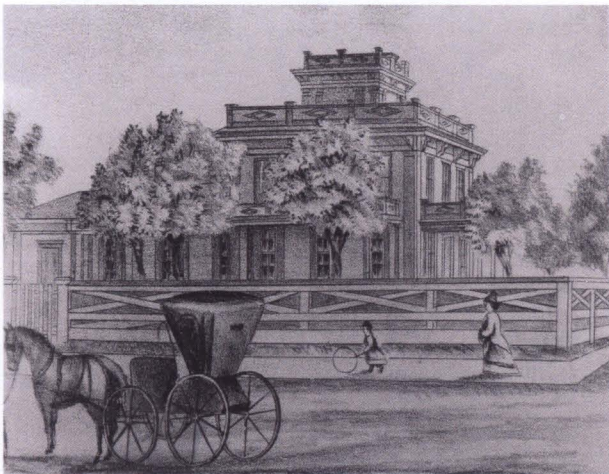


Historical Walking Tour

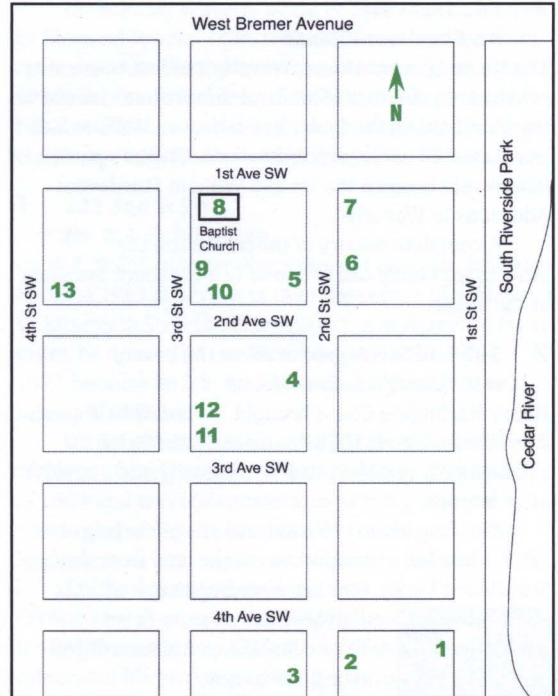
STURDEVANT SW HISTORIC DISTRICT

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

EAST OF 4TH ST SW



2 507 2nd St SW - H.H. Couse/H.S. Burr House



- | | | |
|-----------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | 502 1st St SW | <i>Ira Sturdevant House</i> |
| 2 | 507 2nd St SW | <i>H.H. Couse/H.S. Burr House</i> |
| 3 | 508 2nd St SW | <i>William Babcock House</i> |
| 4 | 308 2nd St SW | <i>R. Howard Sewell House</i> |
| 5 | 220 2nd St SW | <i>R.R. Watkins House</i> |
| 6 | 215 2nd St SW | <i>Louis Case House</i> |
| 7 | 203 2nd St SW | <i>Dr. W.A. Rohlf House</i> |
| 8 | 201 3rd St SW | <i>First Baptist Church</i> |
| 9 | 215 3rd St SW | <i>W.T. McRoberts House</i> |
| 10 | 222 2nd Ave SW | <i>F.C. Koch House</i> |
| 11 | 220 3rd Ave SW | <i>Birum/Grassfield House</i> |
| 12 | 315 3rd St SW | <i>Norman Grassfield House</i> |
| 13 | 318 2nd Ave SW | <i>Orlando Babcock House</i> |

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

1 502 1st St SW

Ira Sturdevant House

The Ira Sturdevant House, Waverly's oldest home, was constructed about 1855 on land that Ira had claimed on the west bank of the Cedar River. His son William had purchased 80 acres just to the north. The two parcels of land would become the Ira and William Sturdevant Additions to Waverly.

A complete history of the house and the Sturdevant family can be found in a brochure available at the house.

2 507 2nd St SW (pictured on the cover)

H.H. Couse/H.S. Burr House

Henry Harlington Couse brought his family to Waverly from Illinois about 1858. In the early 1860s he established a cemetery in south Waverly and named it after himself.

The long history of this house began in July of 1867 when Mr. Couse purchased the land from the Sturdevant family. He must have begun to build this grand home immediately—the house, with its distinctive belvedere or cupola, appears on an 1868 bird's-eye-view drawing of Waverly.



H.H. Couse



Caroline Couse

The house is an example of the Tuscan variation of the Italianate style. Original corner pilasters extend from the foundation to the second-story cornice line and decorative paired brackets support the eaves. These same features are found on the belvedere. The home's original entrance faced north onto what was then called Clay St.

H.S. Burr purchased the property in 1889 from the Couse family. Mr. Burr served on the city council and the board of education. In 1870 he partnered in a private bank called Bowman Bros. and Burr, which became the First National Bank in 1884. He served as cashier until his death in 1900.

In 1903 the home was acquired by Martin Lyman Stebbins, a local harness maker who was Waverly's last surviving Civil War veteran when he died in 1938 at age 92.

3 508 2nd St SW

William Babcock House

William Babcock built his home across the street in 1910, in a style known as the American Foursquare with Colonial Revival details. Note the oval leaded glass window on the second story, the heavily ornamented eaves, and the beveled glass of the foyer windows.

Mr. Babcock arrived in Waverly in 1887, a young man of 22, and found a job as a bookkeeper; in 1896 he was elected county recorder. By 1904 he was cashier of the Waverly Savings Bank, a position he held until his death in 1934. He also served on the city council and school board, and was an organizer of the Bremer County Fair.

The home had fallen into a state of disrepair but has been meticulously restored with the help of early photos supplied by Elizabeth Hartman.

4 308 2nd St SW

R. Howard Sewell House

In 1900 R.H. Sewell built this graceful Victorian house, just down the block from the home of his parents. The vintage photo below shows that only the front porch skirting and railings have been changed since the house was constructed.

Mr. Sewell farmed and was a livestock dealer in association with his father for 35 years before he settled in Waverly and became vice president of the First National Bank.

His Queen Anne style house features asymmetrical façades, and decorative shingles and trim. Note the detailing on the porch above the steps and also the



R. Howard Sewell House

unusual keyhole window on the south façade. The *History of Bremer County, Iowa*, published in 1914, called this house “one of the most commodious and attractive in the city.”

5 220 2nd St SW
R.R. Watkins House

Ralph Watkins built this home, one of the largest residences in Waverly, in 1910-11 at a reported cost of \$32,000. The house is an example of a Craftsman style hipped-roof two-story house form with Tudor Revival and Mission style elements. Note the strong horizontal lines and the very wide eaves. A hipped-roof porch spans the front façade and incorporates a porte-cochere (“carriage entrance”).



Watkins House under construction in 1911

A local newspaper of June 1911 reported that the home was completed and ready for occupancy, and that Mr. and Mrs. Watkins and a Waverly furniture dealer “will leave for Chicago next Sunday night to select furniture and furnishings, which will be in keeping with the magnificence of the building.”

Mr. Watkins lived in his home only two years; he died in 1913 at the age of 59. The residence was sold in 1931 to F.C. Koch for use as a funeral home. It also housed the Cleveland Funeral Home from 1939 to 1989.

6 215 2nd St SW
Louis Case House

Louis Case came west with his parents and 11 of his 13 siblings in 1854. He settled in Waverly and was elected county clerk in 1860. And he helped organize the State Bank of Waverly and was cashier until his retirement in 1909. Mr. Case also served on the school board for 18 years, was a two-term member of the state legislature, and a national bank inspector for 10 years.

He built his Waverly home in 1899, in the Colonial or Classical Revival style, with elaborate roof brackets, eyebrow-arched attic dormers and leaded glass. By the 1970s the home had been divided into a duplex, but it has since been restored to its original grandeur using old photos and the memories of previous owners.

7 203 2nd St SW
Dr. W.A. Rohlf House

Dr. W.A. Rohlf, pioneer physician and surgeon, built this home in 1913 at what was then the corner of S. Elm and W. Ellsworth Streets. After practicing at Hampton for six years, he opened his medical practice in Waverly in 1897 because he felt “the professional field here held more possibilities.”

Dr. Rohlf helped secure the Abraham Slimmer residence which became St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in 1904 and was instrumental in forming a nurses’ training school at the hospital. He was an active civic leader and an avid supporter of the Boy Scouts.

But he is best remembered for his birthday clinics. On the fifth of January from 1911 to 1935, Dr. Rohlf celebrated his birthday by inviting his physician friends to treat the sick and needy of Bremer County and to lecture on the latest medical advancements. In the evening a lavish banquet was served at the Fortner House hotel in downtown Waverly.



Dr. W.A. Rohlf

Dr. Rohlf wrote about his experiences as a country surgeon in an autobiography called “*Good Morning, Doctor!*,” which is available at the Waverly Public Library.

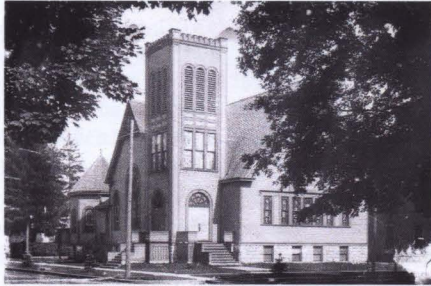
8 201 3rd St SW
First Baptist Church

The Baptist church in Waverly was organized in 1855. Its first building, a dual-purpose church and parsonage, was constructed on the east side of the river in 1858. The congregation soon outgrew the facility and a church was built on this location in 1867.

By January of 1901 the congregation was again considering a new building. The process began in earnest after the church steeple and roof were damaged by a fire on Sunday afternoon, February 3, 1901. The fire began on W. Bremer Ave. to the north, where four stores in the middle of the block burned to the ground. Strong

winds swept the flames across the alley to the south, destroying two barns, and then onto the Baptist church.

The congregation hired Murphy & Ralston, Waterloo architects, to design the new building. Its style is Late Victorian Romanesque characterized by the semi-circular arches of the window and door openings



First Baptist Church in 1901

and by the square bell tower. The new church, with its beautiful colored opalescent glass windows, was dedicated in November of 1901.

9 215 3rd St SW **W.T. McRoberts House**

Waverly's most important early architect, John Leitha, designed this home for Will McRoberts in the Bungalow/Craftsman style. The house is covered in alternating thick and thin courses of square-cut shingles that extend nearly to the ground and flair at the lower edge. The matching brackets on the eaves, porch and gables, the paneled piers at the corners of the porch, and the vertical stick work with shingles between on the tympanum of the porch are all strong Craftsman design elements.

When the McRoberts family moved into their new home in 1913, Will was a bridge builder who had held the Bremer County Bridge Construction contract from 1907 through 1912.

10 222 2nd Ave SW **F.C. Koch House**

Fred Koch was a furniture dealer and undertaker in Tripoli before moving to Waverly in 1923. He bought the Watkins house next door for his funeral home and personal residence in 1931. When he retired in 1939 he built this Colonial Revival style house with its enclosed gabled entrance and an attached garage that was part of the original design.

11 220 3rd Ave SW **Birum/Grassfield House**

Vern Birum's new house in the Third ward was "looming up nicely" according to the *Bremer County Independent* in 1912. Its style is known as the American Foursquare, which is characterized by a square boxy shape, four rooms on each floor, and a hipped roof with attic dormers.

E.T. Grassfield, who owned a shoe store on E. Bremer Ave, purchased the home in 1920. After his death, his widow transferred a small parcel of land behind the house to their son Norman where he built the next house on the tour.

12 315 3rd St SW **Norman Grassfield House**

Norman Grassfield and his brother assumed the ownership of their father's shoe business after his death in 1922. In 1926 Norman built this Craftsman-style side-gabled house on the north portion of a lot owned by his mother.

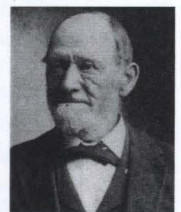
The house's well-executed masonry work includes a foundation covered in the same mottled brown brick as the walls; the two are separated by a course of soldier (or vertical) bricks. Distinctive features of the house are its clipped or jerkinhead gables.

13 318 2nd Ave SW **Orlando Babcock House**

Mr. Babcock built this elegant Queen Anne structure as his retirement home. It was described in a local newspaper of the day as "an ornament to Waverly." At a cost of over \$4,000, it was the most expensive personal residence constructed in 1893; many homes were built that year in the range of \$1,000 to \$2,500.

Before retiring to Waverly, Mr. Babcock farmed southwest of town at the site of the old radar base. Known for his innovations in livestock housing, he raised cattle on the farm and shipped them by rail to Chicago.

Mr. Babcock's home has been painted to match the original colors as closely as possible.



Orlando Babcock

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.