

First National Bank Building Is Placed on the Waverly Historic Register

The Waverly Historic Preservation has voted to place the First National Bank building on the Waverly Historic Register. A building or structure qualifies for this award because of its distinctive architectural character, its prominent place in the history of Waverly, or its ownership by a family or figure prominent in Waverly's history. The First National Bank Building qualifies on all three counts.

Part of our Downtown Historic District, it is located on the southwest corner of 1st Street SE and East Bremer Avenue, the building is part of the Downtown Historic District, one of five historic districts in Waverly.

Waverly was a dusty frontier town when Abraham Slimmer and his partners formed the Bremer County Bank in 1870. The bank prospered and in 1881 construction began on a magnificent new building that would house the bank building and the post office. The polished granite columns flanking the corner entrance were at the time called "the neatest things in this burg."

In 1885 the Bremer County Bank was purchased by the First National Bank and the new name was carved in stone over the entrance. A barbershop occupied the well-lit and spacious front room of the basement, while the second floor contained offices and apartments. In the late 1890s and early 1900s, Dr. W.A. Rohlf, Waverly physician and surgeon, rented four rooms at the upper front of the building for his office.

The architect was George Joselyn & Son who had offices in Independence and Cedar Rapids. Its architectural style is rather eclectic—having a hint of Italianate style with the brackets at the roof line, and it has a touch of the Second Empire style with its mansard roof over the corner tower. The Queen Anne style was just starting to be popular at this time and it can be seen in the complexity of the brickwork on this building. The original bank entrance was moved from the corner of the building to the west end of the north façade around 1916. The terra cotta bank façade is one of the building's most notable features and includes panels of low-relief carvings, and pilasters topped with scrolled brackets.

In 1896—13 years after it was built—the building was described as “the handsomest business structure in Waverly.”

Don Meyer, Commissioner
Waverly Historic Preservation Commission