

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

**State Inventory No. 09-00794**  New  Supplemental  
 Part of a district with known boundaries (enter inventory no.) 09-00621  
 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 Leitha, John F. and May, House

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number 203 5<sup>th</sup> Street NW

city or town Waverly  vicinity, county Bremer

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

(If Urban) Subdivision Harmon & LeValley Addition Block(s) 49 Lot(s) South 1/2 of 7 & 8

**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)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

<i>If Non-Eligible Property</i>		<i>If Eligible Property, enter number of:</i>	
Enter number of:		Contributing	Noncontributing
—	buildings	<u>2</u>	— buildings
—	sites	—	— sites
—	structures	—	— structures
—	objects	—	— objects
—	Total	<u>2</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* Waverly's NW & SE Neighborhoods Historical & Architectural Survey *Historical Architectural Data Base Number* 09-028

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

01A Single Dwelling

01C05 Garage

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

01A Single Dwelling

01C05 Garage

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

07E01 Bungalow

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation 10A Concrete/Block

walls (visible material) 02B Wood/Shingle

roof 08A Asphalt/Shingle

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended | A | Property is associated with significant events.                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input 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 203 5<sup>th</sup> St NW

Site Number 09-00794  
District Number 09-00621

**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*  
1911  check if circa or estimated date  
*Other dates, including renovation*  
Garage - 1912

**Significant Person**

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)

John F. Leitha

**Architect/Builder**

*Architect*  
Leitha, John F.  
*Builder*  
Leitha, John F.

**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, Svendsen Tyler, Inc.  
organization for City of Waverly, Historic Preservation Commission  
street & number N3834 Deep Lake Road  
city or town Sarona state WI  
date 9/2013  
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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## 7. Description

This single-family house is estimated to have been built in 1908 according to Bremer County Assessor records. The house form and style are consistent with houses in Waverly built leading up to World War I. Property transfer records show the parcel transferred on September 10, 1910 from Lenora Spellman to J.F. Leitha. A house at this address appears in the 1913 city directory listings occupied by John F. Leitha and his wife May. Leitha was employed as an architect and contractor so likely completed the design for this residence and may have participated in its construction as well. A construction date of ca. 1911 appears to be more accurate.

This 2-story frame house occupies a prominent corner lot and is an example of a well-preserved Bungalow/Craftsman Style dwelling from the pre-World War I period. The house has a concrete block foundation with square-cut wood shingle siding on the walls, flaring out over the foundation, and extending to ground level. The shingles are laid in a repeating pattern as follows: one narrow shingle course – one wide shingle course – three medium wide shingle courses – one wide shingle course – one narrow shingle course – and continuing in the same pattern. The pattern finishes the walls with a special texture. A low-pitched clipped side-gabled roof has shed roof dormers on the front and rear slopes and the moderate width eaves are lined with knee-braced brackets on all sides. The enclosed front porch spans two-thirds of the front facade and has been enclosed with continuous 1/1 windows above the original shingle-clad balustrade. Short piers rest on tall shingle-clad pedestals at the outer corners and near the entrance. A course of widely spaced dentils lines the porch's cornice. Other porch decoration includes brackets at the entrance pillars.

Fenestration includes a range of Craftsman Style window designs in various sizes positioned to meet the needs of the interior spaces. For example, four small windows are grouped in the wide dormer space to provide ample lighting. Double-hung variations include the 12/1 double-hung unit on the front façade to the right of the front porch and 6/1, 8/1 and 10/1 windows arranged in singles, pairs and a group of three in a shed-roofed rectilinear oriel, all on the south facade. Another dramatic feature window group is positioned at the northeast corner of the first floor. A shallow, low-pitched hipped roof wraps the projecting corner bay with a pair of closely spaced vertical sash facing east and north. Each window has diamond- patterned lights. A second feature window is now enclosed in the porch and includes a cottage window form with a multi-light horizontal upper sash and large square lower sash.

The house has a wide single-bay frame garage opening onto 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NW. It was completed in 1912 according to Assessor records and has a low pitched hipped roof, beveled weatherboard siding, and exposed rafter tails on the eaves. The overhead door has been replaced.

Alterations: porch enclosure (undated); garage door replacement (undated).

## 8. Significance

The Leitha House at 203 5<sup>th</sup> St NW was built in ca. 1911 and is a well-preserved example of Bungalow/Craftsman Style house form from the pre-World War I years. It has additional significance as the personal residence of Waverly's most important early 20<sup>th</sup> century architect, John F. Leitha, which

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he designed and built. Both the house and garage qualify for the National Register of Historic Places individually and as contributing resources to the historic district under Criteria A, B and C.

Property transfer records show this parcel transferred on September 10, 1910 from Lenora Spellman to J.F. Leitha. A house at this address appears in the 1913 city directory listings occupied by John F. Leitha and his wife May. Leitha was employed as a contractor and self-trained architect at the time and became identified as Waverly's most important local architect in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He designed and built a number of single family houses in Waverly and a handful of commercial buildings listed below. A brief biography researched and prepared by Jan Olive Nash Full accompanies the list of commissions.

In 1915 the Leithas sold the house to Elizabeth Sparks who held it until 1923 when she sold it to Theresa Bostick. After a year, she sold it to Callie Grawe. She held the house until her death in 1987.

## 9. Sources

*Atlas of Bremer County, Iowa.* Waverly, Iowa: Waverly Publishing Company, 1917.

*Atlases of Bremer County.* microfilm copies of atlases for 1875, 1894 and 1927, Waverly Public Library.

Bremer County History Book Committee. *Bremer County History, 1985.* Dallas, Texas: Taylor Publishing, 1985.

Full, Jan Olive Nash, Tall Grass Historians. "Biography of *Architect John F. Leitha (1880-1937)*" and email interview, 3/11/2012.

Grawe, Joseph F. *History of Bremer County, Iowa, Volumes I and II.* Chicago: S.J. Clarke Company, 1914.

*History of Butler and Bremer Counties, Iowa.* Springfield, Illinois: Union Publishing, 1883.

Sanborn Company Maps. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1885, 1892, 1897, 1905, 1915, 1927, and 1927 updated to 1943.

Vertical file collection, Waverly Public Library.

Waverly building histories, miscellaneous bound volumes in reference collection, Waverly Public Library.

Waverly city directories, 1899 and 1913.

Waverly Heritage Days historical walking tour brochures for 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000.

Waverly Historic Photo Collection, Waverly Public Library.

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### **Biography of Architect John F. Leitha (1880-1937)**

prepared by Jan Olive Nash Full, Tall Grass Historians (email interview, 3/11/2012)

John F. Leitha was born near Vienna, Austria, in 1880, and the following year immigrated with his family to the United States. Details of his family and early life remain unknown, but a 1924 passport application reveals that from 1881 to 1909, when he was from age 1 to 29, Leitha annually traveled between Oklahoma and Waverly, Iowa, living half the year in each location.<sup>1</sup> The census of 1900 shows Leitha in Waverly, boarding in the home of Christopher Arns, a German immigrant and house carpenter. Just 19 years old, Leitha was described as a house carpenter, as well, and perhaps was Arns' apprentice. In 1905, the State Census taker found Leitha still living in Waverly, but now with his wife May (also spelled Mae), and daughter Lucille. In 1907, Leitha received what was perhaps his first big construction project. He was hired to build the parsonage (extant) for St. Peter's Evangelical Church in Tripoli, a small town approximately 16 miles northeast of Waverly.<sup>2</sup> Leitha's parsonage was a commodious two-story Queen Anne house (free classic variation), with a two-story front bay.<sup>3</sup> This was a vernacular house of a design commonly seen in and around Waverly and surrounding communities. Dozens if not hundreds of similar houses still stand in Waterloo, Iowa, a much larger city a few miles to the south.

In 1911, Leitha joined with another Waverly builder, Leo Stenzell, to construct the two-story brick Waverly City Hall (nonextant), which also served as fire station and jail. The Stenzell and Leitha team also was the contractor for a two-story brick storefront on the east side of Waverly's business district in 1913. By at least 1912, however, Leitha also was referring to himself as an architect and was designing larger buildings for some of Waverly's institutions. His design work included a new boys' dormitory and teachers' residence at the Iowa Lutheran Children's Home in 1912; a large addition to the Sisters of Mercy Hospital in 1913; and also in 1913 a dormitory building (extant) at Wartburg Seminary and Teachers' Academy, now known as Wartburg College (see Table below).<sup>4</sup>

In 1914 Leitha designed the Waverly Savings Bank in the classical style popular for banks in Iowa at the time. Built on the business district's main intersection on a prime corner lot, the brick and glazed terra cotta bank is a "temple of finance" with an inset main entrance flanked by Ionic columns holding up a bold entablature, though capped by only a modest pediment. The next year, 1915, Leitha was hired to design a large addition to the Sumner High School built in 1901. Leitha's two-story addition to the Sumner High School may have sparked his interest in progressive school architectural theories as he designed his addition, as well as in modern school room and equipment requirements.<sup>5</sup>

As both architect and superintendent of construction for the new Washington School in Osage, Leitha was in control of most aspects of the project and he appears to have moved semi-permanently to

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<sup>1</sup> John F. Leitha, Passport Application, August 29, 1924. Accessed at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) on October 17, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> *Waterloo Daily Courier*, November 12, 1907.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Population Census, 1900; Iowa Census, 1905; U.S. Population Census, 1910.

<sup>4</sup> *Sumner Gazette*, October 19, 1911; *Sumner Gazette*, July 25, 1912; *American Art and Architecture* 103 (June 18, 1913): 10; *American Art and Architecture* 103 (March 5, 1913): 10; *Waverly, Rich in History: A Photo History* (Marceline, MO: Heritage House Publishing, 1996), 32.

<sup>5</sup> *History of the Buildings in the Main Street Area of Waverly, Iowa - West Side.* Vol. 1. Information compiled in part for Main Street-Waverly survey, 1990. Waverly Public Library Collection, Waverly, Iowa; "Two School Districts Were Here When Town Started," *Sumner Gazette*, June 29, 1972.

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Osage. After the contracts were let in August 1916, his wife Mae and daughter Lucille (*aka* Lucy) joined him, as the construction of the school would “keep him in that city for some time,”<sup>6</sup> and the Leithas soon made Osage their new home.<sup>7</sup> An advertisement from the 1916 *Iowa State Gazetteer*, published on the eve of the school’s construction, lists Leitha’s office in Waverly but suggests the architect was anticipating considerable success with his Washington School project. The ad announces the services of “J.F. Leitha, Architect AND Personal Superintending of all Classes of Buildings,” and features Leitha’s rendering of the Washington School about to be built in Osage.<sup>8</sup>

Washington School represents a peak in the career of John F. Leitha, but perhaps not the only one. Following the Osage school commission in 1916, Leitha’s commissions no doubt slowed during the construction hiatus of World War I. Service in the military certainly had an effect on his professional career also. Leitha’s 1918 draft record indicates he was in the service at that time, working as a carpenter at Camp Dodge near Des Moines. That draft card describes the 38-year-old Leitha as of medium height and “stout” build, with gray eyes and dark hair. By 1920, Leitha was once again self-describing as an architect.<sup>9</sup> In that year, 1920, he joined with another architect, Louis Rust, to open an office in Dubuque, Iowa, the river port city on the Mississippi River. Leitha and Rust worked together for almost two years, first remodeling the Dubuque High School and then drawing plans for the Dubuque Coliseum.<sup>10</sup> After the partnership ended, Leitha continued to practice in Dubuque for two more years. In 1924, he applied for a passport indicating he would stay two months in Spain and France doing “architectural work.” While this is not specific, Europe had been at war and was still rebuilding. In late 1927, Leitha moved to Freeport, Illinois, perhaps prompted by the Iowa architectural registration law that went into effect the same year. Newspaper ads and short notices suggest Leitha focused on residential building in Freeport. The same newspaper notices refer to him as an architect; however, in Leitha’s own ads he was careful to only claim to be a designer. The state of Illinois also had a registration requirement that had been in effect since at least the 1890s and it is likely Leitha would have used the title of architect if he had been able to register with the state. Personal problems and the Great Depression appear to have taken a toll on both Leitha’s career and his health. After moving to Boscobel, Wisconsin, to supervise work on a Catholic school building, he died suddenly at age 57 in 1937.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Waterloo Evening Courier*, August 17, 1916.

<sup>7</sup> *Waterloo Evening Courier*, April 14, 1919.

<sup>8</sup> Gazetteer clipping contained in the John Leitha architect file, Iowa State Historic Preservation Office, Des Moines, Iowa.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Population Census, 1920.

<sup>10</sup> *The Bridgemen Magazine* 20/8 (August 1920): 428; *The American Contractor* 41 (September 4, 1920): 42. Rust designed, for example, the Waverly Community Building/Palace Theatre in 1925. See “History of the Buildings in the Main Street Area of Waverly, Iowa - West Side.” Vol. 1. Information compiled in part for Main Street–Waverly survey, 1990. Waverly Public Library Collection, Waverly, Iowa; U.S. Population Census, 1920.

<sup>11</sup> Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa’s Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 1; “Dubuque, IA. Apt. Bldg.,” *The American Contractor* 41 (December 25, 1920): 63; “Hazel Green to Have Town Hall,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, December 26, 1923; *Freeport [IL] Journal-Standard*, November 17, 1927; February 9, 1929; April 10, 1929; March 5, 1930; and September 11, 1937.

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**PARTIAL LIST OF BUILDINGS BY ARCHITECT JOHN F. LEITHA<sup>12</sup>**

NAME OF BUILDING	LOCATION	YEAR	LEITHA'S ROLE	STATUS
Parsonage, St. Peter's Evangelical Church (a.k.a. Faith United Church of Christ)	408 S. Main St Tripoli, IA	1907	Leitha, architect	Extant
City Hall, Fire Station, and Jail	First Street NE Waverly, IA	1911	Leitha & Stenzell, builders	Nonextant
Boys' Dormitory and Teachers' Residence, Iowa Lutheran Orphans' Home	Waverly, IA	1912	Leitha, architect Stenzell & Leitha, builders	Unknown
Sisters of Mercy Hospital addition	Waverly, IA	1913	Leitha, architect	Nonextant
Dormitory, Wartburg Seminary and Teachers' Academy	Waverly, IA	1913	Leitha, architect	Extant
Waverly Savings Bank	100 E. Bremer Ave Waverly, IA	1914	Leitha, architect	Extant
Sumner High School addition	Sumner, IA	1915	Leitha, architect	Prob. Nonextant
Washington School	314 S. 7th Street Osage, IA	1916	Leitha, architect and construction superintendent	Extant
Dubuque High School remodel	Dubuque, IA	1920-23	Leitha & Rust, architects (office in Dubuque)	Extant
Cooper Apartment Building	Dubuque, IA	1920	Leitha & Rust, architects	Unknown
Dubuque Coliseum	Dubuque, IA	1921	Leitha & Rust, architects	Unknown
Hazel Green Municipal Hall	Hazel Green, WI	1923	Leitha, architect (office in Dubuque)	Nonextant
Billerbeck Garage	Freeport, IL	1929	Leitha, architect (office in Freeport)	Unknown

<sup>12</sup>Table Sources: *Waterloo Daily Courier*, 11/12/1907; *Sumner Gazette*, 10/19/1911; *Sumner Gazette*, 7/25/1912; *American Art and Architecture* 103 (June 18, 1913): 10; *American Art and Architecture* 103 (March 5, 1913): 10; "History of the Buildings in the Main Street Area of Waverly, Iowa – East Side." Vol. 2. Information compiled in part for Main Street–Waverly survey, 1990. Waverly Public Library Collection, Waverly, Iowa; *Sumner Gazette*, 9/2/1915, reprinted 6/29/1972; *Electrical World* 68/1 (July 1, 1916): 53; *Waterloo Evening Courier*, 8/17/1916; *The Bridgemen Magazine* 20/8 (August 1920): 428; *The American Contractor* 41 (December 25, 1920): 63; *Engineering News-Record* 87/12 (September 22, 1921): 143; *Wisconsin [Madison] State Journal*, 12/26/1923; *Freeport Journal-Standard*, 4/10/1929.

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Site Map: Bremer County GIS Department, 12/2011.

**203 5th St NW  
PIN 09-03-242-008**



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**Photographs:** 203 5<sup>th</sup> St NW, looking northwest and west, Marlys Svendsen, photographer, 11/3/2011.



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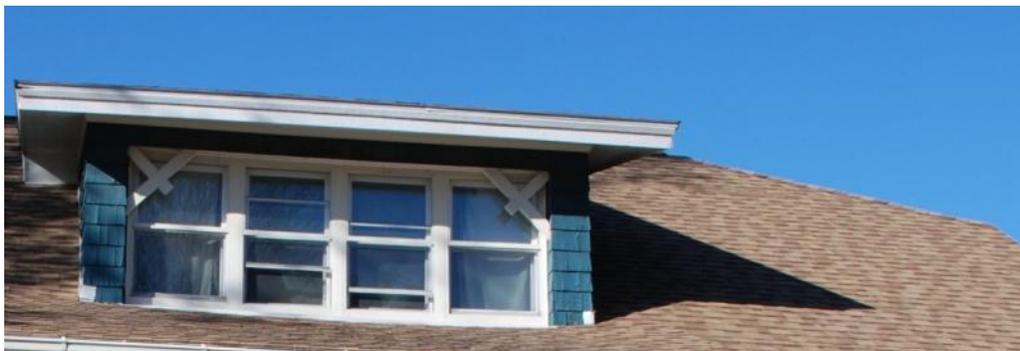
203 5<sup>th</sup> St NW

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**Photographs:** 203 5<sup>th</sup> St NW, looking northwest towards detached garage as well as shed dormer, half-hip roof, eave brackets, windows, and flared siding details, Marlys Svendsen, IHSEMD, photographer, 11/3/2011.



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**Photographs:** 203 5<sup>th</sup> St NW, looking west and north, Justine Zimmer, IHSEMD, photographer, 4/23/2011.



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**Photographs:** 203 5<sup>th</sup> St NW, looking southwest and northwest, Justine Zimmer, IHSEMD, photographer, 4/23/2011.



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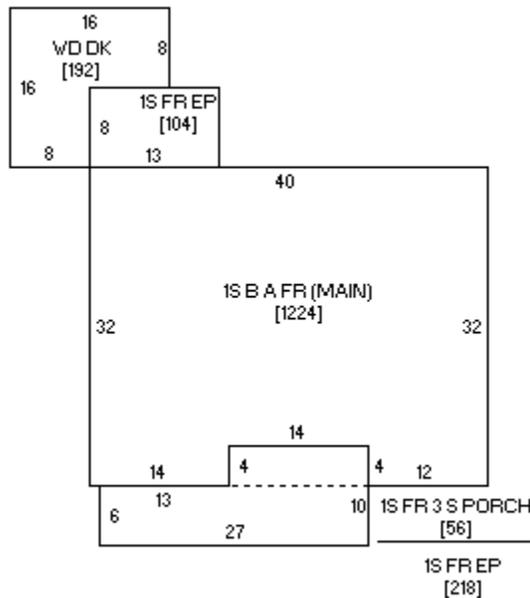
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Additional Information:

Floor plan, 203 5<sup>th</sup> St NW, Bremer County Assessor website; available at <http://beacon.schneidercorp.com/PhotoEngine/Sketch.aspx?appid=330&keyvalue=0903242008&index=0&size=0>; accessed 10/30/2012



Sketch by [www.camavision.com](http://www.camavision.com)