

**Site Inventory Form**  
**State Historical Society of Iowa**  
 (November 2005)

**State Inventory No. 09-00614**  New  Supplemental  
 Part of a district with known boundaries (enter inventory no.) \_\_\_\_\_  
 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 Sturdevant, Ira and Asenath, House  
 other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number 502 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW  
 city or town Waverly  vicinity, county Bremer County  
 Legal Description: (If Rural) Township Name \_\_\_\_\_ Township No. \_\_\_\_\_ Range No. \_\_\_\_\_ Section \_\_\_\_\_ Quarter of Quarter \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If Urban) Subdivision I.H. Sturdevant's Addition Block(s) 6 Lot(s) 6

**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		
	If Non-Eligible Property	If Eligible Property, enter number of:	
	Enter number of:	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	_____ buildings	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____ sites	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____ structures	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____ objects	_____	_____ objects
<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____ Total	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> 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 Hist.&Arch Recon.Report for 2008 Flood-Affected Properties in Waverly Historical Architectural Data Base Number HADB 09-020

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>01A03 Single Dwelling: residence</u>	<u>01A03 Single Dwelling: residence</u>
<u>01C05 Garage</u>	<u>01C05 Garage</u>
_____	_____

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>09A03 Side-Gabled Roof, 1½-Story</u>	foundation <u>04 Stone</u>
<u>04A Greek Revival</u>	walls (visible material) <u>02A Weatherboard</u>
_____	roof <u>08 Asphalt</u>
_____	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)

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	A Property is associated with significant events.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	B Property is associated with the lives of significant persons.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	C Property has distinctive architectural characteristics.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	D Property yields significant information in archaeology or history.

County Bremer  
City Waverly

Address 502 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW

Site Number 09-00614  
District Number \_\_\_\_\_

**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  
1856  check if circa or estimated date  
Other dates, including renovation

**Significant Person**

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)

Ira H. Sturdevant

**Architect/Builder**

Architect  
unknown  
Builder  
unknown

**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 Marlys Svendsen  
organization Waverly Historic Preservation Commission  
street & number N3834 Deep Lake Rd.  
city or town Sarona state WI  
date 1/12/2009; 11/5/2015  
telephone 715/469-3300  
zip code 54870

**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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Sturdevant, Ira and Asenath, House	Bremer
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## **7. Description**

The Ira and Asenath Sturdevant House at 502 1<sup>st</sup> St SW was built between 1854 and 1856 according to documentation compiled and maintained by Sturdevant family descendants and professional historians, Rick W. Sturdevant and his wife, Katherine Scott Sturdevant. The building description sections that follow on pages 1-3 were prepared by historian Katherine Scott Sturdevant for this site form.<sup>1</sup>

### *Exterior, Front Section*

The Sturdevant House is an example of a modest Greek Revival Style Side-Gabled Roof, 1½-Story brick house form with sections clad in stucco. Originally built with a limestone foundation, stone sections remain in some areas including a limestone-walled cellar. Other foundation areas have been replaced at an unknown date by parged concrete block. The house was built during 1854-6 by Ira Sturdevant, a farmer and brick mason. It is the oldest house in Waverly, Iowa, overlooking the Cedar River. Its most striking external features are its straight rectangularity that belies the brick basis under the stucco, its original porch with four intricately carved, hand-turned posts, and its back one-story “addition” that a social historian recognizes as perhaps a “summer kitchen,” but in this modest economic class, the only kitchen. The house’s pale pinkish painted stucco disappoints historically, except that owners in the 1990s stripped and revealed a large section of the original brick framing the front porch. The brick has the historical mixed reds and browns, although it looks as though they used some sealer or other enhancer on it. Also disappointing today, however, is the absence of the roof-top chimney seen in historical photos. The fireplace and chimney are intact in the house, however. The window frames appear to be as original, but the windows today have simple single panes whereas the historical photos show 9-panes up and 6 panes down on the lower windows. The single panes might be closer to the original frontier days; the multi-paned windows might have been a Victorian nicety. The asphalt roof has not altered the original gabling that matches old photographs.

### *Exterior, Back and Side Sections*

The single-story back section of the house that appears to be a later addition is painted stucco and frame over the original brick and frame. The consistency of construction, roof peak, door placement, and windows is comparable to the front part of the house when analyzing the historical and present-day photographs. The back side of the “addition” shows superficial later changes such as a modern double door and a “deck” built from the ground, but the shape of the “addition” and its roof match historical photos circa 1880s-1910s. The condition of this section was assessed as “above normal.” Discussion with the last private owner, Ronda Guyer, clarified the dilemma about this “addition.” Evidence suggests it was two parts—the one closest to the house being original brick and the furthest being a modern frame addition. Still, both seem to occur in turn-of-the-century photographs.

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<sup>1</sup>The building description sections for the exterior (front and back), interior, flood damage, and integrity issues were prepared by Katherine Scott Sturdevant, October 2015. Minor editing was completed by Marlys Svendsen, Southwest Quadrant Survey consultant.

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The south side yard and backyard display flimsy fencing, garden arch, etc. Mature trees are present throughout. There is one non-eligible building, a detached frame 22'x24' garage built in 1992, with newer siding. We do not know of any aggressive efforts to apply archaeological techniques to the lot, but we should be able to find evidence of a well and outhouse. The last owner found a very determined sinkhole. A front-gable two-car garage faces 4<sup>th</sup> Ave SW. It was built in 1992 according to Assessor records and is clad in wide clapboard-style aluminum siding. It is considered noncontributing.

### *Interior*

Assessor's reports describe 384 square feet in the old front part, usually seen by visitors and owners as the "living room." At the north end of this room remains the fireplace, which is made of the same original brick as the house. (See the significance section for the history.) The double brick walls are about 1-foot-thick and the brick itself is soft and crumbly at times. The thick brick walls also provided deeply inset window ledges.

The "addition" is 528 square feet, according to Assessor's reports that do not differentiate the "addition" as having two parts. One sees the kitchen when entering the front door. It is a brick-walled structure that matches and is part of the original house, or at least added on in the earliest phases of the house. There is an attic over the kitchen that does not extend into the newer addition beyond. Inside the attic, one finds a complete chimney structure for the cook stove, whose open chimney connection is on the west wall of the kitchen area. The newer addition at the west end of the house is frame, and appears to have introduced the first bathroom to the house. The newer addition includes a "back room" and doors out to the yard and deck.

There are three bedrooms. One is a small one at the first, original level, off to the side when entering. The other two are in the gabled roof with windows as apparent in all photographs. These were apparently original and clearly had no closets for a period of time. The stairs to reach them appear right when one enters the front door. There is clear evidence of an earlier, steeper staircase in this downstairs room.

In adding the back section, someone dug and constructed stairs down to the cellar, although the cellar only exists under the original part of the house. Listed as a "full basement" of stone, the cellar is the original root cellar, with limestone walls that display fossils. After the removal of plasterboard walls, it became obvious that the cellar stairs were originally outdoors, and the enclosure around them was originally an open porch.

### *Flood Damage*

In the June floods of 2008, no damage occurred to the basic structure or even the outward appearance of the house. It has been classified as a 500-year-flood house, and all family and local tradition and owners' accounts so far say that, in its 154+ years, flood waters never entered the front step until 2008. Flood damage did occur throughout the lower interiors in 2008, however. The last private owner, Ronda Guyer, with her disabilities and difficulties, left it up to a religious group in Waverly that was cleaning out houses to complete that task. The drywall, plaster, cabinetry, counter

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tops, carpeting, linoleum, appliances (including furnace and air conditioning), and wiring were severely damaged and removed as possible. There was also damage to doors, window frames, shutters, weather stripping, and hardware. Generally, most of this material on the interior that was damaged was modern and residential. Most of it would come out anyway during a restoration process to create a living history site.

### *Integrity*

A summary of several aspects or qualities of integrity for the house follows:

1. The house is in its original location. Although Waverly and this neighborhood have obviously changed, the river frontage, semi-rural setting, and proximity to the old cemetery make it possible to illustrate the river's impact from settlement through modern floods, the general appearance of the frontier terrain, and the gradual development of social life and community. The house could be stripped of non-eligible add-ons. The nearby houses include the Martin Lyman Stebbins (aka Couse) house, once thought to be the closest thing folks had to a Victorian mansion in Waverly.
2. The essential brick structure is secure and unchanged, with a substantial portion of brick already exposed to show how the rest might be. The thickness of the walls and window ledges are a rare asset. The craftsmanship of Ira Sturdevant remains.
3. The front porch and its posts are as they were originally, with elaborate carving and hand turning done with tools that are rare today. A recent owner reproduced the missing post admirably with an appreciation for historical method. The craftsmanship of Ira Sturdevant or perhaps one of his sons or grandsons remains.
4. The fireplace is intact. After removal of plasterboard above it, it became obvious that the brick was removed and, at one point, an outlet placed for the chimney of a stove. The missing portions of the original chimney could be reconstructed with period brick.
5. The "basement" is the limestone cellar, offering social history opportunities. It has been a most popular aspect of tours for children. Some have informed the directors that there is a friendly ghost there.
6. The kitchen is probably original or close to it and can recreate more social and women's history.
7. The provenance for the house is building. More research and careful examination of the structure will yield valuable results in the future. The Ira Sturdevant House, Inc., the not-for-profit private owner of the house in 2015, retains the original abstract for the property.

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## **8. Significance**

The Ira and Asenath Sturdevant House at 502 1<sup>st</sup> St SW derives individual significance under National Register Criteria A, B and C for its association with pre-Civil War settlement patterns and community development in Southwest Waverly, for its direct link with one of the area's first and most representative Yankee New England settlers – Ira Sturdevant, and as a preserved example of a modest Greek Revival brick house credited as being the oldest extant dwelling in Waverly in 2015. It is also a contributing resource in the Sturdevant SW Historic District, which qualifies for the National Register under both Criteria A (Community Development) and C (Architecture). The historic district takes its name from Ira Sturdevant, his son William Sturdevant and other members of the Sturdevant family who played important leadership roles in the establishment and settlement of Waverly beginning in the early 1850s. The district is a well-preserved collection of mid and late 19th century and early 20th century architectural styles and vernacular house forms located in Waverly's southwest residential neighborhood and is nearly all located within the William Sturdevant and Ira Sturdevant additions. The neighborhood developed as a middle class and working class residential district from the late-1850s through the mid-20th century. The garage is considered noncontributing due to its more recent construction.

### *Historical Background for Waverly<sup>2</sup>*

Waverly was established in 1853 along the Cedar River in Waverly Township located in southeastern Bremer County. It was designated as the county seat for Bremer County the same year that the county was officially organized and was formally incorporated in 1859. Like most Iowa towns established before the Civil War, growth during the early 1860s was deferred until after the war came to a close. Waverly's first railroad, the Cedar Falls and Minnesota Railroad was extended to Waverly in 1864. Eventually track was also laid for other branch lines and an electric interurban. By 1917 track for branch lines was absorbed by the Chicago and Great Western Railroad and the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad. Track for the electric interurban – the Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and Northern – was laid in 1910 but usage was never as substantial as predicted.

Waverly grew in the manner typical of other Iowa county seats in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its commercial center extended along the east-west route of Bremer Avenue on both sides of the Bremer Avenue Bridge that crossed the L-shaped course of the Cedar River as it passed through the center of town. The county courthouse was located outside of the commercial area on a slight prominence at the east end of Bremer Avenue. Residential districts grew up in the four quadrants formed by the intersecting main street and river. The broad, generally flat profile of both the business district and early residential neighborhoods saw the regular occurrence of flooding resulting in the gradual replacement of most first generation frame building stock. German immigrants were among the largest ethnic group to populate Waverly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century establishing religious institutions with ethnic affiliations such as St. Paul's Lutheran Church in the northwest quadrant, St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in southeast quadrant, and the German Methodist Church.

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<sup>2</sup> The historical background information is largely drawn from the *Waverly, Iowa: An Architectural Heritage*, (Waverly, Iowa: City of Waverly), 1977.

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Bremer County and its county seat of Waverly prospered during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century becoming a retail and professional services center for Bremer County and sections of adjacent Butler County. The county's standing as the "Dairy Spot of Iowa," gave rise to a number of dairy industries including a manufacturing plant operated by the Carnation Milk Products Company for the production of condensed milk in the 1920s. Population stood at 16,300 people in 1900 before the growth rate slowed before World War I. By 1930 population topped 17,000. Expansion of a Lutheran seminary in Waverly first located in the community in 1879 through the relocation of Wartburg College to the community in 1939 was a cultural and economic stimulus for the community. Waverly continued to add a 1,000 people per decade until 1950 when the post-War boom saw growth accelerate to more than 21,000 by 1960. During the past 50 years population has slowed somewhat topping out at 23,325 in 2000.

### *Historical Background for the Ira and Asenath Sturdevant House*

The Sturdevant House is located in the Southwest Quadrant of Waverly that includes additions platted by early Waverly settlers, Ira Sturdevant and his son William Sturdevant. The Sturdevant family moved to the unsettled area along the Cedar River in the 1850s. Ira received a 40-acre federal land grant based on his military service in the War of 1812. William acquired 80 acres of adjoining land to the north of his father's 40-acre parcel. In 1857 the William Sturdevant's Addition was laid out and in 1860 the Ira Sturdevant Addition was platted. Growth remained relatively slow in these subdivisions until after the Civil War though houses were built for both William and Ira before the war.

The historical summary beginning below and continuing through page 9 was prepared by Katherine Scott Sturdevant.<sup>3</sup> It focuses on the social history of the Sturdevant House and the surrounding neighborhood as well as interpretive aspects of the house, now being developed as the building is reused as a local historic site.

The Sturdevant House is the oldest extant house in Waverly, Iowa. Constructed of brick in 1854-1856 by one of the area's first and most representative Yankee New England settlers, it tells yields for us the nature of ordinary folk exploring, locating, and acquiring western land through treaty cessions from Native Americans and the relations with those indigenous peoples. Its architecture and construction are enough intact and restorable to display the basic construction technologies, materials, subsistence and small market agricultural practices, and social history aspects of everyday life in the frontier stages of a Midwestern rural community.

Sturdevant's revivalist religious beliefs and practices typified the frontier fervor carried from New York's "Burned-Over District" of the 1830s and led to the founding of Middle American Methodism. Local annual lauding of Ira Sturdevant for his previous (1812) military experiences and those of his sons (Civil War), great-grandsons (World War I), and great-great grandsons (World War II) illustrate a national trend of military memorializing conducted religiously by voluntary associations and descendants.

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<sup>3</sup>The building description sections for the exterior (front and back), interior, flood damage, and integrity issues were prepared by Katherine Scott Sturdevant, October 2015. Minor editing was completed by Marlys Svendsen, Southwest Quadrant Survey consultant.

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As the house itself, and the descendants' and the town's attention to the house evolved in late-Victorian and turn-of-the-century Waverly, the image of the house and Ira's memory were part of nostalgic patriotism for the formative period in a community's development. Documenting all of this with photography, speeches, and celebrations was important to the family and town. Finally, the house's survival through modern remodeling superficialities and a nearly 500-year flood into the era of historic preservation at the social history level makes it still another inspirational symbol.

### *Ira Sturdevant, Frontier and Waverly Settler*

Ira H. Sturdevant was born April 28, 1793 in Tinmouth, Rutland County, Vermont. His family traces to English Puritans of Connecticut who moved from frontier to frontier as subsistence farmers and occasional counterfeiter. His parents were Revolutionary War veteran Caleb and Miriam (Howe) Sturdevant. A memorial to Ira's younger brother Dr. James M. Sturdevant, published privately in 1874, described how Caleb Sturdevant removed with his wife and ten children to the southern part of Ellisburg, Jefferson County, New York, in February 1813 and settled "amid an almost unbroken forest," where Ira used a knife and axe to build a "log shanty...18 by 24 feet, without nails or sound of a hammer." With his brother Caleb, Ira cleared sufficient forest to plant a couple of acres in the spring of 1814. Ira, meanwhile, had defended his frontier by fighting in the Battle of Sackets Harbor in May 1813 under Captain Gad Ackley.

On December 31, 1813, Ira married Asenath Lilly. Ira and Asenath had nine children between 1814 and 1836. During that period, they followed popular "Yankee Exodus" migration routes from Ellisburg to Mina Corners, Chautauqua County, New York, then to Corey, Erie County, Pennsylvania. By the late 1840s, the family was moving westward to settle briefly in Stephenson and McHenry County, Illinois. In 1853, Ira's sons William and Lafayette hired out to plough land for a man named Charles Hoover near Quasqueton, Buchanan County, Iowa. When they finished that job, a group of Indians told them about fertile land up the Red Cedar River, and the brothers traveled north along the east bank of the river to a spot now overlooking Cedar Lane north of downtown Waverly. Deeming the location first-rate, they returned to Illinois and prepared for the family to move to Iowa early in 1854.

Ira Sturdevant applied for a 40-acre federal land grant based on his War of 1812 service, and his son William purchased 80 acres adjoining the northern boundary of Ira's property. Both properties, which today are designated as Waverly's Ira and William Sturdevant Additions, extended westward from the west bank of the Cedar River. In late 1854-1856, Ira built the brick house for himself and Asenath on the northeast corner of his property.

### *Native American Relations*

Winnebago, Sioux, Sac and Fox, and Mesquakie Indians had been relocated to Iowa during 1830-50, most notably after the Blackhawk War of 1832, and were then removed out of Iowa Territory. The U.S. government purchased land at first, and each treaty included promises of subsidies in trade for Native Americans leaving the area. By 1850 and then 1862, final treaties

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completely cleared the area officially, opening the Cedar Valley for settlement. The Winnebago, the Sioux, and the Sac and Fox Indians, however, continued to hunt in this territory and to fish in the Shell Rock, the Cedar, and the Wapsipinicon rivers during Ira's day.

During these trips they camped in favorable places for from a couple of days to several weeks at a time....[they] would go to Cedar Rapids to receive their allowance from the government, usually down the Cedar River...the Indians frequently passed through Waverly or camped along the banks of the river near town.<sup>4</sup> The most persistent story still told about Ira Sturdevant and his brick house, was that Indians used to ford the river and spend the night sleeping in front of Ira's fireplace along the north wall of the main room. The Sturdevants welcomed the Indians, offered them meals, and had them sleep by the fire in the same manner of hospitality made available to any passersby.

### *Frontier Yankee Revivalism*

Ira Sturdevant and his family came from the Second Great Awakening's "Burned-Over District" of western New York, where they learned to enjoy evangelical itinerant ministers.

Uncle Dick Swarengen was a Methodist circuit preacher, zealous, pugnacious, waggish and withal a good man and a good preacher. His voice was like a fog horn and when he was thoroughly aroused he almost lifted the shingles off the roof. He could be heard at the Bremer (Fortner) House when at his best. On being rallied about so much lung power on one occasion Uncle Dick replied "there are a lot of sinners who will not come to hear me at the court house, but congregate about the hotel, now they have got to consort on the west side of the river or hear the gospel even if I split the shingles." Father Ira H. Sturdevant, a soldier of the war of 1812, a deeply religious man, and entirely unceremonious in his devotions, was present and heard the conversation. He could not refrain from breaking in by saying "Yes, yes Brother Dick cry out and spare not, I'll pay for the shingles."<sup>5</sup>

From their brick house, across the first bridge of the Cedar built by son William, Ira and Asenath helped found and attended the first church organized in Waverly, the Methodist Episcopal Church, starting in 1854-5. The Sturdevant family remained dedicated to that Waverly church through all of its changes until they moved away, circa 1980.

### *Life in the Brick House*

Ira's bounty claim and home were recorded in the new town plat on February 29, 1860. That year the U.S. Census showed Ira H. Sturdevant with Asenath, ages 67 and 66, farming from their brick house, with real estate valued at \$1500. William, age 43, farmed in his adjoining addition of \$800 value with his wife and children, including a nine-year-old son, Ira.

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<sup>4</sup>Col. W. V. Lucas, *Pioneer Days of Bremer County, Iowa: Compiled from Letters to the Waverly Democrat* (Waverly, IA: *Waverly Democrat*, June 1918), pp. 143-144.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

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Family and other local recollections and newspaper accounts have documented the life that the Ira Sturdevant House could portray as living history. At first there was local hunting, although deer were already almost gone during Ira's day. Fishing was always part of daily life. Women learned to cook with what they grew in their gardens, first in their fireplaces and then in their back kitchens, keeping cooler in the summer but providing heat in the winter. The winters were hard and dangerous, but women like Asenath clung firmly to maintaining social networks with family and neighbors. Men concerned themselves with solving the problems of markets and transportation, especially someday bringing the railroads. Disease was a constant threat, especially the scourge of the era, tuberculosis, known as consumption. Ira died from consumption (or perhaps pneumonia) in his brick house on April 12, 1862, but Asenath continued living in the house until her death on 7 May 1867.

### *Military Heritage, Associations, and Commemorations*

America of the middle-to-late 1800s, the Victorian era, directed much of its romantic sentimentality and patriotic fervor toward "honoring the troops." Ira came to Waverly just 7-8 years before the Civil War, when young men like his sons had grown up hankering for the "glory" their fathers and grandfathers had seen. Honoring Ira Sturdevant started a trend within this trend for Waverly.

Waverly in her early days had two survivors of the war of 1812, in the person of Ira Sturdevant and Manassah Reeves, who were always accorded the place of honor on all public occasions. They were sturdy and solid men, who were looked upon as worthy of any honor that the younger generation could pay them. The first time I saw them they were on the platform with the officers on the Fourth of July, 1856, of which I have written in a former letter. As I gazed upon their determined faces and quiet manners, I felt myself to be in the presence of men who deserved the honor of a nation and of all the people. It welled up in me that I would like to have a chance to do what they had done—defend the flag of our country—never dreaming that the day was not five years away when such as I would be called upon to do so, and even in a far more desparate [sic] war than the one in which they had participated. I had the chance, and I got enough out of it to satisfy me for life. I believe that both these men are buried in Harlington cemetery...Reeves and Sturdevant left a posterity of the best people of Bremer county.<sup>6</sup>

Ira lived to see the beginning of the Civil War. Three of his four surviving sons (Seth had died in 1847)—William, Lafayette, and Caleb—all volunteered for the Union Army from Bremer County with hundreds of other men, many of them doomed. Son James farmed through the war but his own son Harvey served. William, Caleb, and Harvey all died in the war, of disease and infection, as was the dreadful Civil War reality that hit Bremer County particularly hard. Only Lafayette survived to return to Waverly as the Sturdevant patriarch until his death in 1911. All are buried or commemorated in Harlington Cemetery.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

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Remembering the Civil War became a prolonged “obsession” for Waverly as for much of the pro-Union West. The Grand Army of the Republic formed as the generation’s dominant veterans’ organization in 1866. Its hall was the hall for events in Waverly until it burned and later organizations’ halls from later wars replaced it. The GAR caused Memorial Day to become a national holiday. Starting in 1868, and continuing without fail until they moved from Waverly in 1976, Sturdevants participated in the Memorial Day events. The central focus was the march of the veterans, ever older, greyer, slower, and fewer, from the courthouse to Harlington Cemetery, to decorate the graves. Crossing the bridge over the Cedar, they would cast a special floral wreath into the water to symbolically recognize naval veterans in a way parallel to honors at sea. Then they would parade past the Ira Sturdevant House, year after year, to Harlington, where they paid special homage to the War of 1812 veteran as they placed his flag and flowers.

### *Photography, Collecting, and Ira’s Family History*

Ira’s son Lafayette was a dedicated photographer, even as his trade for a time. He documented the social history of his family, of Waverly, of their homes starting with the Ira Sturdevant house, and of the GAR and Memorial Day. Lafayette inspired his great-grandson Keith Lovejoy to conduct and preserve photography and raised his own grandson Frank Sturdevant to become the closest Waverly had to a town historian, archivist, and genealogist. Frank collected and recorded everything. A World War I veteran, Frank was the postman for the Southwest District for 30 years. In this role he met daily with neighbors, discussing their family histories and life events. He also served for the Works Progress Administration’s Graves Registration Project in the 1930s. His records of Waverly veterans remain a key source for all local research. The Frank Sturdevant Collection passed on to his grandson, historian Rick W. Sturdevant.

### *Conclusion: “A Real Brick”*

Ira Sturdevant’s house, the oldest house in Waverly, Iowa, has survived more than 150 years with the basic structure intact. The brick he laid thick, the cellar he dug, the beams he made with his own hands, are all there. The fireplace where the last of the free-roaming Indians were welcome to sleep is still there. The kitchen and bedrooms that Asenath probably appreciated are there. The lacy carved posts of the porch, be they the work of Ira, his sons, or his grandsons, represent the fine carpentry that also ran and still runs in the family. The well-trodden path of Memorial Day parades is almost visible as it respectfully walks past Ira’s door. The spirit of this solid man, this founding settler, his prayers and his last breath, live on in this house. The house on what was ironically known as Water Street (now First Street) stood up against the flood of all floods in the summer of 2009. Modern trifles added to it are easily washed away or stripped away, but it stands unless thoughtless people of today deliberately tear it down. Like old Waverly citizens thought of Ira himself, his house deserves every honor we can bestow.

The historical section beginning below and continuing through page 11 was prepared by historian and Sturdevant family descendent, Rick W. Sturdevant. It focuses on the story of Ira and Asenath

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Sturdevant's son, William, and his life in Waverly. The platted William Sturdevant Addition on which most of the Sturdevant SW Historic District is laid out, is the only historic resource that continues to be associated with his life and career.

### *William Sturdevant<sup>7</sup>*

William Sturdevant, son of Ira and Asenath (Lilley) Sturdevant, was born in Ellisburg, Jefferson County, New York, on 13 March 1818. He migrated westward with his parents and other siblings during the 1840s and purchased 40.23 acres of land southeast of Marengo, in McHenry County, Illinois, in March 1848.

Perhaps as early as 1851, William and his younger brother John Lafayette were in Buchanan County, Iowa, plowing land with a team of oxen for Charles Hoover. When a group of Native Americans passed through the area, the Sturdevant brothers asked them about the lay of the land to the northwest. They learned of a beautiful valley on the Cedar River and decided to see it for themselves. The brothers rode their ponies up the Wapsipinicon River, then westward to Jefferson City (present day Denver). Leaving their mounts, they trekked through the Big Woods until they arrived on the bluffs along today's Cedar Lane north of Waverly. Finding the prospects for settlement more than satisfactory, William opted to stay and sent Lafayette back to Illinois to encourage Ira, Asenath, and the rest of the family to move. William Sturdevant's name appears as a resident of Bremer County in the special state census enumerated on 24 July 1852.

When he learned Spencer Acuff held a federal warrant, dated 19 August 1852, for 80 acres based on his service in the Tennessee militia during the War of 1812, William offered him \$120 and received Acuff's warranty deed for the land on 10 September 1852. William filed the deed for that land, located west of the Cedar River, which the Bremer County recorded on 7 December 1854. He arranged for it to become the William Sturdevant Addition to Waverly on 11 December 1857.

Meanwhile, before the rest of the family arrived in September 1854, William had built a structure called then Ida House on the west side of today's 1st Street SW approximately one-half block south of Bremer Avenue. It served as a hotel, dry goods store, and post office. The Ida House sheltered the rest of the newly arrived Sturdevant family until they could find or build housing for themselves. Also, in the autumn of 1854, presumably before the rest of the family arrived, William Sturdevant became a founding member of what is today's Trinity United Methodist Church in Waverly.

At some point prior to March 1856, William sold the Ida House to E.F. Tabor and relocated across 1st Street SW to what he called the Western Exchange, a hotel and livery stable, that stood approximately where the Rock Island Railroad later built its depot, one lot south of Bremer Avenue. In July 1856, William undertook construction of the first bridge across the Cedar River

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<sup>7</sup>Rick W. Sturdevant, "William Sturdevant," prepared October 2015 and submitted for use with this Iowa Site Inventory Form.

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on what is today's Bremer Avenue. This was also the first bridge on Iowa's Cedar River anywhere north of Cedar Rapids. Although he intended to raise the \$2,500 by subscription to pay for the labor and material to build the bridge, William soon found that many subscribers neglected to fulfill their pledges; they left him to pay for the "Free Bridge" out of his own pocket. In the end, the bridge cost nearly \$10,000. Despite this financial setback, he completed the bridge, which had stone abutments and piers with a wooden-plank superstructure and deck, in early March 1857. Unfortunately, several days of heavy rain later that month swelled the river's flow. High water, immense quantities of ice, and massive driftwood damaged the bridge's wooden towers, and the stone piers on which they stood, also washing away the wooden planking. Only one pier and a single arch remained. A new bridge would not be built until June 1860.

As the Civil War intensified, William Sturdevant enlisted as a private in the "Bremer County Rangers," which became Company B, 38th Regiment of Iowa volunteer infantry. They mustered on 4 November 1862 and participated in the siege of Vicksburg during the spring of 1863. In August 1865, William and his surviving comrades found themselves on a steamboat headed homeward up the Mississippi River. Unfortunately, early on the morning of 24 August, the other men found William's lifeless body; he had bled to death from a burst carbuncle on his neck. They buried him on a bluff along the Mississippi near Helena, Arkansas. Today, a memorial headstone in Harlington Cemetery reminds visitors of another of Waverly's founding fathers.

## 9. Sources

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State Historical Society of Iowa  
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Site Number **09-00614**

Related District Number

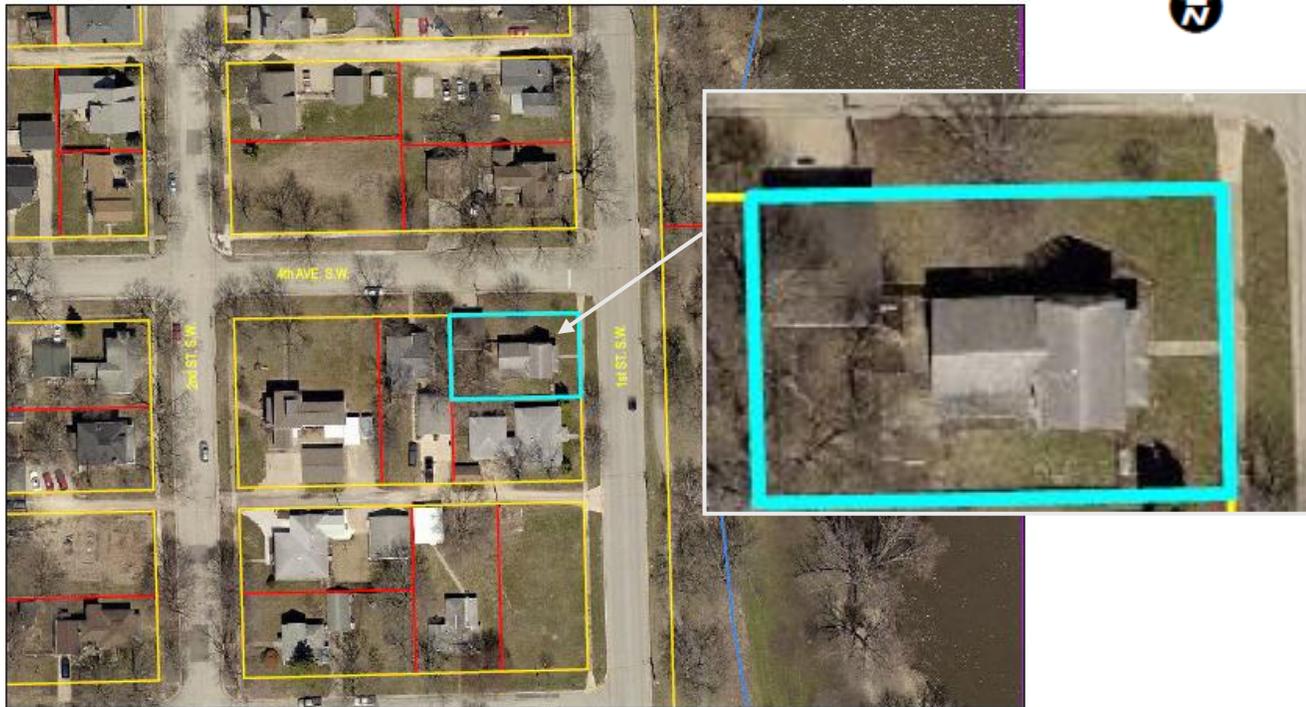
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**Additional Information:**

Waverly Southwest Quadrant Historical and Architectural Survey Map (Bremer County GIS Department, 3/26/2014).

**502 1st St SW  
PIN 09-02-303-003**



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Full Legal Description: I H STURDEVANT'S ADDITION N 1/2 LOT 1 BLOCK 1 N 1/2 E 1/2 LOT 2 BLOCK 1.

## Site Map

Aerial map available at Bremer County Assessor's website at: <http://beacon.schneidercorp.com/Application.aspx?AppID=330&LayerID=3621&PageTypeID=1&PageID=2344&Q=1291611593&KeyValue=0902303003>; accessed 11/23/2010. Historic resource is designated by the red star.



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**Historic Photograph:** Sturdevant House, 502 1<sup>st</sup> St SW historic views provided by Katherine and Rick W. Sturdevant, 10/2015. Their comments follow: "The photograph above was taken ca. 1900-1910s. This estimated date is based on when family photographs were converted to postcards (postcard title and lines on the back)." Note the painted brick prior to stucco cladding.



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**Historic Photograph:** Sturdevant House, 502 1<sup>st</sup> St SW historic views provided by Katherine and Rick W. Sturdevant, 10/2015. Their comments follow: "The photograph below dates to 1880s-1910s because it was printed both from a glass-plate negative and as a family postcard. Glass-plate negatives were passé by the early 1900s. In the Sturdevant family, where several versions of this photograph exist, the family photographer who took glass-plate negatives was Lafayette Sturdevant, Ira's son, who died in 1911. Note the "addition" and the porch posts. Note also that the "addition" already appears to have two separate parts—the closest being the brick kitchen and the furthest being frame. Also note that Ira's barn is visible to the south of the house. This he built in 1857. It is no longer extant."



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**Photographs:** 502 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW, looking southwest and west, **3/23/2015**, Marlys Svendsen, Svendsen Tyler, photographer.



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**Photographs:** 502 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW, looking northwest and south, **3/23/2015**, Marlys Svendsen, Svendsen Tyler, photographer.



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**Photographs:** 502 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW, looking northwest and west southwest, **12/5/2013**, Andrew Bell, Svendsen Tyler, photographer.



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Photographs: 502 1st Street SW, looking northwest and porch scroll-cut millwork and masonry details, looking northwest, 12/5/2013, Andrew Bell, Svendsen Tyler, photographer.



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**Photographs:** 502 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW, looking west southwest and south, **12/5/2013**, Andrew Bell, Svendsen Tyler, photographer.



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**Photographs:** 502 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW, from 4<sup>th</sup> Ave SW, looking southeast and garage looking southwest, 12/5/2013, Andrew Bell, Svendsen Tyler, photographer.



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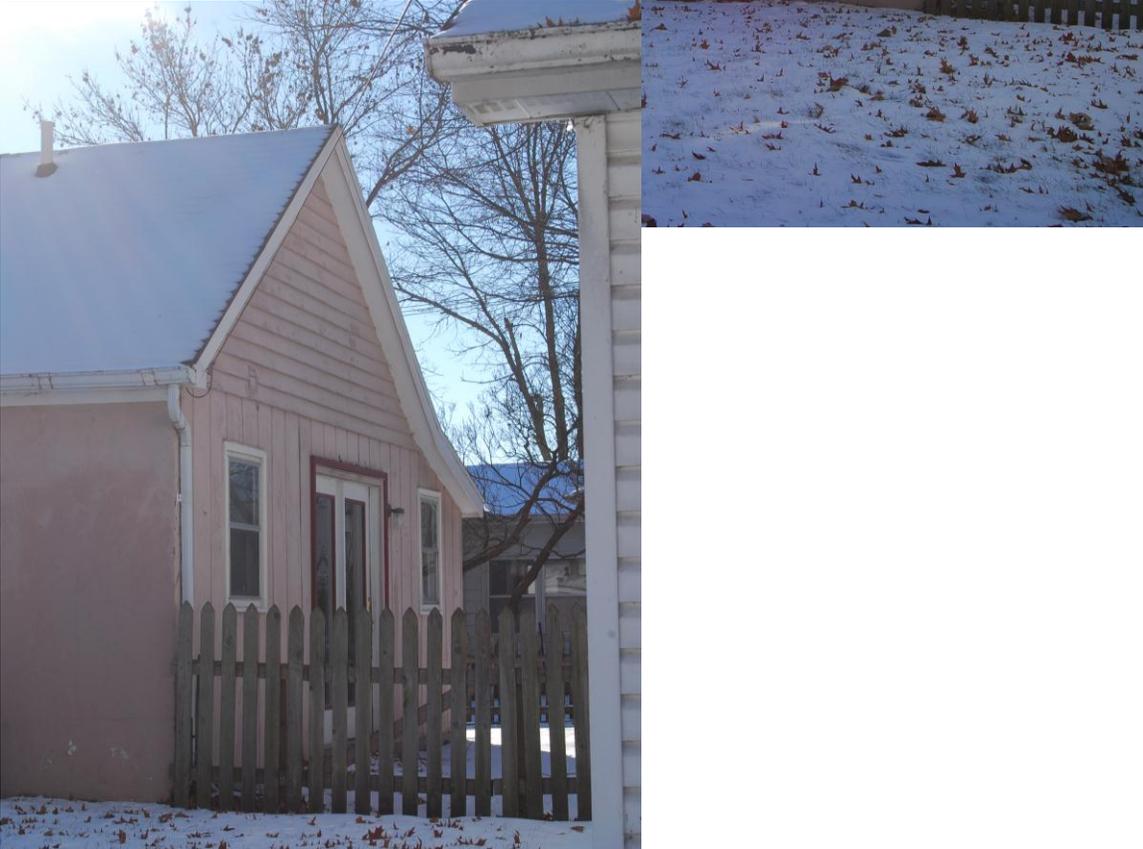
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**Photographs:** 502 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW, looking northwest and west southwest, **12/5/2013**, Andrew Bell, Svendsen Tyler, photographer.



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**Photographs:** 502 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW, looking west and northwest, 1/24/2009, Justine Zimmer, IHSEMD, photographer.



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**Photographs:** 502 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW, looking northeast, 1/24/2009, Justine Zimmer, IHSEMD, photographer



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**Photograph and Sketch Plan:** Bremer County Assessor website photograph and map available at:  
<http://beacon.schneidercorp.com/Application.aspx?AppID=330&LayerID=3621&PageTypeID=4&PageID=2342&Q=317567283&KeyValue=0902303003>; accessed 11/29/2010.

