Iowa Site Inventory Form

Supplemental

State Historic Preservation Office

(January 2016)

State Inventory Number: HP-00145030 96-0025659 ☐X New ☐

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: James T. Relf Home

B) Other names: ____

• Location

A) Street address: 501 5th Ave.____

B) City or town: City of Decorah____ (☐ Vicinity) County: Winneshiek____

C) Legal description:

Rural: Township Name:____ Township No.: 98 Range No.: 8 Section: 16 Qtr:____ of Qtr: ____

Urban: Subdivision: Morse Addition West Decorah____ Block(s): 13 Lot(s): 1

• Classification

A) Property category: *Check only one*

X Building(s)

☐ District

Site

☐ Structure

☐ Object

B) Number of resources (within property):

If eligible property, enter number of: Contributing		Noncontributing		*If non-eligible property, enter number of:*	
1	Buildings				Buildings
	Sites				Sites
	Structures				Structures
	Objects				Objects
1	**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 *Historical Architectural Data Base #*

____ ____

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

A) Historic functions

OA101 Residence

____

____

B) Current functions

OA101 Residence

____

____

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

A) Architectural classification

05B Italianate

____

____

____

B) Materials

Foundation (visible exterior): 04C stacked stone

Walls (visible exterior): 15B vinyl siding

Roof: 08A asphalt shingle

Other: ____

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

Site Number: ___ Address: ___ City:___ County:

- **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 x No ☐ More research recommended
Criterion B: Property is associated with the lives of significant persons.	X 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 x 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.
☐ 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: Property less than 50 years of page or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

C) Areas of significance
Enter categories from instructions
02 Architecture

D) Period(s) of significance
1876-1890

E) Significant dates
Construction date
1876 ☐ *check if circa or estimated date*
Other dates, including renovations

F) Significant person
Complete if Criterion B is marked above
James T. Relf

G) Cultural affiliation
Complete if Criterion D is marked above
Prominent business owner

H) Architect/Builder
Architect
unknown
Builder/contractor
unknown

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: Jenny Werner Date:May 2025
Organization/firm: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission E-mail:historicpreservation@decorahia.org
Street address: 400 Clairborne Dr Telephone:
City or Town: Decorah State: IA Zip code: 52101

- **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 top 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:* _____

Name of Property County

Address City

C. Narrative Description: 501 Fifth Ave - Lot 1 Block 13 Morse Addition Decorah, Iowa

Location and Neighborhood Character

This home faces a wide boulevard and is slightly elevated from the street level on a corner lot. The residential neighborhood is a mixture of homes from the 19th century to present day construction. This home is one of two Italianate style homes built in 1876 by brothers, James and William Relf, that sat side by side on Lots 1&2 and were identical when built.

One of these homes is now located on Lot 3 as 505 5th Ave and is thought to have been moved from Lot 2 after being sold to Klemet Haugen in 1877. Haugen constructed a second story addition to that home in 1885.

Site

The lot dimensions, according to Assessor records, are 55.00X132.00, 0.17 acres, 7260 SF. The site is flat as the NE corner lot of Block 13, with a concrete sidewalk leading to the front porch. A two car detached garage was built in 2005. A 20 ft. poured cement curb remains alongside the newer garage which could possibly have been part of the original horse barn or simply used as a hitching post for both homes as there are iron rings embedded in it. A cistern remains under the west facing back porch but is no longer accessible. The original well water pump, while no longer functional, remains as decoration west off the rear porch.

Building Exterior Features

The Italianate home was restored to its original appearance in 2005. This home has maintained its low pitched hip roof with italianate style paired brackets replaced to support broad eaves. The original home had a dutch lap wood siding which now is covered by vinyl siding. The original siding is visible on an interior wall of the enclosed porch. The tall narrow four pane windows have hood molds on all sides of the home including the bay window arrangement on the east side. The front porch was restored to its original form with acanthus leaf cut out design on chamfered corner bracket supports and lattice skirting detail. Facing east, is an enclosed 3 season porch. A small 3rd porch on the rear west side remains open and the original storm cellar entrance remains on the back. The home sits on a cut stone stacked limestone foundation and is oriented north to south on the lot.

Building Interior Features

A one story residence with a one room half story at the rear over the kitchen. Entering through the front door, is a small foyer leading to a living room with 3 tall windows, which is open to a dining room with a bay window and an exterior doorway to the enclosed porch. This porch door trim visible on the enclosed porch, is the only remaining interior trim left original to the home. The casement with pocket doors which divided the LR/DR rooms was removed to open the space between the front rooms. The original wood floor in the LR/DR was patched and restored in 2005. The original wood windows, interior doors and trim were removed during major remodels in 1960 and 2005. A large modern kitchen occupies the rear of the home with doorways to both the enclosed porch on the east and a small open

porch on the west side. An exterior doorway on the back of the home was removed and replaced with a small window in 2005. This doorway likely led to a small porch at one time. There are two small bedrooms on the west side with one bath at the rear. Between the kitchen and rear bedroom is a steep staircase with access to the half story room above the kitchen. The half story room is thought to have been the maid's quarters. The stairway and flooring in this upper room have remained in their original condition. There is also an interior stairway off the kitchen leading to the basement. The basement limestone walls have been sealed with foam and wall board.

Documented Building Alterations

Major alterations to the exterior were most likely done sometime between 1930 and 1960. A small addition for an indoor bathroom was likely added by 1940. Alterations during this period included the removal of the front porch, slate style asbestos shingle siding covering the dutch lap siding and removal of all the exterior Italianate trim pieces. (See photo dated before 2004) The shingle style siding was removed in 2005 and while the original wood siding was in fairly good shape, vinyl siding was installed over it for practical upkeep. Using the 1880s photo as a guide, the front porch was replicated and added back onto the home in 2005. The hood molding window trim was also replicated and added above all the exterior windows as well as all the trim details as it originally appeared around the east bay window, i.e. the panel trim and banding. Italianate style brackets were used to trim the front porch. The original wood windows were in very poor condition in 2005 and were replaced with vinyl windows of the same design. An exterior door on the back of the house was removed and replaced by a window to accommodate the kitchen remodel in 2005. The east facing porch was enclosed possibly prior to 1950. Kent Klocke (the local contractor who did the 2005 restoration) remembers there was some original siding remaining under the porch windows when he replaced the combo storm aluminum windows with new in 2005. The original horse barn structure that appears at the rear of the home in the 1880s photograph was no longer there by the 1950s.

Interior changes to the home in 2005 were the removal of two small pantry rooms in the kitchen to enlarge that space. The pocket doors originally between the living room and dining room as well as the front hall door had been removed before 2005. Around 1960, Lyle Sacquitne (a local plaster and stucco contractor) rented this home while building a new home for himself across the street. Sacquitne replastered all the interior walls and ceilings, lowering the original 12 ft ceilings to 9 feet. It is possible that the original coffered ceiling remains under the plaster. All the interior wall and window trim were replaced in 2005. A second interior brick chimney in the kitchen area was removed.

Narrative Statement of Significance

501 Fifth Ave. is significant as it was originally the home of Decorah Pioneer and prominent business owner, James T Relf. He had a photography studio on Water Street for 22 years and also owned and ran a variety store called "The Fair" in later years before his death in 1909. It is thought that his photography business was started around 1870 and was on the second floor of 128 W. Water St., the Relf Building, which is a three story building contributing to the Decorah Commercial Historic District. The family name is displayed on the exterior of this building which is pictured later in this document. It

Name of Property County

Address City

is thought that James added the third story with its Victorian details to the downtown building between 1885 and 1894.
501 5th Ave was the second of two identical homes built by brothers James and William Relf, both built in 1876. The second home and its history is documented in a site inventory of 505 5th Ave in Decorah.

501/Lot 1 Morse Addition Ownership Chronology

1859 Henry T. Morse purchases Lot 1 from the State of Iowa (land transfer books says Lots 1&2)
1859 Morse sells Lot 1 to Henry C. Bullis
1861 Henry C. Bullis sells Lot 1 to Albert Miller
1862 Albert Miller sells Lot 1 to Lauvinda C. Newell (alias L.C.Moon)
1875 L. C Moon sells Lots 1&2 to George Gardner - 6/3/1875
1875 George Gardner sells Lot 1&2 to Leonard Cutler - 8/31/1875
1876 Leonard Cutler sells Lot 1&2 to William & James Relf
1877 James Relf (& wife) sell 12ft ingress of Lot 1 to KI Haugen for reasonable use 9/22
1877 William Relf to James T. Relf Lot 1 10/21/1877
1890 James Relf sells Lot 1 to A.D. Thomas
1900 Estate of A.D. Thomas sells Lot 1 to Ella Harvey
1913 Ella Harvey sells Lot 1 to Charles Trzcinski
1932 Eleanor Trzcinski sells Lot 1 to Jennie Trzcinski (transferred to J.J.Trzcinski upon her death-1936)
1939 J.J. Trzcinski sells Lot 1 to George W. Johnson 3/6/1939
1939 George W. Johnson sells Lot 1 to Henry T. and Ethel Braa 3/25/1939
1947 Henry T. Braa sell Lot 1 to Peter & Elizabeth Kjorlang
1953 Elizabeth Kjorlang sells Lot 1 to Eunice Kjorlang
1962 Eunice Kjorlang sells Lot 1 to Irene V. Thiese
2004 Estate of Irene V. Thiese sells Lot 1 to Kent & Marla Klocke
2005 Kent & Marla Klocke sells Lot 1 to Candace and David Arp
2017 Candace and David Arp sell Lot 1 to Brian & Kathy Petersburg

Historical Documentation

James Relf (Sr) came to Iowa from Chatham England in 1855, farming in Madison township as one of the original pioneer families. After the death of his wife in 1863, he came to live with his children in Decorah (Death Notice, Decorah Republican 7/6/1877). In 1865, he purchased “the ‘Akins old residence’ to set up a store of groceries and will also reside in this building.” (Decorah Republican 5/25/1865) James Relf replaced this older structure with a two story building still located at 128 W. Water in 1868. His children, James T. and William, had a Photography Studio on Water Street in 1874. James T. (1847- 1909), also ran a variety store in the building for a time called “The Fair”. William Relf took part in the Photography business but dissolved the business partnership in 1877. “During 22 years Mr. Relf was in the photography business in Decorah. Of late years he has conducted stores on Winnebago and Water streets.” Decorah Journal - Obit, for James Relf, 7/27/1909.

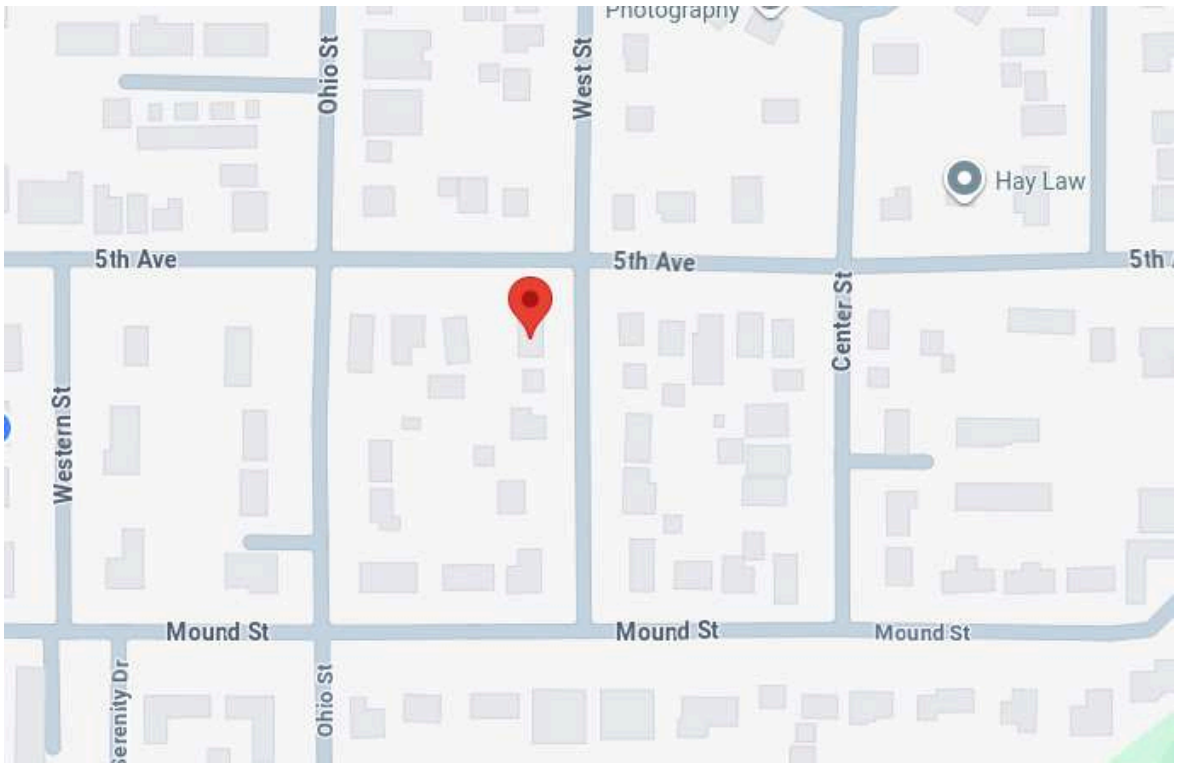
Name of Property County

Address City

It has been assumed that James T. (aka J.T.) was responsible for adding the 3rd floor and decorative Victorian details between 1885 and 1894. (Decorah Commercial Historic District Doc), (1894 Sanborn) The Relf Business Property (128 W. Water St) remains today as pictured later in this document.

Bibliography

https://winneshiekcounty.advantage-preservation.com Winneshiek County Newspaper Archives
Davis, Robert H., Decorah Visitors Guide, The Winneshiek Historical Society, 1996, pg.67
Winneshiek County Land Transfer Books, Block 13, Morse Addition, West Decorah, Iowa
Plat Book of Winneshiek County Iowa, Warner & Foote, Minneapolis Minnesota, 1886
C.W. Burdicks Abstract of Title, Winneshiek County, November 1900
National Registry of Historic Places Registration Form Decorah Commercial Historic District Section 7, page 67.
Decorah Commercial Historic District, NRHP 2017, https://www.decorahia.org
Winneshiek County Biographies -1996, Iowa Sesquicentennial Project, Anundsen Publishing, Decorah.
Decorah Significant Properties Listing, https://www.decorahia.org
Parcel ID 111630100400 Winneshiek County, IA, beacon.schneidercorp.com
Interviews with Elizabeth Lorezen Fall of 2024
Interview with Kent Klocke September 2025
Decorah Genealogy Assn. 808 River St, Decorah, IA



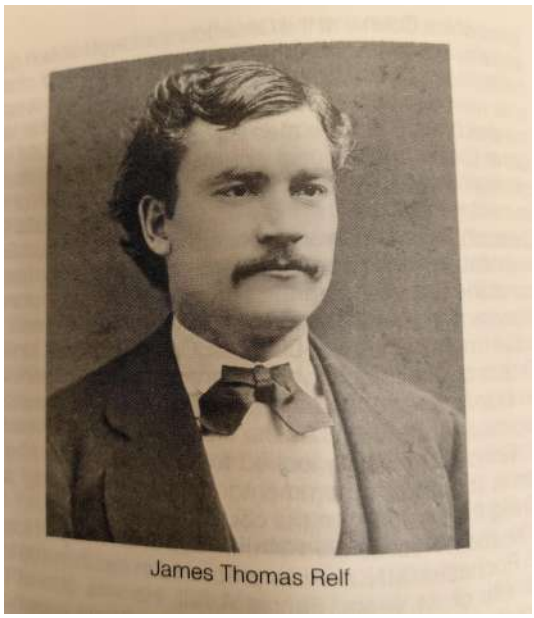
Name of Property County

Address City

501 Fifth Ave between 1877-1890 (Photo undated) Built by James Relf in 1876. “Flopsy” the horse owned by Relf can be seen standing with a cart at the rear facing a small barn or outbuilding.

Name of Property County

Address City



James Thomas Relf

Fannie Whittney Relf

James and Fannie were married on Thanksgiving Day 1876 in Monroe WI.
Photos acquired from Winneshiek County Biographies -1996, Iowa Sesquicentennial Project

when a city like Decorah furnishes a dancing school with sixty scholars?

—Mr. James Relf made a missionary tour last week, and as a result, brought home a bride to preside over his neat little house in West Decorah.

—Another change has been made in

Decorah Republican, December 8, 1876

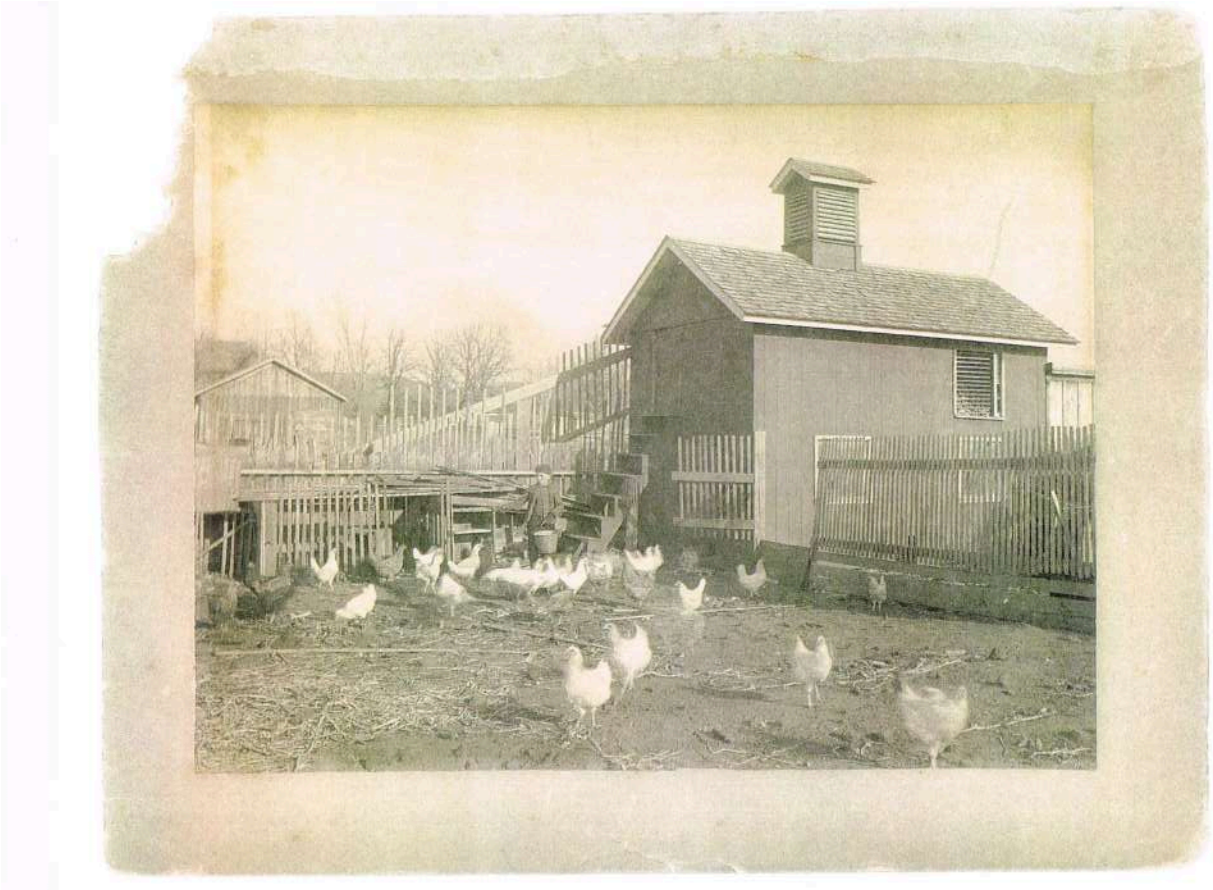
Name of Property County

Address City

Sons of James T. Relf, Roy and Robert, sitting at the 501 dining room table. Photograph from Relf Photography Studio, circa 1890.

Name of Property County

Address City



Out building, location unknown, son of James Relf depicted in photograph, circa 1890.

Name of Property County

Address City

501 5th Ave in 2005 when purchased by Klocke, photos by Kent Klocke

Name of Property County

Address City

501 5th Ave 2024 photo by James Buzza

Name of Property County

Address City

501 5th Ave 2024 photo by James Buzza

Name of Property County

Address City

Name of Property County

Address City

501 5th Ave west side with open porch off the kitchen pictured in 2025. photo by J. Werner

Name of Property County

Address City

501 5th Ave rear view original storm cellar door half story window above pictured in 2025 photo by J. Werner

Name of Property County

Address City

501 garage built in 2005 on site of original horse barn photo by J. Werner

Name of Property County

Address City

Cement curb remaining possibly from an 1880s alleyway which extends from lot 1, to lots 2&3.
Iron ring remains embedded for tying horses? photo by J. Werner

Name of Property County

Address City

Doorway to enclosed porch from the DR. Original door frame remains with dutch lap siding
photo by J. Werner

Name of Property County

Address City

Original dutch lap siding remains exposed on the enclosed porch. photo by J. Werner

Name of Property County

Address City

Original water pump on west side of home. photo by J. Werner

Name of Property County

Address City

501 5th Ave - 2005 after restoration and remodel completed by Kent Klocke (photo from Beacon)

Name of Property County

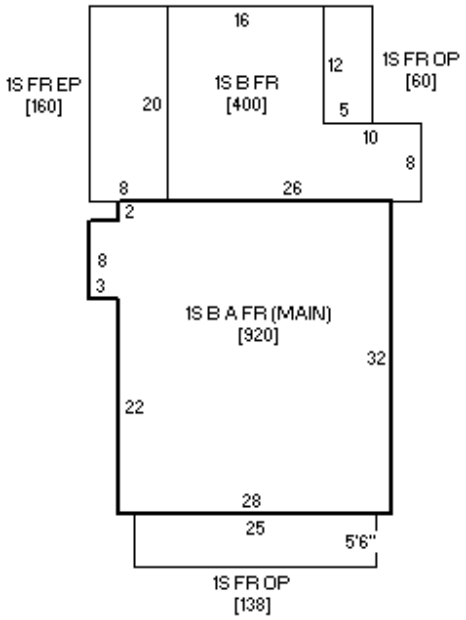
Address City

501 5th Ave as it appeared in 2004 when purchased by Kent & Marla Klocke (photo from Beacon)
Note absence of front porch and Italianate trim detail.

Name of Property County

Address City

B-1860
GAR-2005- 24x24

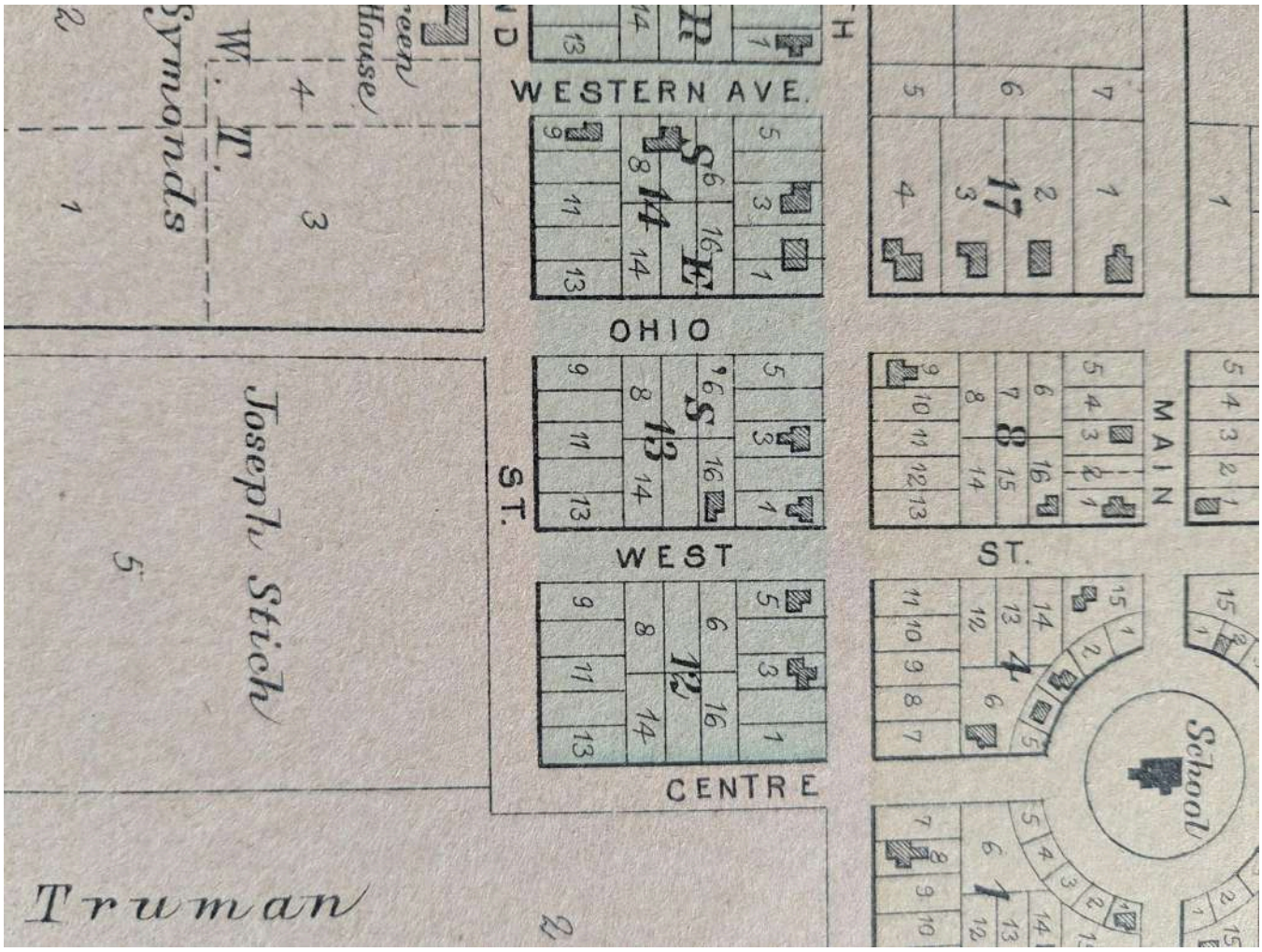


Sketch by www.camavision.com

501 Fifth Ave - https://beacon.schneidercorp.com/

Name of Property County

Address City



Plat Map of West Decorah 1886, 501 & 505 Fifth Ave on Lots 1 & 3, Block 13, Morse Addition. Note identical house shapes.

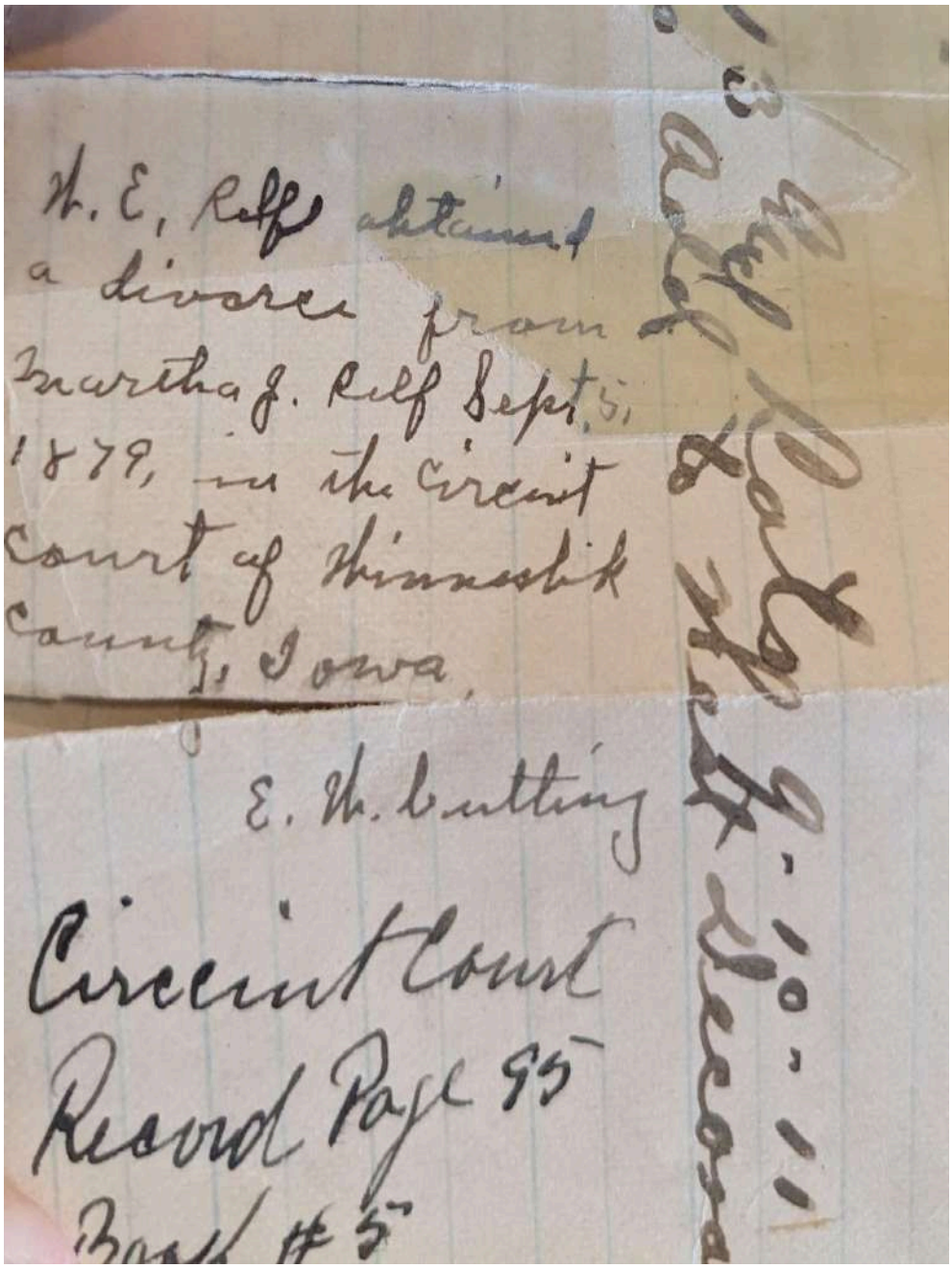
Name of Property County

Address City

Relf Building located in the Decorah Commercial Historic District - photo taken in 2024 by J. Van der Linden

Name of Property County

Address City



Entry on the abstract for 501 5th Ave; noting the divorce of William and Martha Relf in 1879. Most likely this was the impetus to sell the home on Lot 2 to K.I. Haugen.

Name of Property County

Address City

The Decorah Photograph Gallery,

J. T. RELF, Prop.,

Over Montgomery & Co.'s Drug Store.

Largest and Best Light In Iowa
Best Artists Employed
Finest Materials only Used

Consequently can

Guarantee BEST WORK Everytime.

A choice line of Holiday Goods now opened, such as

ALBUMS, all prices,
PHOTO FRAMES,
VELVET GOODS,
MOULDINGS, &c.

PICTURES FRAMED---All Sizes.

A new assortment of "VIEWS OF DECORAH" just issued—elegant for Christmas Presents. Come and see them.

J. T. RELF.

Decorah Republican, 12/21/1882

Name of Property County

Address City

Page 5 of Decorah Republican, published in Decora

enridge as pronounc-
) cents. Fun free!

Aid Society.

ting of the Union Aid
ection of officers and
other business, will be
on *Tuesday evening*,
asement of the Deco-

Opal Fair.

remember that this
ularly last week, will
afternoon and even-
ell building. Dinner
noon, and after that
offee, &c., at all hours.

Concert.

ne talent will be given
h at Ridgeway, Satur-
7th, for the benefit of
, everybody. Admis-
COM.

efs 25 cents. These
s have been sold for
Our price on them
BEN BEAR.

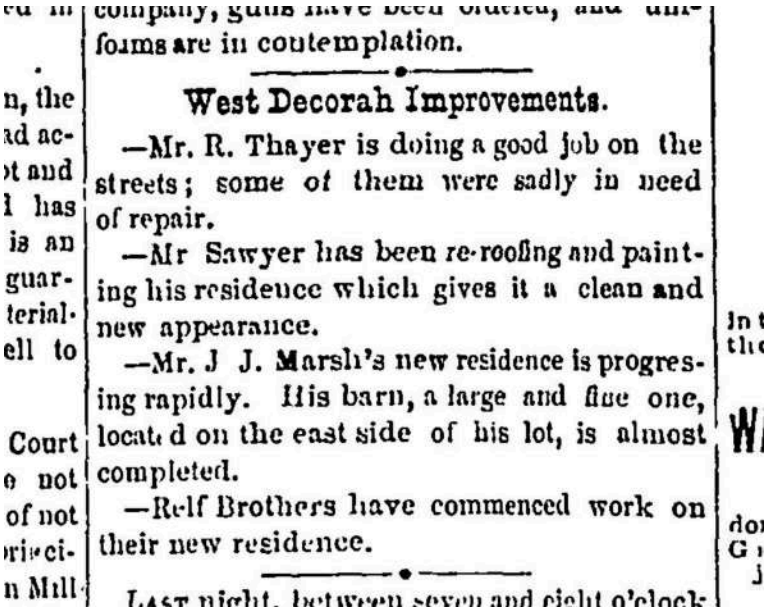
THE FAIR.

Opening of Jas. T. Relf's New Store--- a Bazar.

The formal opening of Relf's new establishment occured yesterday. He He has rightly christened it "The Fair." It is a bazar; a novelty or variety store; an emporium of odds-and-ends; a sort of "if you-don't-see-what-you want-ask-for-it" depot. The aim, Mr. Relf says, will be to make it a "bargain" store, where buyers can find good goods as well as low priced goods; and where they will always get the worth of their money. The stock will include all staples, but will be especially full in novelties of all sorts. Of necessity the variety will be constantly changing. Just now the assortment of holiday goods is very full; containing a wider range than any establishment of its kind. Mr. Relf invites the public to call and see him, and he, or his assistants Miss Cartwright and Miss Davidson, will be glad to show you the stock.

We struck a lead in buying a big lot

Decorah Republican, 12/5/1889



company, guns have been ordered, and uni-
forms are in contemplation.

West Decorah Improvements.

—Mr. R. Thayer is doing a good job on the streets; some of them were sadly in need of repair.

—Mr Sawyer has been re-roofing and painting his residence which gives it a clean and new appearance.

—Mr. J J. Marsh's new residence is progressing rapidly. His barn, a large and fine one, located on the east side of his lot, is almost completed.

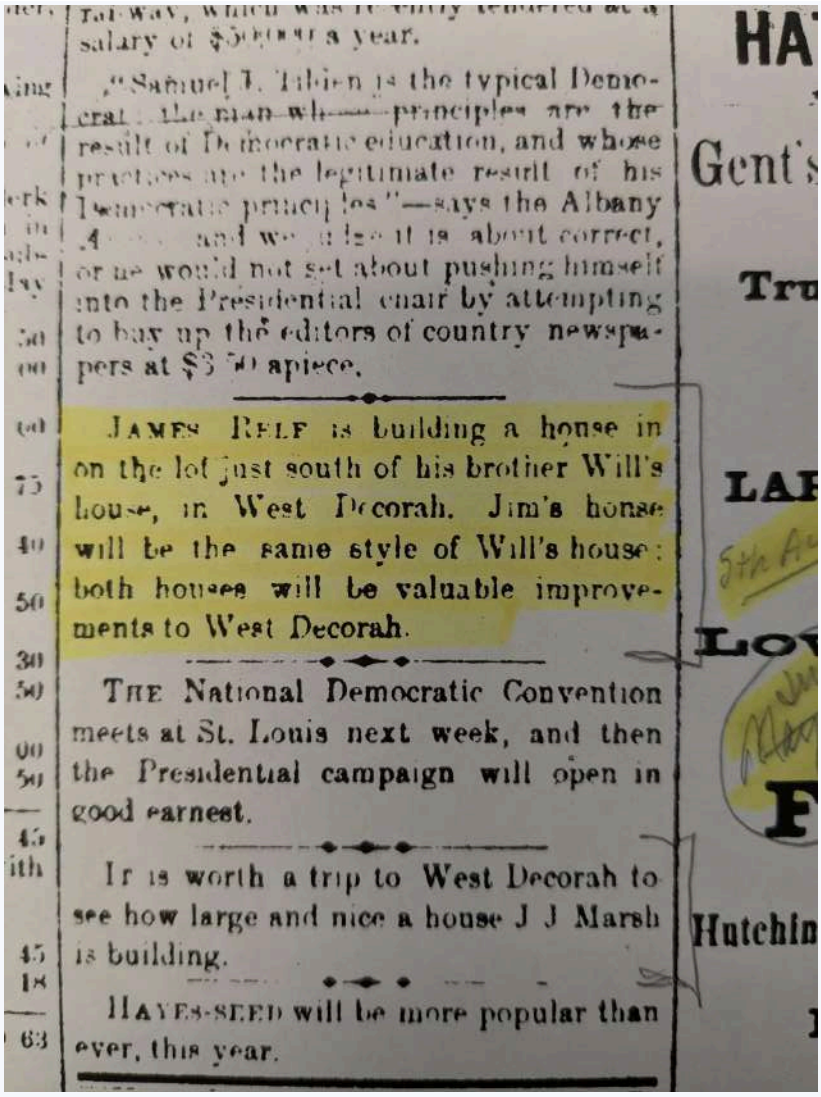
—Relf Brothers have commenced work on their new residence.

LAST night, between seven and eight o'clock

Decorah Bee, April 22, 1876

Name of Property County

Address City



salary of $5[illegible] a year.

"Samuel J. Tilden is the typical Democrat. The man whose principles are the result of Democratic education, and whose practices are the legitimate result of his Democratic principles"—says the Albany [illegible] and we realize it is about correct, or he would not set about pushing himself into the Presidential chair by attempting to buy up the editors of country newspapers at $3 [illegible] apiece.

JAMES REIF is building a house in on the lot just south of his brother Will's house, in West Decorah. Jim's house will be the same style of Will's house: both houses will be valuable improvements to West Decorah.

THE National Democratic Convention meets at St. Louis next week, and then the Presidential campaign will open in good earnest.

IT IS worth a trip to West Decorah to see how large and nice a house J J Marsh is building.

HAYES-SEED will be more popular than ever, this year.

June 23, 1876, Decorah Republican

Name of Property County

Address City

James T. Relf.

Thursday morning, July 22nd., at one o'clock occurred the death of James T. Relf after a long and painful illness from heart trouble and Bright's disease.

The deceased was born in Mount Vernon, Ohio, January 27, 1847. In 1855 he came to Decorah with his parents. Here he has made his home ever since. In Monroe, Wis., on Thanksgiving Day, 1876 he was united in marriage with Miss Fanny A. Whittier. During twenty-two years Mr Relf was in the photograpic business in Decorah. Of late years he has conducted stores on Winnebago and Water streets. In 1901 he was converted to Christianity at revival meetings conducted by evangelist Pratt. He is survived by his wife, two sons, Roy and Robert of this city, one brother, W. E. Relf of Orchard, Nebr., and one sister, Mrs. J. T. Baker of St. Paul. Funeral services were held Saturday morning, July 24th, Rev. M Willett officiating.

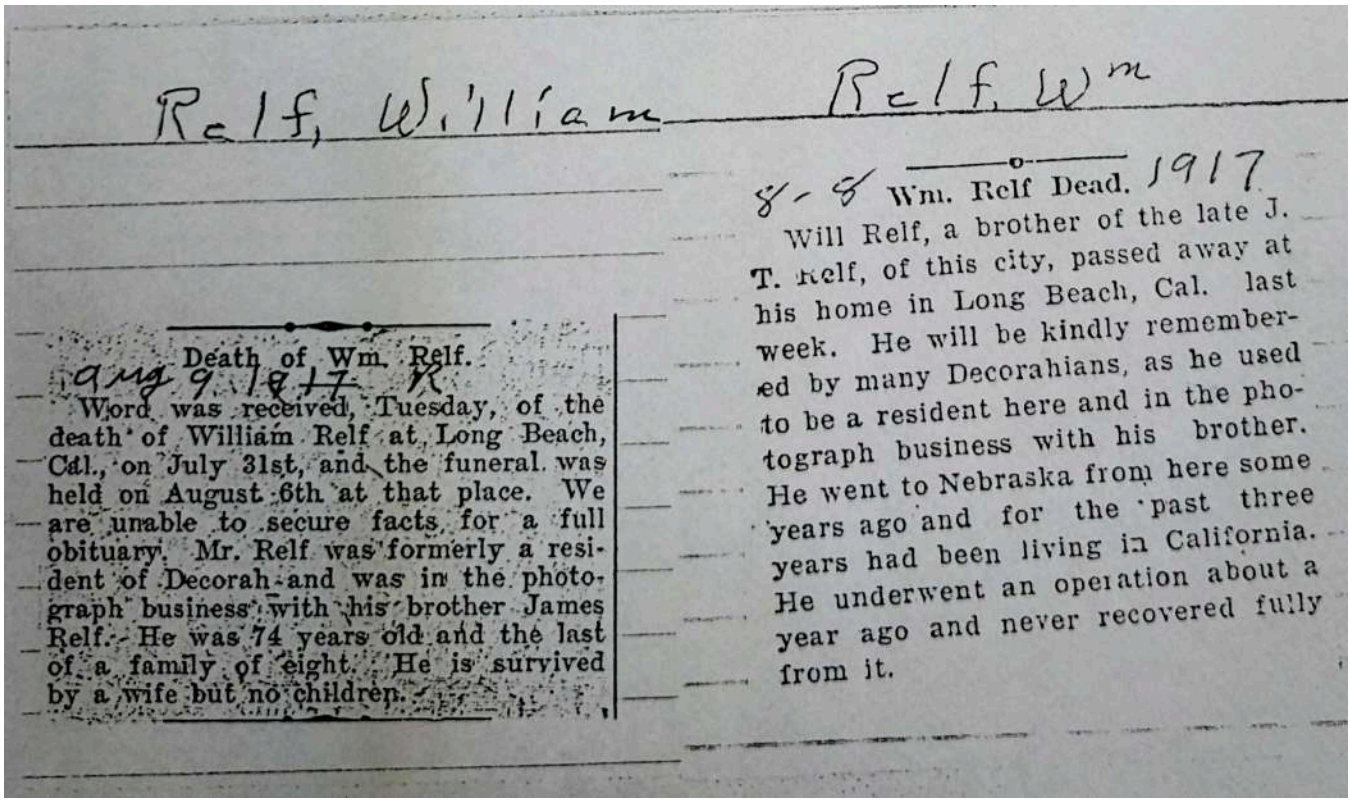
Mr. Relf has been honored and respected by a large acquaintance as an honest, honorable, man of high purposes and good character. His death will be mourned as producing a genuine loss to the community.

Among those present at the funeral were: Mr. and Mrs John T. Baker of St. Paul and W. E. Relf of Orchard Nebr.

Decorah Republican, July 27,1909

Name of Property County

Address City



Ralf, William Ralf, Wm

Death of Wm. Relf.

aug 9 1917 R

Word was received, Tuesday, of the death of William Relf at Long Beach, Cal., on July 31st, and the funeral was held on August 6th at that place. We are unable to secure facts for a full obituary. Mr. Relf was formerly a resident of Decorah and was in the photograph business with his brother James Relf. He was 74 years old and the last of a family of eight. He is survived by a wife but no children.

8-8 Wm. Relf Dead. 1917

Will Relf, a brother of the late J. T. Relf, of this city, passed away at his home in Long Beach, Cal. last week. He will be kindly remembered by many Decorahians, as he used to be a resident here and in the photograph business with his brother. He went to Nebraska from here some years ago and for the past three years had been living in California. He underwent an operation about a year ago and never recovered fully from it.

Decorah Republican, August 9, 1917
Newspaper source unknown for August 8,1917