

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 the instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 Bigler Building
other names/site number Riegel Blacksmith Shop

2. Location

street & number 210 Mill Street N/A not for publication
city or town Clermont N/A vicinity
state Iowa code IA county Fayette code 065 zip code 52135

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)
Patricia O'Brien 5-5-95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State Historical Society of Iowa
State of 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 the 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 Signature of the Keeper
Entered in the National Register 6/9/95 Date of Action

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: brick commercial building

foundation STONE, walls CERAMIC TILE, roof METAL, other

Narrative Description

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

Bigler Building
Name of Property

Fayette County, IA
County and State

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 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)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

ca. 1906

Significant Dates

ca. 1906

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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 of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Bigler Building

Fayette County, IA

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 160955.0 476152.0
Zone Easting Northing
2

3
4
Zone Easting Northing

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 Robert C. Vogel, Preservation Planning Consultant
organization Robert C. Vogel & Associates date 31 August 1994
street & number 270 Brimhall Street telephone (612) 698-8224
city or town St. Paul state MN zip code 55105

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Clermont Historical Society
street & number P. O. Box 167 telephone (319) 423-5281
city or town Clermont state IA zip code 52135

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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Bigler Building
Fayette County, Iowa

Description

The Bigler Building-Riegel Blacksmith Shop is located on the west side of Mill Street, between Union and Clay, in the heart of Clermont's historic business district. It abuts a one story brick commercial building on the north and the south wall faces an alley. The land in back of the property is vacant. The blacksmith shop is a small utilitarian commercial building typical of other commercial buildings constructed in Clermont around the turn of the century. The ground plan is linear, in the form of a simple rectangle oriented perpendicular to Mill Street. The core of the building measures 25 feet by 24 feet 8 inches, with an 11 foot by 17 foot 2 inch rear addition. There are relatively few architectural details and very little exterior decoration. The principal elevation is a rather plain one story facade of fired brick in alternating rows of headers and stretchers laid on common bond with quoins at the corners. A wooden sign above the main door proclaims this to be the "Burkhard Riegel Black Smith Shop." Fenestration is symmetrical throughout with two window openings flanking a large central entry on the principal facade and three windows and a doorway on the south wall. The tile block load bearing walls rest on a poured concrete foundation. The metal roof is flat, supported by heavy timber rafters, and capped with a low brick parapet. A brick chimney rises above the back of the building. The most conspicuous architectural details are the window openings on the street facade, which are embellished with segmented brick arches, and the recessed entry with its large wooden door. The shop has one large room with wide plank flooring and heavy timber framing and a smaller storage area in back which included the coal bunker. The Clermont Historical Society has a photograph taken in 1938 that shows Riegel at work at his forge. In this photograph, the south-facing windows are six-over-six doublehung; today they have one-over-one sash. The old asphalt roof was replaced in 1992 by a galvanized metal roof.

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Bigler Building
Fayette County, Iowa

Description (continued)

Otherwise, the building appears to be substantially unaltered and is in overall good condition. The blacksmith shop was acquired by the Clermont Historical Society in 1991 and is used as a "living history" museum.

Statement of Significance

Clermont's nickname, "The Brick City," is based on the historic importance of local brickworks in the town's economic development as well as the distinctive aesthetic qualities of the community's numerous brick masonry buildings. Evaluated from a local heritage perspective, the Bigler Building-Riegel Blacksmith Shop is significant under National Register Criterion C because it is an outstanding local example of brick commercial architecture. The building is one of twenty-seven surviving brick commercial buildings in town which date from the era of the Clermont brick making industry and it clearly possesses integrity of materials, design, location, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association. The property also helps recall an obsolete trade (blacksmithing) and is thought to be a rare surviving example of the traditional smalltown blacksmith shop.

The basis for evaluating the significance of the Bigler Building is the local historic context "The Brick City (1850s-1940s)," developed by the Clermont Historic Preservation Commission in 1991. This thematic study unit is represented by four generalized property types based on historic function: residential buildings, commercial buildings, religious buildings, and educational/civic buildings. Brick commercial architecture in Clermont

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Bigler Building
Fayette County, Iowa

Significance (continued)

includes banks, wholesale and retail stores, a railroad depot, social halls, gasoline stations, and various general purpose buildings.¹

Clermont, "The Brick City," 1850s-1940s

No single feature distinguishes the built environment of Clermont's downtown commercial district more than its brick commercial buildings. The majority of these were constructed between 1860 and 1930. For shops and stores, flat roofs were nearly universal and were often stepped, or hidden behind brick parapets, the masonry version of the familiar "false front." Plans tended to be functional with relatively little specialization of building form: stores, workshops, offices, and banks alike tended to be generally rectangular, one or two stories in height. In multistory buildings, business activity was concentrated on the ground floor, with the second story rooms commonly rented out as apartments. Although freestanding buildings were the norm, commercial blocks and rows of uniform buildings were not uncommon. Owners seem to have been most mindful of economy of construction, but with due regard to proportion, contemporary architectural tastes, and aesthetics, so that the simple mass of the typical brick commercial building was usually relieved by some minimal ornamentation on the principal facade. The most ambitious commercial buildings had impressive facades embellished with details in the Renaissance and Romanesque revival styles, particularly Greek Revival and Italianate forms. In terms of color, the standard material was common red brick. Fenestration was symmetrical, emphasizing verticality.

¹Robert C. Vogel, Historical and Architectural Survey of Selected Properties in Clermont Iowa (St. Paul, 1991), pp. 16-26.

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Bigler Building
Fayette County, Iowa

Significance (continued)

Historically, brickmaking has been widely dispersed throughout northeast Iowa, where deposits of suitable clay are abundant. Indeed, few communities in the region failed to support at least one brickyard. The brick manufacturing industry in Clermont was established in 1855 by Ezra H. Dibble, a native of New York, who "slop molded" his brick by hand in the traditional manner. Later nineteenth century brickyards used molding and pressing machinery. Mixing clay with sand, Clermont brickmakers tempered the raw material by adding water and mixing it in large vats. Next, the clay was thrown into wooden molds which had been dipped in water ("slop molding") or dusted with sand ("sand molding") to prevent sticking, and carried to the drying floor, where the raw bricks were laid in "hacks" and left for several days. When dry, the raw bricks were hauled to the kiln to be fired (literally burned), using wood or coal fires. Most of the brick produced by the Clermont brickworks was of the soft burned common variety. In color, these bricks ranged from cream to dark red. Hard-burned ornamental brick and fire brick was also manufactured. Clay tile, made from carefully selected clays fired at very high temperatures in down-draft kilns, was produced in quantity after 1880. Cement brick, produced in the same sizes as common brick, was manufactured locally after 1900.

There were no brickyards located within the Clermont corporate limits until very late in the nineteenth century. The original Dibble brickworks, later owned by William Larrabee (1832-1916), were located a short distance west of town and relied upon wagons to haul brick to the Clermont railroad depot. Not only were the most important clay deposits located along the Turkey River, but early brickmakers needed large quantities of water as well. When Christian Miller moved the former

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Fayette County, Iowa**Significance (continued)**

Dibble brickworks into town ca. 1900, he piped water from the water tower at the Turkey River Mill (also known as the "Brick City Mill"); later, the Miller company drilled several very deep wells on its property. Clermont's brickyards were the most important employer in town until after the Second World War.²

The Village Blacksmith Shop, 1858-1943

Burkhard Riegel (1905-1990), "the faithful village blacksmith," was the last in a succession of Clermont blacksmiths. Born in Germany, in his youth he was apprenticed to the blacksmith's trade, eventually attaining status as a master blacksmith. Emigrating to the United States in 1929, Riegel settled first in Dubuque and then located in Clermont in 1931, moving into rented space in the Bigler Building at 210 Mill Street. He purchased the building from Bigler's widow in 1946. Active in community life, Riegel was a leading citizen of the town, a member of the volunteer fire department and other civic organizations, and served two terms as mayor.

Riegel was renowned for his workmanship, especially in horsehoeing. One of his most talked about accomplishments was shoeing Gene Autry's horse "Champion" before a Fayette County fair appearance.³ He also manufactured and repaired wagons, tools, farm implements, and home furnishings. "Besides all the sidelines that come under regular blacksmithing, Clermont's Village Blacksmith is an artist in the molding and constructing of wrought iron railings and decorative posts for porches and patios, and his artistic ability can be witnessed far beyond the

²Vogel, Historical and Architectural Survey, pp. 9-10.

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Fayette County, Iowa**Significance (continued)**

immediate area" notes the local history booklet.⁴ Riegel retired from blacksmithing in the 1970s.

Blacksmithing was an important small-scale industry in Clermont and other rural villages from the time of the earliest Euro-American settlement until after the Second World War. The cost of importing ironwares, as well as the need to keep the region's sizeable horse population shod, made the village blacksmith a universal feature of rural Iowa well into the present century. In addition to horseshoes, iron spikes, and plowshares, blacksmiths also commonly manufactured furniture, wagons, carriages, and hand tools. Although the average towns person in Clermont could probably get along without a blacksmith, there was a significant demand for the local manufacture and repair of various small machines and hardware. Furthermore, during the early years of the automotive age, blacksmiths commonly found employment as car and truck mechanics.

Reconstructing the physical history of the Riegel Blacksmith Shop is somewhat problematic, given the sparse documentary record. According to one recent county history, the building has been used a blacksmith shop since 1858.⁵ Fayette County tax and deed records indicate that the lot was originally owned by John Thompson, one of the proprietors of the Clermont townsite, who sold it to William Davis in 1855. During the remainder of the nineteenth century the property was owned by a number of local individuals, including William Larrabee, who sold the lot about the

³Helen Moeller (ed.), Out of the Midwest: A Portrait (Macedine, Mo., 1976), pp. 211-212.

⁴Clermont Historical Society, Historic Clermont, 3rd ed. (Elkader, 1987), p. 37.

⁵Moeller, Out of the Midwest, p. 212.

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Fayette County, Iowa**Significance (continued)**

time he was elected to his first term as governor of Iowa in 1888.⁶ A building of somewhat smaller proportions than the Riegel Blacksmith Shop is shown occupying the front half of Lot 4 of Block 16 on the Bennett fire insurance map of 1899.⁷ The Sanborn fire insurance map of 1915 depicts a building with dimensions comparable to the present-day 210 Mill Street,⁸ and deed records indicate that the present building was erected about 1906 by local lumberyard operator and building contractor Fred Bigler, who purchased the town lot in 1907.⁹ Presumably, the brick and tile block came from the Miller brickyard in Clermont. According to information provided by members of the Clermont Historical Society, there were at least three blacksmiths at this location before Riegel: William Davis in the 1850s, Ben Peterson in the early 1900s, followed by an individual named Swenson or Seward, and finally Bill Callahan in the 1920s. Local lore also suggests that the property may have at one time been used as a harness shop. After Riegel's death in 1990, the Clermont Historical Society obtained the property for use as a "living history" museum. It is currently maintained, with its original blacksmith shop equipment and furnishings, by the society.

Bibliography

Bennett, H. Clermont, Iowa. Cedar Rapids, 1899. (Fire insurance map.)

⁶Deed records in the archives of the Fayette County Recorder; transfer records in the office of the Fayette County Auditor; both located in the Fayette County Courthouse, West Union.

⁷Clermont, Iowa (Cedar Rapids, 1899).

⁸Clermont, Iowa (New York, 1915).

⁹Fayette County Recorder, deed records; Fayette County Auditor, Transfer Books.

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Bigler Building
Fayette County, Iowa

Bibliography (continued)

Clermont Historical Society. Historic Clermont. 3rd edition. Elkader, Ia.: Griffith Press, 1987.

Fayette County Auditor. Transfer books. Fayette County Courthouse, West Union.

Fayette County Recorder. Original plats, deed index, and deed records. Fayette County Courthouse, West Union.

Moeller, Helen (editor), Out of the Midwest: A Portrait. Fayette County Helpers and Historical Society. Marceline, Mo.: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1976.

Sanborn Map Company. Clermont, Iowa. New York, 1915. (Fire insurance map.)

Vogel, Robert C. Historical and Architectural Survey of Selected Properties in Clermont, Iowa. Prepared for the Clermont Historic Preservation Commission. St. Paul: Robert C. Vogel & Associates, 1991.

Verbal boundary description

Lot 4 of Block 1, Clermont Original Town.

Verbal boundary justification

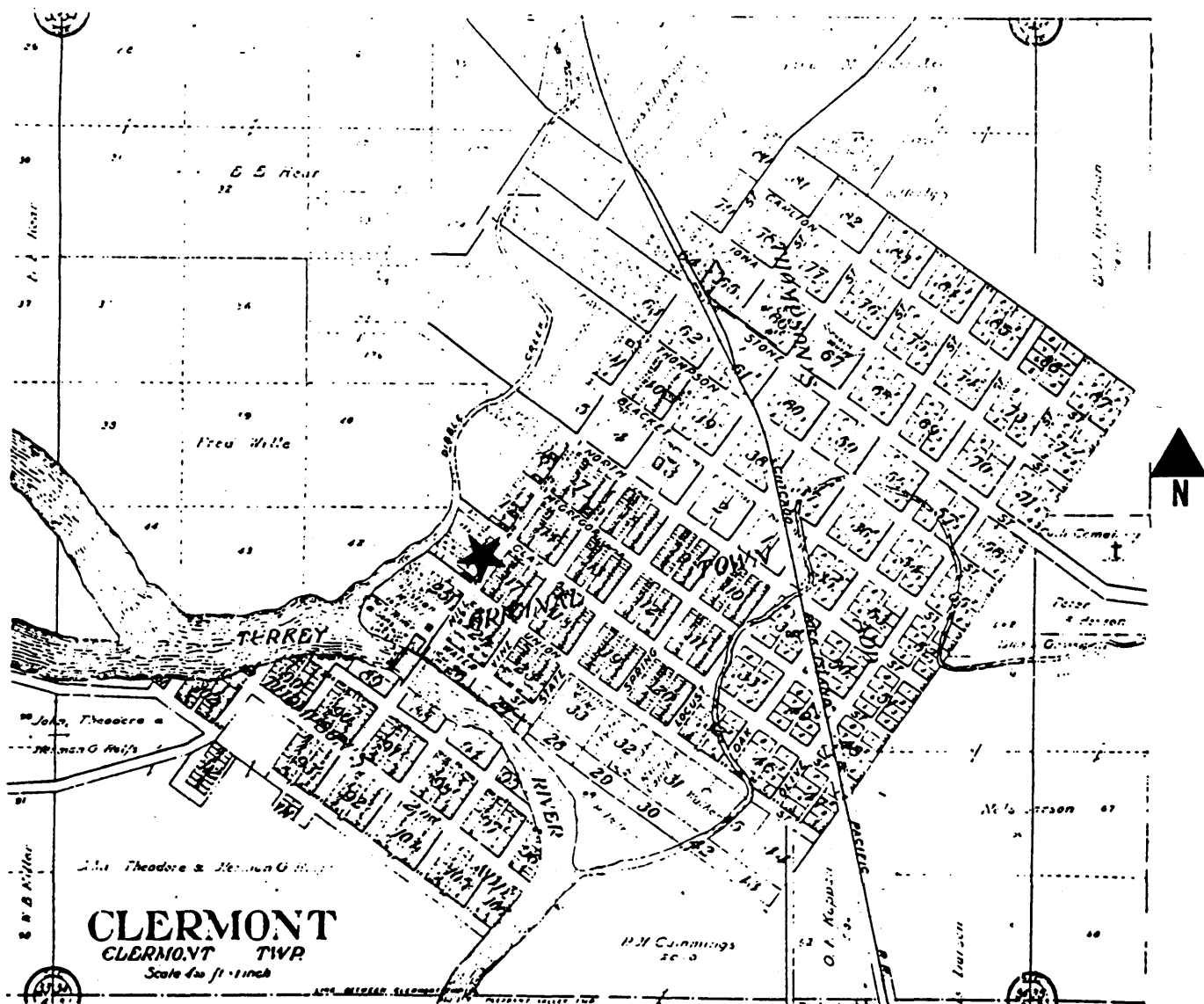
The boundaries include the entire city lot that historically has been associated with the property.

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Bigler Building Fayette County, Iowa

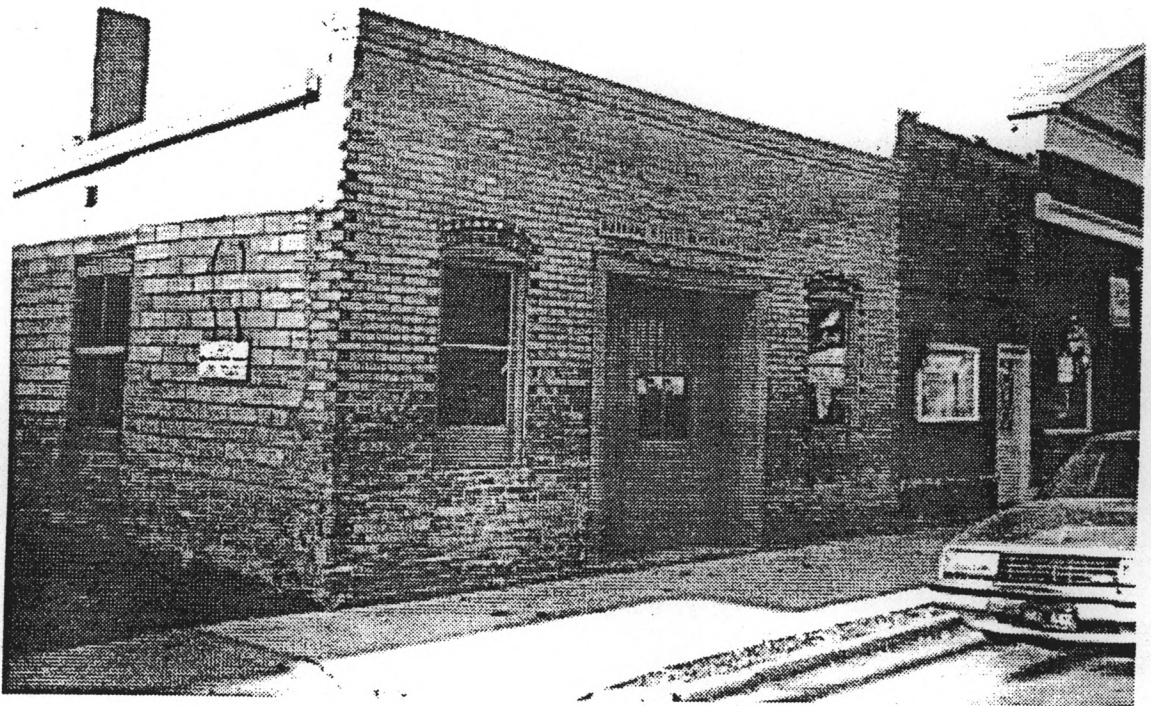


Location of Bigler Building/Riegel Blacksmith Shop, Clermont, Iowa.

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Bigler Building
Fayette County, Iowa



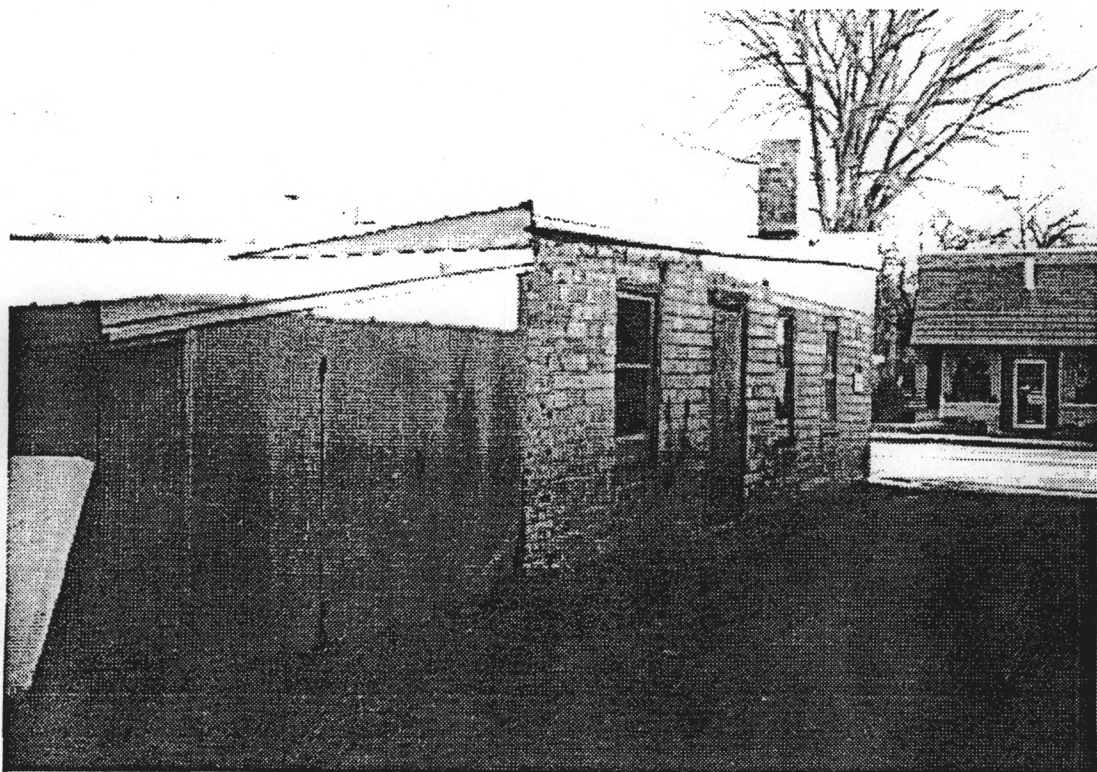
Bigler Building/Riegel Blacksmith Shop, Clermont, Iowa. View of principal facade.

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Bigler Building
Fayette County, Iowa



Bigler Building/Riegel Blacksmith Shop, Clermont, Iowa. View of south facade.

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Bigler Building Fayette County, Iowa

