

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Baumert & Bogner

Other names/site number Baumert Furniture

Name of related multiple property listing NA
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & Number 217 Center Street

City or town Howells State Nebraska County Colfax

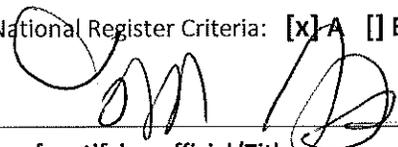
Not for publication Vicinity

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D


Signature of certifying official/Title:

SHPO/Director

5/23/02
Date

Nebraska State Historical Society

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting Official

Date

Title

State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	Buildings
_____	_____	Sites
_____	_____	Structures
_____	_____	Objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store
COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse
FUNERARY: mortuary

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property:

Walls: Brick and CMU Block, Roof: Wood Frame with Synthetic Rubber Membrane, Accents: Stone, Cast Iron, and Tin

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Description

Summary Paragraph

The business of Baumert & Bogner was established in 1916 by Henry Baumert and Peter Bogner, who purchased an existing two-story brick building located at 217 Center Street in Howells, Nebraska. The building was constructed in 1900 by F.H. Woerth, utilizing heavy timber construction and a freight elevator for the purpose of a hardware and furniture store. It also housed an undertaking business. As the business grew so did the need for more space; therefore, a one-story addition, with the appearance of a separate storefront, was added in 1966 west of the main building.

Today, the buildings are known as Baumert Furniture, which was established in 1958 when Paul Bogner sold his interest to James and Marianne Baumert. Their son, Gary, daughter, Deb, and son-in-law, Dave, joined the business in the 1970's. The business remained family owned and operated for three generations until the store closed in 2022.

Narrative Description

Setting/Site

Surrounded by farmland, the village of Howells is in rural northeast Nebraska, in northern Colfax County. It has a population of around 650, with the closest urban centers being Fremont (30 miles away) and Norfolk (40 miles away). Howells is bound to the south by Highway 91 and to the east by an abandoned railroad line and the East Fork Maple Creek. Within the northeast corner of the village is the downtown commercial district, which has developed into a T-shape pattern, spanning a few blocks long. It is comprised of a mixture of modest historic brick buildings and modern metal storefronts. The Baumert Furniture store is located on the east end of downtown on the south side of Center Street. To the east is a historic two-story meat market and to the west is another historic brick building, both built around 1900. Across the street to the north is a row of historic single-story brick buildings constructed around the turn of the twentieth century. Behind the building to the south is an alley and an open lot. Originally there was a woodshed located on this open lot, which housed the horses and cart and eventually a truck and trailer used by the business to transport goods. The alley allowed access into the warehouse. This back entrance was more private, which kept the task of transporting bodies as part of the undertaking business discreet.

The Baumert Furniture main building, warehouse, and addition fill up lots 4 and 5, except for a 2' setback from the west property line along the addition. This was likely to avoid and not disturb the adjacent building's foundation during the construction of the addition and to allow space to collect and properly manage storm water off the roof of the addition.

In the beginning, the site was located only half a block from the railroad depot. With heavy shipments made by rail, this was a convenient location for transporting goods off the train and into the store. Center Street was and continues to be a major thoroughfare through Howells. Alongside other businesses, this location was a hub of daily activities and commerce. The north-facing front of the main building is comprised of large glass block display windows, which allowed for maximum light capacity without having to contend with the power of the sun from a heat standpoint and potential to fade products positioned near the windows overtime.

Construction

The main building, approximately 35' x 70', is two-stories tall with a basement. Attached to the rear of this building is a single-story warehouse, approximately 50' wide x 30' deep. Both the main building and warehouse were constructed in 1900 with brick foundations and walls, interior wood partitions, and wood framed roofs. The main building utilized heavy timber construction to support the anticipated weight of the merchandise being sold. The interior has a finished appearance with wood floors, plaster walls and ceilings, and pressed tin ceiling on the second floor. The warehouse is constructed of a concrete floor, brick walls, and wood rafters with most surfaces covered by modern finishes.

The one-story west addition, built in 1966, is 12' wide by 66' long. It is constructed of CMU block walls, with the front façade clad in brick. The roof is framed out of wood and covered with metal panel roofing, sloped to drain to the west side between it and the neighboring building.

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Figure 1: Early 1900's photo of Joseph Novak's building with painted mural advertisement on west façade and railroad cars in the distance. Howells Historical Society. *Quasiquicentennial 125th Celebration: Family & Business History Update 1987-2011*.

Exterior

Primary (North Façade)

The main building is a two-part commercial block. The lower zone is divided and framed by cast iron columns and beams and brick pilasters with large window openings between. The main body of the façade is clad in orange brick laid in a running bond. Facing Center Street, the primary façade consists of three bays: central, east, and west. The central bay has a recessed entry on the ground floor level. The original tall, wood display windows, transoms, and double doors remain intact within the recessed entry.

Centered within the recessed entrance is a pair of wood paneled doors with three-quarter glass lites flanked by tall display windows. The original, decorative brass door hardware and hinges remain on the doors. Spanning over the doors is an operable wood transom with a small portion of painted, wood beadboard near the ceiling. The painted wood display windows consist of a tall pane of glass with a smaller transom above. The corners of the wood frames are notched at a 45-degree angle, which adds a level of sophistication to the overall design. The display windows sit on top of a brick knee wall with a recessed panel design. A painted, wood beadboard ceiling remains. A modern aluminum storefront and double door sits flush with the exterior wall and on top of the original cast iron vestibule sill. Framing the recessed entry is a pair of cast iron columns and beam. Additional cast iron beams span the east and west bays, which each have modern glass block set within the original, large storefront openings. Originally, these openings consisted of two tall wood display windows with two clear transoms above, separated by thin wood muntin's. These wood display windows were removed in the late 1970's and replaced with glass block. Below these large openings are brick kneewalls with two recessed panels. The kneewalls are topped with a concrete sill and rest on a continuous cast iron sill, which spans the entire length of the façade. The lower zone is framed on each side by brick pilasters in line with the main body of brick above. The display areas in the east and west bays are slightly recessed from the face of the pilasters and cast-iron components. The ground floor level is elevated

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about 6" above the public sidewalk. This is a common feature of other historic buildings along Center Street. The masonry wall surface between the sidewalk and cast-iron sill is covered by a parge coat of stucco.

On the second floor, there is a large masonry opening in the center flanked by two smaller windows in the east and west bays. Originally, the central masonry opening consisted of a large, fixed wood window with a linear transom window above. The original one-over-one wood double hung windows remain within the east and west bays; however, they have been covered on the exterior with modern one-over-one metal storm windows and on the interior with a sheet of plastic mounted to a wood frame. The interior sheets of plastic were installed in the early 2000's to reduce the amount of air infiltration. It is unknown when the storm windows were added. All masonry openings on the second floor have decorative tin window hoods and stone windowsills. Adorning the front parapet is a decorative pressed tin cornice. A hierarchy is given to the central bay, as the tin cornice steps upwards and forms an arch. Just beneath the arch, mounted over the top band of tin, is a wood board with individual metal letters attached to it which reads "Baumert & Bogner." Just below that, pressed in tin, are the words "Hardware. Furniture." A tin entablature remains centered beneath the cornice in the brick and reads "1900." Various floral details remain on the tinwork and cast iron. Prior to the 1940's, at an unknown date, a metal blade sign with support arms was mounted to the front of the building. The sign projected above the sidewalk and spanned from the top of the display windows to the head of the second-floor windows. Utilizing white lettering on a dark background, the sign read "Baumert & Bogner" at the top and "Undertaking Furniture" at the bottom. Remnants of the metal anchors remain visible on the façade. The sign was likely removed when the name changed to Baumert Furniture.

The 1966 west addition is a vernacular one-part commercial block with simple brick detailing. The main body is clad in blonde-colored oversized Norman bricks laid in a one-third running bond in lieu of standard modular brick, which give this façade an updated appeal. This brick also has a textured finish compared to the brick on the main building which has a smooth finish. A large rectangular wood display window takes up two-thirds of the façade and has a brick rowlock sill. On the west edge of this façade is a wood paneled door with three-lites, covered by a modern metal screen door. One course of rowlock bricks caps the top of the wall. A blank brick façade was intentionally left above the display window and entry door for a signage band. Baumert Furniture had a painted wood board with their business name and white and red logo in this location until just recently, when a windstorm blew it down and it was never re-installed.



Figure 2: A 1930's photo looking east along the sidewalk of Center Street, towards Baumert & Bogner's large blade sign. Howells Historical Society.

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On the main building, the orange face brick from the primary façade wraps the east and west building corners, utilizing a brick quoin detail. The two-story section is clad in orange brick laid in a common bond pattern with brick parapets gradually stepping down towards the back of the building. Most of the east façade is not visible as it abuts the adjacent building. However, two-thirds of the west façade remains exposed, with the lowest third covered by the addition. The front third of this facade stands out, as it bears an original 1900 painted advertisement, spanning the full height of the building which reads "Go Farthest, Wear Longest. Patton's Sunproof Paints. Sold By Jos. Novak." There are two masonry openings on this façade at ground level. An arched door opening towards the back of the commercial bay and a one-over-one wood double hung window into the office.

The east façade of the warehouse is covered by an adjacent building. The west façade, which aligns with the property line, is a blank masonry wall covered with painted stucco. With no parapet at either end, one can see how the roof slopes down towards the south.

At the addition, the west façade is partially visible near the front and the back. This façade consists of a flat, painted CMU block wall with a single steel awning window near the warehouse. There is no east façade to the addition, as the roof structure is directly attached to the west façade of the main building; therefore, leaving the bottom one-third of the main building's west façade visible inside the addition.

Rear (South Façade)

The south façade is composed of two sections. The lower section is the warehouse, which abuts the rear property line, while the upper section is the back wall of the main building set back twenty-eight feet. Both sections consist of brick walls which have been covered with stucco at an unknown date. At the second floor of the main building are two arched masonry openings which retain their original one-over-one wood double hung windows and stone sills. A modern metal storm window has been added over the window on the west side. The synthetic rubber roof on the main building slopes towards the rear, where there is a metal gutter and downspout that jogs down and over the warehouse to the alley. Originally the south façade of the warehouse had three arched masonry openings, which included a pair of wood doors flanked by small six-lite wood windows. At an unknown date, the double doors were removed. The opening was infilled with a single, wide metal door surrounded by wood stud infill and covered with a metal panel on the exterior. The east window has been covered overtime with painted plywood. Covering the warehouse is a metal roof that slopes towards the alley.

Interior***First Floor (Main)***

The store is laid out into three zones: the front commercial bays, the private business spaces, and the back warehouse. Having served the community for 106 years, the first floor of the store has undergone few changes due to its largely open floor plan and ability to remain operating as a furniture business. The main entrance is recessed and centered on the north façade. It consists of a pair of original wood doors with three-quarter glass lites which open directly into the commercial space. Once inside, a patron is greeted by an east and west commercial bay visually divided by a row of square, wood, painted columns equally spaced down the center of the building. The top of each column is adorned by a small wood header carved in an enlarged ogee profile, with a straight bottom edge and s-curve. The smaller wood headers are then attached to the main wood header, which spans north and south below the plaster ceiling. Flanking the main entrance, near the large display windows, are the front display areas, which once showcased popular products to draw patrons into the store. The base of the storefront and floor in these areas has been covered by carpet. The front display area in the northeast corner is currently used as an open office. Behind this area, east of the main entrance, is a wide, L-shaped staircase framed out of wood and covered by modern carpet. This stair provides public access to the second floor commercial space. The lower run of the stair remains open to the commercial space with a wood guardrail on one side and a half-height peg board wall on the other side. The upper run is enclosed by walls covered with carpet samples. Below the intermediate stair landing is a small bathroom.

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Figure 3: A 1937 interior photo of the west commercial bay on first floor of the Baumert & Bogner store. From left to right: Peter Bogner (in the aisle), Henry Baumert (in a suit), and Louis Baumert (embalmer, in striped apron). Baumert Family Personal Collection.

The east and west commercial bays originally had wood floors, tall wood baseboards, a flat plaster ceiling, and plaster walls. Those features remain exposed today, except the wood floors have been covered by modern linoleum flooring. In 1955, an opening was cut in the floor between two columns located near the front entrance to allow for a new, wood framed stair to be installed down to the basement. Wood guardrails, consisting of wood posts and rails, continue to wrap the east, west, and south sides of the opening. Attached to the inner face of the guardrails are painted MDF wood panels. The west side of this stair is open to the basement and has a wood handrail. The other side is walled off. The treads have been covered with various carpet samples. The bottom landing is covered in linoleum with the word, "appliances" cut into the pattern.

At the back of the west commercial bay is a private office and elevator shaft. The office is in the southwest corner of the main building. Centered on the north wall is a single doorway framed by original wood casework. On the west wall is an original window opening framed with the same casework. The north and east walls are clad with painted wood beadboard, while the west and south walls are coated with plaster. A new dropped ceiling, covered with rigid insulation, resides below the head of the window. The office floor has been covered with modern carpet. North of the office is a wood service desk with a cash register. Directly east of the office is the original elevator shaft with a hand-powered wood platform that can be raised or lowered to serve the basement, main, or second floor levels. The front of the shaft retains its original pair of painted, wood-paneled doors and ornate, wood casework. Centered above these doors is a green indicator light, which glows when the elevator is in use. The north and east walls of the shaft are clad in wood beadboard, the south wall coated in plaster over brick, and the west wall clad in unfinished vertical wood paneling. At the back of the shaft is a pair of painted, wood framed screen doors, which provide access into the rear warehouse. At the back of the east commercial bay,

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east of the elevator, is a furniture showroom nook with modern wood-paneling on the walls, carpet on the floor, and directional can lighting overhead within a lowered ceiling covered with carpet. In the southeast corner is a wood paneled door which leads into an enclosed L-shaped wood stairwell. This stair provides access down to the basement and into the undertaking room.

A single-story warehouse is attached to the rear of the main building. Originally, the rectangular shaped warehouse consisted of exposed brick walls, wood rafters, and a concrete floor. A single row of square wood posts ran down the center of the warehouse in the east/west direction which allowed the warehouse to maintain an open layout. Overtime, as the function of the warehouse changed, various modifications were made to accommodate the new use. Currently, the warehouse is subdivided by modern stud walls covered in a variety of materials such as unfinished plywood, wood pegboards, and painted wood paneling. An unfinished storage space remains in the southwest corner, with a concrete ramp sloped up towards the wide exterior door on the south façade. Across from this ramp, on the north wall, is a wide door which leads into the ceramic tile showroom. This space has been finished with carpet samples over the concrete floor, peg boards and wood paneled wall coverings, and a suspended acoustical tile and grid ceiling system. There is a wide masonry opening which remains on the north wall of this room accompanied by a concrete ramp, which slopes up from the warehouse to the west addition. The west half of the warehouse was used as a TV/radio shop in the 1950's. The eastern half of the warehouse remains open except for a few walls positioned directly behind the elevator shaft of the main building, creating a semi-enclosed passageway between the two spaces. Within this passageway is an exposed concrete ramp, which slopes up to the double doors at the rear of the elevator shaft and a wider door opening leading into the adjacent room. Around the 1950's, this space was finished with modern wood paneling, wood baseboard and casework around door openings, VCT flooring, and a suspended acoustical tile and grid ceiling system. Prior to this, at an unknown time, the ceiling in this area was covered with mineral fiber tiles attached to the bottom of the wood rafters. On the north wall, east of the elevator shaft, is a large masonry opening that once provided access between the main building to the warehouse. This opening was infilled with stud wall construction during the time the furniture showroom nook was being remodeled.

The west addition serves as a commercial bay and is long, narrow, and wide open from end to end. There are three ways to get in and out of the addition. The north door on the front façade serves only as an exit. Near the south end on the east side is an original masonry opening, which allows access into the main building near the office. And the large masonry opening on the south wall leads into the warehouse. The addition consists of two different showrooms: a larger one in the front and a smaller one in the back. The larger showroom was for displaying carpet samples, which spanned from the east masonry opening to the north façade. Wood framed tables once lined the east side for laying out larger carpet samples. The entire west side continues to have compact, wall mounted displays racks, with the top panel advertising the brand name for the various carpet samples below. The smaller showroom, from the east masonry opening to the south wall, was where drapes and window coverings were once displayed. The carpet showroom has exposed painted CMU block walls on the north and west sides. The east wall has a stucco wainscoting with exposed brick above. The east and west walls of the drapery showroom have been furred out and covered with carpet. The south wall of the addition has been covered by wood paneling. Overall, the addition consists of a concrete floor covered with modern carpet, 12"x12" mineral fiber ceiling tiles, and stained wood crown molding around the perimeter of the ceiling. No baseboard exists in the addition. This addition is not counted as a contributing resource. Because its use and function has always been linked, both physically via doors and stair and intangibly through business use, to the two-story building, it is being labeled as an addition.

Second Floor

Since the beginning, the second floor of the main building has been utilized as the furniture and home furnishings department. While minor changes have occurred overtime, the second floor maintains an open layout. It has an east and west bay separated in the center by the same wood columns found on the first floor. While mostly vacant now, pieces of furniture, alternating with open aisles for browsing, once lined the east and west bays. At the front of the west bay, in the northwest corner, is a private room original to the building. This is where caskets were sold as part of the undertaking business up until the early 1940's when the firm decided to no longer pursue that side of the business. Afterwards, the room was used as a mattress showroom and more recently for discounted bedroom sets. Two windows are located on the north wall. The east and south walls of this room are clad in painted, horizontal wood cladding. A single-paneled wood door with simple casing is situated in the south wall. Outside the room, mounted above and to the side of the door, is gold metallic marketing for "King Koil Bedquarters." In the east bay, towards the front of the building, is a floor opening for the wide staircase which leads down to the main floor. The upper run of this stair abuts the east exterior wall. A simple wood

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guardrail wraps the north and west sides of the opening. Covering the stair opening is a hinged wood panel tied to a pulley and weight. At the back of the west bay is the elevator shaft, which was originally not enclosed on this floor. A stained, wood paneled guardrail with wood cap wraps the elevator floor opening. At an unknown date, modern stud walls clad with painted wood pegboard, were installed around the original elevator opening likely as a life safety measure. In front of the elevator, within the modern partition, is a pair of wide doors also utilizing a wood frame with a pegboard face which provide access to the elevator. In the mid-1970's, Gary Baumert built wood shelving units along the exterior wall in the west bay. These shelves were used to display smaller items such as lamps, end tables, and nightstands.

Overall, the second floor consists of plaster walls, a wood floor that has been covered with random samples of modern carpet and linoleum, tall wood baseboard, and a pressed tin ceiling with crown molding around the perimeter. All but one window retains its original wood painted casing which consists of detailed rosette blocks and fluted trim. Linear fluorescent pendant lights are centered within the east and west bays. A dial phone is also mounted to the face of one of the central columns, which would have been used to make frequent calls to retail suppliers, representing a time prior to cellphones.

Basement

There is a full basement below the main building. Located along the back wall, is a storage room, elevator shaft, and private undertaking room. The remainder of the space within the east and west bays is generally open, besides some heating equipment and a small room in the northeast corner. Originally, the front two-thirds of the basement was unfinished with a dirt floor and small room in the northeast corner which served as the coal room. The exterior walls were coated with plaster. The ceiling was finished with painted wood panels divided by thin wood strips and wood crown molding around the perimeter. The only access to the basement at the time of construction was from a switchback wood staircase from the main floor into the undertaking room or via the elevator shaft. In 1955, the basement was renovated into an appliance department. A new central staircase was added at the front of the basement, which descends from main floor to a landing 6" above the basement level with openings on the east and west sides. A new concrete floor was poured and covered by carpet throughout. Within the east bay, the walls and central columns were covered with blonde-colored wood paneling and the wood joists on the ceiling covered with 24"x24" mineral fiber ceiling tiles. In the west bay, the plaster remains exposed on the exterior walls along with the historic wood paneled ceiling and crown molding. Three recessed openings framed by wood and infilled with plywood remain along the west exterior wall. The undertaking room, in the southeast corner, retains its historic painted wood paneled ceiling and walls, exposed concrete floor, and light fixtures. An L-shaped wood counter and stand-alone wood shelves remain within this room. Access is via the switchback stair or through a wall opening in front of the elevator shaft. A few modern stud partitions create a passageway in front of the elevator shaft, which includes a wide wood door on the north wall. One of the heavy timber post and beams is exposed within this passageway with a stepped brick footing. The other central wood columns and exterior walls have had their brick footings covered by concrete.

Integrity and Present Condition

The Baumert Furniture building maintains a high level of integrity to illustrate its association with the commerce of Howells and surrounding communities and as a one and two-part commercial block type. The main building's integrity, along with the addition, is recognized by seven aspects:

- **Location:** The location of the main building and west addition has been preserved as they have not been moved. Both buildings remain located on the south side of Center Street, a main thoroughfare through town. The location proved to be beneficial as it was located at the heart of downtown near the railroad depot, which attracted consumers and was convenient for receiving heavy shipments of goods and supplies.
- **Design:** The main building's form, material, and detailing have been well maintained. On the exterior, the masonry openings, recessed entrance, pressed tin cornice and entablature have been preserved. Interior features and spaces have also been maintained and contribute to the integrity of the building. While the Baumert family was not involved with creating the design for the main building, they did have a chance to bring their vision to life through the construction of the west addition. The addition's massing, brick detailing, and signage band remain. While certainly more plain than the main building, the addition reflected the owner's desire for a modern curb appeal within the downtown context.
- **Setting:** Despite façade improvements to neighboring commercial buildings, the immediate downtown setting has changed very little over time. The building stock along Center Street remains intact except for one open lot. The meat market to the east (built around the same time as the main building) shares a similar level of historic integrity. The alley

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at the back of the property remains functional and in-use. It continues to serve as a secondary entrance for goods or supplies to be received into Baumert Furniture and adjacent buildings. Overall, the façades of the main store and addition fit into the context of their commercial counterparts.

- **Materials:** Except for the removal of the large wood display windows, most of the building's original materials, such as the brick kneewalls, wood display windows and cast iron sill within the recessed entry, wood windows on the upper floor, stone sills, and wood framed interior walls remain intact. Material deviations, such as the glass block infill and overlaying the original wood floors with linoleum and carpet, occurred during the period of significance and are therefore still historically significant to the property. The use of heavy timber post and beams was vital as it provided greater structural capacity to support the weight of the proposed goods. The choice and combination of materials for the main building and addition indicate the availability of materials and technologies in this area during a specific period in history.
- **Workmanship:** The quality workmanship and durable materials used on the main building and addition have guaranteed its endurance against weathering and deterioration. The detailing of the pressed tin components, cast iron, wood detailing around the frames of the original wood display windows, and door hardware on the main doors are proof of the skill and talent of the original builders and craftsman who installed such work.
- **Feeling:** Existing features such as the wide open bays, large front display windows, and tall ceilings are indicative of a commercial building. The property's feeling as a furniture store remains intact due to the various carpet samples and flooring used throughout the building and the remaining displays and showrooms. The historic elevator remains operable with its original wood platform and its large size and heavy duty structure clearly indicate its use in moving heavy goods.
- **Association:** Much of the building, including the primary façade, continues to resemble its historic appearance. The lot where the addition resides now, is associated with the implement business. The height of the building and original full-height mural painted on the west façade are the most distinctive features which make the Baumert Furniture store stand out amongst its commercial counterparts in downtown. The fact that the main building and addition are so well preserved are a sign of their practical design, their importance to the history of the community, and how worthy they are of preservation. An early patron of the business would easily recognize the buildings if he/she were to walk by them today.

Overall, the main building and west addition are in good condition. Many of the historic elements remain and have been well maintained.

Future Plans

The main building and addition were sold in February of 2022. The new building owner plans to renovate the main building into a bar and grill.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

A: Commerce

C: Architecture

Period of Significance

1900 to 1972

Significant Dates

1949: Reopened as Baumert & Bogner

1958: Baumert bought out Bogner; became known as Baumert Furniture

1966: Added west addition to main building

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect: N/A

Builder: F.H. Woerth

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

Baumert Furniture is locally significant from 1900 to 1972 (placed in service date to the “50-year rule”) under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its association with Baumert & Bogner and Baumert Furniture, a hardware, furniture, undertaking, and agricultural implement business, whose contributions over three generations have largely impacted the development of the local and surrounding communities. It is further significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an example of a one and two-part commercial block building type as identified by Richard Longstreth with a side-post freight elevator as a distinctive feature in the main building. While the period of significance technically ends in 1972, a closer reflection of the true end may be 2022 when the building was sold, and the business closed.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Criterion A: Baumert Family as Successful Business Owners in the Hardware/Furniture Sector

Settlement in east-central Nebraska in northeast Colfax County was sparked by the availability of homestead land and news that the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad was extending its line between Scribner Junction and Oakdale. The abundance of creeks in the area contributed to the county’s fertile land, making it ideal for agriculture. An influx of immigrants, largely Czechs and Germans, settled there during the 1870s and 1880s. In 1886, the railroad company purchased and platted the village of Howells south of the tracks. A year later Howells was incorporated. Early pioneers and builders were busy establishing a means of livelihood. The early sidewalks through downtown were wooden platforms. Center Street was dirt, coal oil lamps lit up the streets each evening, and daily passenger and freight train service was heralded with much anticipation. Almost everything arrived in Howells by rail. Daily activities and downtown celebrations attracted a wide array of people. Howells flourished into the twentieth century, characterized by a growing cluster of houses and one-and two-story brick businesses.

Joseph Novak was one of those early pioneers, who quickly became a well-known citizen and businessman of Howells. In 1891, he pursued the hardware business and by 1894 built the first brick building in the town, a warehouse for farm implements.¹ In March 1900 he sold a two-thirds interest in his business to Anton L. Kovarik and John J. Sindelar. The new business commenced under the name of Joseph Novak & Company.² They purchased Lots 4 and 5, Block 7 on the south side of Center Street. This location was appealing as it was close to the railroad depot for ease of transporting materials, and it had enough space to display large implements. It was during this time they decided to build a new two-story brick building with a large adjoining warehouse for farm machinery. The contract was given to “F.H. Woerth, the well-known Scribner contractor, for the erection of a brick building, with a frontage of thirty six feet, two full stories in height, with a basement under the entire building, which will be seventy-six feet in length.”³ By June 1900 the brick work was completed and in September they were “commencing to receive their stock of furniture which they are placing on display in the second story of their new brick building.”⁴ The Joseph Novak & Company consisted of hardware, furniture, implements, and undertaking. Joseph Novak managed the business with the aid of his son, Joseph A. Novak, who studied to become an embalmer and therefore added considerably to their business.



Figure 4: Portrait of Joseph Novak in 1916. *Historical Album and Descriptive History of Howells*. 1916.

¹ “Historical Album and Descriptive History of Howells,” 1916.

² *The Schuyler Sun*, 9 March, 1900, 1.

³ *The Schuyler Sun*, 6 April, 1900, 1.

⁴ *The Howells Journal*, 14 September, 1900, 1.

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Henry Baumert and Peter Bogner Embark on a New Business Partnership

When Joseph Novak decided to retire in 1916, Henry Baumert and Peter Bogner purchased his business, establishing the partnership of Baumert & Bogner. Both men were born and raised in Howells and attended the same church, which strengthened their business relationship. Henry's previous experience working as a farmhand and later for an implement store in Bloomfield, Nebraska proved to be beneficial to the new business. At the time the business transitioned, Henry and Peter retained Joseph A. Novak as an embalmer. Mr. J.A. Novak resigned 7 months later but the company continued to provide undertaking services.

During 1918 both men were in the service, so the store was under the management of Edward Shonka. During World War I, Henry was in the service with the 70th Balloon Company Signal Squad. After the signing of the Armistice, he was transferred to Camp Funston where he received his honorable discharge on December 21, 1918, returning home to resume his work in the store.

By 1919, the firm was seeking business property in downtown with hopes to build a new substantial building for the enlargement of their hardware and implement business. Instead, Baumert & Bogner purchased the Novak building from Joseph and his wife Mary, with the warehouse on lots 4 and 5 along Center Street, and lots 23, 24, 25 and the west 36 feet of lot 7 in block 7 for \$20,000.⁵

In the early years, the firm sold oil stoves, Hot-Point electric ranges, and other hardware supplies on the main floor. Henry and Peter would often travel to Omaha to purchase new lines of furniture and implements to sell at their store. One of their main sources was Beebe & Runyun, a furniture wholesaler located at 105 S 9th Street in Omaha (listed on the National Register), who had a large furniture showroom and warehouse.

The implement department was a necessity in this region, which was dominated by cropland and pasture for raising livestock. The company held tractor demonstrations, which were attended by large gatherings of local farmers. Through these demonstrations Baumert & Bogner generally secured several good prospects. In 1925 to provide additional space for the display of their goods in the implement line, they tore out the old wood plank sales platform on the west side of the building, filled in the space to match the grade of the sidewalk, and poured a new cement platform measuring 18x80 feet.⁶ *The Schuyler Sun* newspaper praised Baumert & Bogner for helping to advance the development of agriculture by supplying farm implements of dependable quality at the lowest possible prices. They assisted their farm friends in keeping their implements in first class condition at moderate prices.⁷ In addition to Mitchell wagons and John Deere tractors, they also sold hog and chicken feeders, threshing machines, etc.



Figure 5: 1929 Cartoon ad promoting a John Deere tractor binder, for sale at Baumert & Bogner. *The Howells Journal*, 14 June, 1929.

⁵ *The Colfax County Press and the Clarkson Herald Consolidated*, 23 October, 1919, 7.

⁶ *The Howells Journal*, 25 September, 1925, 1.

⁷ *The Schuyler Sun*, 20 December, 1934, 4.

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Like many of its contemporaries in the 1900s, Baumert & Bogner also offered undertaking and embalming services. Rather than become more specialized in the profession, they combined undertaking with an even wider array of goods and services. In 1926 Baumert & Bogner added equipment to their undertaking department to modernize their service. "Their latest is a Henney 70-horse power limousine hearse which is the most modern achievement in motor hearse equipment. It is the finest thing in the way of a combined hearse and ambulance in this part of the state."⁸ It was purchased locally from Fiala & Matejka of the Auto Hospital. The new hearse replaced the horses and was borrowed by the mortuary in Schuyler on several occasions. From 1929 to 1941, Baumert & Bogner had an ambulance service as part of their undertaking business. They would transport people in need to the hospital or bring remains back to their business. Louis Baumert (cousin of James Baumert) worked for Baumert & Bogner as an embalmer for some years. After practicing for a while, he attended a six month's course at the New York School of Embalming & Restorative Art to continue his education and provide the very best services for the business.⁹ Baumert & Bogner were "recognized as outstanding funeral directors with careful, considerate service, attending tastefully to every wish and desire of the bereaved relatives."¹⁰

The efforts of Baumert & Bogner clearly paid off at a time when they needed them the most. Towards the end of the Great Depression, a 1934 newspaper article titled "Let's Get Acquainted with the Leading Firms in the County," described Baumert & Bogner as "having built perhaps the most successful and highly valued number of patrons of any store to be found in the northern part of Colfax County."¹¹ They continued to keep a complete line of gifts, hardware, furniture, ammunition, guns, paints, tinware, builder suppliers, and washing machines of the best manufacturers.

Peter Bogner died suddenly in November 1937, at the age of 46 years old, due to a cerebral hemorrhage. The business was carried on as Baumert & Bogner until 1942, when Henry Baumert bought out the controlling interest from Peter's wife, Agnes Bogner. The business name then changed to Baumert Hardware. In addition to the undertaking service and complete lines of hardware, furniture and implements, Baumert Hardware placed an emphasis on seeds, feeds, and paints.¹² They secured the agency for Funk's G Hybrid, Maygold, Hagemeyer, and Hoegemeyer seed corn.

During this period, it was common for the business to hold auction sales at the store, sometimes twice daily to move furniture and hardware out so new inputs could be brought in.

The business remained open and thriving during World War II under Baumert's watchful eye, since he was too old to serve in this war. In 1942, Baumert Hardware along with three other local businesses sponsored a magician's show at the local parish hall. Admission was by the purchase of War Bonds and stamps.¹³ That same year the people of Howells came together to raise money for patriotic causes such as for the Red Cross War funds. Baumert Hardware, along with other local



Figure 6: Ad showing the new Henney Limousine Hearse purchased by Baumert & Bogner. *The Howells Journal*, 26 February, 1926.

⁸ *The Howells Journal*, 26 February, 1926, 6.

⁹ *The Schuyler Sun*, "Howells Notes," 02 April, 1931, 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid. The Schuyler Sun*, 20 December, 1934, 4.

¹¹ *Ibid. The Schuyler Sun*, 20 December, 1934, 4.

¹² *The Howells Journal*, 26 February, 1942, 1.

¹³ *The Howells Journal*, "Big Crowd See's Magician's Show," 03 September, 1942, 6.

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businesses, contributed to the cause.¹⁴ In 1943, Henry Baumert hired Robert Clinkscales, a licensed embalmer formerly connected with a furniture and undertaking business in Dodge. Clinkscales was a son-in-law of F.J. Miller, a competitor associated with Miller's furniture store in Clarkson.

In 1945, the store led the way to life after the war. "One of the attractions in Howells during the past week has been a beautiful white Maytag wash machine displayed in the Baumert Hardware show window. It is one of the first post-war products to reach the Howells market and many a housewife is eyeing it enviously."¹⁵

In November 1945, Henry was 61 years old and making plans to downsize and retire. He sold the hardware and furniture stock and mortuary service to F.J. Miller of Clarkson and Robert Clinkscales. He still owned the building but decided to lease the space to Clinkscales for \$50 a month. He also retained his Yaeger Seed Store business, which was located in another downtown building. In 1946 he moved his seed store to the former Sindelar building. In December of 1947, F.J. Miller sold his interest in the business to Gerald Petricek. The business was then known as Clinkscales and Petricek. The partnership dissolved two years later, and a large liquidation sale took place. The Prucha Funeral Home purchased all the funeral merchandise and undertaking equipment, thus becoming the sole mortuary business in town.¹⁶

Sons Reopen Baumert & Bogner with New Vision

In the fall of 1948, Henry's son James was attending his first semester at Ames College in Ames, Iowa. While at home over Christmas break, James decided he did not care for school and would not return. He contemplated what he should do. During high school he would often help at the business, and he learned how to lay flooring from Robert Clinkscales. With this experience, he decided to attend a training course during the spring semester at the Armstrong Flooring Installation School in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Upon returning from this course, he knew what he wanted to do.

In September of 1949, James H. Baumert and Paul G. Bogner, each sons of the first Baumert & Bogner partnership, re-opened the store and it was again called Baumert & Bogner. For a second time the entrepreneurs were busy conducting a wide variety of business out of the store. The building itself was repainted and remodeled. Henry transferred ownership of the building to James Baumert. At this time, the company specialized in hardware, furniture, floor coverings, and appliances. They continued to sell some farm seeds such as alfalfa, sweet clover, blue grass, and Hoegemeyer Hybrids seed corn. Through the early 1950s they also partnered with James Strudl and advertised plumbing fittings, a trench digging service, and installation of kitchen, bathroom, and furnace equipment.

In 1952, Baumert & Bogner expanded into electronics. Fred Blum was hired as a salesman in their Crosley (washers/dryers, radios, and televisions), home appliance and furniture departments. Advertised as "Howells TV Headquarters," there was also a radio and television sales and repair shop located in the west part of the warehouse called Baumert, Bogner, & Luxa. In September of 1955 a stairway was built from the first floor to the new appliance department in the basement. In 1956, Leonard Luxa sold his interest to Baumert & Bogner, who took over the entire Radio and Television sales and services formerly handled by Baumert, Bogner & Luxa. Joseph Kuzelka was to remain in charge of this department.¹⁷ The following year, Kuzelka and Jermain Rhode (both having been employed at Baumert & Bogner for several years) purchased the Radio & Television Sales and Service Department. Their showroom and service shop remained in the Baumert & Bogner store, conducted under the new name of Howells Television Service. Neil Verba then bought that business in 1957 and conducted business there until 1962.

Despite the improvements to the building and the wide variety of services, James and Paul's business partnership was deteriorating. On the side, Paul Bogner had become a qualified auctioneer and it became apparent that the two had different visions for the company. In April of 1958 the partnership was dissolved when Paul Bogner sold his interest to James and Marianne Baumert. Afterwards, the business became known as Baumert Furniture and handled furniture, drapery, and floor coverings. They bought many products directly from the factory, including upholstery maker Mastercraft

¹⁴ *The Howells Journal*, "Howells People Give Freely for Red Cross Help," 15 January, 1942, 2.

¹⁵ *The Howells Journal*, "New Washer," 01 November, 1945, 4.

¹⁶ *The Schuyler Sun*, "Undertaking Equipment Purchased By Prucha," 30 June, 1949, 1.

¹⁷ "We Will Continue to Serve You," *Howells Journal*, 26 January, 1956, 7.

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of Omaha and Armstrong Flooring. As part of their drapery department, they hired a seamstress who would sew custom drapes for customers.

In 1961, after ten years of court hearings and attempts to end service, the Interstate Commerce Commission granted the Chicago Northwestern Railroad permission to abandon a 66-mile section of track from Scribner to Newman Grove.¹⁸ As early as the 1920s the railroads were noticing the increasing effect of motor vehicle transportation and the improvement on new paved roads as part of the highway projects across the state. The loss of the railroad meant a readjustment in the community of Howells as the train would no longer service the businessmen and women and farmers along this route. Up until the 1940s the business would get an occasional carload of furniture delivered by train. After this however, the business had invested in their own vehicles for transporting products and relied on deliveries made by trucking companies. Therefore, the largest impact the railroad abandonment had on the business was related to outside exposure and reduced foot-traffic downtown.

To continue to develop their business, Baumert Furniture decided to expand their flooring department with a larger space dedicated to carpet samples. They also wanted to add window coverings to their product line-up. Due to water infiltration issues, the rear warehouse was not an ideal space to have a large portion of inventory or samples on display. Therefore, in October of 1966, Gerwick Construction Co. of Snyder was tasked with constructing a 12 foot wide addition to the Baumert Furniture store.¹⁹ The addition was erected on the open lot west of the main building, where implements were once displayed. This lot had been sitting vacant since the mid-1940s when the business stopped selling implements and naturally was a great choice for the addition in terms of capturing an additional display window for goods along the streetscape and a first floor space that could easily be accessible to shoppers. The long and narrow addition was designed as one open space to maximize the amount of display area. Since the radio and television repair shop was no longer occupying the room in the northwest corner of the warehouse, that space got remodeled into a ceramic tile showroom. The doors leading into this room within the large masonry opening on the north wall were removed; thus, creating a visual connection between the two spaces. They kept the remainder of the warehouse utilized for general storage.

Over time, Baumert Furniture acquired three other commercial buildings in downtown primarily for use as warehouse space, so that the main building could remain the focus of the retail business. In 1968, the former George and Lillian Peitzmeier building located at 224 Center Street was purchased by James and Marianne. The business initially used this building as a carpet warehouse, storing large rolls of carpet, carpet pad, and tools. In 1975, the company acquired another building for a storage warehouse located at 117 S. 3rd Street. This property had an open space in the rear, which was used for parking the business' commercial box truck. A small engine repair shop located at 216 Center Street was purchased from Joseph F. Pimper (Marianne's father) in 1979. The old building was torn down, and a new block building was erected with a brick front. This became the new carpet warehouse, equipped with a dock at the rear. The building at 224 Center Street then served as a showroom for bedroom sets and mattresses. The buildings at 216 Center Street and 117 S. 3rd Street were purchased in 2021 by Mitchell Blum, James's grandson, who has embarked on his own flooring business. In 1990, the wooden shed located south of the alley on lot 7 and once used for oil storage and Baumert & Bogner vehicles, was torn down. This shed was once used to store the cart and horses for the undertaking business. It then became used for storage of a pick-up truck and trailer. Now, that space is used for trash and recycling containers. These other commercial buildings and site are not being nominated. Although they served a purpose in daily business operations, they have little historic integrity remaining and the carpet warehouse at 216 Center Street is currently less than 50 years old.

The Third Generation Carries on the Tradition

Overtime, James and Marianne acquired the help of several family members. Their son, Gary Baumert, entered the business in December 1972. He attended a semester of college at South Dakota State University, but after breaking his leg decided to return home and help with the family business. Dave and Deb Blum, son-in-law and daughter of James and Marianne, entered the business in 1979. Deb had recently completed her teaching degree at Kearney State College. Dave was going to farm with his dad but instead went off to college where he met Deb. The couple decided to move back home and work at the store. Shortly afterwards, the business became incorporated on July 1, 1981. When Gary joined the

¹⁸ *The Howells Journal*, "RR Still Has High Hopes," 26 October, 1961, 1.

¹⁹ *Fremont Tribune*, 18 October, 1966, 13.

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business, he took over the flooring installations and helped James with estimates and bidding projects. Although Gary never took any professional courses on how to lay flooring, he picked up the trade rather quickly from watching his dad over the years. Dave was also self-taught and mostly in charge of ceramic tile installations. Marianne and Deb were the primary bookkeepers and helped arrange deliveries. Marianne would often prepare home-cooked meals for the employees whether they were working in or out of town. As an active member of the local Women's Club, she arranged to have Baumert Furniture as one of the places in town from which a person could purchase cookbooks and souvenirs to commemorate the Howells Q125 celebration. She continued to be involved in the business until 2018 when she passed away. James, now 93 years old, remained working at the store daily until the time the business closed. Other full-time employees in recent years have included Don Blum, George Blum, Glen Semerad, Thomas Blum, and Scott Blum. A handful of James and Marianne's grandchildren have also worked at the store over the years.



Figure 7: Photo of Baumert Furniture staff standing in front of the elevator and office during the early 1980's. From left to right: Marianne Baumert, James (Jim) Baumert, Dave Blum, George Blum, Deb Blum, Jody Lyrch, and Gary Baumert.

The business remained successful for many years despite competition from its larger rivals and a growing willingness of consumers to drive further for goods. Regional competitors included Walker Meyers (Norfolk), Deets (Madison), and Nebraska Furniture Mart (Omaha). Local competitors included Humlicek Store (Dodge), Parrs Furniture (Schuyler) and Abe Krasne Home Furnishings (Fremont). Baumert Furniture continued to actively pursue new inventory to keep up with the ever-changing styles and home furnishing trends. James and Marianne would attend summer furniture markets in Dallas. Their large sales were often rewarded. In 1970, James and Marianne and another couple from Blair, were the only Nebraskans among 250 persons to enjoy an all-expense trip to Portugal, winning the trip through a large quota sale of King Koil mattresses.²⁰ A year later, "Baumerts have trip to Ireland, winning the all-expense trip from the Gibson Corporation by earning top appliance sales points."²¹ When the F.J. Miller Furniture & Appliance store closed in Clarkson, only six miles away, Baumert Furniture acquired some of their tools and equipment and benefited from the reduced competition.

²⁰ *The Schuyler Sun*, "Baumerts have trip to Portugal," 04 June, 1970, 4B.

²¹ *The Schuyler Sun*, "Baumerts have trip to Ireland," 04 November, 1971, 7B.

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Baumert Furniture carried brand names like Best Home Furnishings (furniture) and Mohawk Carpet, along with several other varieties. They also carried a line of high quality, Amish-made furniture. Gary remembers traveling to Norfolk to pick up boxcar deliveries of Tell City furniture and accessories, which included items such as hutches and dining room sets. Through the 1990s and early 2000s, the flooring side of the business outgrew the furniture sales. Baumert Furniture often used the Howells Ballroom for prep work, such as pre-cutting rolls of carpet, carpet pad, and sheet vinyl flooring. The ballroom's large open-footprint made this task easy and kept the business organized and efficient come install day.

Beyond work hours, Baumert Furniture also contributed to the success and livelihood of the community. Over the years, the business sponsored and supported many different activities and events. These sponsorships helped broaden the business' credibility, public exposure, and prestige. Yet for Baumert Furniture, and many other local businesses, supporting local events and causes meant so much more. It was their way of preserving the small town way of life. When Gary was young, he remembers the store purchasing baseball t-shirts for his team. Baumert Furniture would donate a piece of furniture for auction during the Howells Community Catholic School Funfest. They would do something similar for the catholic school fundraisers in Dodge and Clarkson too. They occasionally would donate a picture to be framed for the Pheasants Forever banquet. When Deb, Dave, and Gary's children were in high school, it was common for Baumert Furniture to donate recycled carpet tubes and large pieces of cardboard to the high school. These materials were used to help decorate for prom and create scenery for different theatrical productions. The business also donated to the Howells Community Fund and volunteered their time, alongside Fiala Automotive, to help organize the Q125 parade. From 1958 until 2021, Baumert Furniture sponsored a bowling team. Marianne, Deb, Dave, Gary, and others participated in various competitive bowling leagues such as the Sportsman and Pioneer. Any trophies won were proudly on display in the store.

In the last few years, the business struggled to find and retain skilled laborers to install new flooring. On top of this, Gary retired in the winter of 2020. This all culminated in the closing of the business in January 2022. At this point in time, Baumert Furniture has been owned and operated by the same family for longer than any other business in town.

When asked what made them stand out from their competitors, James and Gary agree that the business provided a personal shopping experience with unbeatable quality workmanship.²² Their niche was giving the best customer service they could with no pressure. With transactions being made face-to-face, they made a lot of personal connections and ties through the years.

Throughout its rich history, Baumert Furniture pulled from a customer base within a 60-mile radius of Howells. While they did not have a huge selection of furniture, they offered conservative prices in a low-pressure setting. They tried to educate the buyer and help them make the right selection for their private residence, place of business, church, school, or nursing home. Through the efforts of the Baumert family, the business remained successful for 102 years because they were established, controlled their overhead, had loyal clientele, and provided a variety of services. Having served as a hardware, furniture, implement, and undertaking business, Baumert Furniture has greatly contributed to the commerce of Howells and surrounding communities.

Criterion C: Baumert Furniture as Distinctive Examples of a Type

Several existing features and spaces within the main Baumert Furniture building represent the two-part commercial block type, as defined by Richard Longstreth in his book, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. This type of building is generally limited to two to four stories tall and is characterized by a horizontal division into two distinct zones. The two-part division reflects the different uses on the inside. Typically, the lower zone at street level implies public space for commerce while the upper zone suggests more private spaces.

The two-story Baumert Furniture building was specifically built for commercial purposes. From the exterior, the large display windows and recessed entry on the lower zone are key indicators of the commercial purpose inside. The large square openings flanking the main entrance are framed by cast iron columns and beams, brick pilasters, and brick knee

²² Baumert, James and Gary. Oral History Interview. By Abby Hegemann. February, 2022.

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walls. The cast iron beams and columns made it possible to have a large front display area and allowed more daylight to be brought into the store.

The upper zone consists of five masonry openings, with one large opening in the center flanked by a pair of smaller window openings on each side. Overall, the façade elements are very symmetrical based on a central axis and create a sense of unity and balance. A private room was built on the second floor to sell caskets.

In an era where commercial success relied on people coming into a store to purchase goods, a storefront was deemed as an important architectural feature of a commercial building. It played a critical role in a store's advertising strategy to draw consumers inside and increase business. The readily available supply of cast iron after the 1840's helped transform the storefront design as architects and builders began to experiment using cast iron columns and lintels at the ground floor level. During the same period, advances in the glass industry allowed for the manufacturing of large panes of glass at a reasonable cost. The combination of the two technical advancements led to the popularity of storefront designs like that on the original building, with its cast iron frame surrounding large openings.

It was also common for the storefront to be altered to appeal to modern tastes. In this case, the modernization in the late 1960's included the west addition and a new aluminum storefront across the face of the recessed entry. The next phase of improvements came when the original wood framed display windows on each side of the recessed entry were removed in the late 1970's and replaced with glass blocks. The glass blocks allowed plenty of natural light to flood into the interior but kept the light from fading the merchandize. Baumert Furniture is the only commercial building in Howells, besides the Howells Ballroom, to utilize glass block as a building material. Compared to the other six, two-story brick buildings in downtown, the Baumert Furniture storefront stand outs because it hasn't been covered by non-historic materials and its display window area hasn't been reduced in size.

In contrast, the 1966 west addition is a vernacular one-part commercial block with simple brick detailing that has not been altered. This type consists of a one-story, free-standing building that was a popular commercial design in small towns during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and generally contained only one business. The front façade is typically arranged with a main entrance, display windows, and some wall space above for advertising. The use of blonde-colored oversized Norman bricks laid in a one-third running bond in lieu of standard modular brick, gave the façade of the addition a mid-century modern appeal. A blank brick façade was intentionally left above the display window and entry door for a signage band that was typical of the era. Baumert Furniture had a painted wood board with their name and white and red logo up on the building in this location until just recently when a windstorm blew it down and it was never reinstalled.

Finally, a distinctive architectural and technological feature in the main building is the existing side-post freight elevator with a wood platform. This is a hand-powered system, manually operated by use of a traditional rope and pulley system with no cab. The hoist cable is roped from the crosshead and around an iron pulley and drum, along with a series of gears, then extended down to the counterweights located below. From the time the Baumert Furniture building was built until today, the second floor was where the furniture was placed on display. With a 16-foot ceiling height on the first floor, the elevator provided a safer and easier means of transporting goods and furniture up and down, verses carrying large and heavy items down the wide staircase towards the front of the building. The elevator was



Figure 8: A 2016 photo of the primary north façade of Baumert Furniture which includes the main two-story building and one-story addition with a painted wood sign and business logo above the display window.

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also used for lowering bodies into the undertaking room. As items were sold and new ones arrived, the elevator played a key role in efficient business operations. Depending on the circumstances, the elevator would get used daily or weekly. On first floor the elevator was double-sided and served as the only portal connecting the showroom to the warehouse. A green light bulb remains surface mounted above the double doors as an indicator to others of when the elevator is in use. Baumert Furniture is the only building in town with an extant 1900's freight elevator which remains operable to this day.

The rear, one-story warehouse doesn't add to the architectural significance of the property, because it lacks historic integrity.

Conclusion

Baumert Furniture is locally significant from 1900 to 1972 (placed in service date to the "50-year rule") under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its association with Baumert & Bogner and Baumert Furniture, a hardware, furniture, undertaking, and agricultural implement business, whose contributions over three generations have largely impacted the development of Howells and surrounding communities. Baumert Furniture had a strong commitment to supporting local activities and events through a variety of sponsorships which aided in the livelihood of the town. It is further significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an example of a one and two-part commercial block building type as identified by Richard Longstreth with a side-post freight elevator as a distinctive feature in the main building. While the period of significance ends in 1972, it might end in 2022 when the building was sold, and the business closed.

The main building and addition continue to exhibit several distinctive features which help to identify it as a one and two-part commercial block building type. Baumert Furniture has long been a respected business in the community, known for its strong local roots, personal connections, and generous support towards helping others.

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"Big Crowd See's Magician's Show". *The Howells Journal*. 03 September, 1942, 6.

The Howells Journal. September 14, 1900, 1.

The Howells Journal. September 25, 1925, 1.

"RR Still Has High Hopes," *The Howells Journal*, 26 October, 1961, 1.

"New Washer," *The Howells Journal*, 01 November, 1945, 4.

The Schuyler Sun, 9 March, 1900, 1.

The Schuyler Sun, 6 April, 1900, 1.

"Howells Notes". *The Schuyler Sun*. April 2, 1931, 3.

"Undertaking Equipment Purchased By Prucha". *The Schuyler Sun*. June 30, 1949, 1.

"Baumerts have trip to Portugal". *The Schuyler Sun*. June 4, 1970, 4B.

The Schuyler Sun. July 21, 1977, 6B.

"Baumerts have trip to Ireland". *The Schuyler Sun*. November 4, 1971, 7B.

The Schuyler Sun. December 20, 1934, 4.

Baumert & Bogner _____

Colfax County, Nebraska _____

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Primary location of additional data:

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other (Name of repository) _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one USGS Quadrangle Clarkson, NE

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

- 1. Latitude 41.724952 Longitude -97.002063
- 2. Latitude _____ Longitude _____

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated buildings are situated on all of Lots 4 and 5 of Block 7 in Howells, Nebraska. The two-story building is located on Lot 4 and half of Lot 5 and is roughly 35' wide by 70' long with a 28' deep warehouse on the back side. The warehouse extends the full width across lots 4 and 5. The addition is located on Lot 5 and is roughly 12' wide by 70' deep.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the lots associated with the Baumert Furniture property currently and during its period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Abby Hegemann
organization Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, Inc. date 04/15/2022
street & number 1516 Cuming Street telephone 402-341-1544
city or town Omaha state NE zip code 68102
email ahegemann@alleypoyner.com

Baumert & Bogner

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Additional Documentation



Figure 9: Baumert Furniture Site Location. The building is located at the northeast part of the village of Howells, within the downtown. The building is bound by Center Street at the north and an alley to the south. A historic meat market occupies the lot to the east and another commercial building occupies the lot to the west. Highlighting by Abby Hegemann. Source: Google Earth, 2022. Latitude/Longitude: (Main Building) 41.724952°, -97.002063°.

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Figure 10: 1899 Platbook of Colfax County, Nebraska, page 20, Village of Howells. Published by the Northwest Publishing Company. Bold dashed lines indicate the boundaries of the nominated property at the east end of downtown. Highlighting of lots 4 and 5, block 7 of original town by Abby Hegemann. Not to scale.

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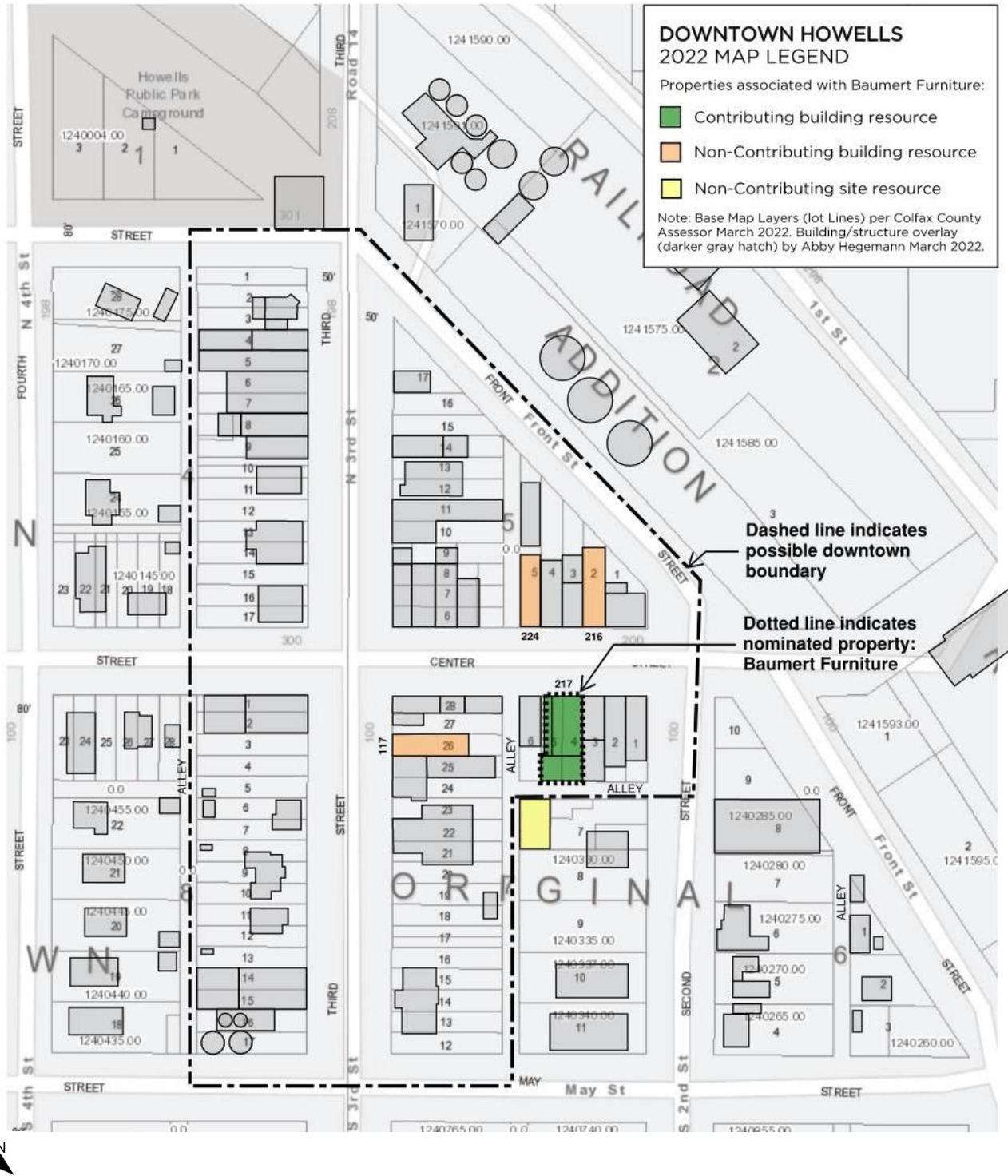


Figure 11: 2022 map of downtown Howells showing contributing and non-contributing resources to the nomination. Base map layers per Colfax County Assessor. Highlighting by Abby Hegemann. Not to scale.

Baumert & Bogner
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Figure 12: Advertisement. *Historical Album and Descriptive History of Howells*. 1916.

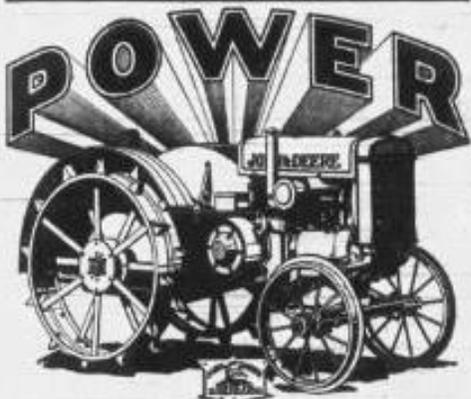
A large, detailed advertisement for 'CARLOAD OF FURNITURE and FURNISHINGS' by Baumert & Bogner, Howells. The ad is framed with a decorative border. At the top, the title 'CARLOAD OF FURNITURE and FURNISHINGS' is in a large, bold, serif font. Below the title, the text 'Just Received and Now Ready For Your Inspection!' is written in a smaller font. A paragraph of text follows, describing the offer: 'Just in time for you to save money on your purchases of Home Furnishings for Fall, and also for Xmas Gifts. We have decided to purchase our new stock in carload lots and thus make a great saving for us and the customer. This event comes forward with remarkably low prices on high grade Furniture. In this shipment we have items that will add much to the pleasure of every wife who appreciates the beauty of refined, yet useful Furniture in every room of the house.' In the center of the ad is an illustration of a living room with a woman sitting on a chair, a bed, and a dining table. To the left of the illustration, under the heading 'Living Room Sets', are listed 'Upholstered Sets, in Velour and Mohair, with Arm and Fireside Chairs', 'Bed Davenport Suits', and 'Couches, Rockers'. To the right of the illustration, under the heading 'For Dining Room', are listed 'Buffets', 'Tables', 'Extension Tables', 'Dining Room Suits', and 'Chairs'. Below the illustration, there are three columns of furniture categories: 'Furniture for the Bed Room' (Dressers, Chiffoniers, Wash Stands, Wood Beds, Vanity Dressers, Dressing Tables, Steel Couches, Steel Cots, Day Beds, Child's Beds, Three-piece Beds, Bed Room Suits with Vanity Dressers, Dresser Bench and Chiffoniers), 'Kitchen Furniture' (Kitchen Cabinets, Folding Tables, White Kitchen Stools, Porcelain Top Tables, and a note 'See ours stock and get prices before you buy elsewhere.'), and 'Miscellaneous Furnishings' (Cedar Chests, Congoleum Rugs, Floor Coverings, Ironing Boards, Rockers, all sizes, Baby Carriages, Medicine Cabinets, Smokers' Stands, Electric Floor Lamps, Bassinets, Carpet Sweepers, Vacuum Cleaners, High Chairs, Rugs of all kinds, Etc.). At the bottom of the ad, the name 'Baumert & Bogner, Howells' is written in a large, bold, serif font.

Figure 13: Advertisement for Furniture and Furnishings at Baumert & Bogner. *The Colfax County Press and Clarkson Herald Consolidated*, 12 November, 1925.

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Another Carload
 of
John Deere Tractors
 Were Just Unloaded and Are Now Ready
 For Your Inspection!



POWER

You can hardly believe your eyes when you see the work done by the sturdy, compact John Deere Tractor. It out-performs tractors hundreds of pounds heavier and handles your work faster, better and more economically. You get a surprising surplus of power in the

John Deere 15-27 Tractor

You will be sure to appreciate the advantage of the John Deere for farm work—its great power that permits the use of both field and belt machines of a profitable size.

You will like its light weight—4,000 pounds—which makes it practical for operation on plowed fields and on land that tends to pack—its extreme simplicity that means less repair expense and fewer and easier adjustments.

You operate it at a saving—with less fuel and oil, it does more work in less time. The fewer, but sturdier, working parts are completely enclosed in a dust-proof case and automatically oiled, which means long life.

The remarkable performance of the John Deere and its great economy have led thousands of farmers to see the value of power farming.

Come in and see this better tractor.

Baumert & Bogner,
 Howells, Nebr.

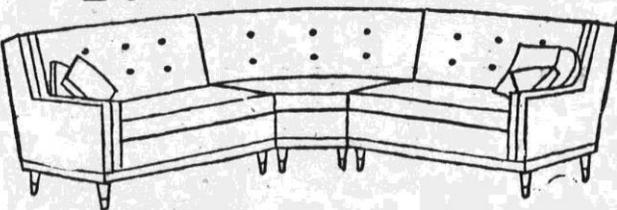


At this Store You Get **QUALITY AND SERVICE**

Figure 14: (above) Advertisement John Deere tractors at Baumert & Bogner. *The Colfax County Press and Clarkson Herald Consolidated*, 09 February, 1928.

SO LIGHT... SO RIGHT... SO VERSATILE

Mobilite
BY MASTERCRAFT®

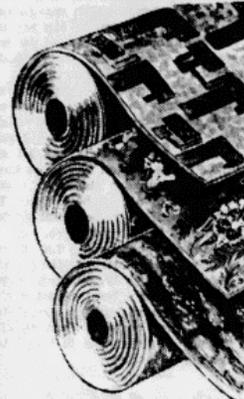


3 PIECE GROUPING
 The masterpiece of Mobilite's light, modern styling. And Mastercraft's Lifetime Construction Guarantee makes this grouping so practical. Select from seven decorator colors in nylon matelasse

Baumert Furniture
 Howells, Nebraska

Figure 16: (above) Advertisement for Mastercraft furniture line. *The Howells Journal*, 03 September, 1959.

Linoleum and Tile



Floor & Wall Coverings ...
 Expertly Installed ...
 Custom Installation Service
FLOOR SANDING

Baumert & Bogner
 PHONE 8741 ... HOWELLS, NEBR.

Figure 15: (right) Advertisement for flooring coverings at Baumert & Bogner. *The Schuyler Sun*, 01 June, 1950.

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WILL YOU BE SURPRISED? THAT PAINT WAS HERE ON THE ROOF A WEEK AND ITS STILL SWIFT! - GAMES I. FROM CANE, IT JUST RIGHT!

SOME OF YOUR PAINTS ARE BAD!

Quality Pays

POOR PAINT IS DEAR AT ANY PRICE!

SHERWIN-WILLIAMS PAINT is scientifically mixed. Every can represents hundreds of tests, until its perfection is your protection.

Why should you attempt to mix your own paint when all this ability, experience, and even the Manufacturer's guarantee of satisfaction is behind every can of the paint we sell?

If you are figuring on taking out some Paint Insurance on the house or barn, or garage, we want to insure you Paint Protection!

We are exclusive agents here for the famous

Sherwin-Williams Paints

WE ALSO HAVE A LINE OF CHEAP PAINTS & VARNISHES.

Barn Red	Outside White	Varnish
\$1.10 Per Gallon	\$2.10 Per Gallon	\$1.50 Per Gallon

BAUMERT & BOGNER
 Henry Baumert HOWELLS, NEBRASKA Peter Bogner

Figure 14: Advertisement for Sherwin-Williams paint at Baumert & Bogner. *The Howells Journal*, 22 June, 1934.

LET US PUT... put a 1954 CROSLEY IN YOUR HOME

WITH the exclusive **CROSLEY PICTURE-SENTRY** THAT GUARDS AGAINST INTERFERENCE

The Picture-Sentry is an electronic circuit specially designed to wipe out flutter, roll-over and streaks—to let you relax and forget about annoying outside interference.

The clearest, most true-to-life picture in all TV—rich wood cabinets that look really expensive—yet the '54 Crosley is yours for only a few pennies a day!

Size of 18 new models, 21" Cassio. Features picture tube without front glass with cut back lens. Model 1-1170-08.

Compare these CROSLEY features—

You can't beat 'em

- CROSLEY PRICES INCLUDE FEDERAL TAX AND FULL-YEAR WARRANTY ON PICTURE TUBE—plus 90-day warranty on all other parts.
- ALL-CHANNEL RECEPTION—WITH BUILT-IN AND OPTIONAL IN EVERY MODEL... other 1954-1957 combinations available.
- SUPER PICTURE POWER—PULLS IN WEAK STATIONS. Features for fringe-area reception.

COME SEE THEM AT:

BAUMERT-BOGNER & LUXA
 RADIO and TELEVISION SALES and SERVICE
 Phone 8741 HOWELLS, NEBR.

Figure 15: (above) Crosley televisions for sale at Baumert-Bogner & Luxa. *The Colfax County Press*, 09 December, 1953.

TOYLAND
 IS OPEN AT
BAUMERT FURNITURE

Visit our Toy Department, make your selection and we will wrap and store it for you.

Visit our Family Gift Department.
 A gift for the home is always appreciated.

Baumert Furniture
 Howells, Nebraska

Figure 16: (bottom left) Advertisement for "Toyland" at Baumert Furniture. *The Howells Journal*, 15 December, 1960.

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Figure 20: Marianne and James Baumert stand in the east commercial bay on first floor. *Diamond Jubilee 1887-1962: Howells, Nebraska.*



Figure 22: Portrait of Peter Bogner. *The Howells Journal*, 19 November, 1937.



Figure 21: 2011 photo of the Baumert Furniture staff in front of west addition with their 'B' logo painted on a wood sign. Bottom row (left to right): Tom Blum, Marianne Baumert, James Baumert, Scott Blum. Back row: George Blum, Don Blum, Glen Semerad, Dave Blum, Deb Blum, Bernadine Baumert, and Gary Baumert. *Quasquicentennial 125th Celebration: Family & Business History Update 1987-2011.*

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Figure 17: Marianne and James Baumert stand in the west commercial bay on first floor. "Business owners part of the tradition of Howells," *Columbus Telegram*, 06 June, 2012.



Figure 18: Baumert Furniture – carpet warehouse. 216 Center Street. Lot 2, Block 5. Photo taken January 2022.

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Figure 19: Baumert Furniture – bedroom set showroom. 224 Center Street. Lot 5, Block 5. Photo taken January 2022.



Figure 20: Baumert Furniture – storage warehouse. 117 S. 3rd Street. Lot 26, Block 7. Photo taken January 2022.

Baumert & Bogner

Colfax County, Nebraska

Name of Property

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Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property Baumert & Bogner

City or Vicinity Howells County Colfax State Nebraska

Photographer Abby Hegemann Date Photographed 01/29/2022

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera.

1. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_01: Exterior. North elevation, street view to Front Street. Looking east.
2. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_02: Exterior. Northwest corner looking at painted mural on west façade.
3. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_03: Exterior. North elevation of two-story main building and west addition.
4. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_04: Exterior. South elevation, alley view of rear warehouse. Looking northeast.
5. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_05: Exterior. North elevation, first floor storefront.
6. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_06: Interior. Recessed main entry, beadboard ceiling.
7. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_07: Interior. Recessed main entry, brick base at wood storefront.
8. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_08: Interior. Recessed main entry, original wood entry doors with original brass hardware.
9. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_09: Interior. Recessed main entry, original brass hardware on wood entry door.
10. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_10: Interior. First floor, looking from main entrance to the back of the two-story building.
11. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_11: Interior. First floor west bay, looking towards east bay and central stair.
12. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_12: Interior. First floor west bay, looking towards east stair in the east bay.
13. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_13: Interior. First floor, looking towards recessed main entrance with wood transom and display windows.
14. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_14: Interior. First floor west bay, looking from the back of the two-story building towards the main storefront.
15. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_15: Interior. First floor, looking at wood doors into elevator, office, and masonry opening into the west addition.
16. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_16: Interior. First floor, looking into elevator shaft.
17. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_17: Interior. First floor, looking up into elevator shaft at metal pulley wheel.
18. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_18: Interior. First floor rear warehouse, looking towards south exterior wall.
19. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_19: Interior. First floor rear warehouse, looking towards north wall and infilled masonry opening into the two-story building.
20. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_20: Interior. First floor rear warehouse, looking at southwest corner with exposed brick walls and wood framed ceiling.
21. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_21: Interior. First floor west bay, looking north out of office.
22. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_22: Interior. First floor west addition, looking north towards storefront.
23. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_23: Interior. First floor west addition, looking south towards rear warehouse.
24. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_24: Interior. First floor west addition, looking southeast at masonry openings into two-story building and rear warehouse.
25. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_25: Interior. First floor rear warehouse, looking northwest towards metal window in west addition.
26. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_26: Interior. First floor, looking down into the basement from the top landing of the central stair.
27. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_27: Interior. Basement, looking northwest towards central stair.
28. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_28: Interior. Basement, looking southeast from elevator shaft towards former undertaking room.
29. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_29: Interior. Basement, looking at wood service stair in southeast corner of two-story building.

Baumert & Bogner

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30. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_30: Interior. Basement, looking southwest at former undertaking room.
31. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_31: Interior. Basement. Historic light fixture in former undertaking room.
32. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_32: Interior. Basement, west bay, looking south.
33. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_33: Interior. Second floor, looking south towards elevator shaft from top landing of east stair.
34. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_34: Interior. Second floor, looking north towards front of the building and northwest corner room.
35. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_35: Interior. Second floor, looking at north exterior wall within northwest corner room.
36. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_36: Interior. Second floor, wood window trim and painted metal ceiling details.
37. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_37: Interior. Second floor, looking south into elevator shaft.
38. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_38: Interior. Second floor, looking south into elevator shaft at metal pulley wheel.
39. NE_Colfax County_Baumert Furniture_39: Interior. Second floor, looking down the elevator shaft at wood platform.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

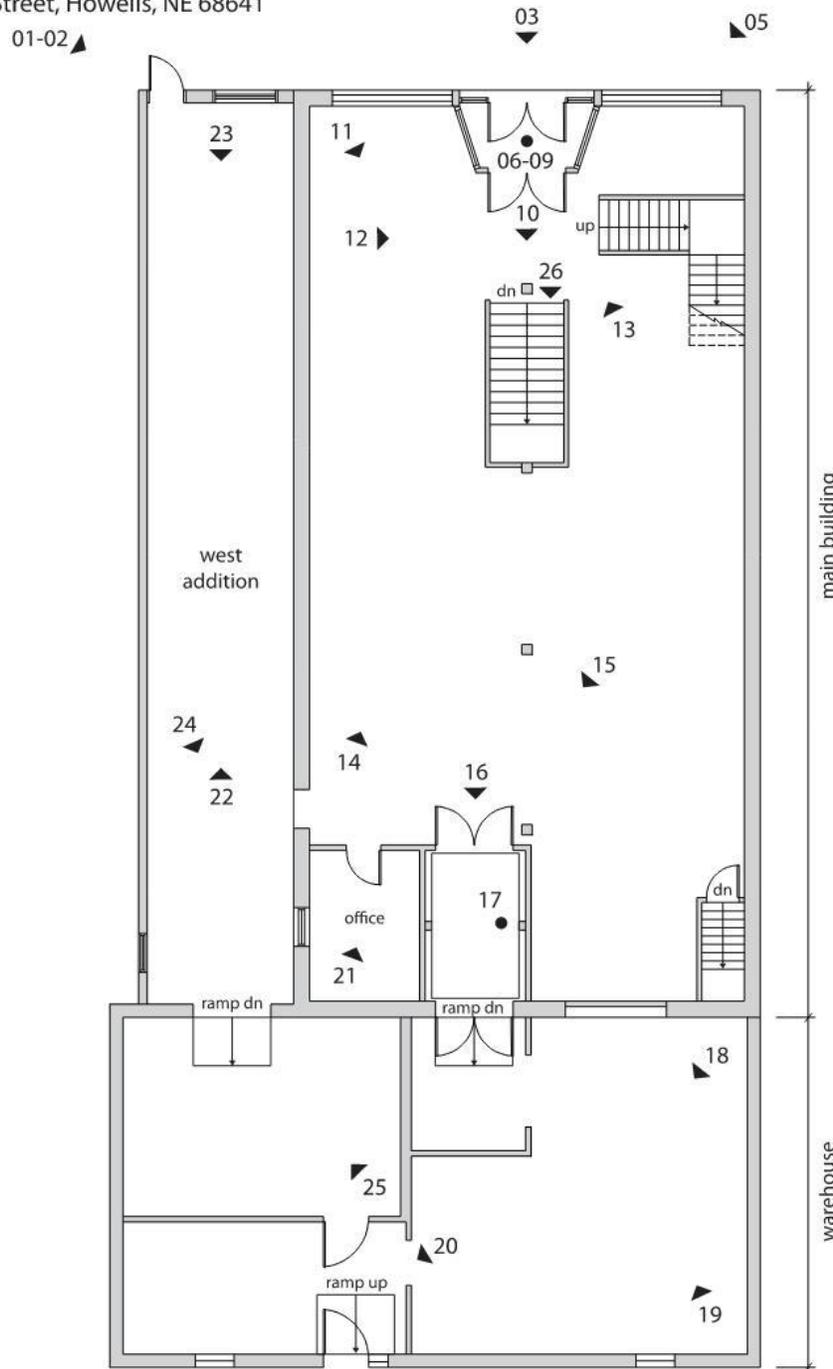
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Baumert & Bogner
 Name of Property

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PHOTO KEY – FIRST FLOOR

217 Center Street, Howells, NE 68641



04

- ◀ photo key - direction photo taken
- photo key - showing floor or ceiling

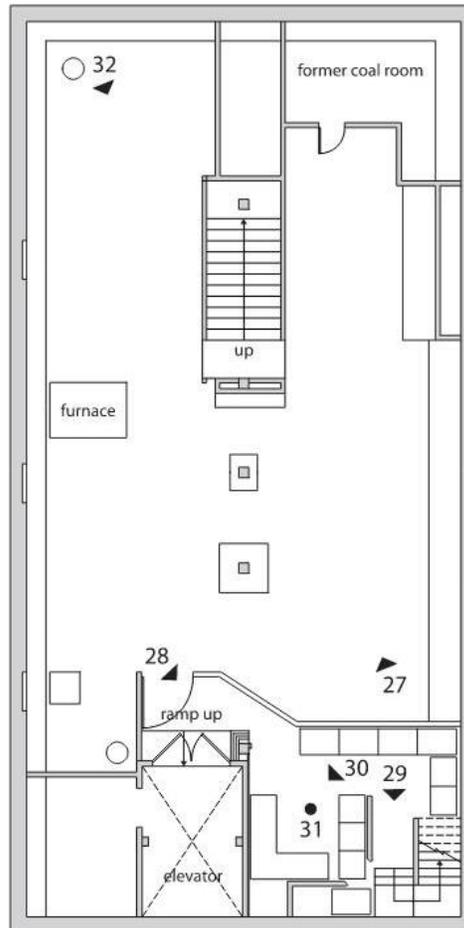


Baumert & Bogner
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PHOTO KEY – BASEMENT

217 Center Street, Howells, NE 68641



- ◀ photo key - direction photo taken
- photo key - showing floor or ceiling

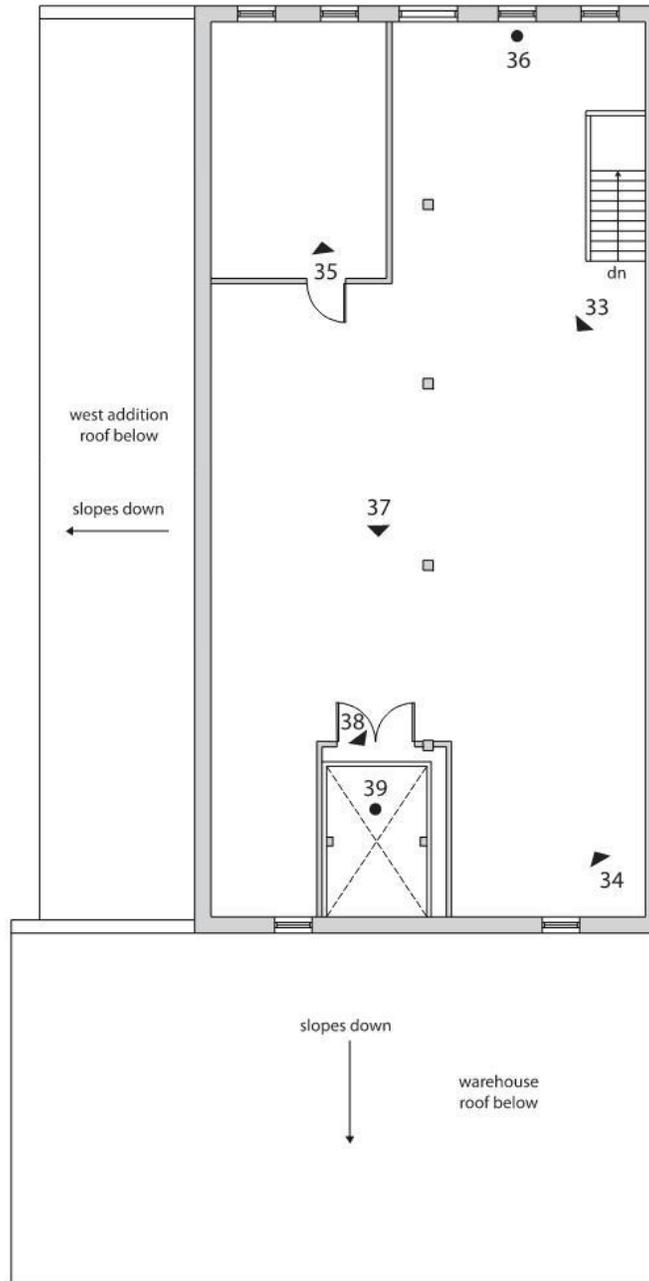


Baumert & Bogner
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PHOTO KEY – SECOND FLOOR

217 Center Street, Howells, NE 68641



- ◀ photo key - direction photo taken
- photo key - showing floor or ceiling



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2.



Baumert & Bogner
Name of Property

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3.



Baumert & Bogner
Name of Property

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3B.



Baumert & Bogner
Name of Property

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4.



5A.



Baumert & Bogner
Name of Property

Colfax County, Nebraska
County and State

5B.



Baumert & Bogner
Name of Property

Colfax County, Nebraska
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Baumert & Bogner
Name of Property

Colfax County, Nebraska
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Baumert & Bogner
Name of Property

Colfax County, Nebraska
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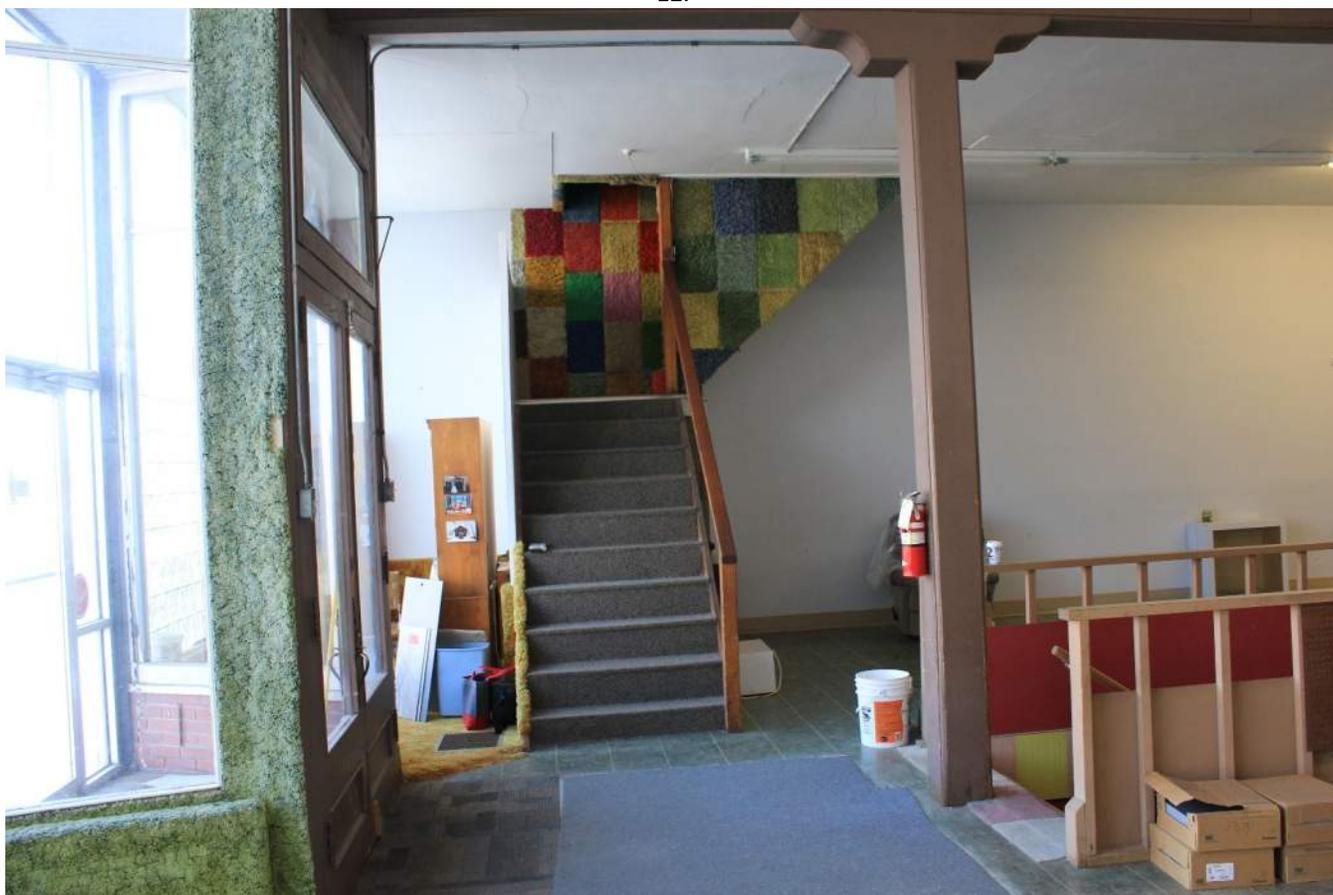


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Baumert & Bogner
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26.



Baumert & Bogner
Name of Property

Colfax County, Nebraska
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27.



Baumert & Bogner
Name of Property

Colfax County, Nebraska
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28.



Baumert Furniture
Name of Property

Colfax County, Nebraska
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Baumert & Bogner
Name of Property

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Name of Property

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Baumert & Bogner
Name of Property

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Name of Property

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Baumert & Bogner
Name of Property

Colfax County, Nebraska
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