

# TIRE VULCANIZING, FILLING STATIONS, AND GARAGES:

The Impact of Muscatine's Automobile Industry  
Expressed by Howard and Deems Auto Supply,

1920 - 2017



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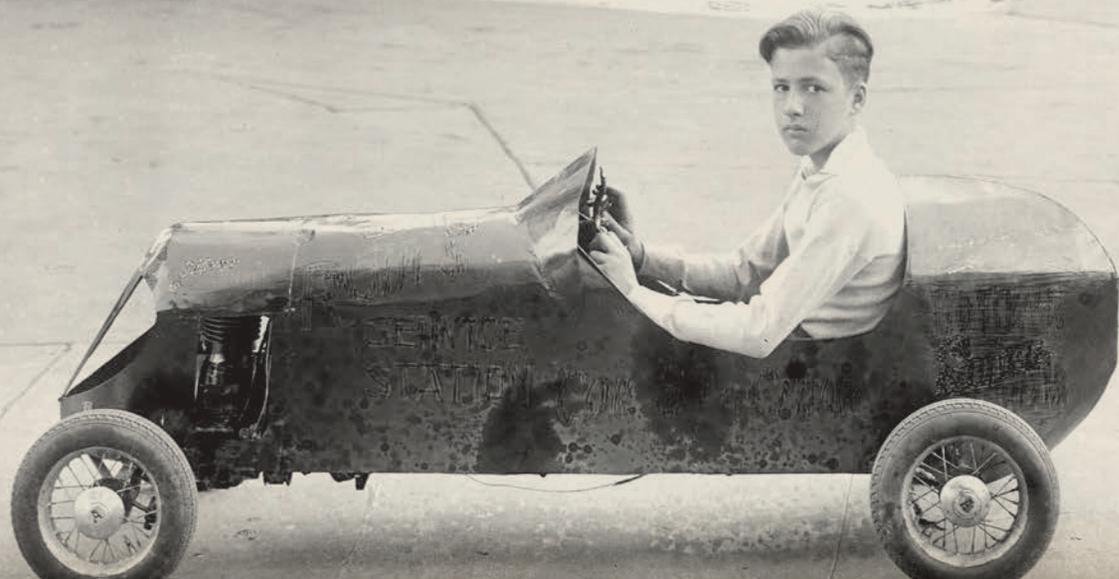
# **TIRE VULCANIZING, FILLING STATIONS, AND GARAGES:**

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Expressed by Howard and Deems Auto Supply,

**1920 - 2017**

**Branden K. Scott  
Impact 7G, Inc.**



# Acknowledgements

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*Cover: Klein Motors, undated. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library.  
Preceding Page: Mills Car, December 23, 1925. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library. Left: M & W Garage, September 19, 1931. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library.*



# MUSCATINE

Howard and Deems Auto Supply

Mississippi River

RIVER

Mile 455

IOWA ILLINOIS

NORMAL POOL 636

Towhead Island  
MISSISSIPPI RIVER ISLANDS  
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

FOURTH

0 0.3 0.6 Miles



# Introduction

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Downtown Muscatine, Iowa has a rich history that is told through its many buildings. Muscatine was central to the early lumber industry, was the world's top producer of pearl buttons, and acted as a beacon of economic development in eastern Iowa for many years. Muscatine's location was central to its development and growth; providing farmers and business owners quick access to the Mississippi River and ports around the world. Railroads increased the importance of Muscatine as an economic center. But one important and often overlooked factor that led to dramatic economic and cultural changes came with the advent of the automobile and the network of roads that tied communities together. Few of us can truly imagine a society without the hustle and bustle of cars and trucks rolling down our highways. But it wasn't many years ago that travel was by boat, train, and horse. The automobile's impact is evident in nearly every aspect of our lives. Roadside restaurants beckon us to stop in for a bite to eat. Street lights regulate the flow of traffic. Hotels along area highways offer the weary traveler a night of rest. Gas stations and auto repair shops dot our many intersections.

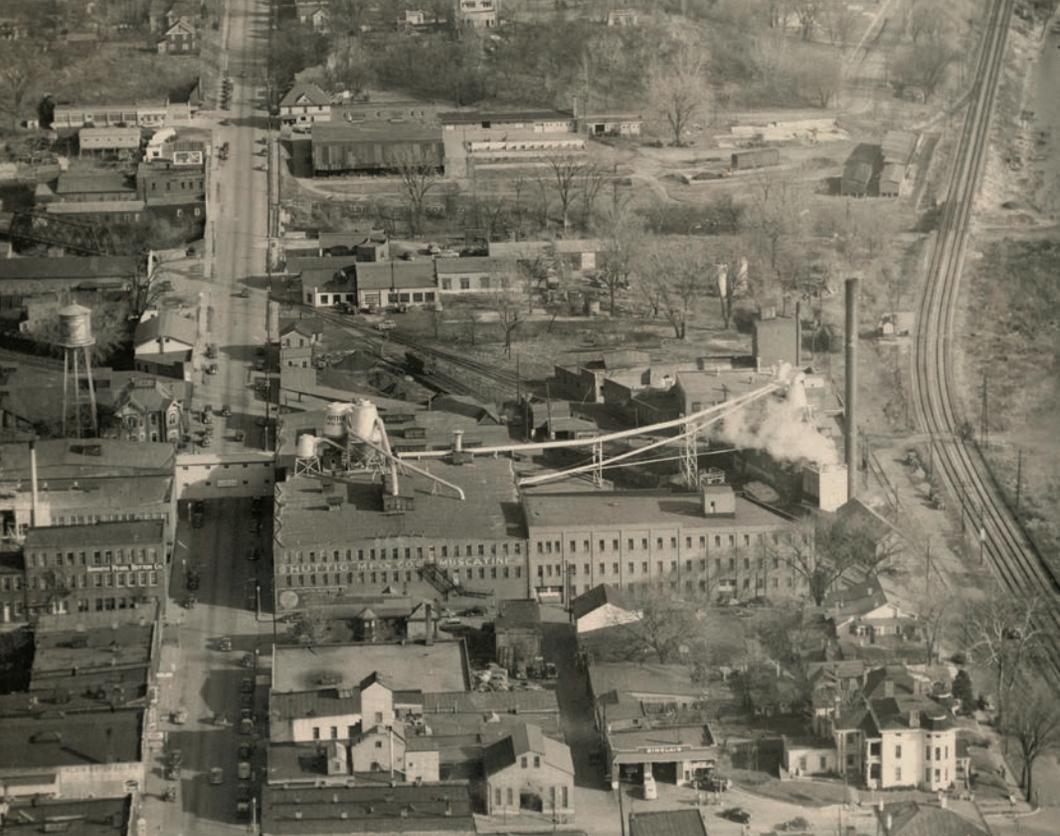
Few properties associated with Muscatine's early automobile industry remain. One such property, the Howard and Deems Auto Supply garage at 507 East 2nd Street (State Inventory No. 70-00954), sits within view of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific railroad tracks and the Mississippi River; precursors to garage's association with the automotive industry. Howard and Deems Auto Supply ranks as Muscatine's oldest remaining commercial automobile repair garage having stood at the intersection of Mulberry Avenue and 2nd Street since 1920. This building tells part of the story of regional automobile development and its history reflects rapid changes to the local economy, culture, and the automotive history itself.

Changes in riverfront land use, transportation, and transportation infrastructure are at work again. Redesigns of the Mulberry Avenue and East 2nd Street intersection as part of Muscatine's commercial district from Main and Pearl Streets to the Norbert F. Beckey Bridge might require the removal of the Howard and Deems Auto Supply garage. Potential road improvement plans seek to improve traffic flow and safety, pedestrian access, offer considerations for flood protection, and tie the downtown business district with the riverfront.

This garage was initially found eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A (contribution to history) by Peterschmidt et al. (2005) because it is the oldest known garage in Muscatine and under Criterion C (architectural significance) as a unique example of a historic garage. A reevaluation of the property by Leah Rogers (2016) of Tallgrass Historians, LLC found that the garage had lost its architectural integrity, but the building was recommended eligible under Criterion A because it is the earliest known garage in Muscatine and because of its association to the City's emergent automobile industry. Since the building is considered historically significant, the City of Muscatine sought to provide additional documentation of this valuable historical resource while its structure remains intact.

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*Left: Topographical Map of Muscatine, Iowa showing Howard and Deems Auto Supply.*



## Garage Significance

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Howard and Deems Auto Supply is historically significant because it reflects Muscatine's ties to early automobile travel (National Register of Historic Places Criterion A). Furthermore, it is the oldest known commercial garage in town, and of the 15 garages listed in the 1923 city directory, only this garage remains (Peterschmidt et al. 2005; Rogers 2016). Auto garages, tire shops, and filling stations once dotted nearly every corner of downtown Muscatine. Most of these garages and gas stations have been replaced with newer buildings or businesses. Howard and Deems has stood at the intersection of Mulberry Avenue and East 2nd Street since 1920, and it is presently the only garage of its type in the area. The significance of this garage does not reside with famed or unique architecture. Instead, the garage represents a major trend in twentieth century travel. The automobile profoundly affected the layout of downtown, community economics, travel, and American culture generally. Auto enthusiasts and hobbyists laid the groundwork for many of our current highways and began a culture of automobile appreciation and collection that continues to this day.

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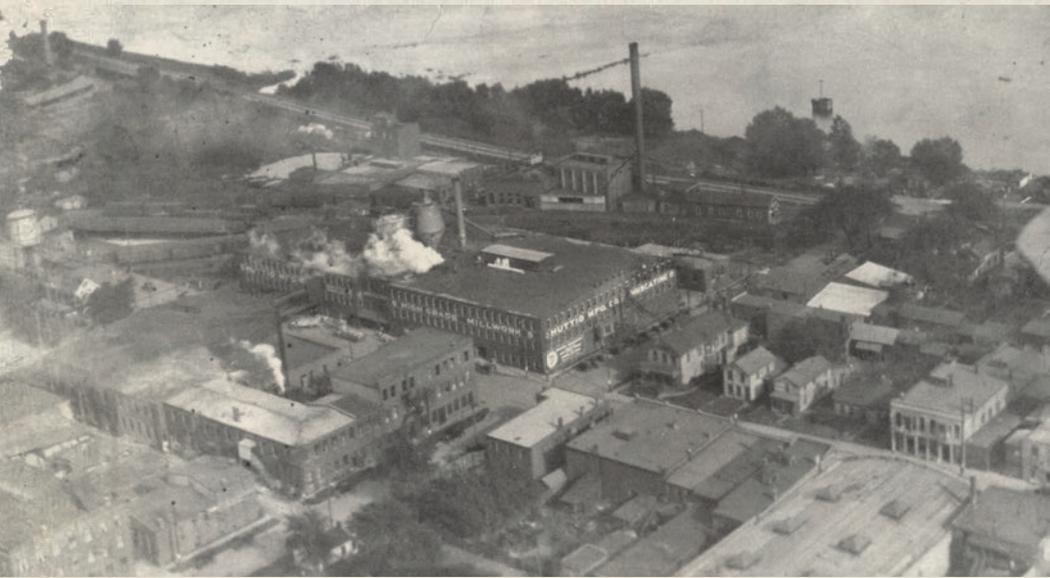
*Left to right: Northeast part of downtown with Howard and Deems Auto Supply in bottom left corner, undated. Used with permission from the Muscatine Art Center. Motor Services Company, June 1, 1933. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library. Burkhard filling station, June 7, 1927. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library. Jackson Garage, ca. 1911. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library.*



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the Great New  
Ford  
TRACTOR  
with the new Ford  
Tractor  
Tractor

38



## Research Methods and Limitations

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Howard and Deems Auto Supply, currently owned by HNI Corporation, was documented using a mixture of on-site documentation and by delving into State and local records. This investigation relied on existing, developed contexts concerning the property, auto travel, and historic Muscatine as produced by numerous sources (Environmental Planning and Research 1977; Ingalls 2009; Iowa Department of Transportation 2018; McCarley 2005, 2006; Rogers 2016). While historic contexts can position a property in time and space, they rarely tell a building's complete story. In addition to existing literature, Impact7G sought primary source materials consisting of historic maps, city directories, newspaper clippings, county records, and period photographs. Most of these records were held at the Musser Public Library, the Muscatine County Assessor's Office, and the Muscatine Art Center. Community members also have local knowledge that is unavailable elsewhere. To tap these resources, Impact7G contacted the Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission and archivists at the Musser Public Library and the Muscatine Art Center.

Limitations exist on any research project, and documentation of Howard and Deems Auto Supply is no exception. The garage has sat at the corner of East 2nd Street and Mulberry Avenue for 97 years. Much has changed in Muscatine during this time and most research, photographs, and remembrances focused on activities around the garage and not the garage itself. Few direct photographs of this property exist, and investigations focused on identifying the garage in photographs taken of the surrounding area. Despite our best efforts, Impact7G could not obtain or view a copy of the property abstract. Most people did not recognize the contribution automobiles were making to the changing society and the community of Muscatine. People tend to be caught up in the moment, often focusing on the past, and forget or fail to realize that history is forged by present actions. This has led to a lack of detailed information concerning the property specifically and most information derives not in the property itself but in developmental trends, of which the garage was more than simply a passive building.

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*Left: Klein Motors, undated (Howard and Deems Auto Supply), undated. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library. Above: Northeast part of downtown with Howard and Deems Auto Supply in bottom right corner, undated. Used with permission from the Muscatine Art Center. East-southeast view from garage rooftop, March 6, 2018.*



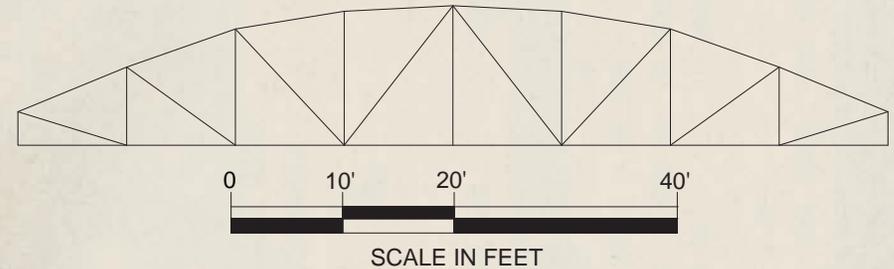
## Property Description

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Impact7G conducted detailed garage documentation on March 6 and 7, 2018. Documentation methods included photographing interior and exterior spaces and obtaining measurements for floorplan sketches. Historically, this garage was a large, open space measuring approximately 10,783.5 ft<sup>2</sup> built in the Craftsman style; an architectural movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries noted for its simplicity/functionality in design.

Much of the garage was built using concrete blocks, with only the southeast side constructed of brick. As of March 2018, metal siding covered the concrete blocks, although historically, the sides of the building were exposed and windows were present to allow light to permeate throughout the building and onto the shop floor. The roof is covered with tar paper which covers wood planking. A brick parapet surrounds the roof with arches on the northwest and southeast sides. Skylights once adorned the roof, but these features have long since been removed. Seven steel trusses support the wooden roof joists. The trusses span the width of the building, resting upon poured concrete piers. The height of the garage from the floor to the metal supports is 14' 6", with an additional 12' 6" from the base of the supports to the roof peak.

*Top Left: Southeast façade of garage, March 6, 2018. Bottom left to right: Southeast view of garage roof and supports. Former window on southeast façade. Garage interior, March 6, 2018. Above Right: Drawing or truss.*

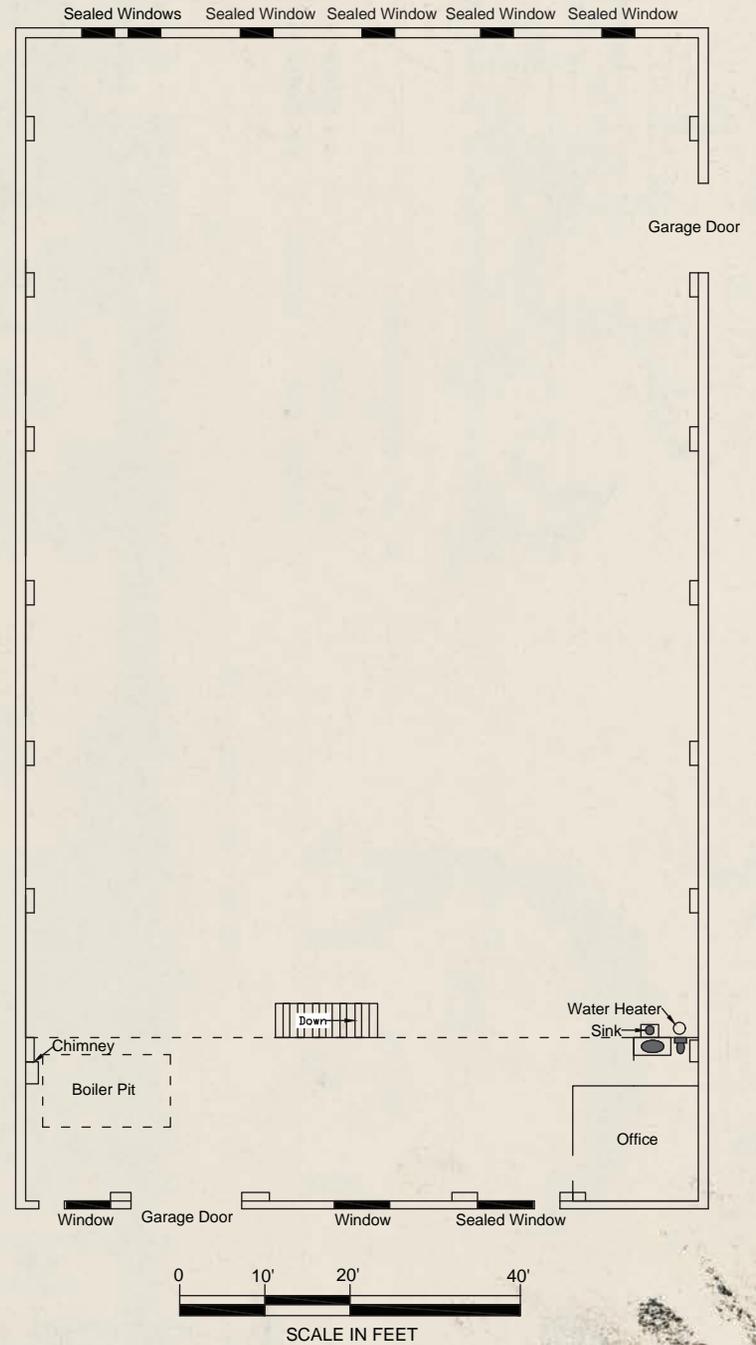


Steel Roof Truss Design - 507 E 2nd Street Muscatine, IA  
Howard & Deems Auto Supply, 1920  
Measured 3/6/2018 B. Scott

The garage faces East 2nd Street and the Mississippi River. The southeast façade was created with brick laid in a stretcher bond pattern, arching above the roofline as part of the parapet. Concrete insets span the frontage along a header-line, giving the appearance of stone lintels. Inset concrete crosses accent the upper corners of the façade. The most notable feature of the southeast façade is the concrete sign with the engraved formed lettering that reads "Garage" with the date "1920" printed in the upper corners. Four round anchor plates and one rectangular anchor plate were used to hold the brick wall above and around the garage door. These anchors do not appear in historic photographs, suggesting that their use resulted from alterations to the garage door. The southwest, northwest, and northeast sides are covered with metal siding which abuts the poured concrete foundation.



Above: Southeast and southwest facades of garage. Garage sign on southeast façade, March 6, 2018. Right: Plan of garage.



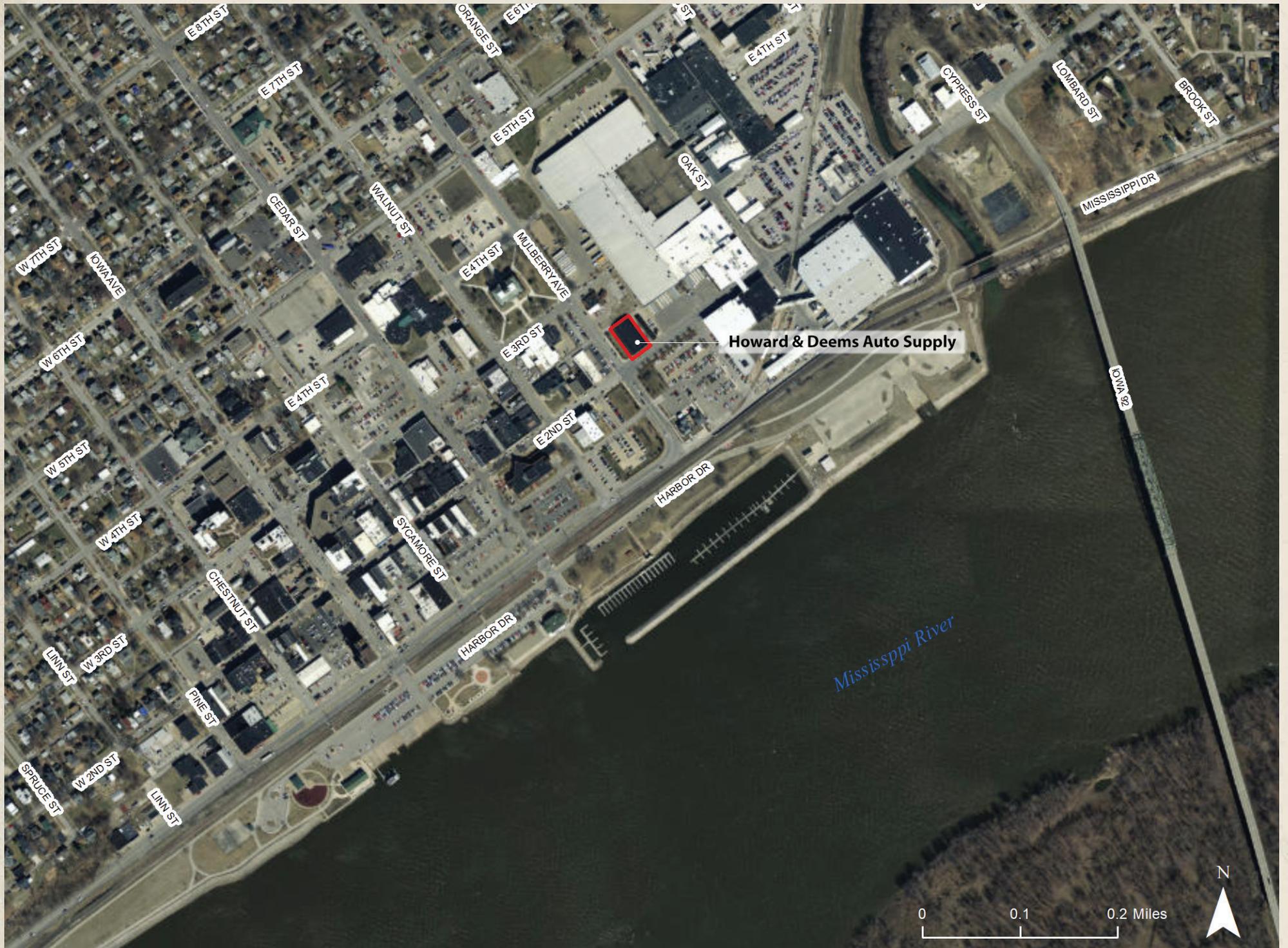
Historically, the southeastern side had large windows that amply displayed the garage and its auto showroom. Rogers (2016) noted that historic photographs depict the storefront as having Luxfer glass pane transom or ribbon windows above plate-glass storefront windows. Numerous windows allowed light into the shop from the east and northwest as well. Nearly all these windows have been covered or otherwise erased. The current window arrangement has two large and one long, narrow window on the southeast side. Historic photographs show at least one large garage door on the southeast side. Presently, the building has one garage door on the southeast side and one garage door on the northeast side. Comparisons of historic images to the current garage door indicate that the door was replaced and that the replacement door needed additional elevation. To accommodate the additional elevation, part of the brick wall was removed. Historic photographs indicate that occupant entry doors were present on the southeast and northwest sides. The present design has two occupant entry doors on the southeast side of the building facing East 2nd Street.

The original design had a large, open area for automobile display and maintenance and the floor was formed using poured concrete slabs. At the time of construction, this open area was likely considered expansive for an interior commercial building and provided not only an aesthetically open feel and attractiveness for automobile display, but served a functional purpose related to maneuvering vehicles and maintenance equipment. Pockets in the brick on the southeast side of the building suggest that additional rooms once existed towards the front of the building. All original rooms have been removed. In their place, a small office and a bathroom were constructed at the east corner of the building. These small rooms were built using 2 x 4" studs and drywall. According to Glen Stelzner, a representative of HNI Corporation, an auto service pit existed in the west corner of the building and it was filled with concrete.

As was characteristic of many commercial buildings constructed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, crawl spaces or basements often accommodated coal or fuel oil-fired furnaces or boilers. At present, a small basement underlies the southeastern part of the garage. The basement encompasses approximately 1,472.5 ft<sup>2</sup>. The building's earliest heating appears to have been a coal-fired boiler, which remained in a small pit excavated into the basement floor. Two fuel-oil tanks were also present in the basement, suggesting that the method of heating might have changed; a transition that was common during the 1930s when fuel oil became a safer heating method (Kibbel 2013). More modern, natural gas fueled infrared tube heaters now provide heat.

The area surrounding the garage is diverse, with industrial development associated with HNI to the northeast, commercial and governmental development to the northwest, and downtown commercial blocks to the southwest. At the time of construction, Howard and Deems Auto Supply was strategically positioned to capitalize on increasing exposure from automobile, pedestrian, and even rail traffic. The intersection of Mulberry Street and East 2nd Street remains busy with automobile and truck traffic. East 2nd Street acts as a conduit to downtown businesses and the southwest side of town. This intersection also accommodates heavy pedestrian movement with individuals accessing the county courthouse and HNI Corporation facilities. Active railroad tracks belonging to the Dakota, Minnesota, and Eastern Railroad Company front the Mississippi River just east of the garage. Within view of the garage is the current Norbert F. Becky Bridge over the Mississippi River which opened for traffic in late 1972. Also within view are piers that once supported a wooden high bridge at Walnut Street. The garage was and is still positioned at the nexus of large industry, small businesses, and seats of county government. Few locations in Muscatine afforded a business the ability to appeal to some many different types of clients that might be looking to purchase or service an automobile.

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Howard & Deems Auto Supply

Mississippi River

0 0.1 0.2 Miles



# History of Auto Industry and Travel in Muscatine

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Peterschmidt et al. (2005) completed an architectural survey of Muscatine's downtown buildings. Results of this survey were later turned into historic contexts documented in Historical and Architectural Resources of Muscatine, Iowa; a National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property submission completed by Rebecca Lawin McCarley (2006). Much of the information about the development of the automobile industry in Muscatine derives from these developed contexts. These contexts were supplemented by information obtained from maps, city directories, newspaper clippings, photographs, and reports on historic roadways in Iowa.

The earliest mode of mass transportation in Muscatine was by Mississippi River steamboat. Shortly after the area was opened for settlement in 1833, a steamboat landing was constructed at Muscatine (McCarley 2006:E3). Steamboat travel began to flourish, with 339 landings at Muscatine in 1840, 449 landings in 1843, 610 landings by 1844, and 710 landings in 1845 (Horton 1978:310–313). Unfortunately, an ice-covered river inhibited travel in winter months, limiting trade to downstream markets until Spring. In 1855, railroads began to replace river boats as the primary means of transportation and shipping (McCarley 2006:E3). The first railroad in town was the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad which connected Muscatine to Davenport and the first passenger train arrived November 29, 1855. The railroad, however, did not have the capability to transport agriculture and lumber products, which had to be ferried to Illinois where they were then transported by rail on the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific (Richman 1911:410–411, 451–452). By 1875, two sets of tracks ran through town with the Southwestern Branch of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific running north/south and the Muscatine Western traveling west from town (Andreas 1875; Western Historical Company 1879:522–523).

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*Left: Scale map of Howard and Deems Auto Supply.*

“ *One thing to which Muscatine can point to with pride is her streets. They are in excellent shape and the city has as much paving as any other city of its size or even larger in the state.*

- Muscatine Journal (December 14, 1901)

”



Above: Street crews laying streetcar track, ca. 1912. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library.

The original town plat attempted to lay roads in a north/south, east/west grid. These early streets lacked paving, leading to significant amounts of mud, often ranging between 3” and 6” in depth on 2nd Street (McCarley 2006:E15). These muddy conditions led to road improvement efforts throughout the 1850s and 1860s, with the first gravel, macadamized (crushed stone and dust binding) road appearing in 1867 (Horton 1978:327; McCarley 2006:E15). One of the most important developments in transportation occurred on May 8, 1891, when the High Bridge over the Mississippi River was opened at Walnut Street (McCarley 2006:E22). This bridge allowed land travel from Illinois to Iowa and it provided increased commercial opportunity to the downtown district and to businesses near the intersection of East 2nd Street and Mulberry Street. The first section of brick paving was laid on 2nd Street between Pine and Chestnut on September 19, 1894 (McCarley 2006:E22; Muscatine Journal [MJ], September 19, 1894). Refuse from the pearl button industry provided much of the paving material, with crushed shell used instead of rock in macadam paving (McCarley 2006:E64). By 1901, city streets were greatly improved, and the Muscatine Journal (December 14, 1901) noted, “One thing to which Muscatine can point to with pride is her streets. They are in excellent shape and the city has as much paving as any other city of its size or even larger in the state.”



Like many towns of its size, Muscatine had a streetcar service in its downtown district. In 1883, the Muscatine City Railway Company was founded to construct a street railway system. The street railway opened on September 11, 1883 with over two miles of track and cars that were pulled by horses and mules (Richman 1911:412, 467). The Street Railway Company (presumably the successor of the Muscatine City Railway Company) converted to electric cars on May 28, 1893 (McCarley 2006:E22). The introduction of street cars and improvements in transportation corresponds with introduction of the pearl button industry in the 1890s. Rails were used for more than just traveling around town. In 1912, the Davenport and Muscatine Railway Company provided interurban transportation between the two cities (McCarley 2006:E65). Not long after the introduction of electric street cars, the early twentieth century ushered in a new form of transportation—the automobile.

In 1909, it was estimated that there were approximately 150 cars in Muscatine (MJ, December 16, 1909). In the following year, at least six auto dealers, one auto painter, and three auto supply stores operated in Muscatine (Muscatine City Directory 1910). By 1923, 13 auto dealers, two motorcycle dealers, five motor truck sellers, four tractor sales businesses, 23 companies marketing automotive accessories, seven businesses selling used parts, three painters, six battery stores, 17 auto repair shops, and 10 filling stations operated in Muscatine (Muscatine City Directory 1923). Purchase and use of private automobiles skyrocketed, leading to a decline in street railway usage and eventual removal and paving over of the tracks in 1929 (McCarley 2006:E79).

*Left: East 2nd Street from Iowa Avenue, April 8, 1912. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library.*



Moving automobiles across Iowa was problematic in the early years of automobile travel. Existing infrastructure was designed for horse and carriage travel, not four-wheeled, loud machines roaring down dirt roads at 35 miles per hour. Motor enthusiasts of the age began to petition for improved and designated routes. Many of these routes followed existing, earlier roadways. Four significant routes passed by Howard and Deems Auto Supply, the “Great White Way”, “River to River Route”, “I.O.A. Shortline”, and “Southwest Trails” (Iowa Department of Transportation 2018). These early roadways were an important aspect to local economies, and like railroads, cities and towns petitioned to have major roadways run through their communities, and by extension, provide much needed economic stimulation from travelers.

The most notable roadway that meandered through Muscatine was known as the “Great White Way” (also known as the “White Pole Road” in the western part of Iowa; Gilman and Florer 2008; Iowa Department of Transportation 2018). It received its name due to the white poles that ran along the route (Gilman and Florer 2008). It is unclear if the poles were already painted white when the route was designated or if the painted poles were only planned. The road first traveled alongside the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad between Des Moines and Council Bluffs in 1910. In 1912, the road was extended from Des Moines to Davenport when Iowa’s legislature passed the Iowa Highway Route Registration Act. In response to the Act, the Great White Way Association (the state-wide highway association) applied for official designation as a highway on October 6, 1913 and they were awarded a certificate on July 30, 1914, making the Great White Way the first route certified under State Highway Commission rules (Gilman and Florer 2008; Iowa Department of Transportation 2018).



Left: Key Ceremony during the Great White Way Picnic, 1914. Great White Way Sign. Used with permission from the Iowa Department of Transportation. Huebinger Map, Blue Grass Road.

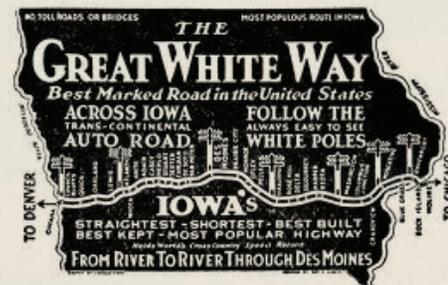
The garage is also located along the Muscatine Branch of the River to River Route; a roadway connecting Davenport to Council Bluffs that was sponsored by the River to River Route Association. The River to River Road was conceived in 1909 after numerous complaints about Iowa's poor roadways. The road was depicted on "Huebinger's Map and Guide for River to River Road" (Huebinger 1910). Most of the route, however, existed north of Muscatine on what is now U.S. Highway 6. However, Mr. J. L. Geisler advocated for the highway to travel south to Muscatine in what was called the "Muscatine Branch" (Huebinger 1910). This branch traveled south to Muscatine along East 2nd Street, turned on Mulberry Street, and proceeded in a northwesterly direction to West Liberty. People traveled past Howard and Deems Auto Supply as they drove along this branch. According to the Iowa Registered Highway Routes, 1914-1925 produced by the Iowa Department of Transportation, the River to River Route was officially registered to the Highway Commission on April 16, 1918 (Iowa Department of Transportation 1986).

Early automobile enthusiasts held competitions for the best and fastest routes. The "Great Automobile Race across Iowa" was held on December 28, 1912 to determine the fastest route from river to river. Don McClure of Oskaloosa logged the fastest time by traveling down the Great White Way; 36 minutes ahead of second-place finisher Peter Peterson who traveled along the River to River Route (Gilman 2014; Gilman and Florer 2008:15). McClure made the trip in 9 hours and 12 minutes with an average speed of 37.5 miles per hour (Gilman and Florer 2008:14). Although the fastest route, the Great White Way went into disuse and by 1922 and it merged with the River to River Route and Primary No. 7 Highway to form Whiteway-7 Highway, but the section of the route at Muscatine was not part of the merger (Gilman and Florer 2008:15; Iowa Department of Transportation 1986).

Two other notable roadways followed current U.S. 61 through Muscatine, and subsequently, past the garage. The I.O.A. Shortline ran from Davenport to Council Bluffs and had a length of 330 miles. This road was registered with the Iowa State Highway Commission on January 8, 1924 (Iowa Department of Transportation 1986). The other notable roadway, Southwest Trails, ran from Kansas City, Missouri to Chicago, Illinois, with 316 miles of the 540-mile route occurring within Iowa (Iowa Department of Transportation 1986). The route was officially registered on June 28, 1915. Both auto routes followed the same path throughout much of eastern Iowa.



Top right: E. F. Kleveter and unidentified woman, July 25, 1926. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library. Bottom right: Great White Way Signage and River to River Road Marker.





With a burgeoning local and regional roadway system, it was not coincidence that automobile manufacturing also emerged. Muscatine was home to the Thompson Motor Corporation, the makers of the “Littlemac” from 1931 to as late as 1935, with Herbert G. Thompson operated as company president (Kasbeer 1966; Quad-City Times, July 6, 2004). The factory was located at 708 East 4th Street, just northeast of Howard and Deems Auto Supply. It is unclear how many cars were produced, but estimates range from 12 to 250 automobiles. The Littlemac was similar in design to the Austin and Bantam automobiles produced during the 1930s and early 1940s. Engineered by C. E. Frederickson, the car had a 4-cylinder Continental Red Seal engine that could propel the vehicle at a typical cruising speed of 55 miles per hour. The car was small, having a wheelbase of 72 inches and a weight of 1,199 pounds. Littlemacs sold for \$350 and a truck version sold for \$500. Like many companies of the Depression-era, Thompson Motor Company succumbed to economic pressures and the backers of the company ran out of money; shuttering the doors of this car company in its infancy (Kasbeer 1966).



Above Left: YMCA Automobile Class, March 1, 1915. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library. Thompson Motor Corporation, Ca 1929-1930. Musser Public Library. Below: Howard & Deems Ad, December 30, 1920. Used with permission from the Muscatine Journal.

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## Property History

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The physical property on which Howard and Deems Auto Supply rests was not always the location of a garage. Historic Sanborn fire insurance maps indicate that between 1883 and 1892 the property was home to C. W. Mathis Pump Manufacturing and a dwelling (Sanborn Map Company 1883, 1888, 1892). The surrounding area was a mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial development with all major industries of the period represented—lumber companies; grinding/grist mills; sash, door, and blind companies; foundries; and just to the southwest at the intersection of Walnut Avenue and East 2nd Street, a livery stable with wagons. By 1888, Adams and Wiles Wagons and Plows Manufacturing moved in just north of the property. In 1892, a bridge is depicted spanning the Mississippi River at Walnut Street, only one short block southwest of what would later become Howard and Deems Auto Supply.



Beginning around 1919, the streetscape of Muscatine began to change again, and this time change would be rapid. The garage housing Howard and Deems Auto Supply was not yet built. Instead, the lot contained a grocer, a confectionary (candy store), feed sheds associated with Schreurs and Freers Feed Yard, and the blacksmith with wagon shop. The surrounding area, however, began to see the development of automobile filling stations, with the nearest station occurring at the intersection of Walnut Avenue and Second Street right next to the livery stables and just a stone's throw from the Mississippi River bridge (Sanborn Map Company 1919). The transition from horse-travel represented by the livery stables and the era of the automobile exhibited by the neighboring filling station was swift. In 1920, the garage housing Howard and Deems Auto Supply was constructed. Newspaper articles at the time indicate that plans to construct the garage were finalized around May 12, 1920. The garage was billed as one of the finest and largest garages in Iowa and it would be constructed at a cost of \$60,000 (MJ, May 12, 1920). It is unclear what the final cost of construction was. The new garage was supposed to have a glass front with two driveways near the center. Skylights would provide additional light to the interior, a feature that is clearly shown on later aerial photographs. The open floorplan was accomplished by using steel trusses provided by the Rock Island Bridge Company (MJ, May 12, 1920). Howard and Deems opened for business in the garage on December 1, 1920, offering vehicle storage, wash, repairs, tires, and Ford parts in their "fire proof steam heated garage" (MJ, December 15, 1920, December 30, 1920). Contractors building the garage were not paid immediately after construction, and at least two contractors placed liens on the property in 1921 (MJ, March 22, 1921). Also in 1921, the garage was the focus of Adjutant General Louis G. Lasher, who inspected the garage as a site to house a National Guard battery of heavy motorized artillery (MJ, October 26, 1921). Lack of data suggests that the National Guard never took up residence in the garage. In addition to their capacity as a garage, Howard and Deems sold used automobiles that included Chalmers, Jeffries, and Dodge brands.

Top right: Howard & Deems Ad, November 27, 1915. Used with permission from the Muscatine Journal. Bottom right: Muscatine Concrete Company, November 8, 1911. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library.

**FOR YEARS;  
OF PNEUMONIA**

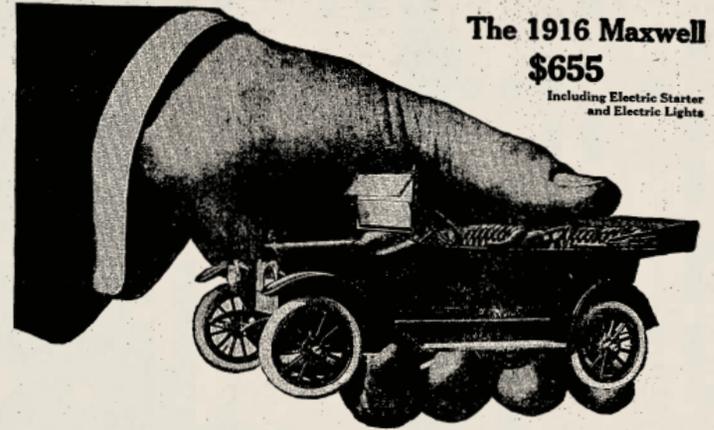
**YEAR-OLD LAD SUC-  
CED THIS MORNING.**

**London Dead From Pneumonia After Suffering for Weeks on Invalid.**

London, a 15-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac of West Front street, died here 7 o'clock this morning. London was a victim of pneumonia. Until about a year ago he was normal and in every respect. About six years ago he began to lose weight and strength. At first he was lame on both his arms and for a time walked on crutches. Two years ago he was crippled that he was unable to move a muscle of his body. He has since then been in bed for more than a year. It is believed that the pneumonia he suffered less than a week ago was contracted from the father of the parents are weak, and are poor, too. It is believed that pneumonia came before 7 o'clock this morning. He was not caused by illness, but by pneumonia. He suffered less than a week ago. The funeral will be held at 10 o'clock tomorrow afternoon at the home and the remains will be buried in Greenwood cemetery.

**IS DITCHED IN  
CK AT CHICAGO?**

**Current in City This Morning as Fire Trucks Figured in Accident.**  
A rumor current in Muscatine that the two new fire trucks, which were to have been shipped to this city last Saturday, were figured in a freight car accident in Chicago. According to the rumor, this is what is delaying their arrival. It is believed that the trucks were communicated with this morning. C. M. Weber of the Muscatine Journal is the source of the rumor.



**The 1916 Maxwell**  
**\$655**  
Including Electric Starter and Electric Lights

**I Want You to Take This Car Now**

Ride in it—take the family out every Sunday—really enjoy the many fine days right now for auto riding. And I have arranged that you may buy this 1916 Maxwell—the biggest auto value on the market—by

**A Small Down Payment—Balance Easy**

The 1916 Maxwell is complete in every detail—electric starter and lights—dismountable rim—one man top—graceful lines—full five-passenger body—everything that the high priced car has—and you can buy it and **Pay as You Ride.**

**Talk It Over**

With "Quince"  
Open Evenings and Sundays.

Third and  
Walnut

**Howard & Deems**

Phone  
1293

**Free Automobile School Dec. 6th to 25th---Ask Us About It**



MUSCATINE CONCRETE CO  
MUSCATINE, IOWA



**Tires Tires Tires**

During the White Way Automobile Picnic, August 17-22d, we will have a car load of automobile tires to sell at cost price. Written guarantee for 3,500 miles goes with each tire.

Mr. Motorist, come in and get a good tire.

**Howard & Deems**  
**Vulcanizing Co.**  
 418 East Third Street.

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Above: Huttig Manufacturing Company and East 2nd Street near garage, September 13, 1918. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library. Howard & Deems Ad, August 19, 1914. Used with permission from the Muscatine Journal. Portrait of Curtis E. Deems, February 25, 1916. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library.

According to historic maps from 1928, the garage had a capacity for 80 cars under a steel-truss roof (Sanborn Map Company 1928). The property retained the blacksmith shop, and the area for wagons was replaced with a welding shop. Corner commercial stores were present at the southeast corner of the lot. Changes were most drastic in the surrounding area—the livery stable a block to the southwest was converted to a garage with a 20-car capacity. Furthermore, auto sales, gasoline filling stations, repair shops, and auto painting businesses blossomed on nearly every block of downtown Muscatine, signaling the end of the equestrian era and the dominance of automobiles. In only a few short years the lot at 507 East 2nd Street would be fully converted to service automobiles. All other commercial buildings and enterprises were gone, leaving only the garage, a filling station, tire shop, and auto repair service on the property.

Howard and Deems operated at this location until February 10, 1930, selling automobiles, tires, and accessories as well as servicing vehicles. The partnership of Curtis Deems and Quincy Howard did not end amicably. In 1932, Curtis Deems claimed in a lawsuit that Quincy Howard appropriated most shop equipment after they ceased active business and further charged that Howard collected rents on the building from M & W Chevrolet Company (MJ, March 7, 1932, April 8, 1932). Howard stated that the property was mortgaged for \$25,000 with an additional note of \$2,500 to American Savings Bank and any monies went to payments of those creditors (MJ, April 8, 1932). Later in the year, Quincy Howard made the claim that he lent money to the company and was entitled to any equipment as compensation; claims that Curtis Deems denied (MJ, August 10, 1932). In April of 1933, the District Court granted permission to withdraw the plaintiff's (Deems) exhibits and no other mention of the case is made in local newspapers (MJ, April 17, 1933).

Right: Howard & Deems Construction Notice, May 12, 1920. Howard & Deems Grand Opening, December 15, 1920. Used with permission from the Muscatine Journal. Ed Dora and Sons Taxi and Livery, September 9, 1924. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library. Sanborn fire insurance map, 1928.

# PLAN TO START ON NEW GARAGE

## TO COMMENCE CONSTRUCTION WORK IN NEXT TWO WEEKS

Howard and Deems' New Garage to be One of Finest and Largest in State — Will Cost \$60,000.

With the clearing of the property at 505-507 East Second street, formerly the site of the Schreurs and Freers feed yard, construction work on its new 100 car garage will be started by the Howard and Deems Auto company within the next two weeks. The property was purchased from the Schreurs and Freers company last winter. The lot is 80 by 140 feet and extends to the alley.

The new garage which will cost

Charles Kern, superintendent of the Welfare Association, received a request to collect the names of 100 needy children, and he has his list already prepared. These shoes are given in addition to those supplied needy school children, through funds raised by the annual Tag Day sales.

## LARGE NEW GARAGE OPEN FOR BUSINESS

The Howard and Deems garage, located on East Second street is now open for business. The garage is one of the largest one story structures of its kind in the state. It was formally opened for business on December 1st.

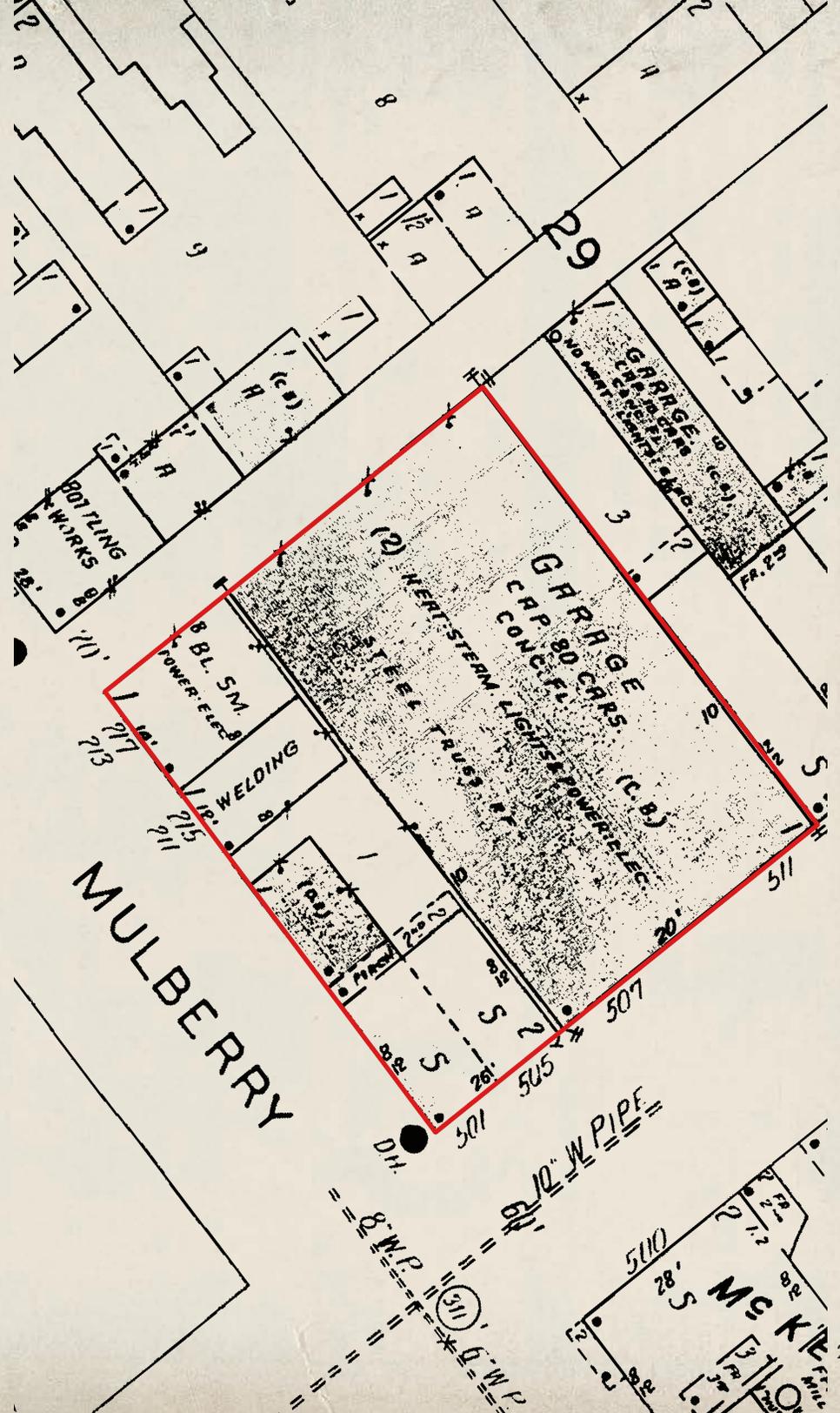
Some forty cars are now stored there and this does not utilize one-half the space which may be devoted to this use.

A repair department is a part of the establishment.

ed to the local lighting company office that the trouble had been found and repaired.

It was at first thought the trouble was due to a cable falling over the high tension circuit at the Block automatic coal chute, but Supt. Fisher scouted this theory, stating that this defect could not have tied up the entire circuit.

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In 1930, the property became M & W Chevrolet Company and according to the Muscatine City Directory (1931), they retained Curtis Deems on their staff. The company leadership included F. B. Montgomery as President, Mrs. A. P. Montgomery as Vice President, and John E. Wood as Secretary. This ownership was short-lived and multiple auto dealers and garages occupied the building in subsequent years, each trying their hand as the Great Depression took its toll on families and businesses across the country. B & J Garage occupied the property in 1933-1935 or 1936, and they offered Nash automobiles in addition to other automotive services under the proprietorship of Nellie Beuchner and Gilbert Jacobs (MJ, December 30, 1933; Peterschmidt et al. 2005). Muscatine Car Market moved into the garage in 1936 and they offered new Graham cars (MJ, December 30, 1936). Klein Motors had a long run at this location from 1938-1958. The proprietor, Ivan J. Klein, offered sales and service of cars and trucks but also branched into Ford tractor sales and maintenance (MJ, December 30, 1947). In 1958, Klein Motors began selling Ford Edsels (MJ October 31, 1958), whose unpopularity undoubtedly affected auto sales. Although Klein Motors ceased operations by 1958, Ivan Klein maintained ownership of the garage until 1988 (Muscatine County Assessor 2018). M and M Ford Sales, Inc. took up the mantle of automobile sales beginning in 1958. City directories indicate that M and M Ford Sales, Inc. was still present at this garage in 1963. It is unclear when M and M Ford Sales, Inc. left the building, but in 2005, the company was still in operation in Muscatine (Muscatine City Directory 2005).

The building was vacant in 1973, but Fred's Body Shop inhabited the building in 1978. The garage returned to being vacant by 1983 and uses/businesses were no longer listed in city directories up to the present (Muscatine City Directory 1973-2014).

**Ford—Ford DeLuxe—Mercury—Lincoln Zephyr—Lincoln**





**Registration of New Cars Near 8,000**




**Renewed and Guaranteed USED CARS**

The rush is here—more new 1939 Fords are being sold—and now we are going to close out our present used cars at prices within reach of everyone. There are thousands of miles of transportation here for any means. Good values—long ranges of prices and terms—\$35 to \$450 cash price; or on terms with a down payment, cash or trade-in.

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| Ford Forder 1937 4-door sedan<br>Selling price <b>\$195</b> | Phonath Coach 1932 2-door<br>Selling price <b>\$195</b>    | Ford Tudor 1937 2-door sedan<br>Selling price <b>\$450</b>      | Ford Ely Van Truck 1935 90 c.<br>Selling price <b>\$450</b>  |
| Ford Tudor 1934 4-door sedan<br>Selling price <b>\$275</b>  | Ford Tudor 1934 2-door sedan<br>Selling price <b>\$395</b> | Chevrolet Coach 1935 2-door sedan<br>Selling price <b>\$275</b> | Ford 1/2 Ton Panel 1935 2-door<br>Selling price <b>\$450</b> |

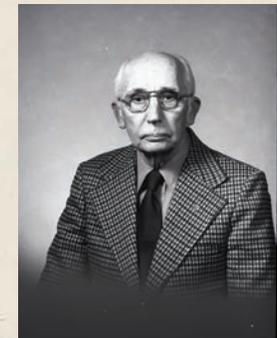


IVAN J. KLEIN

**KLEIN MOTOR SALES**

511 East Second Street. Phone 78

Above: Klein Motors full ad, December 30, 1938. Used with permission from the Muscatine Journal. Right: Portrait of Ivan Klein, undated. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library.





Top: Northeast view along E 2nd St from garage taken March 6, 2018. Bottom: Southwest view from garage rooftop taken March 6, 2018.

## Conclusions

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Howard and Deems Auto Supply reflects Muscatine's early automobile industry. The garage was a pioneer in housing, servicing, and selling cars to an expanding automobile market in Muscatine. The position of the garage along multiple designated highways and its location in mixed industrial and commercial districts made it an ideal location for a successful gasoline-filling and automobile service station. The property has adapted to changing trends in automobile travel, and its most recent and final change will be with its removal to make way for alterations in traffic flow and roadway design. Such garages and the various businesses that occupied the building over the last century stand as a reminder of our continued fascination with travel and our commitment to entrepreneurial spirit.

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*Inside back cover: Batterson Store at night, ca. 1945. Used with permission from the Musser Public Library. Muscatine Car Market Ad, December 30, 1936. Used with permission from the Muscatine Journal. Back cover: Monochromatic southeast façade of garage, March 6, 2018.*

# References

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This booklet synthesized data from numerous sources. The most significant records were housed at the Musser Public Library, the Muscatine Art Center, and the Iowa Department of Transportation. Valuable information was also collected from local informants from the Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission. The State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, also contained resources, but these data were often redundant to local information sources. Attempts were made to locate information from numerous other sources. Data were sought at the Muscatine History and Industry Center and the Muscatine County Historic Preservation Commission but neither had information about the property nor the associated contexts.

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ART CENTER

ART CENTER

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STOP