

## Historical Walking Tour

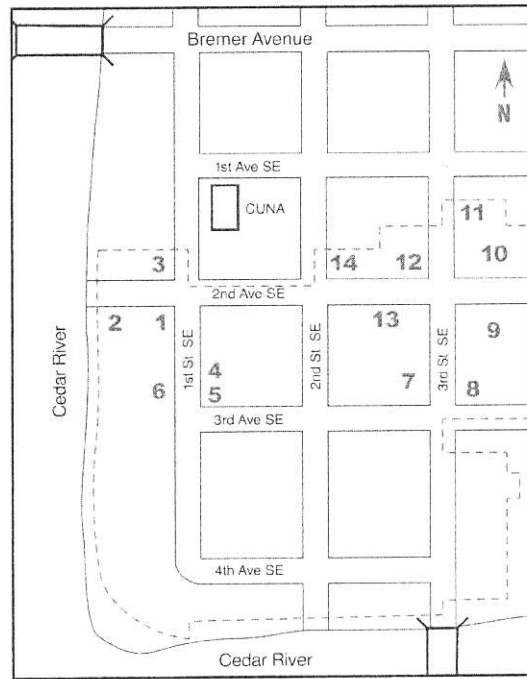
# Old Fourth Ward SE Historic District

(south of Bremer Avenue and  
east of the Cedar River)

### North Section



**1** 302 1st St SE – S.H. Curtis House  
*Photo circa 1906.*



- |           |                |   |
|-----------|----------------|---|
| <b>1</b>  | 302 1st St SE  | <i>S.H. Curtis House</i>                                    |
| <b>2</b>  | 88 2nd Ave SE  | <i>West half of the<br/>S.H. Curtis House</i>               |
| <b>3</b>  | 91 2nd Ave SE  | <i>Leon Hiller House</i>                                    |
| <b>4</b>  | 317 1st St SE  | <i>Leopold Levy House</i>                                   |
| <b>5</b>  | 321 1st St SE  | <i>Judge George Ruddick House</i>                           |
| <b>6</b>  | 322 1st St SE  | <i>Dr. C.H. Graening House</i>                              |
| <b>7</b>  | 322 3rd St SE  | <i>Clark/Pomeroy/<br/>Albert Babcock House</i>              |
| <b>8</b>  | 323 3rd St SE  | <i>John Donahue House</i>                                   |
| <b>9</b>  | 305 3rd St SE  | <i>Merle Gruben House</i>                                   |
| <b>10</b> | 225 3rd St SE  | <i>William P. Harmon House</i>                              |
| <b>11</b> | 209 3rd St SE  | <i>Ralph E. Laird House</i>                                 |
| <b>12</b> | 219 2nd Ave SE | <i>St. Andrew's Episcopal<br/>Rectory/Eliza Laird House</i> |
| <b>13</b> | 214 2nd Ave SE | <i>Henry Schoof House</i>                                   |
| <b>14</b> | 215 2nd St SE  | <i>Millard Curtis/Arnold<br/>Fredrick House</i>             |

*This is a self-guided walking tour. Please view  
the homes only from the sidewalk and respect the  
privacy of the owners.*

**1 302 1st St SE**  
**S.H. Curtis House**

**2 88 2nd Ave SE**  
**West half of the S.H. Curtis House**

The first stop on the tour is the Queen Anne Victorian house constructed by S.H. Curtis in 1891. If you look closely at the 1906 photo of the house on the cover of the brochure, you will notice that the roofline has changed (the dormer at the top of the house is gone) and also that the north gable is much narrower now than it was in 1906. The house was "sawed in two" in April of 1926 by a later owner and the rear portion was moved closer to the river to become the house at 88 2nd Ave SE. The original carriage



S.H. Curtis

house was also moved to a lot east of 3rd St. SE and remodeled into a residence.

Mr. Curtis established Waverly's first hardware store in 1855. By 1865 he had constructed the three-story brick building at 116 E. Bremer Ave. to house the business. The Curtis family continued the hardware business at that location for 104 years.

S.H. and Sarah Curtis raised a family of 10 children but most of them had left home by the time this "handsome new residence" was constructed. According to the newspapers of the day, "the architecture was at once striking and beautiful, and the work throughout exceptionally perfect in every detail." The interior was "finished in sycamore, ash, California redwood, oak and yellow pine in harmonious combination" with "an oil polish equal to the finest parlor furniture."

**3 91 2nd Ave SE**  
**Leon Hiller House**

Leon Hiller might not recognize the home he built across the street in 1901-02 with plans that Mamie Hiller commissioned from Waterloo architects Murphy and Ralston. Originally, the main entrance to this two-story Colonial Revival house faced 1st St. SE (or South Water Street), with a one-story porch running the full width of the east façade. The porch was removed in 1957 when the entrance was shifted to the south side of the house and the oval keystone window on the east façade has been covered over. The two-story pyramidal tower still exists



Mamie Hiller

as does the Palladian window grouping in the east gambrel peak.

Leon Hiller came to Waverly in 1876 and clerked briefly in Waverly's largest dry goods store before opening his own clothing business on E. Bremer Ave. He and Mamie lived above the store in a "model city flat" until they built this house. Mr. Hiller often advertised his clothing sales with slogans like "Hiller's Pants Are Half Off" or "Hiller's Pants Are Down."

**4 317 1st St SE**  
**Leopold Levy House**

Leopold Levy was another successful Waverly clothier. Born in Albany, NY, he came to Waverly by way of Des Moines to open his own clothing emporium in 1881. He was also a trustee of the State College for the Blind, and



was a director for both the Waverly Building and Loan Assoc. and the Waverly Short Line Railroad Co.

He bought this property shortly before his marriage in 1886 but most likely did not build the house; it appears that a dwelling existed here as early as 1875. Mr. Levy improved the house in the 1890s by adding a furnace, chimneys, dormers and a staircase constructed by the Woodring Bros., local furniture makers. The house would now be described as a 2-story Queen-Anne-style Gable Front and Wing form.

Leopold and Mathilda Levy left Waverly for Louisville in 1904. At that time, the house was purchased by Kate Sullivan, the superintendent of Waverly's schools.

**5 321 1st St SE**  
**Judge George Ruddick House**

When George Ruddick arrived in Waverly in August of 1856, just one month after receiving his law degree, he opened an office in a small frame building near the east end of the current bridge, and from its steps he could view the entire town. As his career flourished, he was elected judge of the circuit court, then judge of the

district court and also served in the state legislature. He retired from the district court in 1890 but continued to practice law in Waverly.

By the time George and Estella Ruddick constructed this "handsome residence in the prettiest part of the residence portion of the city" in 1892, their



two surviving sons were grown (three other children died in a diphtheria epidemic in the fall of 1878). Their retirement home, a Queen Anne Style house with Spindework detailing, cost \$3,000 and remains largely unchanged except for the balustrades, posts and skirting of the porch. Notice the unique stair-step windows on the north side.

#### 6 322 1st St SE

##### *Dr. C.H. Graening House*

The provenance of this house is a bit murky. A house existed on this location as early as 1868 and it is likely that some part of that early building remains. The *Bremer County Independent* of July 27, 1893, reported that C.H. Tondro (the owner on that date and the proprietor of Waverly's electric plant) "has torn down a considerable portion of his residence and is putting up a two-story front" at an estimated cost of \$2,500.

Dr. C.H. Graening and his second wife purchased the house in 1901. The doctor had graduated from Wartburg College and Iowa State University, and had opened a medical office in Aspen, Colorado. When the Silver Crash of 1893 caused his practice to fail, he returned to Waverly.

The Graenings also made changes to the house, including a cement block foundation they installed in 1912. Decorative elements now reflect the Queen Anne, Classical Revival and Cottage styles.

#### 7 322 3rd St SE

##### *Clark/Pomeroy/Albert Babcock House*

Walking east on 3rd Ave. SE (formerly Madison Street) brings you to the home of the late Aldora Babcock.

Aldora's parents, Albert and Dora, purchased the property in 1904 when their home north of Bremer Ave. was appropriated by the Chicago Great Western Railroad. It was here that Aldora was born and spent the entire 94 years of her life.

The original house was built some time before 1875 by David Clark, an early Waverly settler. In 1878 Mr. Clark and Dr. Joseph Pomeroy swapped residences. During Dr. Pomeroy's ownership the home was improved with an 1896 addition that included a bath.

Mr. Babcock moved the barn from his demolished home to this property, placing it next to Dr. Pomeroy's existing barn and using them in his horse buying and shipping business. Both of the barns were removed over the years and a two-story garage was attached to the northwest corner of the house in 2003.

#### 8 323 3rd St SE

##### *John Donahue House*

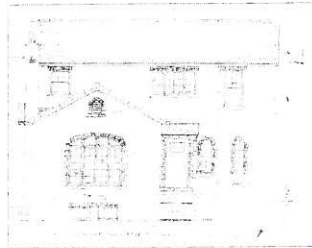
John and Margaret Donahue let the contract for the erection of this "new bungalow" on S. Harmon St. in 1925. The house is a fine example of a Craftsman Style Clipped-Gable Bungalow, built of multi-colored brick, with an underground single-car garage bay at the back. The small front porch features a broad clipped-gable roof to match the main house.

Mr. Donahue worked in the dry goods business, including as a clerk at Hiller's clothing store. The Donahues belonged to St. Mary's parish in the neighborhood.

#### 9 305 3rd St SE

##### *Merle Gruben House*

The next house is a well-preserved Mission Style house form, a rare example of this style in Waverly. The current owners still possess the undated architectural



drawings for the house; we know from newspaper reports that the house was constructed in 1933 by Merle and Jeanette Gruben.

Note the ornamental brickwork around the larger windows and the rock-faced brick quoins around the French doors. An unusual Mission Style feature is the chimney top with its tiled roof cap and three side openings.

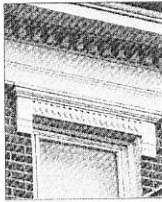
Mr. Gruben owned the Gruben Monument Works, a business that had been purchased by his father in 1900.

#### 10 225 3rd St SE

##### *William P. Harmon House*

When William P. Harmon, Waverly's founder, built this brick Greek Revival Style house in 1857, Waverly had about 450 residents. Upon arriving in this area in 1853, he bought land and had it surveyed into town lots, and then built a wooden dam, a saw mill and a flour mill. The street in front of the house was at first called Washington St. but was later known as Harmon St.

William and Alzina Harmon lived in this house only two years before building a new home in northwest Waverly near the present Carey school. Mr. Harmon died there in 1864 at age 45.



*Window Surround*

#### 11 209 3rd St SE

##### *Ralph E. Laird House*

Across the alley to the north stands a house whose style is a blend of the Colonial Revival and Bungalow styles. Ralph and Laura Laird constructed it in 1909. Mr. Laird was a partner with A.B. Coddington in a business that sold implements, coal, ice, grain and wood; in later years they also sold automobiles.

The oval keystone windows in the north and south gables are a Colonial Revival design; the starburst patterns in the upper sashes of the angled sides of the bay window are also a Colonial Revival motif.

#### 12 219 2nd Ave SE

##### *St. Andrew's Episcopal Rectory/Eliza Laird House*

St. Andrew's Episcopal congregation built this house as a rectory in 1878, on land purchased from one of its members. The low-pitched roof, tall pedimented windows and the angled bay window reflect the Italianate influence in its Gable Front and Wing design.

In 1894 St. Andrew's sold the house to Mrs. Eliza Laird, who was recently widowed and lived in the house with her daughter Emma, a teacher. Emma remained in the house until her death in 1933.

#### 13 214 2nd Ave SE

##### *Henry Schoof House*

Across the street is an example of the American Four Square house form that became popular in Iowa prior to World War I. The boxy, plain houses were a reaction to the more ornate styles of the last half of the 19th century. A typical Four Square includes a large room at each corner on each floor, with a bath and stairway between. Other common features are the hipped roof with dormers, a wide front porch and Craftsman-style woodwork.

This house was built by Henry Schoof in 1913. He worked first as a carpenter, then bought and shipped livestock to New York and Chicago, and after his retirement, he served as deputy sheriff of Bremer County.

#### 14 215 2nd St SE

##### *Millard Curtis/Arnold Fredrick House*

The final house on this tour has been owned by only two families in its history. It was built by Millard "Millie" Curtis, the oldest son of S.H. Curtis, in 1911. His heirs sold the house to the Arnold Fredrick family.



*Millard Curtis*

Mr. Curtis was a partner in his father's hardware business from the age of 16 until his death at age 90.

The house's Late Queen Anne style retains the asymmetrical façades of earlier Queen Anne houses, but with less ornamentation.

The stunning art glass window on the south side was salvaged by the Fredricks from the home of another Curtis son that once stood on the CUNA parking lot across the street.

*The photos in this brochure were reproduced from the collections of the Waverly Public Library and the Bremer County Historical Society Museum.*

*If you have comments or corrections to this brochure, please contact Mary Meyer at 319-352-2013 or [maryjmeyer@aol.com](mailto:maryjmeyer@aol.com).*

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