

Site Inventory Form

State Historical Society of Iowa

(November 2005)

State Inventory No. 92-00471

New Supplemental

Part of a district with known boundaries (enter inventory no.) 92-00349

Relationship: Contributing Noncontributing

Contributes to a potential district with yet unknown boundaries

National Register Status:(any that apply) Listed De-listed NHL DOE

9-Digit SHPO Review & Compliance (R&C) Number

Non-Extant (enter year)

1. Name of Property

historic name Mills Seed Company

other names/site number Downtown Survey Map # DT-081

2. Location

street & number 216 North Iowa (moved here from 604 N. 7th Avenue)

city or town Washington vicinity, county Washingt

Legal Description: (If Rural) Township Name Township No. Range No. Section Quarter of Quarter

(If Urban) Subdivision Original Plat Block(s) 2 Lot(s) south half of lots 3 and 4

3. State/Federal Agency Certification [Skip this Section]

4. National Park Service Certification [Skip this Section]

5. Classification

Category of Property (Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property

- building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Table with 2 columns: If Non-Eligible Property, Enter number of: buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total

Table with 2 columns: If Eligible Property, enter number of: Contributing, Noncontributing, buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total

Name of related project report or multiple property study (Enter "N/A" if the property is not part of a multiple property examination).

Title

Historical Architectural Data Base Number

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

09: Agriculture/Subsistence - seed company

70: Vacant/not in use

10A02: Manufacturing / factory

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

09F05: Commercial / brick front

foundation

10A: Concrete - poured

walls (visible material)

03 Brick

roof

other

Narrative Description (SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" representing your opinion of eligibility after applying relevant National Register criteria)

- Yes No More Research Recommended
Yes No More Research Recommended
Yes No More Research Recommended
Yes No More Research Recommended

- A Property is associated with significant events.
B Property is associated with the lives of significant persons.
C Property has distinctive architectural characteristics.
D Property yields significant information in archeology or history.

County Washington Address 216 North Iowa
City Washington

Site Number 92-00471
District Number 92-00349

Criteria Considerations

- 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)

02: Architecture

Significant Dates

Construction date 1907 check if circa or estimated date
Other dates, including renovation 2010 - move

Significant Person

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)

Architect/Builder

Architect Howard Ross
Builder Harry Shrader and Roy Davis

Narrative Statement of Significance SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography See continuation sheet for citations of the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form

10. Geographic Data

UTM References (OPTIONAL)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	_____	_____	2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet for additional UTM references or comments

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rebecca L. McCarley, consultant, Davenport
organization Washington Historic Preservation Commission date August 14, 2012
street & number City Hall – 215 E. Washington St telephone 319-653-6584
city or town Washington state Iowa zip code 52353

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION (Submit the following items with the completed form)

FOR ALL PROPERTIES

- Map:** showing the property's location in a town/city or township.
- Site plan:** showing position of buildings and structures on the site in relation to public road(s).
- Photographs:** representative black and white photos. If the photos are taken as part of a survey for which the Society is to be curator of the negatives or color slides, a photo/catalog sheet needs to be included with the negatives/slides and the following needs to be provided below on this particular inventory site:

Roll/slide sheet #	_____	Frame/slot #	_____	Date Taken	_____
Roll/slide sheet #	_____	Frame/slot #	_____	Date Taken	_____
Roll/slide sheet #	_____	Frame/slot #	_____	Date Taken	_____

- See continuation sheet or attached *photo & slide catalog sheet* for list of photo roll or slide entries.
- Photos/illustrations without negatives are also in this site inventory file.

FOR CERTAIN KINDS OF PROPERTIES, INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING AS WELL

- Farmstead & District:** (List of structures and buildings, known or estimated year built, and contributing or noncontributing status)
- Barn:**
 - A sketch of the frame/truss configuration in the form of drawing a typical middle bent of the barn.
 - A photograph of the loft showing the frame configuration along one side.
 - A sketch floor plan of the interior space arrangements along with the barn's exterior dimensions in feet.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Use Only Below This Line

Concur with above survey opinion on National Register eligibility: Yes No More Research Recommended
 This is a locally designated property or part of a locally designated district.

Comments: _____

Evaluated by (name/title): _____ Date: _____

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<u>Mills Seed Company</u>	<u>Washington</u>
Name of Property	County
<u>216 North Iowa</u>	<u>Washington</u>
Address	City

This form was prepared as part of a research/survey/nomination project in 2011-2012 funded by a HRDP grant from the State Historical Society of Iowa for the nomination of the Washington Downtown Historic District. The project was primarily structured to develop the nomination for the downtown, with additional research on each building documented on an Iowa Site Inventory form. The information below is taken from the table in the August 2012 draft of the nomination, with additional information documented on the property and photographs in the following sections.

Mills Seed Company (moved here in 2010) - 216 N. Iowa Avenue - State #92-00471 - Map #35 ~ 1 contributing building (C) - 1907, 2010 (moved here) - brick - moved

Historic information:

(1920s earlier 1 story bldg - Washington Motor Co, then 1930s-60s - Mace Motor Co - Ford sales/service)

2010 - Mills Seed Company building moved to this location

history: 1907-c.1918 - Mills Seed Company, 1919-c.1925 - Bruns Seed Company, 1926-1934 - vacant, 1934-1984 - The Curran Company

2012 - vacant since prior to move in 2010

Architectural information:

Height: 3 story - moved

Walls: brick - moved

Storefront: -

Windows: covered for move

Architectural details: brick corbels on parapet

Architect/Builder: Howard Ross (architect - local contractor), Harry Shrader (contractor)

Modifications: Historic: -; Non-historic: 2010 - moved to this site from 604 N. 7th Ave

7. Narrative Description

The Mills Seed Company is a three-story brick building with a full basement. It was moved to this location in March 2010. The five-bay façade (west side at original and new site locations) has a central single door entry with two one-over-one-light double-hung wood windows grouped on either side. This pattern of two windows, one window, and two windows is continued on the second and third stories, creating a symmetrical and balanced façade. The windows have segmental brick arch lintels and stone sills. All the windows have been covered since the move. At that time, the sashes were in fair condition, though repairs were necessary to restore working order on most windows. The ghost of the painted "Mills Seed Co" sign is still visible across the parapet (original height on this side). The simple brick corbelling is found above the sign. A large crack is visible down the front of the building. The cross bracing for the move remains on the building. The south and north sides of the building have twelve bays with one window per bay. These windows have likewise remained covered since the move. A side entry is located in the sixth bay from the west on the south side and in the fifth bay from the west on the north side. The rear (east) elevation has three bays, with a large loading door in the center on the first story. No changes have been made to the interior since the move to date. The interior of the building appears to follow the original design with two offices at the west end of the first story. Open space broken by square wood columns through the middle is then found on the remainder of

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the first story, through the second story, and through the third story. A staircase at the west end and east end provide access to all the stories. An elevator was located in the northeast corner of the building and has been removed. Two temporary interior stud walls were constructed in 2009-10 north-south through the middle prior to the move to provide stability for the building. Overall, the building retains good integrity of design, materials, and workmanship.

The brick parapet was originally a uniform height around the building, but the sides were reduced and stepped to the back to accommodate a steeper pitched flat roof. The later one-story side additions were removed prior to the move in February 2010.

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

In its new location at 216 N. Iowa Avenue, the Mills Seed Company now sits within the recommended boundary for the Washington Downtown Historic District. Its commercial/business history is directly related to significant aspects of the history of the downtown, and it appears to contribute architecturally to historic district.

The individual eligibility of the Mills Seed Company building was assessed in March 2010 by Rebecca Lawin McCarley for the owner/mover at the time. It was determined to retain individual significance under Criterion C at the new location. The building was constructed in 1907 through the efforts of the Commercial Club in Washington and desire of F.B. Mills to locate his western branch distribution center in Washington. The three story building appears to have been the largest of its kind constructed in Washington at that time. It remains as one of a handful of historic commercial or industrial buildings in Washington taller than two stories (notably, three-story brick hotel on Marion, four-story brick bank at Iowa and Main). It is the only historic three-story industrial or wholesale house building in Washington, and the size of the building reflects the architectural prominence within the community. The design of the building reflects the functional nature of the business. The simple yet large brick building was designed by local contractor Howard Ross, with typical structural systems of the period. The use of the building as the primary warehouse and distribution center of the F.B. Mills Seed Company is reflected in the design and construction of the building. The building at its old, as well as new, site location is visible from blocks away, as its height is significant over the surrounding one-story commercial/industrial buildings along the railroad tracks and residential blocks. The only extant historic industrial/wholesale building similar in overall square footage to the Mills Seed Company is the later 1923 two-story McCleery Calendar Factory at N. 7th Avenue and E. 3rd Street. The other industrial/commercial buildings near the railroad tracks are typically small one-story buildings.

Extensive history on the businesses in this building can be found on the March 2010 inventory form. In brief, the F.B. Mills Seed Company was started in Onondaga County, New York in 1887. Frank B. Mills produced his first seed catalog with a small printing press, and the company grew to "one of largest and most complete establishments of its character in the United States" by 1896. He sent a letter to the postmaster in Washington in 1907 to inquire if a western distribution point might be located here.

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Winfield Smouse was a community leader in this area, with success at business as well as real estate ventures. F.B. Mills' inquiry to the postmaster was passed onto him, and he negotiated the terms of the agreement for the western branch to be located in Washington. By the time of the announcement on June 5, 1907, the contract for the three-story building with full basement had already been let to Harry Shrader and Roy Davis, based on plans prepared by architect Howard Ross. The brick building would be 40 by 100 feet with all modern conveniences, including an elevator ("Contracts are all Signed," *Evening Journal*, Washington, June 5, 1907, 4). The 1900 census lists Howard Ross at age 18 in Washington as a contractor living with his father James, also a contractor. No other buildings are known to have been designed by him, though he built other buildings from his own designs as he continued to work as a contractor into the 1930s. The F.B. Mills Seed Company building was reportedly "almost finished" by November 8, 1907. Miss Anna Main arrived from Rose Hill, New York, to train the new workforce, and catalogs were slated to be issued in early December, with Washington listed as the location for orders ("To be in Full Blast Soon," *Evening Journal*, Washington, November 8, 1907, 2). On December 4, 1907, Lots 5 and 6 of Block 1 in Smouse's Northeast Addition were officially transferred from Winfield Smouse to The F.B. Mills Company. On June 17, 1909, the property legally transferred ownership from F.B. Mills to The Mills Seed Company.

The impact on the postal system in Washington was significant. The size of the postage bill was one aspect originally highlighted in the letter from Mills to the city of Washington. An article in 1911 notes that the impact of the heavy mail resulted in development of a federal post office in Washington, with the site purchased in 1911 ("Growth of Big Seed Industry is a Boost for Washington, Iowa," *Muscatine Journal*, December 9, 1911, 8). The post office moved to a larger building awaiting construction of the new federal building, a building already inadequate by 1913. In April 1913, \$80,000 was approved for the construction of the federal building on the previously purchased site, something still anticipated to be years from completion ("New Post Office Building," *Evening Journal*, April 26, 1913, 26). The federal post office was completed and opened in 1916 (extant on N. Marion, also in the historic district).

However, the Mills Seed Company began to have financial problems within a few years. On December 22, 1915, the property transferred to Charles C. Cunningham, trustee for the bankruptcy. An ad for a private sale or an auction on August 31, 1916 for the real and personal property of the Mills Seed Company in Washington, Iowa, appeared in the national *Florist Review* on August 17, 1916 (online at www.archive.org/stream/5205536_38_2/5205536_38_2_djvu.txt). The details are unknown at this time, but the property transferred to W.P. Wells on September 1, 1916, who then sold it back to the Mills Seed Company on September 30, 1916. The 1917 city directory continues to list the Mills Seed Company at 7th Avenue and 6th Street, with L.D. Langworthy as manager. The 1917 Sanborn map also depicts the business here. A 1918 article for the new farm equipment building for the C.W. Busby Company references the location as north of the Mills Seed Company building ("Washington Will Get New Factory," *Muscatine Journal*, April 18, 1918, 10). By 1919, the Mills Seed Company in Washington closed, after operating here for 11 seasons.

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The property (Lots 5 and 6) transferred from the Mills Seed Company to Armin Richard Bruns on May 1, 1919. On January 7, 1921, Armin Bruns then transferred the property to the Bruns Seed Company. The business was based in Davenport and utilized the Washington location as a mail order house for their business. The Bruns Seed Company only operated in Washington for a few years, selling the property to the Washington Manufacturing Company on December 1, 1926. The property appears to have then sat vacant for several years. On February 25, 1930, they transferred the property to real estate investor George Breitenbach, who also appears to have just held the property without a particular use. The 1931 Sanborn map depicts the building as vacant.

On November 24, 1934, George Breitenbach sold the property (Lots 5-6-7) to The Curran Company. The Curran Company started in Washington in fall 1929 to print tally cards, bridge scoring pads, and everyday greeting cards. R.J. Curran of St. Paul, MN, was president, with local residents E.B. Hammer as treasurer and C.J. Jungbluth as secretary. Products were printed in the factory and a considerable amount of work was also completed by women in their homes ("Products of Washington Factories of Today Used in Many Parts of World," Centennial Edition, *Evening Journal*, August 1939, 20). The personnel and business model was similar to that of the American Pearl Button Company (which was somewhat affiliated with the Washington Manufacturing Company). E.B. Hammer managed the button factory from 1910 to his death in 1938, and C.J. Jungbluth was assistant manager through that period and took over as president in 1938 ("Products of Washington Factories of Today Used in Many Parts of World," Centennial Edition, *Evening Journal*, August 1939, 20). The oldest manufacturing concern in Washington in 1939 was the McCleery Calendar Factory, which was founded in 1905 and built their two-story facility in 1923 ("Products of Washington Factories of Today Used in Many Parts of World," Centennial Edition, *Evening Journal*, August 1939, 20).

The Curran Company operated here from the 1930s to the 1980s. The company is located at 313 N. 4th Avenue in the 1932 city directory, and they moved to 604 N. 7th Avenue by the 1935 city directory. The 1941 city directory lists The Curran Company as manufacturers of greeting and tally cards, with Richard Curran, president; Walter Bollinger, vice president; C.J. Jungbluth, secretary and treasurer. C.J. Jungbluth also was president and treasurer of the American Pearl Button Company at 604 E. 7th Street (one block north and one block west; two-story building demolished). The 1943 Sanborn map shows the relationship of the two companies (Figure 8). The business of the American Pearl Button Company declined with the business of the pearl button companies in Muscatine in the 1940s with the introduction of plastic buttons. The business appears to have reincorporated as the Washington Pearl Button Company. The 1952, 1954, and 1964 city directories list The Curran Company and the Washington Pearl Button Company at 604 N. 7th Avenue. By the 1970s, only The Curran Company is listed here, manufacturers of tally and party decorations, with W.H. Jungbluth as manager. They are last listed here in the 1984 city directory. On August 17, 1988, The Curran Company sold the property, apparently having dissolved.

The building was then acquired by Jeremy Patterson and moved to 216 N. Iowa by Jeremy Patterson House Moving, Inc. This site was vacant, following a fire of the previous building on the lot. The earlier

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one-story building on this site was built in the 1920s for Washington Motor Company, and it was Mace Motor Company from the 1930s to 1960s.

9. Major Bibliographical References

City/Telephone Directories, Washington. Various publishers, various dates. Available at the Washington Public Library.

Deed Records, Transfer Books, Auditor's Office, Washington County Courthouse, Washington, Iowa.

McCarley, Rebecca Lawin, architectural historian, SPARK Consulting, Davenport. Iowa Site Inventory form prepared for building in March 2010.

Newspaper advertisements, various years/dates, on microfilm at Washington Public Library:

Washington Evening Journal

Washington Gazette

Washington Press

Sanborn Map Company. "Washington, Iowa," Sanborn fire insurance maps. Pelham, NY: Sanborn Map Company, 1885, 1892, 1897, 1902, 1909, 1917, 1931, 1943.

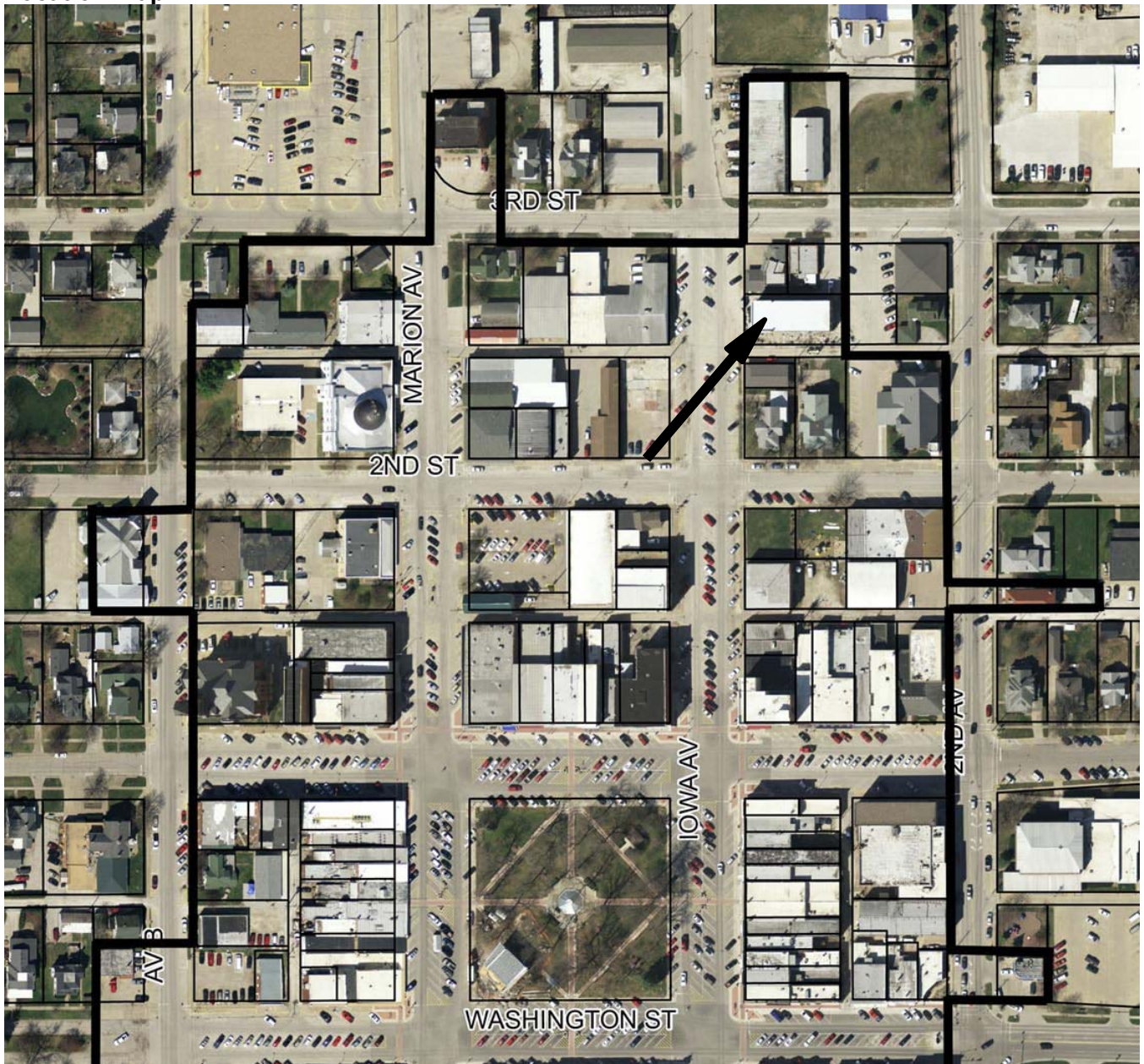
Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
State Historical Society of Iowa
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Location map



2009 aerial photograph (Washington County) – line indicates survey/research area boundary

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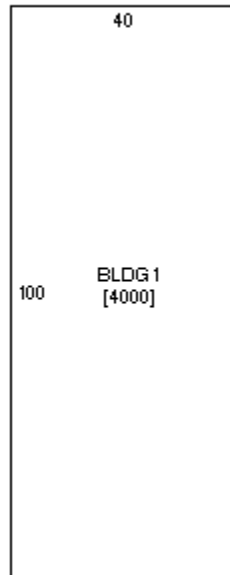
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Building plan (from assessor's website)



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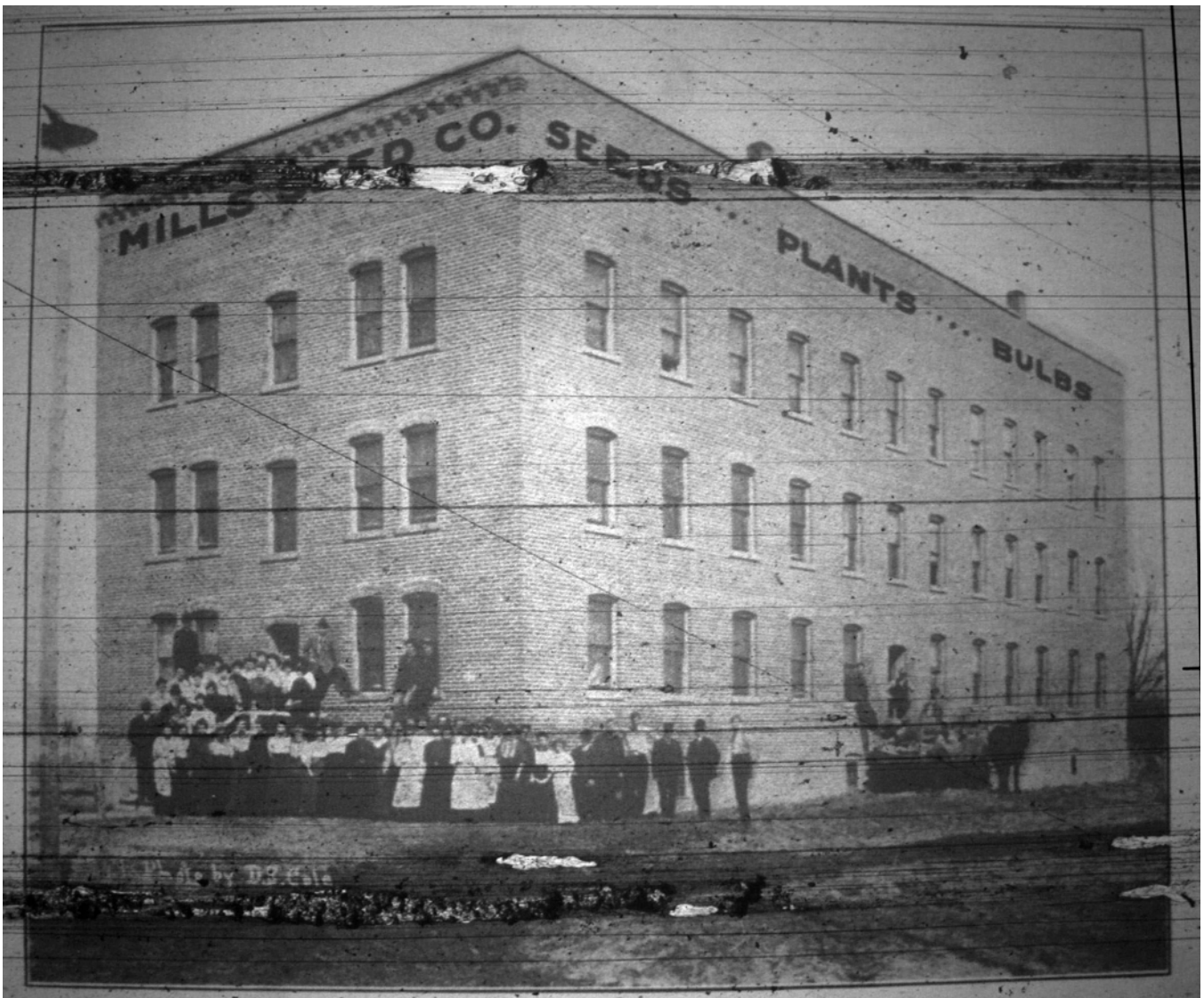
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Historic images



Evening Journal, April 26, 1913, p26

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Digital photographs



Photograph 92-00471-001 - West and south elevations, looking northeast (McCarley, September 20, 2011)

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Photograph 92-00471-002 - North and west elevations, looking southeast (McCarley, September 20, 2011)