

# Iowa Site Inventory Form

## State Historic Preservation Office

(January 2016)

State Inventory Number: 38-00348 ☒ 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.**

### • Property Name

A) Historic name: Wilson Building

B) Other names: Kelso & Son Grocery; Laybourn & Rickers Hardware

### • Location

A) Street address: 721 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: O.P. Block(s): 25 Lot(s): Parts of 6 & 7

### • 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:*

Contributing Noncontributing

<u>2</u>	Buildings	—
—	Sites	—
—	Structures	—
—	Objects	—
<u>2</u>	<b>Total</b>	—

*If non-eligible property, enter number of:*

—	Buildings
—	Sites
—	Structures
—	Objects
—	<b>Total</b>

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: Grundy Center Commercial Historic District Historic district site inventory number: 38-00318

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

MPD title

Historical Architectural Data Base #

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

A) Historic functions

02E03 COMMERCE/TRADE/dry goods

02E11 COMMERCE/TRADE/grocery

02E10 COMMERCE/TRADE/appliance sales and service

B) Current functions

02G01 COMMERCE/TRADE/café or diner

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

A) Architectural classification

09F COMMERCIAL/Brick Front

B) Materials

Foundation (visible exterior): \_\_\_\_\_

Walls (visible exterior): 03 BRICK

Roof: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Site Number: 38-00348 Address: 721 G Avenue City: Grundy Center County: Grundy

• **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.

☒ 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.

☒ 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  
achieved significance within the past 50 years.

☐ D: A cemetery

**C) Areas of significance**

*Enter categories from instructions*

02 ARCHITECTURE

**D) Period(s) of significance**

1919-1963

05 COMMERCE

**E) Significant dates**

*Construction date*

1919 ☒ *check if circa or estimated date*

*Other dates, including renovations*

ca.1939

**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** ☒ *SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED*

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

• **Geographic Data** *Optional UTM references* ☒ *See continuation sheet for additional UTM or comments*

Zone	Easting	Northing	NAD	Zone	Easting	Northing	NAD
1				2			
3				4			

• **Form Preparation**

Name and Title: Alexa McDowell/Architectural Historian Date: May 5, 2020

Organization/firm: AKAY Consulting E-mail: alexa@akayconsulting.com

Street address: 4252 Oakland Avenue Telephone: 515-491-5432

City or Town: Minneapolis State: IA Zip code: 55407

• **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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Wilson Building	Grundy
Name of Property	County
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Address	City

**Property Description**

The Wilson Building property is located at the west end of the contiguous line of commercial buildings sited along the 700 block of G Avenue, directly north of the courthouse square; adjoined on the east by a two-story commercial building, the property is neighbored on the west by a freestanding, former gas station with outdoor seating adjacent to the Wilson Building. The property is comprised of two buildings, both of which are considered contributing to the potential historic district. The Wilson Building, constructed in 1919, is a single bay, two-story, brick building with its façade facing south. The 28- by 100-ft. building (including an approx. 30-ft. one-story section on the north) stretches north from G Avenue to the alley. A one-story, ca.1939 clay block building abuts the rear section of the Wilson Building. The building is oriented with its façade facing west.

As noted, the Wilson Building is a two-story brick building, with a one-story section on the north. The building is characterized by its fully articulated façade of finished brick and secondary brick west elevation. The façade is arranged with a ground floor storefront, upper story fenestration, and decorative cornice. The building façade is largely defined by the masonry finish. A rough-faced brick in tones of brown, gold, and green is laid in a running bond with a peachy mortar. Contrasting brick (smooth finish and more uniformly gold in hue) is used to differentiate storefront and upper levels as well as create stylistic character.

The storefront has been fully renovated, the degree of the alteration suggests the original storefront structural system is likely gone except for the brick, flanking piers. The current storefront is largely a solid panel surface with a door to the upper level located on the east, a door to the ground floor business on the west, and a pair of vertically oriented, fixed pane windows situated near center. A rigid, canvas awning spans the full width of the storefront (from framing pier to framing pier). The framing piers feature three vertical bands of brick; the outer bands are stacked stretcher bricks with the center band being oriented with the brick end facing outward. The piers extend from a cast block at grade to the cast concrete or stone coping that finishes the parapet. A single course of sailor brick provides the storefront cornice.

The upper story has four windows: two set in a pair on-center, with single windows on either side. The windows have a stone or cast stone sill, but no lintel. The window openings are original; window frames appear to be original; and windows are replacements. The upper wall plane, surmounted the windows, features a decorative element executed in brick. The detail is comprised of a centered frame of sailor bricks surrounding an inset panel of bricks set in a basket-weave pattern. A single course of sailor brick extends about two-feet from either end of the frame element. The upper parapet wall is slightly stepped with a simple brick pattern surmounted by a cast stone or stone coping.

The west elevation of the Wilson Building is finished with a secondary-grade brick that is a variety of peach to yellow in color. The brick is laid in a running bond laid with six courses alternating with a single course of sailor brick. The west elevation has no openings on the first floor and six windows of varying sizes and irregularly located found on the upper story.

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The rear (north) elevation is clay tile block. A wood deck with a pent roof is attached to the rear of the building at the second level (over the rear section of the building).

A one-story, clay tile block building is sited adjacent to the rear section of the Wilson Building with its façade facing west. The building, constructed between 1928 and 1939, is characterized by its construction materials and functional appearance. The clay tile block is dark purple-brown with some variation in tonality. The block is laid in a common bond with a light gray mortar. The upper wall of the west elevation is finish in clay tile coping.

The building façade (west) features a pedestrian door on-center flanked by a multi-component window configuration. The door opening appears original with the wood frame retained; the door is a recent replacement. The window configurations are original to the building. Each is comprised of a grouping of three, vertically oriented, six-light windows surmounted by a six-light transom. The windows retain wood frames, sash, and mullions. Window openings are finish by clay block tile set in sailor position.

The north elevation has two openings (one door and one window) that have been boarded.

As a single parcel with two contributing resources the property retains a very good level of historic integrity and stands as an important piece of the historical and architectural story of the potential Grundy Center historic district.

### **Statement of Significance**

As established in the district site form, “the potential Grundy Center Commercial Historic District is locally significant and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. The potential historic district represents two phases of development. The first phase is associated with Grundy Center’s development as the Grundy County seat of government, an important agricultural market town, and a station and shipping point on the Cedar Rapids & Sioux Falls Branch of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad from the 1879 to c.1920. The second phase of development represents Grundy Center’s adaptation to the automobile, particularly after the route of State Highway 14 routed along G Avenue in 1920 and was paved in 1931, and with the post-World War II modernization and building boom, which gained steam in the late 1940s and culminated in 1963 with the Frederick Furniture front remodel” (Price, 2018).

As stated in the 2018 document, “the potential Grundy Center Commercial Historic District displays the building types and architectural details of a cohesive historic district that developed in two phases, from 1879, just after the fire in the 700 block on the north side of G Avenue to c.1920 and from the 1940s to the mid-1960s. The potential district, therefore, exhibits the characteristics, building types, and architectural styles of a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century commercial district, mixed with mid-twentieth-century commercial buildings and historic front remodels” (Price, 2018).

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Following these established guidelines for evaluating eligibility, the Wilson Building was evaluated for its ability to contribute to the significance of the historic district under Criterion A, in association with what the 2018 evaluation identified as “Effects of the Automobile on the Commercial District, 1920s-1963” and/or under Criterion C as a resource that demonstrates the “characteristics, building types, and architectural styles of a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century commercial district.” The Wilson Building, specifically, is significant under Criterion A, in association with the second phase of the community’s development (1920s-1963), specifically the early portion of that period during which the impact of the automobile the composition of the downtown was in its early stages. The Wilson Building is significant under Criterion C, representative of early-twentieth-century commercial buildings. The resource contributes to understanding the potential district’s historical and architectural development spanning 85 years.

The period of significance for the potential Grundy Center Commercial Historic District has been preliminarily established as 1879 to 1963, from the year the Central Block was built right after the 1879 fire, to 1963, the year that Frederick Furniture remodeled their façade, the culmination of the post-World War II commercial district building boom (Price, 2018). Constructed in 1919, the Wilson Building fits firmly within that period of significance.

### **Historical Background**

The city's street numbering system evolved as the town grew. The 1894 fire insurance map notes that the primary east-west roadway was Main Street (now G Avenue) with north-south streets numbered Fourth Street (now 7th Street), Third Street (now 6th Street), and Second Street (now 5th Street). The method of numbering buildings was also revised, with changes made between issuance of the 1902 and 1911 fire insurance maps and again between the 1916 and 1928 fire insurance maps. By 1928 the present system of street names and building numbers was in place.

The lot upon which the Wilson building is sited was developed by the 1880’s. From that time, and through at least 1916, the full width of the lot was occupied by two-to-three, one-story, wood-frame, commercial buildings. These buildings were occupied by various merchants over the years including a millinery, a grocer, shoe stores, a peanut stand, a marble shop, tailor, and cobbler, as well as a location of the town’s hose cart.

As noted in the property description, the L-shaped parcel is occupied by two buildings: a two-story, brick building (the Wilson Building) fronting G Avenue and a one-story, clay block building sited just west of the building near the rear of the parcel.

While the history of this property remains somewhat unclear, some assertions can be made based on the 1977 centennial history and the fire insurance maps. Additional research would undoubtedly provide clarity and, perhaps, upend the current understanding of the property.

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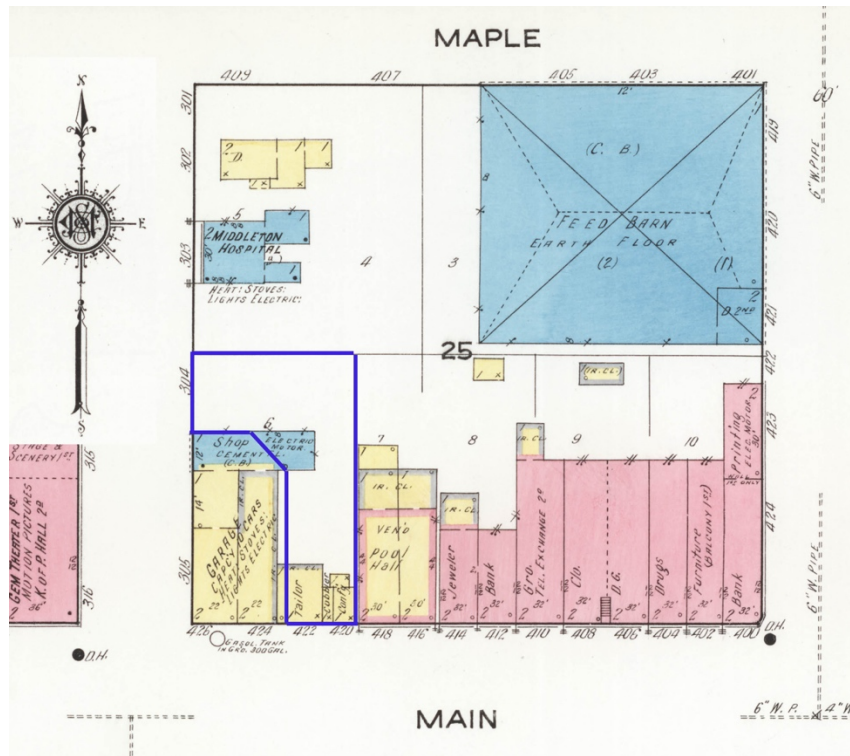
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**Figure 01.** Fire Insurance Map – 1916



(Source: Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/?fa=location:iowa>. Retrieved 03/15/2019.)

An approximation of the current property boundaries is noted in blue.

The Wilson Building first appears on the fire insurance maps in 1928. At that time, a two-story, clay tile building with brick-facing is recorded. The building had a 28-ft. frontage on G Avenue and extended to the north perhaps 60-feet where it abutted (with interior connection) a one-story, 28- by 30-ft. tile building. The fire insurance map notes that the first floor of the building was occupied by a retail business with the second-floor functioning as a “hall” or meeting place. The one-story section at the rear is simply noted as being occupied by a retail business.

The centennial history states that the Wilson Building was constructed in 1919 as a “two-story rough brick front structure” to house the H.K. Wilson, Electric and Battery Shop. While this construction date seems likely for the building – the stylistic elements of the façade are consistent with that era – it seems possible that the battery shop was located in the rear section of the building, with the other occupants also noted by the centennial doing business in the more pedestrian-centered G Avenue storefront. Overtime, businesses that the centennial history places in the Wilson Building included Julius Cohen Dry Goods Store (1926), David Selzer, Dry Goods and Shoes (1928-1932), and the Iowa State Liquor Store (1936).

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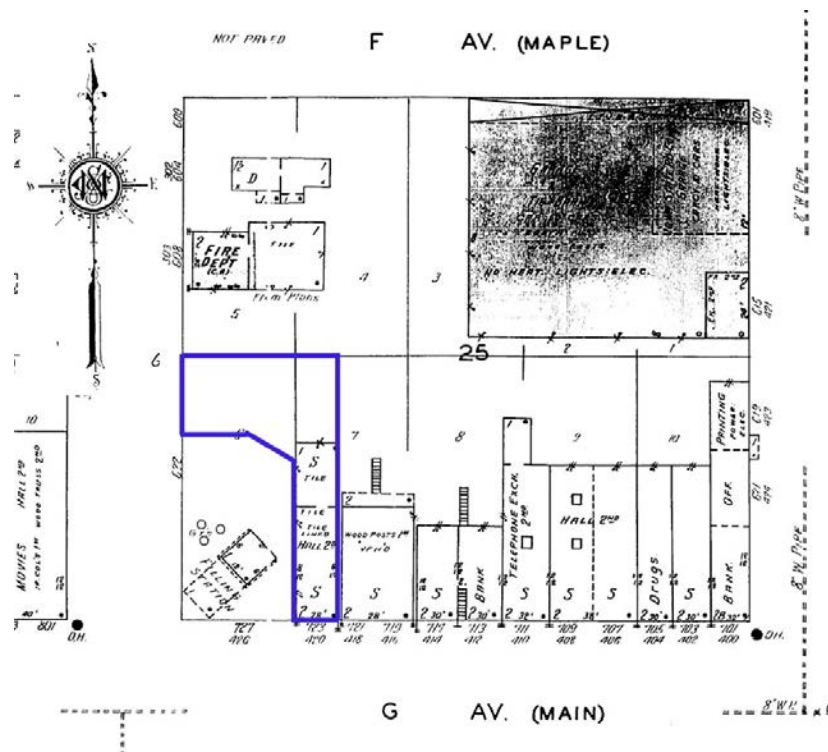
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The clay block, one-story building near the rear of the site first appears on fire insurance maps in 1939, indicating a construction date between 1928 and 1939. Given its rather utilitarian character, it seems possible that some of the businesses identified in the centennial history as occupying the Wilson Building may have been located here, not in the two-story building facing G Avenue. However, the history doesn't differentiate between the 1919 2-story building and the later clay block building so a lack of clarity remains.

**Figure 02.** Fire Insurance Map – 1928



(Source: Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/?fa=location:iowa>. Retrieved 03/15/2019.)

An approximation of the current property boundaries is noted in blue.

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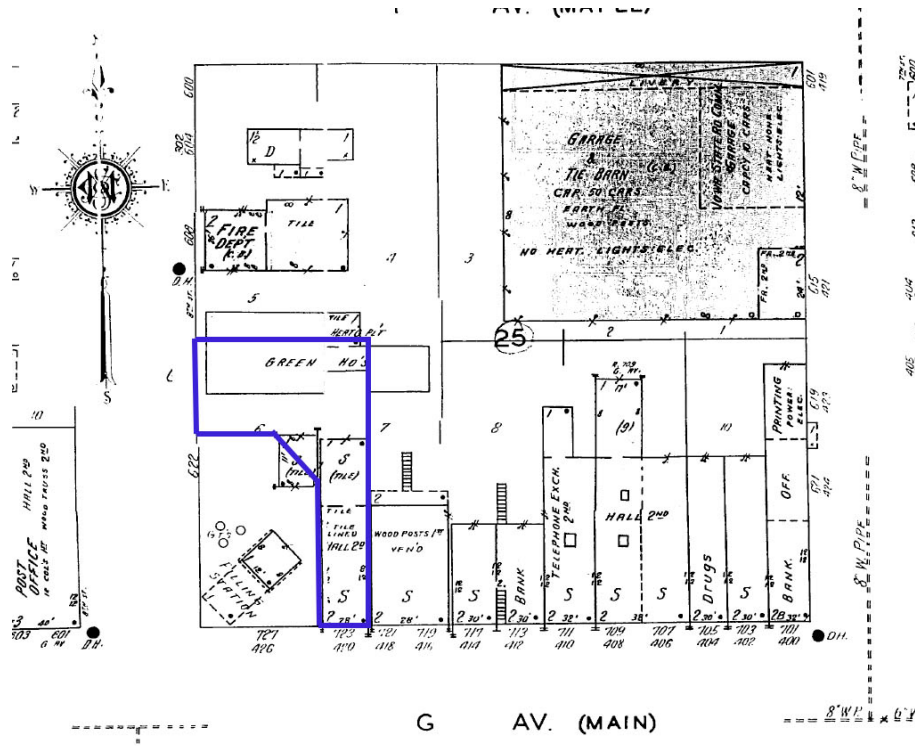
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**Figure 03.** Fire Insurance Map – 1939 (rev. 1928)



(Source: Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/?fa=location.iowa>. Retrieved 03/15/2019.)

An approximation of the current property boundaries are noted in blue.



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**Table 01.** Table of Occupancy

Year	Business			Source	Notes
1880	Bazaar-Millinery and Fancy Goods			Centennial	
1883	Klingaman and Nunyesser, Fresh cured and smoked meats			Centennial	
	Ice Cream Shop			Centennial	No date provided
	A and P Grocery			Centennial	No date provided
1894	Cobbler and Boots and Shoes	Marble Shop	Peanut Stand	Sanborn	Address recorded 105 and 106
1902	Tailor	Cobbler	Hose Cart	Sanborn	
1911	Tailor	Cobbler		Sanborn	Address recorded 420 and 422
1916	Tailor	Cobbler and Confg.		Sanborn	
1919	H.K. Wilson, Electric and Battery Shop			Centennial	New structure (rough brick front and capacity for 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor)
1926	Julius Cohen Dry Goods Store			Centennial	
1928-1932	David Selzer, Dry Goods and Shoes			Centennial	No date provided
	Recreation Parlor			Centennial	No date provided
1936	Iowa State Liquor Store			Centennial	
1939	Hall		Store at N end	Sanborn	Address recorded 723
	Store (Name not listed)				
1941				Assessor	Seems about 20 years too late
1948	R.O. Youngerman and Son Plumbing and Heating			Centennial	
1950-1953	Les Craven Firestone Store			Centennial	
1953	Wayne Shaw’s Firestone, Amana Appliances			Centennial	
1953-1955	Emmerson’s T.V. Sales			Centennial	
1959	Stull and Rowe Firestone Store			Centennial	
1960-1963	Lloyd Cross T.V. and Radio			Centennial	
1964	R.E.C. Appliance Center			Centennial	
1965-1966	Montgomery Ward Catalogue Store			Centennial	
1970-1972	Del-Mar Sports Supply			Centennial	
1973	Jerry Schroeder Plumbing			Centennial	
1974	Fashion Fabrics			Centennial	
1975	Sun Shine Fabrics			Centennial	
2014	The Olive Branch			District Evaluation	
2019	Natural Grind			2019 Photographs	

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Effects of the Automobile on the Commercial District, 1920s-1963

The following paragraphs are excerpted from Price's 2018 survey and evaluation of the potential historic district, which provide the historical context for evaluating resources constructed during the period from the 1920s-1963 and reflecting, in particular, the effects of the automobile on the commercial district.

Not long after the peak of the railroad boom in Grundy Center came the arrival of the automobile in the early 1900s. As more people in Grundy Center became automobile owners, new businesses that sold autos and serviced the needs of these vehicles sprouted on and around G Avenue and the commercial district.

Grundy Center automobile-oriented businesses were mainly grouped in the 500 block of G Avenue, but also within the commercial district, including Schafer's Garage and a garage/auto storage business in the L.L. Daniels Building, an older commercial building on the south side of the 600 block. At the northeast corner of 8th Street and G Avenue, a purpose-built Cities Service Station opened in the 1920s, which was rebuilt and modernized in the 1950s.

Helping to increase automobile traffic through Grundy Center was the designation in 1920 of State Highway 14, which was routed through the town along G Avenue. In 1931, the highway was paved from the junction with State Hwy 57 north of Grundy Center to the junction with State Highway 58 (now 175) west of Grundy Center (Hancock 2018). The improvement undoubtedly brought more traffic along G Avenue and through the commercial district. Such auto-oriented businesses (service stations, garages, and dealerships) continued their presence in downtown Grundy Center throughout the period of significance.

In addition to the new auto businesses, the automobile aided the building of better roads and highways across Iowa, and "created tremendous opportunities for small town shoppers," since "getting into town to shop became vastly easier for rural residents all over the state. As roads improved in the 1920s and 30s, shoppers from both small towns and the countryside were not limited to their local Main Street. Often they kept right on driving down the road to the next largest town" (Nash 2002: 9). And for many rural and small-town residents of Grundy County, that next largest town down the road was Grundy Center, where shoppers could find not just the goods and services offered by locally owned businesses, but also branches of the big national chain stores, like J.C. Penney Co., I.G.A. Grocery, Gambles, and Coast-to-Coast Stores. By locating branch stores in small towns like Grundy Center, J.C. Penney Co. and the other chain stores were adapting to modern business conditions, shaped largely by widespread automobile ownership.

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**Bibliography**

“Go Walkabout Grundy: The Liberty Tour.” Booklet for the Felix Grundy Festival, 1991. Available at the Grundy County Historical Society Museum.

“Go Walkabout Grundy: The Orion Tour.” Booklet for the Felix Grundy Festival, 1992. Available at the Grundy County Historical Society Museum.

*Grundy Center: A Centennial Portrait, 1977.* Grundy Center, IA: Grundy Center Area Centennial, Inc., 1977.

Price, Jennifer A. “Grundy Center Commercial Historic District.” Iowa Site Inventory Form, 2018.

Grundy County Historical Society Museum. Grundy Center, Iowa.

Newspapers

*The Grundy Republican.* “A Live Town.” January 03, 1895.

*The Grundy Republican.* Advertisement for Jacobs Bros. January 03, 1895.

*The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette,* “Grundy Center News: Grundy Center experiencing quite a boom in building.” June 09, 1900.

*The Grundy Republican.* Advertisement for Jacobs & Co. November 11, 1900.

*The Grundy Republican.* “Historical Sketch. Early Days of Grundy County and Grundy Center.” November 11, 1900.

*The Grundy Register, Diamond Jubilee Edition.* Misc. advertisements for local businesses. June 05, 1952.

Online Resources

Grundy County Assessor. <https://beacon.schneidercorp.com>. Retrieved 03/26/2019.

Library of Congress Sanborn Map Collection. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/?fa=location:iowa>. Retrieved 03/15/2019.

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**Geographic Data**

Latitude/Longitude: NW 42.361825/-92.773602  
NE 42.361825/-92.773511  
SE 42.361654/-92.773511  
SW 42.361654/-92.773602

Associated (clay tile) Building NW 42.361928/-92.773697  
NE 42.361928/-92.773638  
SE 42.361857/-92.773637  
SW 42.361846/-92.773697

**Additional Information**

**01. Assessor's Parcel Map – 2019**



(Source: <https://beacon.schneidercorp.com>. Retrieved 03/20/2019.)

The location of the resource is indicated in YELLOW.  
The Wilson Building is sited on the east 1-ft. of the south 61-ft. of Lot 6, the north 39-ft. of the south 100-ft. of Lot 6, the west 24.5-ft. of the south 100-ft of Lot 7, Block 25.

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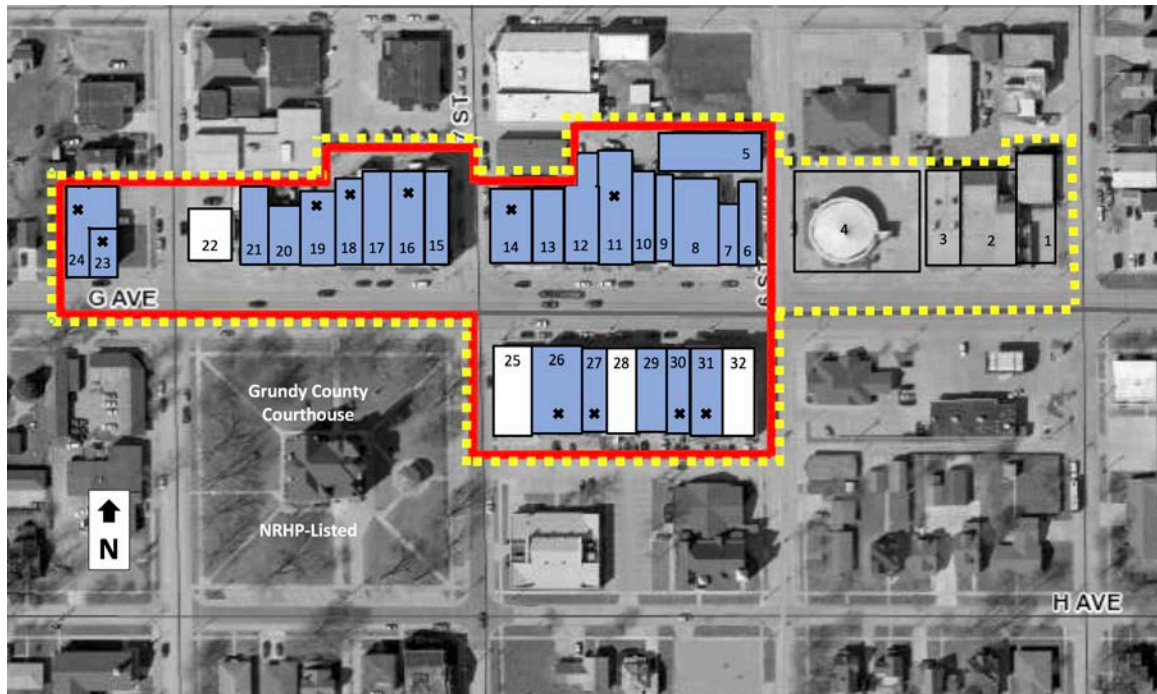
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**02. Potential District Boundary Map – 2018**



(Source: Jennifer Price, "Grundy Center Commercial Historic District," Iowa Site Form, 2018.)

The red outline indicates the proposed district boundaries. The Wilson Building is noted as building '21'.

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**Additional Information: Photographs (06/08/2019)**

**01. Streetscape View: Looking NW along G Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> Street**



**02. Streetscape View: Looking NE along G Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Street**





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**03. View of façade (south), looking north across G Avenue**



**04. View of the storefront**



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**05. Detail of upper façade masonry and fenestration**



**06. View of rear garage structure (2017), looking SE from 8<sup>th</sup> Street**





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**Additional Information:** Historic Images

**01.** View of streetscape looking NE from G Ave and 8<sup>th</sup> Street – ca.1900



(Source: Grundy County Historical Society.)

The site of the Wilson Building is at left. At this early time, the site was occupied by small, 1-story wood-frame buildings (between the two-story buildings).

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**02. View of streetscape looking NE from G Ave and 8<sup>th</sup> Street – ca.1945**



(Source: Grundy County Historical Society.)

In this view looking west along G Avenue, the Wilson Building is in view at the end of the block.

**03. View of streetscape looking NE from G Ave and 8<sup>th</sup> Street – ca.1945**



(Source: *The Grundy Centennial: A Bicentennial Portrait*, 1977.)

In this view from the porch of the Columbia Hotel (non-extant), the Wilson Building is at far left.