar closet for clothing storage, two small servants' rooms and a servants' bath and wash room.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 4

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

The Garage Cottage (contributing)

Located some 100 feet north of the W. A. Sheaffer house, within the property grounds, is a three-room garage cottage. Designed by Mayo & Mayo and built in 1930 during construction of the main house, the cottage served as living quarters for the Sheaffer butler/chauffer and his wife who served as the Sheaffer cook. The cottage is a one-story structure, the brick facing of which utilizes common bond. The south and north facades are each surmounted by paired, stone-capped gables in the Tudor style. A small entrance wing at the east end, displays a stone-capped, crenellated roof line. The cottage sits on a three-car, underground garage accessible by a paved, downward-leading ramp located at the west side of the building. In common with the main house, this structure is roofed in slate. The rooms are small and without decorative elements.

Integrity

Apart from the addition of air conditioning to the heating ducts, there has been no change architecturally to either the exterior or interior of the house since its completion in 1930. Most lighting and bathroom fixtures are original. The adjoining secondary structure, housing a garage and cottage, is also largely unchanged architecturally since its construction in 1930. The only exceptions are the wood garage doors which have deteriorated with age and will be replaced by new doors of similar style to those original to the building. The house was occupied by three successive non-Sheaffer-family owners following the death, in 1961, of Mrs. W. A. Sheaffer.

Both buildings suffered a 32-year period of neglect between 1972 and 2005, when the residence of an elderly, reclusive couple. Ceilings of the Sheaffer house were damaged in some areas through seepage of water leaking between loosened roofing slates. Water seepage has also damaged areas of flooring in the reception hall and drawing room.

The present owners, who purchased this property in 2005, are committed to restoring the house and cottage fully to original condition. This process began in the autumn of 2005, with restoration of the slate roofs, together with a copper-clad roofing area, and related flashing and gutters, a project supported, in part, through an HRDP emergency grant awarded under the guidance of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

The work of restoring other parts of the external fabric and internal walls, ceilings, floors and utility installations of both house and garage/cottage continues at a steady pace. As of June 2006, restoration of the ballroom and other areas of the third floor had been largely completed.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 5

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

Statement of Significance

Summary Statement

The Walter A. Sheaffer House is of local, state, and national significance under Criterion B, through the building's direct association with the career of the inventor, industrialist and successful entrepreneur who patented and marketed the first self-filling fountain pen. This and subsequent innovative products introduced by Sheaffer to the pen and mechanical pencil industry, identified Fort Madison and Iowa as places of manufacture, both nationally and internationally, of fine writing instruments. According to the distinguished historian Joseph F. Wall, "Inventive genius and promotional talents," enabled Sheaffer to develop "an idea for the fountain-pen that could be filled by a simple lever-and-bar device instead of the inefficient and messy medicine dropper then in use."¹

Writing instrument historian Archemede Fusille affirms that Sheaffer's simple design, the world's first practical, lever-filled fountain pen, was to "revolutionize the entire writing industry."² Another important Sheaffer innovation, introduced in 1924, was "Radite," a plastic material developed in cooperation with DuPont, which could be molded into any shape and dyed a variety of colors. Fountain pen historian Sherrell Tyree noted the "Sheaffer's use of the material for caps and barrels had a lasting effect on the writing instrument industry" and "just what was needed to assure Sheaffer of capturing significant market share and even assuring its place in history."³ Sheaffer's other major innovations included one of the first successful ballpoint pens, desk-pen sets, lifetime guarantees on pen nibs, and Skrip writing fluid, marketed as a superior replacement for ink. The house, here nominated, was completed and first occupied by Sheaffer in 1930 at the height of both his successes and those of the Company he founded.

The 16,000 square foot W. A. Sheaffer House, 11 High Point, Fort Madison, was evaluated in 1990 for nomination for the National Register of Historical Places. Eligibility included Criterion B, as the former home of inventor and industrialist W. A. Sheaffer, and Criterion C, Architecture. The current nomination is submitted under Criterion B only, a purposeful choice, which may be supplemented at a later date to include Criterion C. We believe that W. A. Sheaffer deserves the principal attention of the present nomination.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 6

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

Historical Contexts

Walter A. Sheaffer⁴

Born in Bloomfield, Iowa, on July 27, 1867, Walter A. Sheaffer had been one of five children of Jacob Royer Sheaffer and Anna Eliza (Walton) Sheaffer. Walter's father owned a small jewelry store that he was obliged to sell through debts incurred during the panic of 1872.

The family suffered from diminished finances until 1880, when Jacob borrowed sufficient funds to re-enter the jewelry trade. Several years later, after having worked at a jewelry store in Centerville, Iowa, Sheaffer returned to Bloomfield as a partner in the family store.

With some new product lines, careful planning, and sales procedures initiated by Sheaffer, the Sheaffer jewelry business prospered.

Using increased revenues from the store's operations, Sheaffer bought an eight-acre parcel of land on part of which he planted a large peach orchard. Subsequently, he traded this property for a derelict and overgrown 188-acre farm, which Sheaffer much improved.

W. A. Sheaffer married Nellie Davis on February 8, 1888. Two children were born to the Sheaffers; a daughter, Clementine, and a son, Craig.

In 1906, Sheaffer sought a second jewelry store to support the growing needs of his family. He learned of such a property for sale at Fort Madison, Iowa, for which Sheaffer traded the farm and a cash amount of \$300.

The First Sheaffer Pens

For many hundreds of years, into the nineteenth century, the principal means of writing with ink in most Western countries, had been by a feather quill, often that of a goose. The quill-end would be sharpened by knife into a point which, when worn down through use, was again sharpened.

Steel pen nibs were made in France as early as 1740. In 1809, the American inventor Peregrine White received a U.S. patent on the slitting of nibs of metal points. Improvements to this basic-style nib, usually fitted into a tapered, solid-wood writing barrel, continued throughout the nineteenth century and later.

The first practical fountain pen, which contained an ink reservoir in the hollow barrel fed by an eyedropper, was patented by the American, L. E. Waterman in 1884.

One day in 1907, Walter Sheaffer noticed a newspaper advertisement for a Conklin pen with a hump on the barrel side used to fill pens with a coin pressed through

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 7

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

a slot in the hump. When one withdrew the coin, the sac would expand and draw ink from a container in which the pen point had been dipped. A more common contemporary means of filling a pen was by the eye dropper method.

Sheaffer believed that a pen could be designed for filling, without the mess and bother of an eyedropper or coin. He thereupon set to the task of developing such a product. Within a short period of experimentation, he eliminated the eyedropper by the addition of a lever and pressure bar to deflate and expand the sac. The lever fitted into a shallow recess in the pen barrel from where it could be hinged out and back.

On August 25, 1908, Walter Sheaffer obtained U.S. Patent 896,861 for his new, lever-filled fountain pen that would change the writing habits for America and much of the rest of the world.

Over subsequent years, Sheaffer continued to refine his lever-fill pen invention. Improved designs were patented in 1912 and 1914. In total, Sheaffer, received 20 patents over the years for various mechanical and design writing instruments improvements. More than 100 other patents were issued to the firm, through its development program, during the first 50 years of operation.

In 1908, and for several years thereafter, Sheaffer distributed samples of the new pen for friends to use. Their favorable response encouraged Sheaffer to invest his savings and borrow additional funds to form a pen-making company. In 1912, this was a risky venture, for at that time, more the 50 competing pen manufacturers were operating in the United States, including the then leaders of the industry, Parker and Waterman.

In 1912, the workshop of the Sheaffer jewelry store in Fort Madison became a pen factory with seven employees. During that year also, at Kansas City, Missouri, the Company opened its first sales office.

Product quality was a Sheaffer guarantee from the outset. With the success of early operations, Walter attracted sufficient investors to incorporate his growing firm, for \$35,000, in 1913, as the W. A. Sheaffer Pen Company. During its first year of production, the new company held three percent of the U.S. writing industry market with sales of \$100,000. Profits were \$17,500 or 50 per cent of the initial investment.

Troubling Years

In the years immediately following 1913, and despite increasing sales, the future of the Sheaffer Pen Company seemed uncertain. This had been a period of successive legal cases and maneuvers to protect the Company's patents and product designs against claims of Sheaffer's competitors. The resulting charged atmosphere of competing lawsuits pitted a small company with limited funds, against much larger fountain pen manufacturers holding substantial financial resources. However, through

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 8

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

firm determination and skillful planning, Sheaffer and his fledging Company persevered in protecting their patent rights.⁵

Company Expansion

In 1917, Sheaffer expanded his factory operation through purchase of a former plow-works building in Fort Madison. Also in 1917, the Sheaffer Company received its first patent for a practical mechanical pencil. This device was supplied with lead held within the barrel by an innovative gripping device. By rotating the pencil cap, a further length of the feeder lead would be extended through the point for continuous writing. Leads could also be repelled within the barrel when not in use. In 1919, the Company introduced matching pen and pencil sets packaged in attractive gift boxes.

By 1918, the number of Sheaffer employees had risen to 100, with an annual production of 100,000 writing instruments.

In 1920, Sheaffer raised concern in the American writing industry by introducing a pen priced at \$8.75 – three times more than the market cost of most competitive products. The 14-carat gold point of this pen was guaranteed for the life of the first owner, another unique service not offered by competing pen companies. This achievement reflected W. A. Sheaffer's marketing philosophy. He believed that the pen was worth the money and, when consumers became aware of that quality, they would be willing to pay a higher price. He was right; the Sheaffer "Lifetime" fountain pen became the nation's number one quality seller.

In the early 1920s, Sheaffer determined that his Company must develop its own ink, rather than depend upon the products of other ink providers. In 1922, after many months of research and various setbacks, the formula for Skrip ink was developed – a fast-drying product that proved better than competitive inks. Skrip continues in current production.

A major Sheaffer innovation of the 1920s was the development of a method to make pen caps and barrels of plastic. Hard rubber, previously used, was highly breakable and precluded production in colors other than black and dark brown.

Sheaffer's first attempts to produce writing instrument barrels with a Casine plastic failed because the plastic expanded too much as the temperature increased. Sheaffer urged his development staff to continue their research; they succeeded by using a new Pyroxylin-type plastic which Sheaffer named Radite. Thus, in 1924, the Company became the first manufacturer in the United States to produce pen barrels and caps in a variety of colors including yellow, red, orange, blue and a mottled, jade-green which proved highly popular. The Company further produced a range of quality pen and pencil casings in sterling silver and gold, many of which were hand engraved in

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 9

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

a variety of designs. At every period of manufacture, Sheaffer also offered a line of low-budget-priced pens and mechanical pencils to accommodate all consumer markets.

Always concerned for worker amenities, the Sheaffer Company opened an employee recreation center in 1927, a novel concept for the manufacturers at that early date. This building provided a gymnasium and basketball court, bowling lanes, work-out and shower rooms, club meeting rooms, lounges, a restaurant, and other facilities.

The Nineteen Thirties

By the early 1930s, the national Depression, initiated by the stock market crash of 1929, had deepened and spread. Sheaffer sales held up fairly well until 1931, then fell off sharply. Even so, the Company was one of the last Iowa manufacturers to cut production schedules. Employees worked three days a week as the financial crisis continued to worsen. But through skillful planning and marketing, Sheaffer prevailed and his Company returned to full employment. By the mid-1930s, annual sales were about \$7 million, a favorable percentage of total industry sales of \$30 million.

During the depth of the Depression, when many workers across the country were obliged to accept reduced compensation and benefits, Mr. Sheaffer introduced a profit-sharing plan for all employees. He wished to strengthen the Company by giving his workers a share in corporate growth.

Strong ties with pen retailers also helped the Company weather the Depression. During the 1920s, Sheaffer had developed forthright policies, treating all dealers with equal fairness, a mode of responsible management that continued over subsequent decades.

During the 1930s, the Sheaffer Company continued to introduce new writing instrument products including the "Feather-touch", a two-way writing point; the plunger-filling pen, and a part clear-barrel pen to determine remaining ink supply. The "Fineline" mechanical pencil, introduced in 1936 and priced at only one dollar, proved so successful that it remained in production for more than 30 years.

The Company's manufacturing capabilities were also expanded during the depression years. The first molding machine was installed in 1937. This equipment allowed production of some molded parts, a major improvement that enabled the Company to introduce large-scale precision operations.

In 1938, at age 71, W. A. Sheaffer retired as Company president, a position thereafter filled by his son, Craig. Named Chairman of the Company Board of Directors, W. A. remained closely involved in all aspects of manufacturing and sales.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 10

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

The Second World War

The Second World War brought many changes to the Sheaffer Company. Major production turned from writing instruments to manufacture of airplane bombsight parts, an automatic radio tuning device, and other items needed by the armed forces. Sheaffer opened a second plant at Fort Madison to manufacture government-contract products. At the height of the war, Sheaffer's employed more than 2,000 workers. For outstanding achievements in carrying out war-work, the Company was presented an Army-Navy "E" (for excellence) award in 1944. At this period, most of the small number of writing instruments produced were assigned to the armed forces.

Both the quantity and quality of war products served as acknowledgements to the skill and devotion to work of Sheaffer administrative and factory employees. Women workers were employed in increasing numbers as men went into the armed forces. By 1944, 490 Sheaffer employees were serving in the armed forces.

Of major importance to employees was the extension, in 1942, of the Company's worker profit-sharing program.

At the war's end, the Sheaffer Company launched a major expansion program. This undertaking included renewed work on concept and experimental products that had been under development just prior to the war. One such item was the ball-point pen. The Company became the first American manufacturer to introduce, in 1946, a practical ball-point writing instrument. W. A. Sheaffer, who died the same year, had been a firm advocate of the ball-point which, in subsequent years, became the leading ink-writing instrument worldwide.

W. A. Sheaffer and His House

The nominated house was significant as the residence of W. A. Sheaffer during the critical Depression years of the 1930s when Sheaffer succeeded, through practical but quality production methods, careful development planning, and innovative marketing initiatives, to maintain the commercial viability of his Company. Regularly, during this difficult period, he held major policy meetings at the house on all aspects of Company operations, with leading Sheaffer technicians, departmental executives and other staff.

In 1934, the W. A. Sheaffer house also contributed to the continued well-being of the Company when Mr. Sheaffer mortgaged his home to secure sufficient capital that prevented the laying-off of a single plant worker.

In Mr. Sheaffer's lifetime, the house ballroom was also often utilized for semi-annual meetings of Sheaffer distribution representatives and salesmen from throughout the country and elsewhere. During these sessions, marketing procedures and problems

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 11

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

would be considered, often to the benefit of both salesman and the Company by achieving resolutions to such issues.

The house is the only significant, surviving building connected with Sheaffer and his work. The original factory was demolished in 1952, six years after his death, following completion of a new plant. Sheaffer's old jewelry store building was rebuilt during the 1970s and presently contains no visual element of the original structure. The house occupied by the Sheaffer family, prior to 1930, on the same site as the nominated home, was removed to provide space for this new building.

A Summing Up

The founder and first president of the Sheaffer Pen Company, W. A. Sheaffer, possessed an infectious but just determination to succeed at his life's work. Beginning with the invention of the lever-fill fountain pen in a small room at the back of his Fort Madison, Iowa, jewelry store, Sheaffer acquired a firm understanding of the techniques of product development, manufacturing and merchandising. Through careful planning and honest interchange with employees, retainers and consumers, Sheaffer created a major market in the United States and abroad for his Company's writing instruments. By successful advertising and other promotional policies, such as the guaranteed "Lifetime" pen, increased demand for quality Sheaffer products led to additional Company assembly plants being established in Canada, the United Kingdom, Holland, Australia, South America, and elsewhere. W. A. Sheaffer was President of the Sheaffer Pen Company for 25 years from 1913; he remained active in Company affairs until his death in 1946.

In his comprehensive, 1998 volume, *Fountain Pens of the World*, leading pen historian Andreas Lambrau states: "Today Sheaffer is an international organization producing a wide range of quality writing instruments. . . . For more than half a century Sheaffer has been one of the top pen manufacturers worldwide."⁶ Sheaffer deserves much credit for the past and ongoing financial viability of the firm he founded. Over more than 90 years, the Company's success and steady, work-force employment, has also contributed to the economic prosperity of Fort Madison and Lee County, Iowa.

In 1988, W. A. Sheaffer was inducted into the Iowa Inventors' Hall of Fame, an achievement recognition program administered, in part, by the State Historical Society of Iowa.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 12

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

¹ Joseph Frazier Wall, *Iowa: A History*, New York, 1978, p. 142

² Archimede Fusilio, "Sheaffer Fountain Pens History," p.1, Copyright by Author, 1997, located on "Jim's Pen Site," <http://www.jimgaston.com/shistory.htm>, accessed 1/18/2006.

³ Sherrel Tyree, "A Transition Balance? . . . Of Course," p.2, All Rights Reserved by Author, 2002, located on <http://www.pencollectors.com/pennant/summer92/balance.htm>, accessed 1/18/2006.

⁴ This biographical précis treating W. A. Sheaffer, is drawn largely from a 90 page typed memoir dictated by Sheaffer in 1939. Titled *The Life of W. A. Sheaffer*, the memoir is the only comprehensive account of Sheaffer's life and his professional achievements; it serves as the major source of all later life sketches and relevant articles. (see bibliographical sources).

⁵ For one writer's views on aspects of the relevant court case, *Walter A. Sheaffer vs. C. E. Barrett* (1915), see David Nishimura, "The First Sheaffer Pens," *The PENnant*, Vol. XV, No. 1, Spring 2001, p. 7-0, 25.

⁶ A. Lambrou, *Fountain Pens of the World*, Los Angeles, 1998, p. 133.

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

Section number 8 Page 13



Walter A. Sheaffer

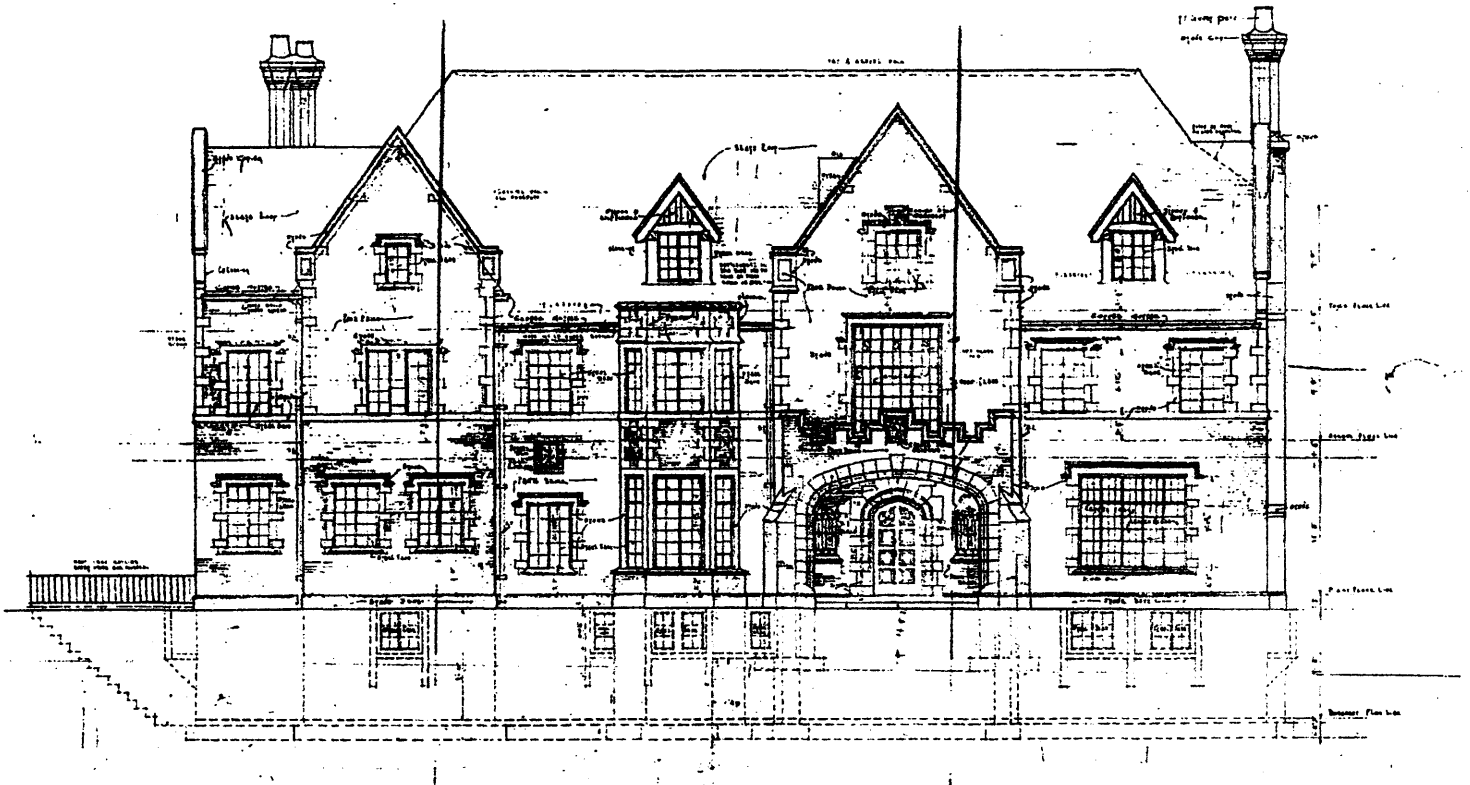
1867 - 1946

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 14

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa



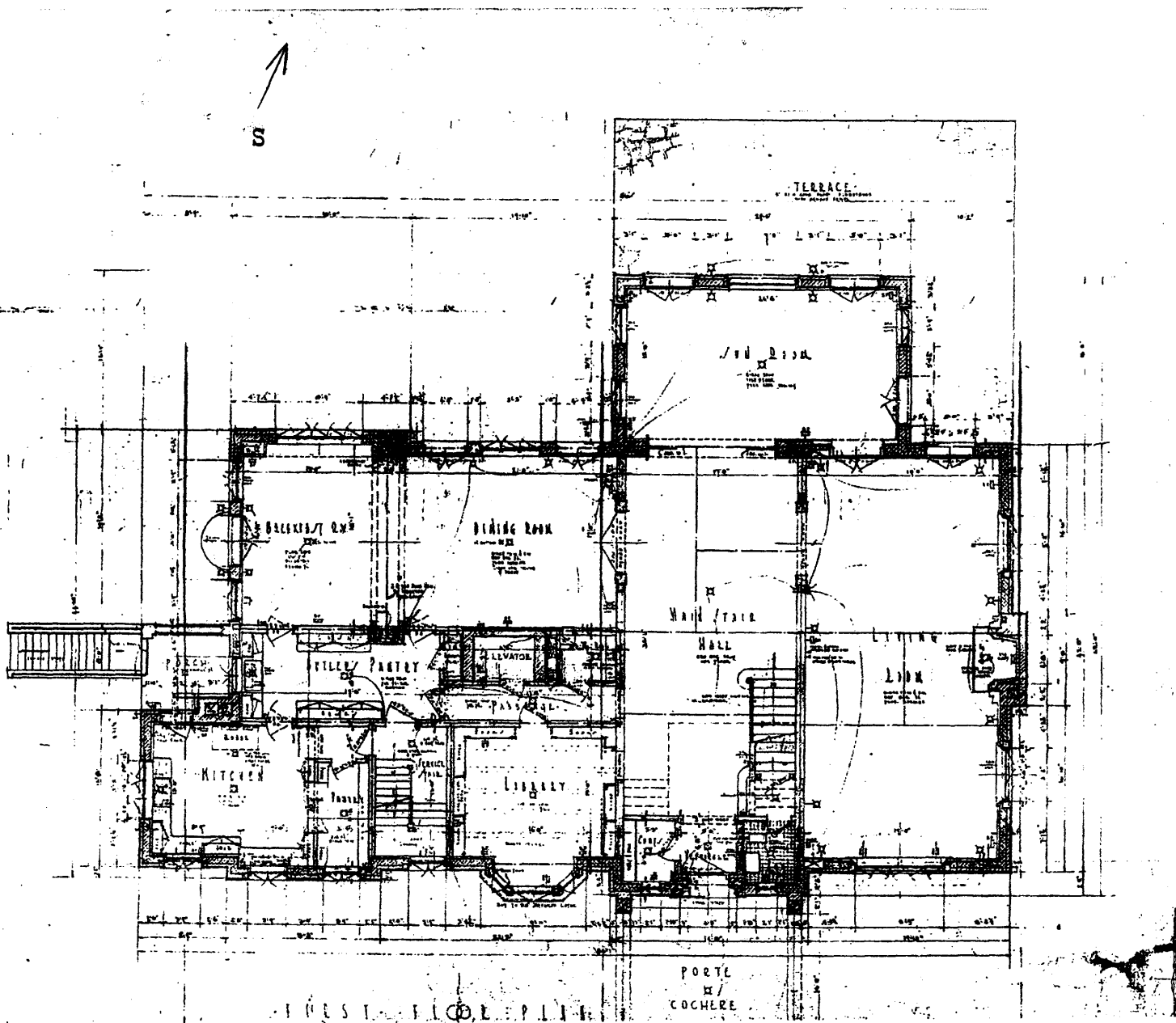
North Elevation

from blueprint plans by Mayo & Mayo, 1929

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 15

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa



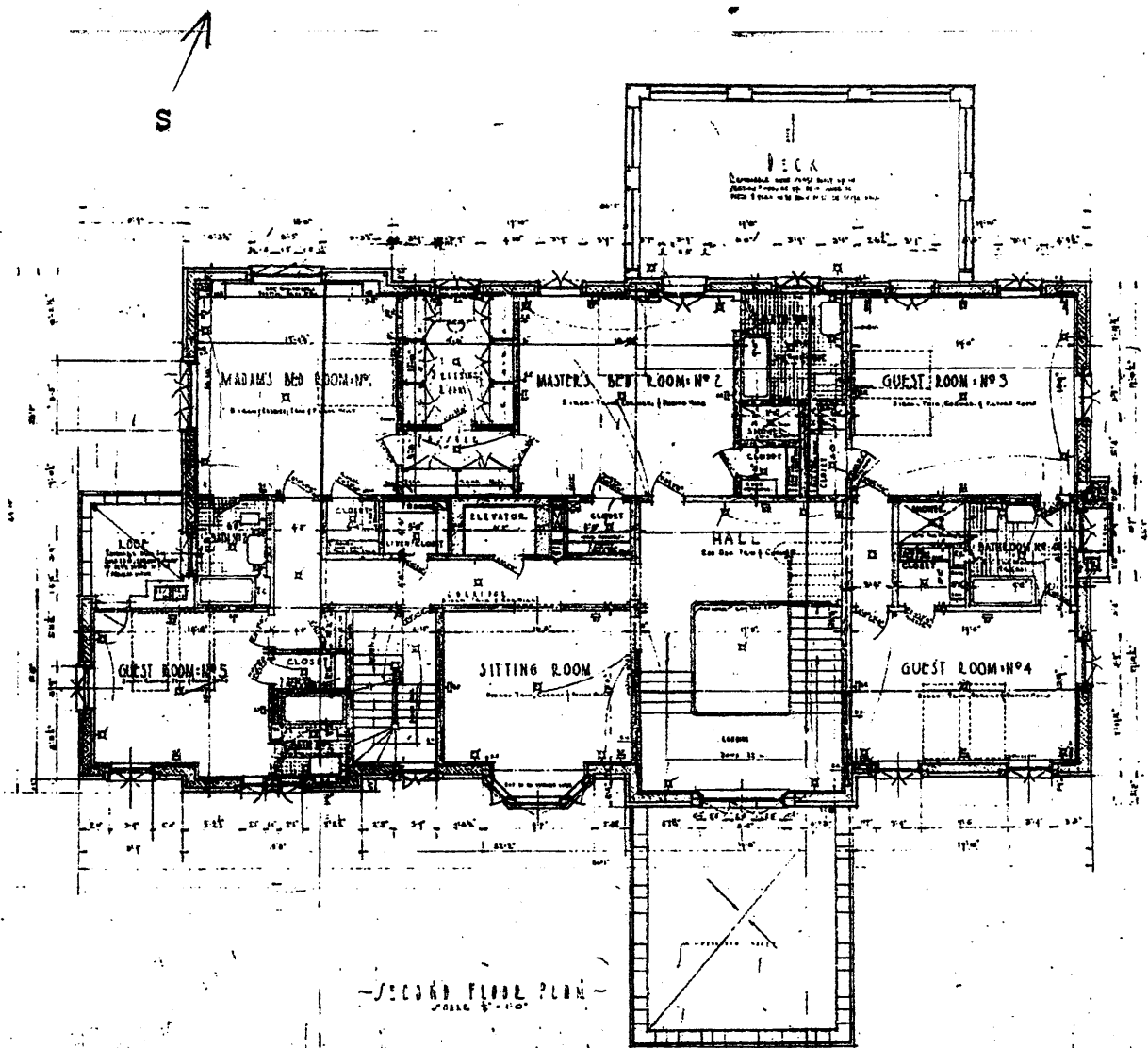
First Floor

from blueprint plans by Mayo & Mayo, 1929

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 16

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

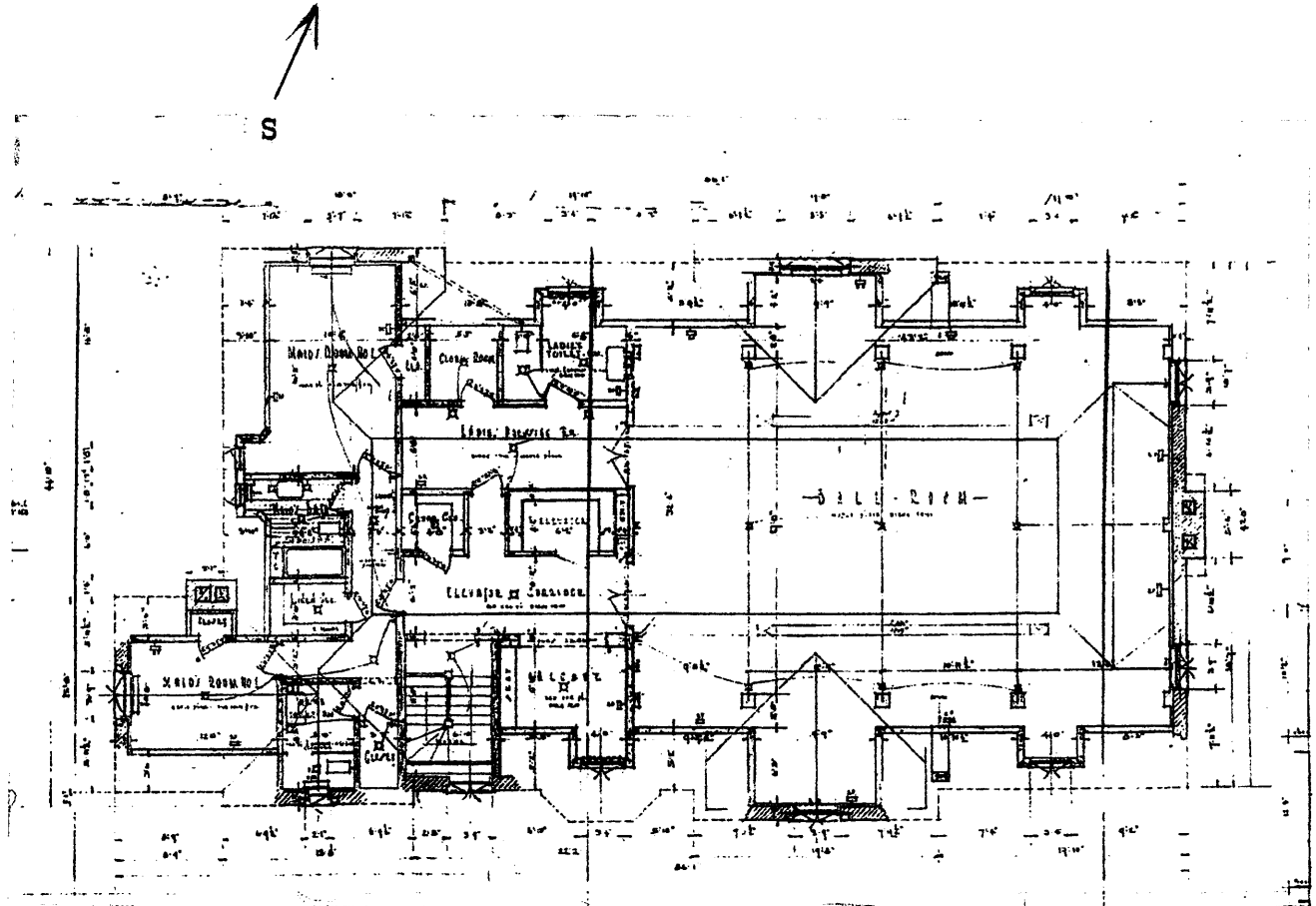
Second Floor

from blueprint plans by Mayo & Mayo, 1929

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 17

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa



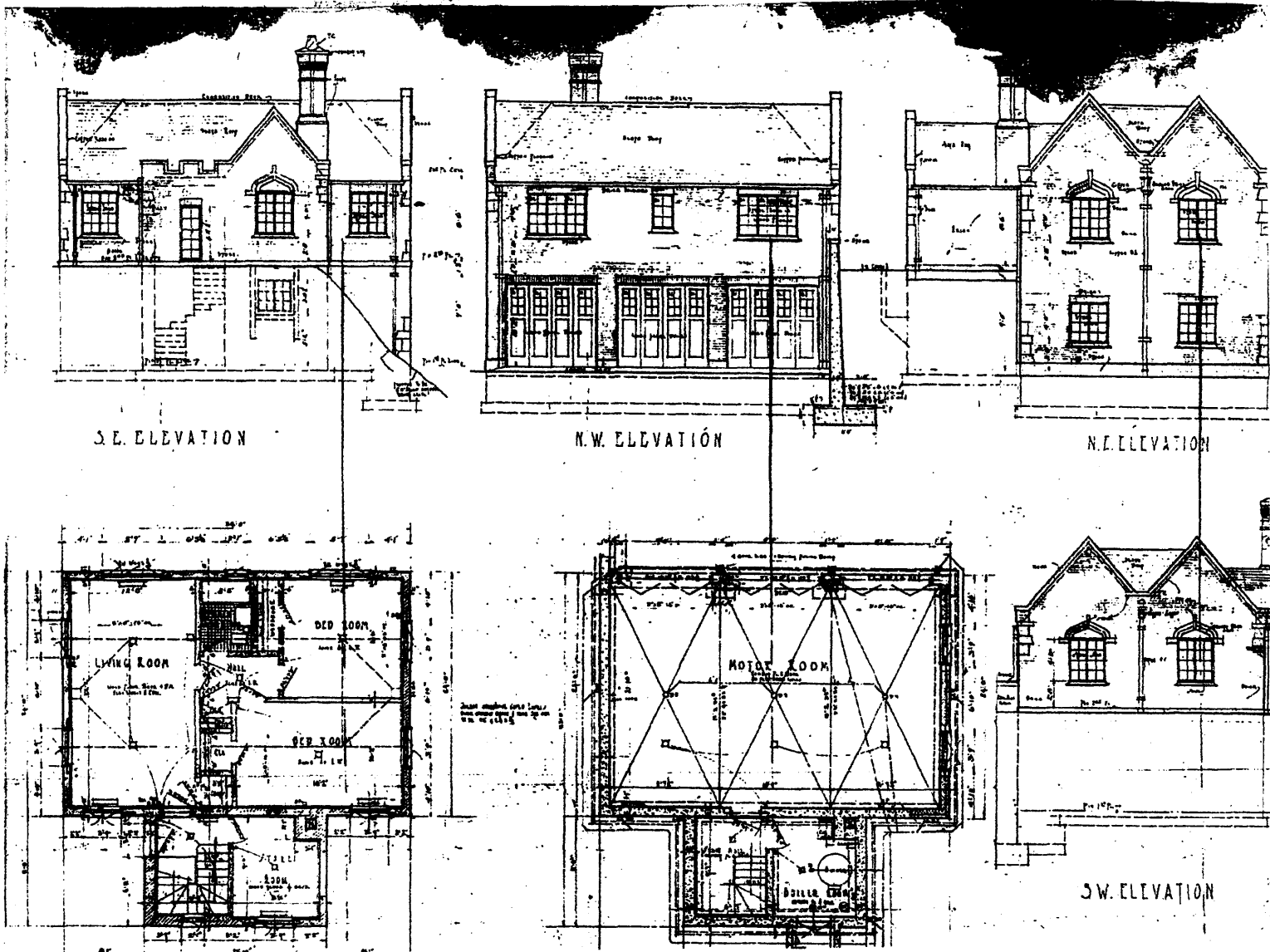
Third Floor

from blueprint plans by Mayo & Mayo, 1929

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

Section number 8 Page 18



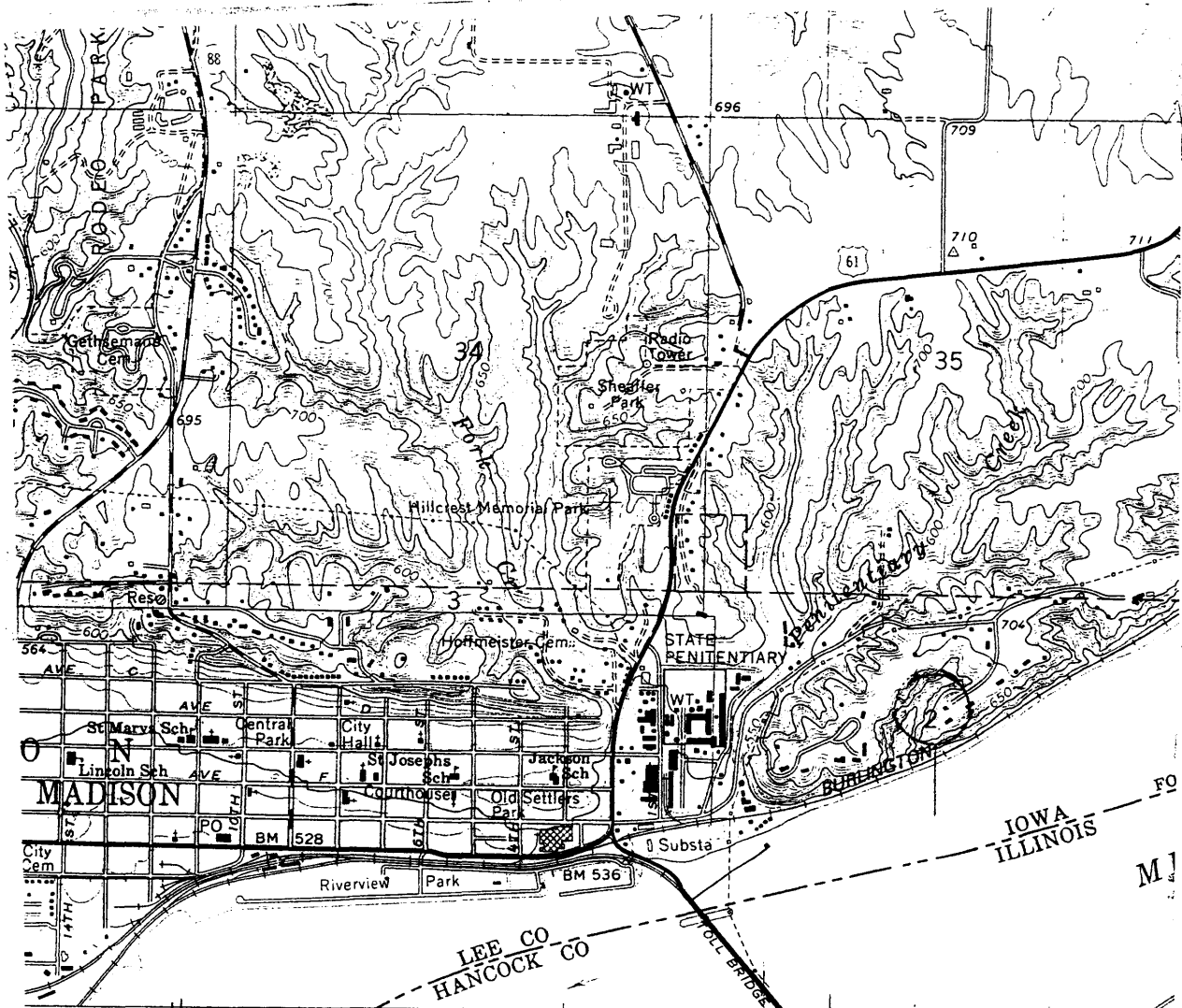
Garage Cottage

Four elevations and first & second floors
from blueprint plans by Mayo & Mayo

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 19

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa



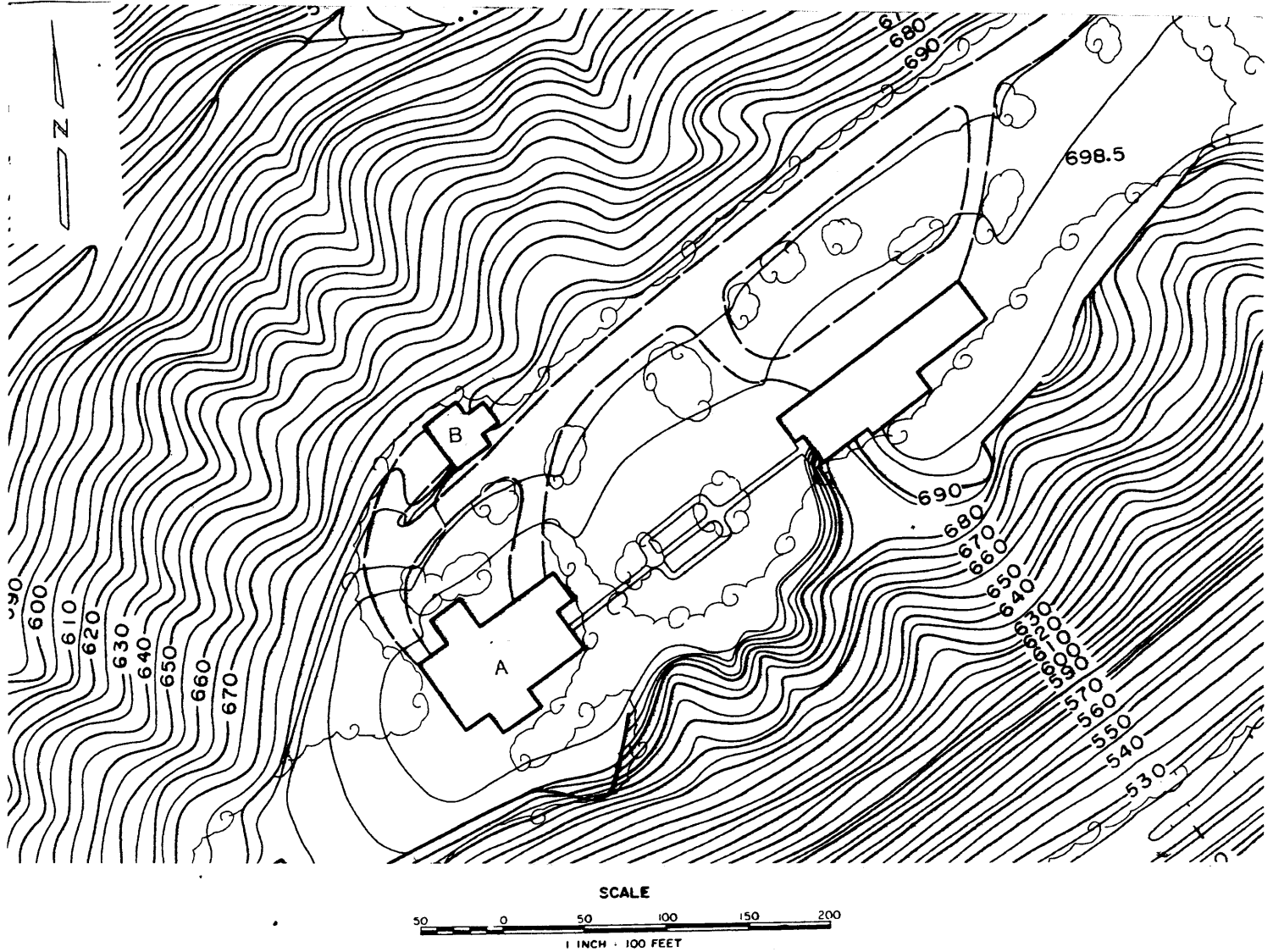
U.S.G.S. Map of Fort Madison, Iowa - Ill, (1964)

Circle shows Sheaffer house (below) & garage cottage (above)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 20

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa



Topographical map showing the W.A. Sheaffer house (A) and supporting garage/cottage building (B) in the High Point Addition to Fort Madison, with contours at five-foot intervals: City of Fort Madison Survey, 1968, Sheet No. K-14.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 21

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

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- "Two Tell Hoover Business is Good," *New York Times*, 20 December, 1929, p.25.
- "Sheaffer Pen Votes Dividends for 1931," *Chicago Daily Tribune.*, 8 January 1931, p. 25.
- "Prosperity Vision by Pen Maker," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 February 1931, p. A1.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 22

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

"Don't Reduce Wages is Plea of Pen Co. Head," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 July, 1931, p. 27.

"Voice of the People," (W. A. Sheaffer), *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 January, 1933, p.10.

"Sheaffer Pen Pays," *Los Angeles Times*, 18 December, 1934, p. 11.

"W. A. Sheaffer Founder of Pen Firm Dies at 78," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 June, 1946, p. 20.

"Small Town Jeweler's Acumen Guided Sheaffer Pen to the Top," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 September, 1959, p. 5.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 23

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 8, High Point addition to Fort Madison,
comprising 8 acres.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel associated with W. A. Sheaffer.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 24

Walter A. Sheaffer House
Lee County, Iowa

Photographs

Name of Photographer: John F. Hansman

Date of Photographs: March 20, 2006

Location of Negatives: 408 7th Street, Fort Madison, Iowa 52627

1 – House Exterior, north façade

2 – House Exterior, west façade

3 – House Exterior, south façade

4 – House Exterior, east façade

5 – House Interior, reception hall showing decorative plaster ceiling

6 – House Interior, reception hall, red oak, linen-fold paneling

7 – House Interior, stair landing showing leaded windows and decorative plaster ceiling

8 – House Interior, dining room showing decorative plaster ceiling

9 – House Interior, living room showing stone chimneypiece with pointed arch opening.

10 – House Interior, ballroom

11 – Garage Cottage, south facade

12 – Garage/Cottage, west facade