

Iowa Site Inventory Form

State Historic Preservation Office

(July 2014)

State Inventory Number: 38-000322 New Supplemental

9-Digit SHPO Review & Compliance (R&C) Number: _____

Non-extant Year: _____

Read the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions carefully, to ensure accuracy and completeness before completing this form. The instructions are available on our website: <http://www.iowahistory.org/historic-preservation/statewide-inventory-and-collections/iowa-site-inventory-form.html>

• Property Name

A) Historic name: H.G. Geer Block

B) Other names: The White Brick Front Store; H.G. Geer General Store; Cech Grocery; United Telephone Co.

• Location

A) Street address: 711 G Avenue

B) City or town: Grundy Center (Vicinity) County: Grundy

C) Legal description:

Rural: Township Name: _____ Township No.: _____ Range No.: _____ Section: _____ Qtr: _____ of Qtr: _____

Urban: Subdivision: Original Plat Block(s): 25 Lot(s): 8 and 9

• Classification

A) Property category: *Check only one*

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

B) Number of resources (within property):

If eligible property, enter number of:		If non-eligible property, enter number of:	
Contributing	Noncontributing		
<u>1</u>	Buildings	—	Buildings
—	Sites	—	Sites
—	Structures	—	Structures
—	Objects	—	Objects
<u>1</u>	Total	—	Total

C) For properties listed in the National Register:

National Register status: Listed De-listed NHL NPS DOE

D) For properties within a historic district:

- Property contributes to a National Register or local certified historic district.
- Property contributes to a potential historic district, based on professional historic/architectural survey and evaluation.
- Property *does not* contribute to the historic district in which it is located.

Historic district name: _____ Historic district site inventory number: _____

E) Name of related project report or multiple property study, if applicable:

MPD title

See Iowa Site Inventory Form No. 38-00318

Historical Architectural Data Base # _____

• Function or Use *Enter categories (codes and terms) from the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions*

A) Historic functions

02F01 COMMERCE/retail center/general store

02E11 COMMERCE/specialty store/grocery

10E05 INDUSTRY/telephone co. facility

B) Current functions

02B COMMERCE/professional

• Description *Enter categories (codes and terms) from the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions*

A) Architectural classification

09F05 Commercial/Brick Front

05B LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate

B) Materials

Foundation (visible exterior): 04 STONE

Walls (visible exterior): 03 BRICK

Roof: 15C01 SYNTHETICS/Rubber membrane

Other: _____

C) Narrative description **SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED**

• **Statement of Significance**

A) Applicable National Register Criteria: Mark your opinion of eligibility after applying relevant National Register criteria

- Criterion A: Property is associated with significant events. [X] Yes [] No [] More research recommended
Criterion B: Property is associated with the lives of significant persons. [] Yes [] No [] More research recommended
Criterion C: Property has distinctive architectural characteristics. [X] Yes [] No [] More research recommended
Criterion D: Property yields significant information in archaeology/history. [] Yes [] No [] More research recommended

B) Special criteria considerations: Mark any special considerations; leave blank if none

- [] A: Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes. [] E: A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
[] B: Removed from its original location. [] F: A commemorative property.
[] C: A birthplace or grave. [] G: Property less than 50 years of age or
[] D: A cemetery achieved significance within the past 50 years.

C) Areas of significance

Enter categories from instructions

02 ARCHITECTURE

05 COMMERCE

D) Period(s) of significance

1880-1963

E) Significant dates

Construction date

1880 [] check if circa or estimated date

Other dates, including renovations

1960s

F) Significant person

Complete if Criterion B is marked above

G) Cultural affiliation

Complete if Criterion D is marked above

H) Architect/Builder

Architect

Builder/contractor

I) Narrative statement of significance [X] SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED

• **Bibliography** [X] See continuation sheets for the list research sources used in preparing this form

• **Geographic Data** Optional UTM references [X] See continuation sheet for additional UTM or comments

Table with 8 columns: Zone, Easting, Northing, NAD, Zone, Easting, Northing, NAD. Rows 1, 2, 3, 4.

• **Form Preparation**

Name and Title: Jennifer A. Price/Consultant Date: June 2018

Organization/firm: EarthView Environmental, Inc./Impact7G E-mail: jprice@impact7G.com

Street address: 310 2nd Street Telephone: 319.594.9513

City or Town: Coralville State: IA Zip code: 52241

• **ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION** Submit the following items with the completed form

A) For all properties, attach the following, as specified in the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions:

- 1. Map of property's location within the community.
2. Glossy color 4x6 photos labeled on back with property/building name, address, date taken, view shown, and unique photo number.
3. Photo key showing each photo number on a map and/or floor plan, using arrows next to each photo number to indicate the location and directional view of each photograph.
4. Site plan of buildings/structures on site, identifying boundaries, public roads, and building/structure footprints.

B) For State Historic Tax Credit Part 1 Applications, historic districts and farmsteads, and barns:

See lists of special requirements and attachments in the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Use Only Below This Line

The SHPO has reviewed the Site Inventory and concurs 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:

SHPO authorized signature:

Date:

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H.G. Geer Block	Grundy
Name of Property	County
711 G Avenue	Grundy Center
Address	City

This Iowa Site Inventory Form is being prepared for the City of Grundy Center as part of an Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) Downtown Revitalization Grant. The building is located in the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the grant project, and the owner of the building at 711 G Avenue is participating in the Downtown Revitalization Grant. The building is also located in a potential Grundy Center Commercial Historic District, and this site form provides an architectural/historical evaluation of the property as a contributing building in that potential historic district.

7. Narrative Description

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

This two-story, full basement, flat-roofed, brick building was constructed in 1880, according to the date inscribed at the top of the building, and supported by historical photos. The building is site is approximately one lot, but actually is located on portions of two adjoining lots. It is located as part of the "Central Block", which consists of similar buildings on the north side of main street across from the county courthouse. The front doors open to the sidewalk on main street, and the back door provides access to the alley. Rectangle in shape, this building features 12 to 14 ft ceilings on the main and upper levels with tin ceilings. There are three evenly spaced windows on the upper level overlooking main street with a wonderful view of the county courthouse. The windows are nine feet tall double hung windows, one of which still has the ornate prism glass located in the top portion of the window, and arched caps at the tops with ornate trim on the exterior. Above the center window is lettering, probably of wood, that identifies W.C. Geer 1880, believed to be the original owner and year of construction. The top of the façade contains an ornate cornice, and at one time had a spoked star in the center above the cornice.

The main level façade has been altered, perhaps around 1960 when the property was sold to W. Bruce and Miriam Brockway Callaway. The storefront features metal-framed windows and recessed entrance door near the middle. The front windows to the west of the entrance door angle to the recessed entry door, but the windows to the east are even with the front façade.

On the interior, the main floor is mostly open with 14-foot ceilings that are the original tin ceilings that have been cleaned and repainted to retard rusting. Floors appear to be original floors with Douglas Fir tongue-and-groove flooring laid at 45-degree angle over the subflooring and floor joist. The walls were originally brick, then plastered over, then fir strips with paneling, then drywall. Some areas have layers removed to the original brick, other areas still show the plaster and some have the drywall. The ceiling lights are the original fixtures that have been cleaned and utilized with new globes.

On the upper level, it is about 12-foot ceilings that also have the original tin ceilings in the north and the south rooms. The south room, a large bedroom suite, has original windows facing the courthouse and original trim around the windows. The rest of the trim is new in 2017 to replicate the historical trim. Some of the plaster on the walls was removed to expose the original brick of the lower 8 feet of the wall, with the plaster having been repaired and kept on the top 4 feet of those walls. The large north room remains basically untouched for the past 60 years, with the exception of the ceiling being repainted in 2017.

(Description taken from Downtown Revitalization Grant Survey site form dated January 2018)

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8. Statement of Significance

The H.G. Geer Block is locally significant and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building in a potential Grundy Center Commercial Historic District under Criteria A and C. The H.G. Geer Block, built in 1880, is associated with the beginning of the first phase of development in the potential Grundy Center Commercial Historic District, during which a number of architecturally significant buildings replaced older buildings that were lost in the fire of 1879. The ornate Italianate-style H.G. Geer Block, nicknamed “The White Brick Front Store,” was made possible by the town’s railroad connections via the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railroad (later known as the Cedar Rapids & Sioux Falls Branch of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad), which made building materials, such as pressed brick, cut stone, and cast-iron architectural elements featured on the building easy to procure. The prosperity of the era also allowed merchants like general store proprietor H.G. Geer to build their own store buildings. The H.G. Geer Block also reflects the history of the Grundy Center business community, first as Grundy Center’s well-known “White Brick Front Store,” and later – beginning in 1890 – as the location of a series of grocery stores, culminating with the Cech Grocery, which operated in the building from 1932 to 1955. It was also the location of the local telephone company from 1913 until the 1960s.

The building is also a good example of a Property Type III Main Street Commercial Building, according to typologies set forth in the National Register Multiple Property Document, *Iowa’s Main Street Commercial Architecture* (Nash 2002). “These buildings date from the succeeding years of a town’s commercial growth, with Iowa’s commercial districts typically reaching a peak in the very late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. The impact of the railroad was reflected in the continued building up of the platted commercial district. Type III buildings are typically multi-story in height and can contain anywhere from one to a number of actual store units. Large block buildings were constructed during this period, with store units often unified along the second floor by a shared façade, cornice, and other details. Type III buildings are most often of masonry construction, usually brick either locally manufactured or shipped in by rail. Many display stylish architectural features” like the H.G. Block, an Italianate-style commercial brick block with architectural embellishments confined mainly in the upper story, including tall narrow windows with pedimented crowns, arched brick surrounds, brick corbelling, and an ornate bracketed metal cornice with a central round pediment that reads: “H.G. GEER/1880.” Although the storefront was remodeled probably in the 1960s, the building nevertheless retains much of its historic character.

The period of significance is 1880-1963, from the year the H.G. Geer Block was completed to the end of the period of significance for the potential Grundy Center Commercial Historic District (see Iowa Site Form No. 38-00318).

Building History

Built in 1880, this building is one of the oldest buildings in the downtown district of Grundy Center. Located on the “Central Clock” to the north of the courthouse, this building was built by H.C. Geer for his general store. It was a significant place of commerce at that time because of its location and broad array of goods for sale. It was known as “The White Brick” building because of the white brick façade, which appears to have been painted red in later years to match the neighboring red-brick buildings. But over the years the red has mostly worn off and the white brick is again mostly exposed. The upper story was the office of Dr. Gaffney for a year in 1912 before becoming the office for the local telephone company in 1913. Local residents remember going up there to pay their phone bill and seeing the telephone operators sitting in front of the switchboards handling phone calls. The phone company changed ownership several times, but remained at that location until the 1960s when they closed this location and removed the equipment.

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H.G. Geer Block	Grundy
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711 G Avenue is a brick building on the central block on the north side of the Grundy County Courthouse. It was built in 1880 by H. G. Geer. There had been a small white wood frame building there previously, which housed the Post Office in 1877 small white wood frame building which housed the Post Office 1878 Peck Jewelry, until it was destroyed by fire along with several adjoining buildings in 1879. 1880 Geer built the white brick building, known as "The White Brick Building", that still occupies this property as of 2017. It was built to operate his general store named H. G. Geer Dry Goods, Clothing, Boots, Shoes, and Groceries. It then became White and Derby Grocery 1909 Eugene and Emery Billings Grocery 1919 it became J. R. Bossman Ideal Grocery 1928 it became Consumers Food Market 1931 it became Cech Briardale Grocery, owned by James Cech through the Great Depression 1956 it became Peoples Natural Gas Company for two years 1959 it became Reliable Booterie 1962 it became Elmer and Winifred Long Booterie 1967 it became Floorcraft-Carpet, owned by John Van Nyhuis. There was a small fire on the main level in 1969 that did some minimal interior damage. 1970 it became the office of Western Dressing, Inc. prior to them building the plant on the north edge of Grundy Center 1972 it became Fashion Fabrics, owned by Helga Staker for only a year 1973 sold to Frederick Furniture, Inc and becoming Fredericks Annex Store known as The Chair Shoppe. 2017The building was sold to John and Joan Schuller in 2016 and when Frederick Furniture closed in 2017, the Schullers gutted the main level, exposing much of the original brick walls and the original tin ceiling, and rented the building to Katie McMartin for her interior design businesses known as ID By Katie and 319 Design. The facade is scheduled to be renovated as part of a downtown facade renovation program in 2018.

The upper story, known at 711 ½ G Avenue, was:

1912 Dr. Gaffey
1913 Cedar Valley Telephone Company
1934 Iowa State Telephone Company
1959 United Telephone Company until they vacated the upper level sometime in the 1960s. It was then vacant for many years until
2017 South half was renovated into a rental suite of a large bedroom and master bathroom for overnight guests

(Building History taken from Downtown Revitalization Grant Survey site form dated January 2018)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Downtown Revitalization Survey/Iowa Site Inventory Form, January 2018.
Grundy County Assessor Record online.
H.G. Geer General Store Advertisement, *Grundy Argus*, November 10, 1881.
Nash, Jan Olive. *Iowa's Main Street Commercial Architecture*. Multiple Property Document, National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., 2002.

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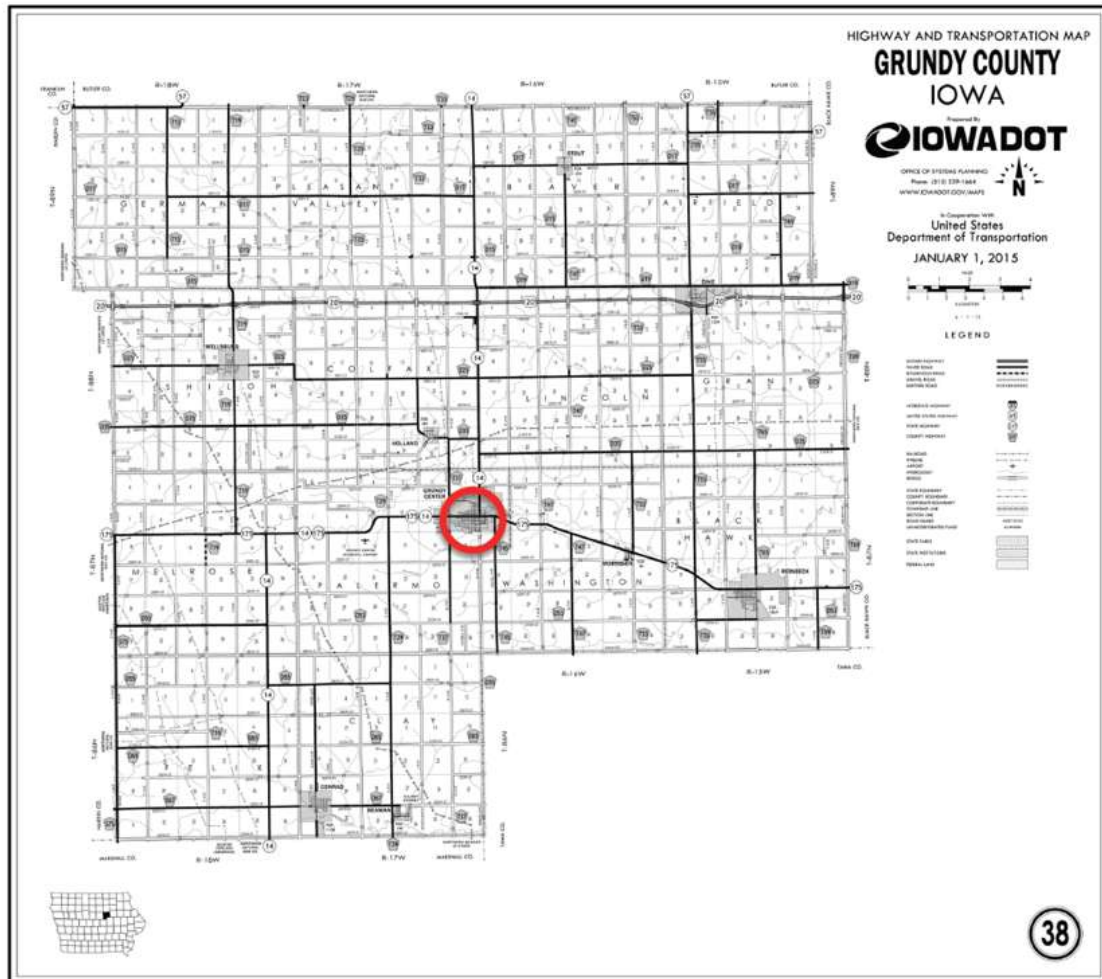
H.G. Geer Block
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"Over 45 Years in the Grocery Business," *Grundy Register*, July 7, 1977.
"Potential Grundy Center Commercial Historic District," Iowa Site Inventory Form No. 38-00318, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, June 2018.
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Grundy Center, Grundy County, Iowa, 1894, 1902, 1911, 1916, 1928, and 1928, updated to 1939.
"Served as Grocery Store for 60 Years," *Grundy Register*, December 1, 1955.

10. Additional Documentation

General Location Map



Latitude: 42.361712
Longitude: -92.773146

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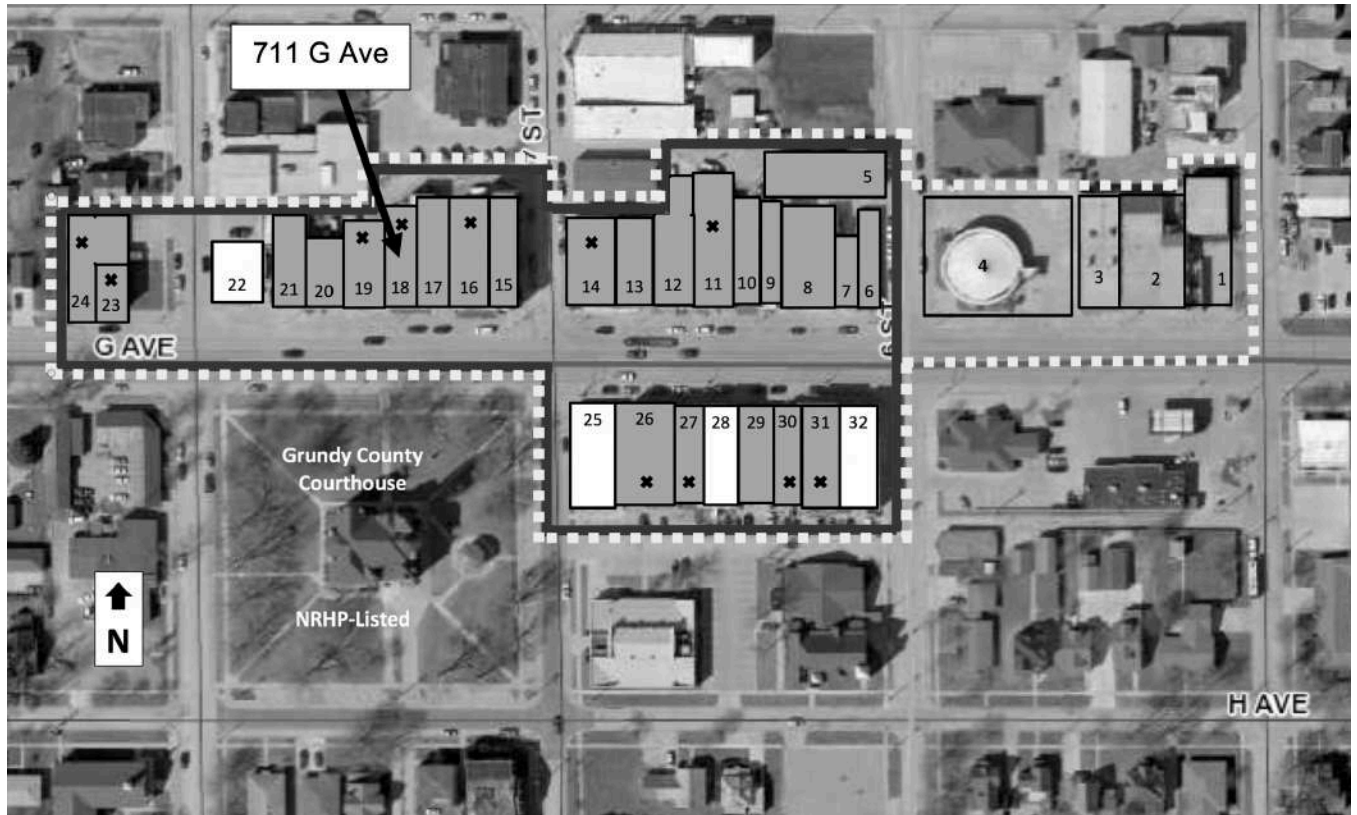
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Location in Potential Grundy Center Commercial Historic District



(dark boundary = preliminary boundary of potential historic district)

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H.G. Geer Block
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Current Photographs

(photos by Jennifer A. Price, June 20, 2018)



View north

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View northwest

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General view northeast

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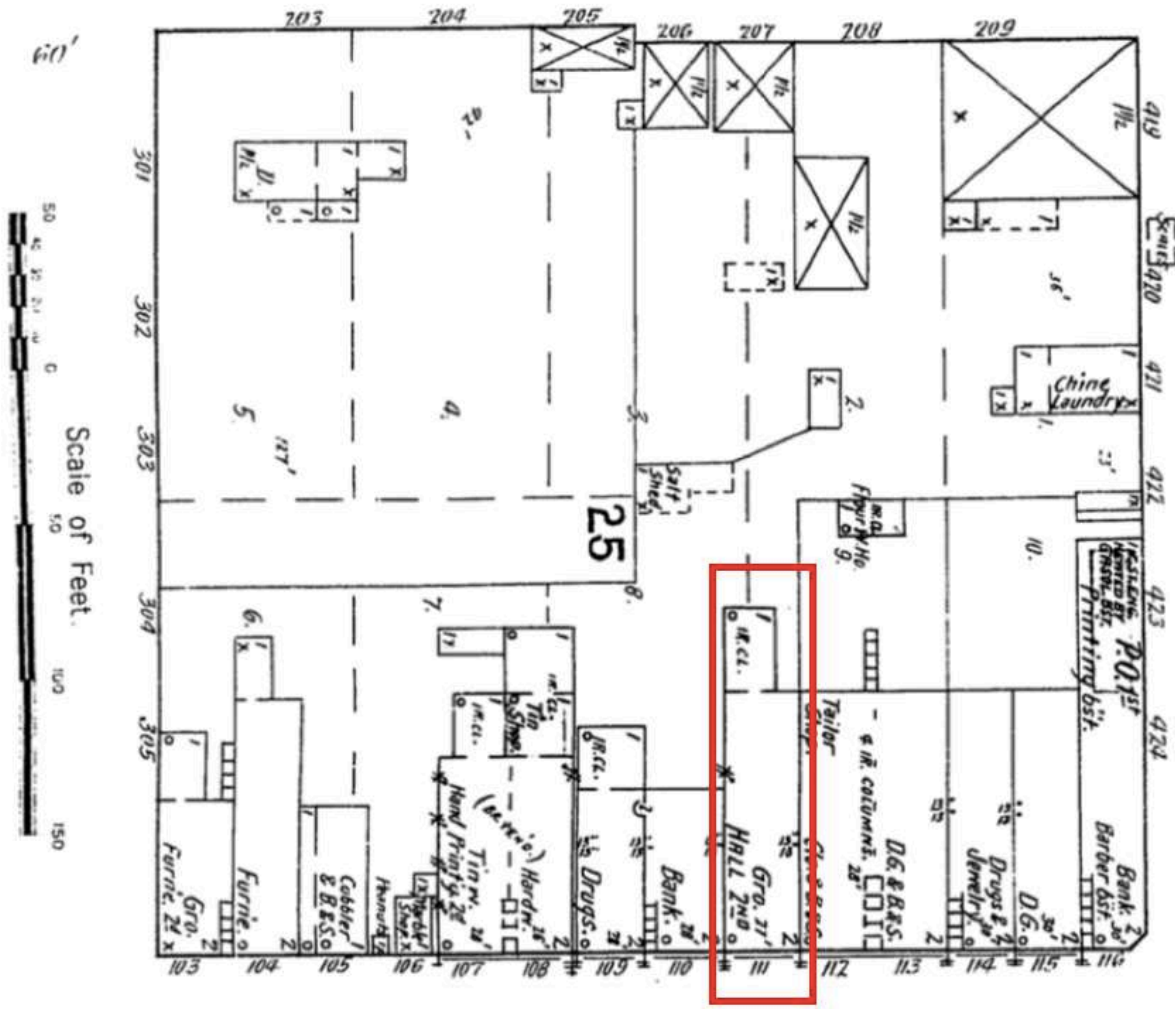
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Historical Documentation



Block 26 shown on the 1884 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Grundy Center with H.G. Geer Block indicated

H.G. Geer Block
 Name of Property
 711 G Avenue
 Address

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 Grundy Center
 City

See his eye for by n-va al ly or al sy n-of to d-re ts st n-10 id y 5-1- r- s, ts r- s, s- st 10 of 16 t, n-10

Geer buys his goods for Cash and can give bargains.



Geer has the largest Stock of Goods in Grundy County.

PEOPLE OF GRUNDY COUNTY,
 Above I present you a cut of
THE WHITE BRICK FRONT STORE
 and desire to call your attention to the following FACTS. I am opening for the Fall and Winter trade

\$25,000 worth of new Goods
 comprising everything new and desirable from the New York and Chicago markets. Read a few prices and come and see the bargains:

5000 Yards Prints at 5 cts. yard; 3000 yards Crash at 6 1-4 cts. yard; 3000 yds. Cotton Flannels 8, 10 and 12 1-2 cts. per yard; 2000 yds Good Western Flannels at 15, 25, and 35 cts per yard.

Jeans, Cottonades, Cassimeres, Blankets, Horse Blankets, Robes, etc., etc.
 at lower prices than ever before.

CLOTHING.

Having added 24 feet to my store room I am enabled to show the **LARGEST STOCK** in this county, and can fit the largest man and smallest boy, at prices that defy competition, and these are the reasons **WHY** I can do this:

- 1st. I own my buildings and pay no rent whatever.
- 2nd. I take from 4 to 7 per cent. discount on my bills by paying **CASH**, and the money thus saved more than pays all running expenses, clerk hire included.
- 3rd. I have no partners among whom to divide net profits.
- 4th. I sell the best and closest trade in Grundy county, and do not lose on dead-beats and have to make up the loss out of men who pay their debts.
- 5th. I am selling twice as many goods as in former years.

Come, Come, Come and See Me and Get Bargains.
H. G. GEER.

Early advertisement of H.G. Geer's General Store in the new H.G. Geer Block, or as he called it, "The White Brick Front Store," 1881. Source: *Grundy Argus*, November 10, 1881

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View northwest of 700 block of G Avenue with H.G. Geer Block indicated (arrow), 1890s
Source: Grundy County IAGenWeb



View northwest of 700 block of G Avenue with H.G. Geer Block indicated (arrow), 1900s
Source: Grundy County IAGenWeb

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View northeast with H.G. Geer Block indicated (arrow), c.1940
Source: Grundy County IAGenWeb

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Cech's Grocery 1932-1955

Cech Grocery in the H.G. Geer Block, 1932-1955
Source: *Grundy Register*, July 7, 1977

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H.G. Geer Block
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Served As Grocery Store For 60 Years

The building on Main Street in Grundy Center which has been vacated by the Cech Grocery has housed a grocery store for about 60 years. The building has had more than a half dozen different tenants during the time. Jim Cech occupied the building a longer time than any of the other tenants. He conducted a grocery store there the past 24 years.

The building in which the grocery stores have operated for 60 years is now owned by the United Telephone Co. The owners are using the second floor of the building for the Telephone Exchange. The vacated room has not been rented.

Former Cech Grocery building sold to United Telephone Co., 1955
Source: *Grundy Register*, December 1, 1955