

CITY OF DES MOINES HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION
Wednesday, January 17, 2024

AGENDA ITEM #1

CAHP-2023-000134

Applicant: Rosa Gonzales (owner) represented by Israel Rodriguez (applicant).

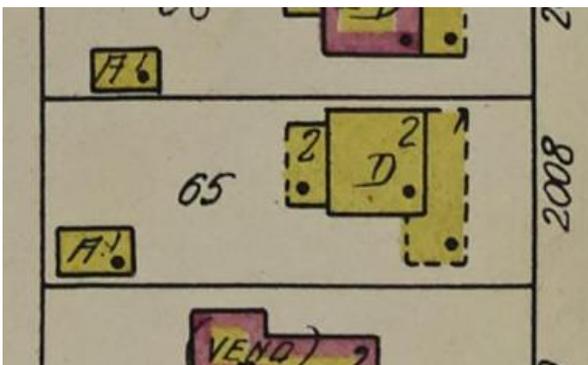
Location: 2008 9th Street (River Bend Local Historic District).

Requested Action: Retention of a replacement door along the south façade.

This item was continued from the December 20th, 2023, Historic Preservation Commission meeting to allow the applicant an opportunity to attend the meeting. Below is the staff report and recommendation as presented at the December meeting.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

- 1. Site Description:** The subject property is located on the west side of 9th Street at the intersection of 9th Street and Lincoln Avenue. It measures approximately 50-feet by 128-feet (6,400 square feet), and contains a 2-story single-family residence built circa 1901 according to the Polk County Assessor webpage.
- 2. Sanborn Map:** The 1950 maps show a building footprint that is similar to current footprint of the house. The attached garage shown on the Sanborn Map has since been enclosed. A detached two-car garage was constructed in 2009 to the west of the dwelling.



- 3. Relevant COA History:** N/A.
- 4. Additional Information:** The request originated from enforcement case ZONE-2023-000278, where the owner removed and replaced the south façade door without a COA.

II. APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Architectural Guidelines for Building Rehabilitation (doors):

- a. Every effort should be made to keep original doors, restoring as necessary.
- b. The original size of all door and window openings should be restored and replacement windows should match the shape of the original openings.
- c. Existing door and window openings should not be blocked down to accommodate stock sizes.
- d. Air conditioners should not be put in the windows of any primary façade.
- e. Any new openings constructed should be at the side or back and the size, shape and placement should relate to the existing pattern of door and window openings.
- f. When original doors or windows of some merit are removed and replaced with new, they should be kept in dry storage for a future owner who may be interested in a complete restoration.
- g. Non-original door or window openings should not be created on the front or other street sides.
- h. The original wooden storms and screens should be restored and maintained.
- i. If wooden storms and screens are unsalvageable, wood storms and screens should replace the original. Storm doors should have a large panel of glass and be of very simple design.
- j. Combination aluminum or steel, or vinyl storms and screen may be used as a substitute for wood. Exposed metallic frames are not appropriate. They should be anodized, painted, or, in the case of vinyl, stained to match trim colors.
- k. Metal frame profiles should match those of wood as closely as possible.

The applicant recently replaced the door along the south façade of their home. This door is a side door that opens from the driveway to an interior landing that redirects between the basement stairwell and the steps up to the main floor. The door is visible from the street. According to the applicant, the previous door was a wood door that was damaged, and the replacement door is a half-panel, aluminum door. According to past images, it appears the previous wood door may have featured a three-quarter window. Staff does not recommend retention of the steel door, and instead recommends the use of a wood door as the replacement. Additionally, staff seeks Commission input on whether or not the new door should be a window in the replacement door due to visibility from the street.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the request subject to the following conditions:

1. The door shall be made of wood material.
2. Commission input on the additional requirement of a window in the door.
3. The selected door shall be reviewed and approved by staff prior to purchase and installation.

CITY OF DES MOINES HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION
Wednesday, January 17, 2024

AGENDA ITEM #2

CAHP-2023-000127

Applicant: Mike Hutchison (owner).

Location: 400 28th Street (Owl's Head Historic District).

Requested Action: A) Convert a previously enclosed porch into a solarium.

B) Installation of new all-wood windows and wood trim.

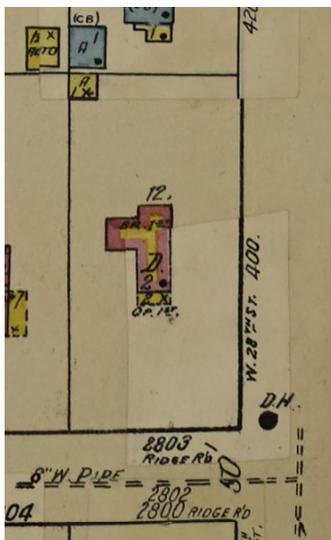
C) Installation of a salvaged door original to the home.

D) Construction of wood staircase, deck and railing.

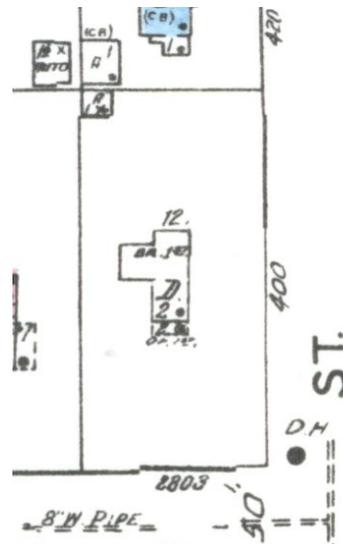
E) Construction of a paver pathway.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

- 1. Site Description:** The subject property measures 97 feet by 190 feet and contains a 2½-story house built circa 1900 and a 3-car garage addition to the north of the house built in 2021.
- 2. Sanborn Map:** The 1920 map shows the footprint of the house and a small garage in the northwest corner of the property and 2-story wood frame porch on the south side of the home.



1920 Sanborn Map



1957 Sanborn Map

3. **Relevant COA History:** On May 19, 2010, the Commission approved COA 20-2010-7.05 allowing the demolition of a 1970's era garage. On August 19, 2020, the Commission conditionally approved COA 20-2021-7.01 allowing the construction of an addition that included a 3-car garage. On April 19, 2023, the Commission conditionally approved CAHP-2023-000021 to allow a fence to be constructed in the front, side and rear yards.

II. APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Architectural Guidelines for Building Rehabilitation (windows & doors):

- a. Existing windows should be retained, reconditioned and well maintained to be energy sound.
- b. Any replacement windows should duplicate the original window in type size, and material. The shape of the original window subdivisions should **not** be changed. New muntin bars and mullions should duplicate the original in size and profile shape.
- c. Windows with true divided lights should be used in places where this type of window was used originally. Snap in muntin bars should **not** be used.
- d. Any enclosure or screening should be built behind or between columns and posts and behind balusters in order to retain and keep visible the design elements. Enclosures more permanent than screen should include a large amount of glass window or door area to retain the quality of openness.
- e. Every effort should be made to keep original doors, restoring as necessary.
- f. The original size of all door and window openings should be restored and replacement windows should match the shape of the original openings.
- g. Existing door and window openings should **not** be blocked down to accommodate stock sizes.
- h. Any new openings constructed should be at the side or back and the size, shape and placement should relate to the existing pattern of door and window openings.
- i. When original doors or windows of some merit are removed and replaced with new, they should be kept in dry storage for a future owner who may be interested in a complete restoration.
- j. Non-original door or window openings should **not** be created on the front or other street sides.

The applicant is proposing to open up a previously enclosed porch on the first floor on the south side of the house. The Sanborn maps show that the area was originally a 2-story wood frame porch. The existing conditions of the previously enclosed porch are a masonry wall painted to match the rest of the first floor painted masonry, with a second story patio space above. The applicant's intent with the solarium conversion is to not disturb the existing second floor patio space. There are currently three existing windows located in this area that will be removed as a part of this work, along with the masonry wall. The existing windows are located on the rear façade, side façade and front façade.

Renderings provided by the applicant show a total of (8) new double hung windows with decorative wood trim between the windows. A large panel of wood trim serves as the base of the windows. There is one proposed window facing the front of the house (east façade), a single window next to a door on the rear of the house (west façade), and 6 windows (in pairs) facing the side yard (south façade). The proposed windows are larger than the existing windows and make up the majority of the wall to create a façade that is mostly glass interspersed with decorative trim elements. The applicant has not provided dimensioned drawings for the windows. Staff notes that one of the proposed windows does face the front of the house and an elevation drawing showing the full impact of this change to the front elevation of the home has not been provided.

The applicant plans to use the same Pella all-wood windows that were used in the recent addition. The proposed wood trim between the windows would be cedar wood painted to match the white trim on the rest of the house. The mullion pattern on the windows references the existing windows, however the existing windows show a divided lite on the upper portion of the window only, and the proposed windows show divided lites on the upper and lower portions of the windows. Staff seeks Commission input on the proposed mullion pattern and potential impacts to the front façade of the home.

The proposed door on the rear of the house (west façade) is to be a salvaged original door from the house that the owner has retained. Staff is supportive of the use of the salvaged door with the condition that a photo of the door is provided for staff review and approval prior to installation.

Staff is supportive of the overall design of the solarium with the conditions listed in Part 3: Staff Recommendation. Staff seeks Commission input on the mullion design and potential impacts to the front façade of the home.

2. Architectural Guidelines for Building Rehabilitation (decks)

- a. New decks, exit balconies and other non-original outdoor areas on either first level or above should be located at the back or side, be minimally visible from the street, should have no major impact on the original building and its character, and be designed with appropriate balustrade and compatible materials.
- b. Porch additions which are not a replacement of an original porch should **not** be constructed on the front of a building.

The applicant plans to add a small wood deck with decorative wood railings and a wood staircase with 5 risers. The purpose of this deck is to provide access from the proposed walkway to the door in the new solarium. Staff is supportive of this request with the

condition that the final design of the stairs, deck and railings be reviewed and approved by staff prior to construction.

3. Architectural Guidelines Building Rehabilitation (walkway):

- a. New concrete walks in Sherman Hill and Owl's Head should be consistent with City standard and consistent in width with the widest existing sidewalk at either end of the proposed sidewalk.
- b. 4', 5', and 6' sidewalks should be subdivided into two equal widths.
- c. Stamped concrete is permitted when the proposed pattern is shown to be a recreation of an original pattern used in this area.
- d. Exposed aggregate should **not** be used because it is difficult to match and there is no evidence that this texture was historically used.

Renderings provided by the applicant show a walkway connecting to the bottom of the proposed staircase. The renderings indicate this walkway will be a decorative paver in a grey color. A product selection or site plan showing the location of the walkway has not been provided by the applicant at the time of this staff report. Staff is supportive of a paver walkway with the condition that the location of the walkway and the product used to pave the walkway are approved by staff prior to installation.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the request subject to the following conditions:

1. Commission input on the window mullion design and potential impacts to the front facade of the home.
2. Review and approval of the final window product selection prior to purchase by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
3. Review and approval of the salvaged door prior to installation by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
4. Review and approval of a site plan/sketch that illustrates the width and location of the proposed walkway and review and approval of final paving product for walkway prior to installation by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
5. Review and approval of the final design of the staircase, deck and railings prior to construction by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
6. Compliance with the Building Code and issuance of all necessary permits by the Permit and Development Center.

CITY OF DES MOINES HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION
Wednesday, January 17, 2024

AGENDA ITEM #3

CAHP-2023-000137

Applicant: Ryan Avila (owner) represented by Jessie Walter (applicant).

Location: 1250 9th Street (River Bend Historic District).

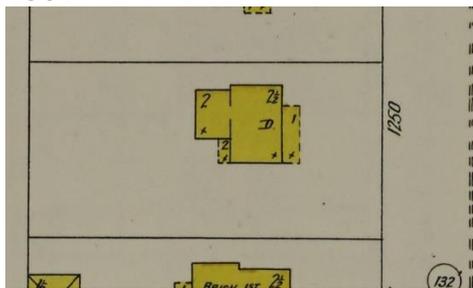
Requested Action: Replacement roof on garage in rear yard.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

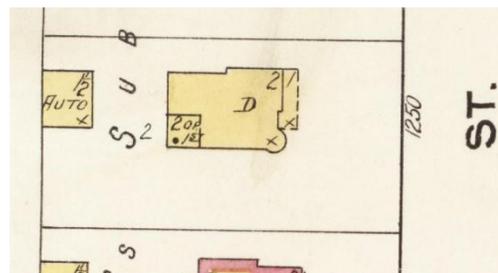
1. **Site Description:** The subject property measures 66 feet by 132 feet and located on the west side of 9th street near the intersection of 9th Street and Indiana Avenue. It contains a detached garage and 2-story duplex built circa 1893 as a single-family dwelling, according to the Polk County Assessor.

2. Sanborn Maps:

1901



1920



3. **Relevant COA History:** On September 20, 2023, the Commission approved removal of the metal frame and plastic roofing that covers the open porch on the south façade of the house.

On February 17, 2021, the Commission conditionally approved replacing two first floor windows and installing new siding on the rear façade provided the windows were wood and that the applicant work with staff to find an appropriate design, material, and texture for the windows and siding.

On March 28, 2017, staff administratively approved a COA for replacement of front stoop shingles with asphalt shingles to match the rest of the home.

II. APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Architectural Guidelines for Building Rehabilitation (roof):

- a. Restoration of the original roof shape is critical in rehabilitating a building. Such restoration should be based on photographs and any remaining structural clues.
- b. Changing an original roof shape and style is **not** permitted.
- c. Solar collectors should either be located on outbuildings to go unnoticed when viewed from the street side(s). They should be set back as far as possible from the primary facade(s) and on pitched roof buildings should be mounted at the same angle as the roof and as close to the roof plane as possible.
- d. Original roof materials should be retained and repaired. This is especially important if the roof is a permanent material like slate or tile.
- e. Original roof material should be replaced with the same material. Roofs originally shingled with wooden shingles should be re-shingled with wooden shingles.
- f. When asphalt or fiberglass shingles are used as a substitute for wood shingles a medium or dark color should be used.
- g. Metal, tile or slate roofs should **not** be redone using substitute roofing material unless that material is similar in size, coursing, texture and color to the original.
- h. Rubber or other composition material may be used when re-roofing flat-roofed areas or flat-roof buildings.

The applicant is proposing to replace an existing roof on a garage in the rear of the property. According to the new owner, only the shingles will be replaced, which would normally be reviewed Administratively. However, upon notifying the Commission, it was revealed that the existing condition of the roof would likely require more than just shingles replacement. Staff confirmed with the applicant that, at minimum, some sheathing would also require replacement, but was unsure if more would be required. Staff seeks discussion at the meeting to confirm all aspects of the roof work is understood and included in any issued Certificate of Appropriateness.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness subject to the following conditions:

1. Clarification from the applicant regarding the full scope of work for the roof replacement.
2. Compliance with all applicable Building Codes with issuance of all necessary permits by the City's Permit and Development Center.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Davidson Bros. Company Warehouse and Manufacturing Building

other names/site number _____

Name of Multiple Property Listing n/a

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

2. Location

street & number 108 SW 3rd Street not for publication

city or town Des Moines vicinity

state Iowa county Polk zip code 50309

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: State Historic Preservation Officer Date

State Historic Preservation Office of Iowa

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 or 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 the Keeper Date of Action

Davidson Bros. Company Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

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		buildings
		site
		structure
		object
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/warehouse

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: BRICK
walls: BRICK

roof: _____
other: _____

Davidson Bros. Company Warehouse

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph (Briefly describe the current, general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

The Davidson Bros. Company building was constructed in 1901 in the industrial area located west of the Des Moines River and south of the commercial downtown area. The building is comprised of a three-story, 1901 heavy timber and masonry building with a reinforced concrete and brick addition completed in 1912. The building was constructed between the major east-to-west railroad corridors that bisected this industrial sector; it retains the historic association with the rail lines that remain in place to its south. Davidson Bros. is representative of the city's wholesale grocery sector and the manufacture and distribution of candy and chocolates. The building was rehabilitated for adaptive re-use in 1988, with interior partition walls constructed to create office spaces; more recent remodeling dates to 2015. Despite the alterations, the interior (first floor in particular) retains a good sense of the historic warehouse function with exposed heavy-timber structure and brick perimeter walls intact. The exterior also remains representative of the historic function, with form, masonry, and most of the original openings retained (windows replaced). Generally, the building retains a good level of historic integrity.

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable.)

(Iowa SHPO Additional Instructions: After the main **Narrative Description**, discuss any physical alterations since the period of significance under the subheading **Alterations**, the seven aspects of integrity as it applies to the property in a **Statement of Integrity**, and any future plans for the property under the subheading **Future Plans**.)

The Davidson Bros. Company Warehouse and Manufacturing building is comprised of a three-story, 1901 heavy timber and masonry building with a reinforced concrete and brick addition completed in 1912. The building was constructed on land leased from Des Moines real estate developer Fred M. Hubbell and strategically located between the major east-to-west railroad corridors that bisected the industrial sector. The resource represents one of the oldest remaining warehouses associated with the industrial center that was concentrated west of the Des Moines River and south of the downtown commercial area. The building retains a good level of historic integrity, with exterior character-defining features and interior heavy timber structure and reinforced concrete retained.

Site Description

Davidson Bros. is located in what was the pre-eminent wholesale and jobbing district west of the Des Moines River. Much changed from its heyday, the area is now a combination of remnants from that era and new construction. The Des Moines River is located two blocks to the east.

The resource is sited on the southeast corner of its block, which is bounded on the east by 3rd Street, on the south by Depot Street, on the west by 4th Street and on the north by Cherry Street. The building property is sited with its façade (east elevation) abutting the public sidewalk on the east, the south elevation abutting Depot Street (a vacated alley) on the south, the west elevation abutting the rear

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

property line (marked by a narrow strip of seeded yard), and by a parking lot on the north; the building fills its legal parcel except for a narrow strip of land along the north elevation, between the building and the parking lot—the land being located within the parcel boundary.

The site is flat and lacking vegetation. Adjacent properties have city-mandated landscaping, which is small in scale and minimal in character.

Building Description

Constructed in 1901 with an addition dating to 1912, the Davidson Bros. Warehouse is a 65- by 172-foot, three-story building with a full basement. The 1901 building is a heavy timber and masonry structure; the 1912 addition is reinforced concrete and brick. Typical of industrial buildings, the warehouse has a flat roof.

Exterior - Overview

The building exterior is visually characterized by its rectangular form, flat roof, masonry exterior, and use of the round-arch form for large-scale openings on the ground floor. The building exemplifies the warehouse property type in its sense of mass, which is derived from the dominance of masonry wall over glazed openings, a limited use of decorative details, and an absence of other organizational elements (e.g., belt-courses, watertable, storefront) typically incorporated on commercial property types with a retail component. The Davidson Warehouse exhibits a sense of individual design character in the use of the round-arch form, which is incorporated at ground level on all of the 1901 elevations. The arch establishes the façade symmetry and creates a rhythm along the north and south elevations.

The exterior of the original building is clad in brick, laid in a common bond. The brick on the lower six-feet of the three elevations is a multi-toned, brown brick with the upper walls clad in a red brick. The struck joints have taupe-colored mortar with a prominent aggregate. A stain has been applied to the north elevation, deepening the color of both the brick and the mortar. The addition is constructed of reinforced concrete and brick with the structural system exposed on the north and west elevations. The south elevation of the addition is clad in red brick, which is deeper in tone than that of the 1901 building.

All elevations of the 1901 building and the north and south elevations of the addition have a simple cornice created by the incremental stepping outward of brick courses to create a flared profile. Metal flashing covers or has replaced the original coping.

All elevations of the 1901 building share a consistent character relative to fenestration. On each elevation, the ground floor is dominated by round-arch openings with smaller, segmental arch openings used in isolation. Fenestration on the elevations of the addition is inconsistent in character, with significant alteration of original openings on the north and south.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

Ghost signs are retained on the north and south elevations. Those on the north are diminished by the stain treatment previously noted, but above the first-floor openings (near the east end of the elevation) a linear, painted sign reads "wholesale fruits." Markings above the second-floor windows are more difficult to discern, but the words "ice cream," "confectionery," and "wholesale" appear in a linear band that extends from the east elevation to the addition. Also on the north elevation, in the west bay of the addition, at the second floor, a ghost marking extends the full width of the bay between the second- and third-floor windows; the text on this section is very degraded, but it appears to read "frozen food lockers" along the bottom edge, with a large downward pointing arrow noting "first floor south"; the addition was constructed to house "a freezing and cold storage plant" so that reading is very likely accurate.

Similar markings appear on the south elevation. Like those on the north, they are degraded and difficult to read. On the east end of the building, between the first and second floors, a linear painted sign reads "wholesale fr" (the word being terminated at the "r"). Another ghost sign appears between the second and third floors, but it is illegible.

Exterior – Façade

The façade (east elevation) of the Davidson Bros. Warehouse incorporates the materials and design elements noted above. The façade is arranged in four bays and is notable for its symmetrical arrangement of ground-floor openings within the bays. Two large, round-arch openings establish the elevation's center-line. The openings extend well into the wall plane, accentuating their importance. Each arch features five courses of dark brown, rowlock brick, which spring from the foundation. The south opening houses the primary entrance. Though now obscured by a metal frame and canvas semi-circular awning, the original opening and door frame system is retained (paired doors replaced). The entrance is comprised of brick side walls with a ledge at the mid-point, partial sidelights, and a wood, round-arch framing system with door frame, deep jambs, sidelights, and a rectangular transom surmounted by a round-arch transom. The north opening houses a large, four-light (vertically oriented) window. The form and details of the north opening matches that of the south. Specifically, the sill aligns with the sidelight sills associated with the entrance and the wall under the opening has a ledge at midpoint.

The pair of arched openings are flanked by window openings, both of which have segmental arched heads, a ledge aligned with those of the other openings, and slightly undersized replacement windows (double-hung with a one-over-one light configuration) set deeply in the opening. The windows have a flat head with an insert filling the segmental gap between the flat head of the window and the arched head of the opening. The headers are comprised of three rowlock courses with a single course of rowlock used for the sills.

The second- and third-floor windows are arranged with paired windows located in each of the center bays and a single window opening in the outer bays. Slightly undersized replacement windows are metal, double-hung with a one-over-one light configuration. Each opening has a segmental insert to fill the gap between the window head and the arched opening. The segmental heads of the second-floor windows are consistent with those of the first. However, on the third floor, bricks are laid in soldier position with the long edge facing outward; the arrangement results in a flared form with a hard upper edge.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

The masonry (described above) is in fair condition with large areas of mortar loss. Damage to the brick is visible in the south bays, from the third-floor window openings through the cornice. Additionally, there are some remnants of an unknown element at sill level of the middle bays, second-floor windows. A disk form of unknown purpose (perhaps the location of the original sign or medallion with company logo) is retained in the spandrel between the two arched openings. The disk is flush to the wall plane, stone colored, and blank.

Exterior – North Elevation

The north elevation extends the length of the 1901 building through the addition, the point of transition between them being marking by the concrete structural pier of the addition.

The general character of the 1901 portion of the elevation matches that of the façade. The north elevation of the 1901 building is organized into eight bays, each of which is defined by fenestration. On the ground floor, the six middle bays house arched openings of a scale and design character that is consistent with the façade. A “storefront” system has been introduced in each of the arched openings that is comprised of a center, single-leaf, glazed door with wide sidelights surmounted by a three-light transom. The replacement systems are sympathetic in character to the historic building and are a reasonable representation of the original system that remains in place on the south elevation. The east bay has a single window opening with replacement window that matches those of the façade and the upper stories of this elevation. The original opening in the west bay has been altered (date of alteration or alterations unknown). Today, the opening houses a pair of windows with a wood panel insert below.

As noted, the masonry on the north elevation has been stained (reason and date unknown) and there are ghost markings retained in fair to poor condition. The masonry is in generally fair to good condition with some evidence of joint loss, poor quality repointing, and environmental staining at the cornice edge.

The 1912 section of the north elevation is characterized by the exposed concrete and brick structure. Changes to the openings confuses our understanding of the original configuration, but the clear evidence of brick infill and original concrete sills provides a roadmap to differentiating historic from non-historic.

This section of the elevation is arranged in two bays. At ground level, the east bay has a non-period of significance opening with a vehicular door and the original opening in the west bay has been brick in-filled. On the second floor, openings have been brick in-filled with replacement windows installed in the reduced openings. Windows are metal framed, double-hung with one-over-one light configurations.

The flared cornice established on the façade continues the full length of the north elevation—including the 1912 addition. At the west end, the flare extends past the plane of the west elevation so that the flared reads from the north. However, the flare does not extend around the northwest corner to the west elevation.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

Exterior – West Elevation

The 1912 addition constitutes the whole of the building's west elevation. The elevation is characterized by the exposed concrete and brick structure, with the elevation arranged in four bays. Windows are confined to the middle bays of the first and second floors where sets of three windows are centered in the bay, abutting the concrete above them. The windows are replacements, slightly undersized, with metal frames, double-hung sash, and a one-over-one light configuration. The retention of concrete sills associated with the windows in the south bay (both floors), the width of which matches the width of the openings, indicates the window openings are likely original to the addition. The absence of sills with the windows of the north bay (both floors) suggests those openings are later alterations.

The masonry on the west elevation is in generally good condition. Some deterioration of the concrete structure is apparent, though likely superficial in nature. As noted, the flared cornice does not extend to this elevation. The roof edge has metal coping.

Exterior – South Elevation

The south elevation extends the length of the 1901 building through the 1912 addition, the point of transition between them being marking by a change in brick color and character of fenestration.

The south elevation is characterized by the change in historic operational function related to adjacency to the depot and rail lines. While the masonry and general character of the openings is consistent with the other elevations, the raised height of first-floor openings and the retention of a loading dock dominate the character.

The south elevation of the 1901 building is arranged in eight bays, five of which have arched, ground floor openings. Alteration of the arched openings in the outer bays diminishes the impact of the form on this elevation. The arched openings in the middle three bays, however, retain the original wood framing system with deep frame and jambs as well as profiled muntins. Some alteration and/or infill of each of these openings has occurred but all three retain the transom and the frame with a good sense of the original character intact. The west bay retains a tall and narrow opening with a segmental arched head, single-leaf door (replacement), and the original transom. The openings in the remaining two bays have been altered from the original.

Openings in the upper stories of the 1901 portion of the building are irregularly placed and of varying sizes. Although a number of alterations of the opening sizes has been completed, ghost markings provide an understanding of the original arrangement. All windows have been replaced with slightly undersized, metal frame, double-hung sash with a one-over-one light configuration.

The masonry on this elevation is in generally good condition with some joint loss across the elevation and environmental staining at the cornice.

A concrete loading dock extends across five bays.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

The south elevation of the 1912 addition is brick clad (concrete structure is not exposed). The character of the brick is similar to that of the original building. Window openings have been altered on all floors (dates of alterations unknown).

A raised vehicular opening (without a dock) is centered on the elevation, its head abutting the concrete running sill associated with a ribbon of first-floor windows. The window opening, and a second opening adjacent on the east, are linear in form, have a concrete sill, and are filled by industrial-type, steel frame windows (operability undetermined).

Interior - Overview

The interior character of the Davidson Bros. Warehouse reflects an adaptive re-use renovation completed in the 1980s and a 2015 remodel of the first floor. The 1980s renovation impacted the interior by altering the historic plan to create double-loaded corridors on the second and third floors. The first floor remains largely open in plan. On the whole, the interior retains much of the exposed structure and brick perimeter walls, with the first floor retaining the highest degree of historic integrity due to the fully expressed heavy timber structural system (and associated volume), exposed brick perimeter walls, and arched openings along the north elevation.

Interior - First Floor

The building is entered via the SW 3rd Street entrance. Entering at grade, an approximate 20- by 16-foot vestibule is a transitional space between the exterior and the main lobby. A set of wide steps with a single-person lift on the south provides access to the raised first-floor level and the lobby. The vestibule and lobby retain an exposed structure ceiling and contemporary finishes on the walls and floor; structural columns are also exposed, though integrated within non-historic partition walls. The spaces are otherwise without notable features. An elevator and staircase are accessible from the lobby.

The primary first-floor tenant space (a single tenant office) is accessed from the lobby, near the northeast corner of the building. As noted, the space remains largely open with the structural system exposed (wood timber in the original section and concrete in the addition); where non-historic partition walls have been constructed, the columns remain visible. In the addition, ceilings have been dropped, with lay-in acoustical tile installed; this treatment covers the concrete beams and ceiling deck. The spaces in the original building also retain the exposed brick perimeter walls on the east, north and south.

Throughout, floors are covered with contemporary finishes, partition walls are painted gypsum board, and mechanical systems (spiral ducts) are exposed, striking a balance between the historic industrial character and the finished character appropriate for the adaptive re-use.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

Interior – Second and Third Floors

The upper stories are both impacted by the sub-division of the original plan for adaptive re-use as offices. On both levels, a double-loaded corridor extends east-west through the building, with offices of varying sizes filling out the plan.

Throughout the original section of the building on the second floor, the timber structure remains exposed; where new walls have been constructed, the columns remain visible. In addition, perimeter walls remain exposed brick. Partition walls are painted gypsum board. Throughout the 1912 addition, ceilings have been dropped, with lay-in acoustical tile installed; this treatment covers the concrete beams and ceiling deck.

The third floor is finished in character with structural systems hidden by non-historic partition walls and/or finishes. Notably, the bearing wall between the original building and the addition remains a prominent element, with brick exposed on both sides and steel fire doors retained. Brick also remains exposed on the perimeter walls of the addition in some areas. Throughout the 1912 addition, ceilings have been dropped, with lay-in acoustical tile installed; this treatment covers the concrete beams and ceiling deck.

Interior - Basement

The warehouse basement is a largely open plan with exposed structure throughout. The basement currently houses tenant storage in a series of temporary, cage-like spaces.

The basement retains concrete floors throughout, exposed structure, and exposed masonry walls.

In summary, the interior of the Davidson Bros. Warehouse retains a generally good level of historic integrity despite the alterations made to accommodate the new use. Although the integrity of the third floor bears a significant adverse impact due to those alterations, the lower floors go a long way to mitigating that impact. As a result, the building retains a strong sense of its historic function as a warehouse.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

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 grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1901-1928

Significant Dates

1901

1912

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

Architect/Builder

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

Statement of Significance

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The Davidson Bros. Company Warehouse and Manufacturing building is eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A. The building is locally significant in association with the history of Des Moines industry in the early 20th century. The building was constructed in 1901 to house the Davidson Bros. Co., a fruit and produce wholesaler. In the years that followed, the company expanded their line into the distribution of a range of products including margarine, cigars, and beer. Their most successful products were candy, which they manufactured and distributed; the 1912 addition was built to provide additional manufacturing and cold storage for the company's candy and chocolate lines. The company occupied the building through 1928.

The resource is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The Davidson Bros. Company building is locally significant as an important surviving example of the warehouse/manufacturing property type in the historic industrial area concentrated on the west side of the Des Moines River, just south of the downtown commercial area. The majority of warehouse and manufacturing buildings in this area have been lost overtime to economic downturns, the shift away from the industrial interests that was once a major economic driver, the redevelopment that followed the peak of industrial output in this area of the city, and to redevelopment currently underway in this vicinity. Although neither the architect nor the builder has been identified, the building expresses its historic function on the exterior through its simple form, general sense of mass, limited use of stylistic embellishment and, on the interior, through its heavy timber construction and exposed finishes (e.g., brick perimeter walls). The building design is set apart from other comparable properties by the dominant use of the round arch for first-floor door and window openings; its use on the north elevation, in particular, is a significant character-defining feature.

The Period of Significance under Criterion A is 1901-1928, which extends from the construction date through the last year in which the building was occupied by Davidson Bros. Dates are 1901 and 1912, the year the building was placed in service and the year the west addition was placed in service.

Narrative Statement of Significance

 (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

(Iowa SHPO Additional Instructions: For properties not nominated under Criterion D, include a statement about whether any archaeological remains within or beyond the footprint of the property were assessed as part of this nomination under the subheading **Archaeological Assessment**.)

The Davidson Bros. Company building was constructed in 1901 in the industrial area located west of the Des Moines River and south of the commercial downtown area. Major east-to-west running railroad lines marked the transition from the commercial downtown on the north to the warehousing and jobbing district and provided the transportation source required for receipt of materials and shipment of goods. When constructed, the building's brick and heavy timber-frame structure was one of dozens that populated that industrial area of the city, several of which lined Court Avenue just to the north. Davidson Bros. is associated with the city's wholesale grocery sector and the manufacture and distribution of candy and chocolates. The building was rehabilitated for adaptive re-use in 1988, with interior partition walls constructed to create office spaces; more recent remodeling dates to 2015. Despite the alterations, the interior retains a good sense of the historic warehouse function. Absent historic images of the interior, we recognize the historic function as a warehouse by the exposed heavy-timber structure, brick perimeter walls, and generally open volume. The exterior also

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

remains strongly representative of the historic function, with form, masonry, design elements, and most of the original openings retained (windows replaced). Generally, the building retains a good level of historic integrity.

Historical Background

The Davidson Bros. Company building was constructed in 1901 in the industrial area located west of the Des Moines River and south of the commercial downtown area. The warehouse was strategically sited adjacent to the city's major east-to-west running rail system that provided the transportation source required for receipt of materials and shipment of goods. When constructed, the building joined the many masonry warehouses that dominated this industrial area of the city. Davidson Bros. is representative of the city's wholesale grocery sector and the manufacture and distribution of candy and chocolates. As noted, the building was rehabilitated for adaptive re-use in 1988 with the first floor remodeled in 2015. The building remains representative of the historic function, with form, masonry, most of the original openings retained (windows replaced), and interior structural system intact. Generally, the building retains a good level of historic integrity and an important, increasingly rare, surviving example of an early 20th century masonry warehouse building.¹

Des Moines Industrial Center West of the River and Fred M. Hubbell

The Davidson Bros. Warehouse is located in what was, at the turn of the 20th century, the city's pre-eminent warehouse and jobbing district. The district, which developed during the late 19th century and remained a contributing force to the industrial economy through the mid-20th century, grew up south of the city's main westside commercial downtown and adjacent to the network of rail lines that transected the area; the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad and the Des Moines Union Railway (among others) had trackage through the district. Just blocks to the south (along what was then Elm Street and has since been redesigned and renamed Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway) was a second east-to-west running network of tracks operated by the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad.² This well-developed transportation system led to the establishment of a warehouse district in the area surrounding Vine Street on the north and Elm Street on the south. Davidson Bros. Warehouse was constructed on a site between the trackage of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul and the Great Western railroads on the north (with a spur line running along the building's north elevation) and the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad on the south. The American Railway Express depot was, and remains, sited immediately south of Davidson Bros., fronting the remaining rail lines.

Additionally, West Court Avenue one block north of Davidson Bros. was a light industrial, jobbing, and warehouse district that developed during a similar period. By the early 20th century, the wide roadway had become the focus of economic development with large-scale properties like the National Register listed Taft-West Warehouse (1923) constructed to serve wholesale operations. Located between the south warehouse area and the West Court area, Davidson Bros. stands as a link between the two.

¹ The use of "increasingly rare, surviving example" is intended to underscore both the current status as a historic property type that was the victim of urban redevelopment efforts in the past as well as a resource located in an area of the city that continues to experience redevelopment. Although the Davidson Bros. Warehouse doesn't currently face any specific threat, redevelopment in the city core is a constant and as a property type whose numbers have already diminished significantly from their heyday, the building should be considered an increasingly rare, surviving example of a warehouse.

² James E. Jacobsen, "Hubbell Warehouse," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2010.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

Frederick Marian Hubbell (1839-1930) was the patriarch of Des Moines's most prominent, family-based development and investment company. The company continues to play a leading role in metropolitan advancement. Early in his career, Hubbell became associated with the legal and real estate firm of J.S. Polk and P.M. Casady, which in 1864 became Polk and Hubbell. The firm was central to the establishment of services critical to the growth and development of the city of Des Moines including construction of the Iowa & Minneapolis narrow gauge railroad to Ames. The municipal streetcar system, organization of the Equitable Insurance Company, and establishment of the Des Moines Water Works Company are also attributed to the firm.

After dissolution of their partnership in 1887, Fred Hubbell turned his focus to real estate and the development of the Des Moines Union Railway, an in-city link between various railroad companies and between the facilities located on those lines. By 1907 Hubbell's real estate holdings totaled 54-square miles of key commercial and industrial land in the city.³

In 1913 Hubbell platted the Factory Addition. At that time, many factories, jobbing houses, and warehouses were located on the west side of the Des Moines River, just south of the "downtown proper," However, the land to the west of that developed area was shot with small dwellings among the sprawling system of rail lines and facilities. Hubbell platted the Factory Addition for the purpose of extending the warehouse district to the west. As enticement to potential companies, Hubbell advertised his lots on Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth streets, south of Elm Street, noting that he was "willing to lease on long time for factories, warehouses and other industries, free of rent, except taxes, for the first ten years and after that 4 per cent annually on the value of the ground, with taxes."⁴

Although the Davidson Bros. Warehouse lies outside the bounds of the Factory Addition, the advertisement illustrates Hubbell's methods for attracting companies to build on land leased from him. In other instances, Hubbell would undertake the building for the tenant firm on his land, then retain an interest in the company.⁵ In the case of the Davidson Bros. Warehouse, Hubbell's interest in the property is apparent after a fire in 1921, at which time, the newspaper reported an initial estimated loss of \$300,000; \$50,000 of that amount fell on Fred Hubbell.⁶

Davidson Bros. Company

Davidson Bros. Company was established by Elmer J. and James C. Davidson in 1900. The following year, the brothers constructed their warehouse on a site one block south of Court Avenue and between two, major east-to-west railroad corridors. Initially focused on the wholesale of fruit and produce, Davidson Bros. expanded to distribution of a variety of products. Their success in candy manufacture became the central component of their business, with an addition constructed in 1912 to support expansion of the manufacture and distribution of candy, with chocolate being their specialty. In 1914, the company continued on that trajectory, remaining in business at this location until 1928.

³ James E. Jacobsen, "Hawkeye Transfer Company Warehouse," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2010: 08.6 and *Des Moines: The Pioneer ...* Vol. 2, 1911: 20-24.

⁴ James E. Jacobsen, "Hawkeye Transfer Company Warehouse," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2010: 08.6 (quoting a partially cited newspaper article in the *Capital* (Des Moines))

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ "Davidson's Will Continue in Business," *Des Moines Tribune*, December 30, 1921: 01.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

In 1899 Elmer J. Davidson relocated to Des Moines from Minneapolis, where he had worked for a wholesale company for four years. It is unclear when his brother, James C. had located to the city from the family home in Missouri, but upon Elmer's arrival in the city the brothers engaged in the wholesale business.⁷ Davidson Bros. was incorporated in 1900, with Articles of Incorporation filed with the Secretary of State on October 22 and notice published of an authorized capital stock in the amount of \$25,000.⁸ The Davidson Bros. Company first appears in the city directory in 1900, at which time the brothers, along with H.W. Baxter, had their business at 200-202 Court Avenue.⁹

The fire insurance map for 1901 records that the lot upon which the new home of Davidson Bros. Company would soon be constructed was occupied by four "vacant dilapidated" buildings and a two-story brick building. At that time, the lot was already surrounded by rail lines and manufacturing/warehouse buildings that defined this section of the city. Nearby industrial interests included the C.C. Taft Co., a wholesale grocery located on the east; Fuller & Johnson Manufacturing and the Lederer Straus Company to the north; and the W.J. Pratt Grocery Co. warehouse to the northeast.¹⁰

In April of 1901, a newspaper account reported the pending construction of a four-story building at the corner of 3rd and Depot streets, a location that provided "excellent trackage facilities." The new building was to be 60-by 130-feet with special features including a celery room, which would "be cemented and especially arranged to keep celery clean and fresh and in that condition in first-class shape for delivery every day." The new building would also have a storage room sufficient to hold three cars of bananas. No record of the architect or building has been found. In addition to grocery items, the firm would carry a complete line of foreign and domestic cigars. The building was expected to be completed and ready for occupancy by the first of June.¹¹ That projected completion date appears to have been met, as the 1901 city directory places Davidson Bros. Co., with Elmer J., president, E.E. Merrill, secretary, and James C., treasurer, at 106-108-110 3rd Street.¹²

Although Davidson Bros. wholesaled fruit, produce and cigars, the company was best known as manufacturers of ice cream and candy. In 1911 it was reported that \$500,000 worth of candy was manufactured in Des Moines annually. In addition, local plants made 25,000 gallons of ice cream valued at about \$150,000. This production of candy and ice cream supplied three-fourths of the state. The Davidson Bros. contributed significantly to those production numbers with their local favorites being stick candy, chocolates, and Clover Leaf ice cream.¹³

With the company's success in the manufacture of candy and ice cream came plans to expand their facility. Through the spring and summer of 1912, plans and construction were underway for a cold storage and manufacturing addition. Plans called for a 44' by 66', three-story plus basement addition. A local news article noted that the existing manufacturing facilities, which were located on the upper stories of the 1901 building (the fruit and vegetable warehouse occupying the lower floors), were "simply inadequate." The new space would "be fitted with modern candy-making and ice-cream equipment... a freezing and cold storage plant will

⁷ "Elmer J. Davidson Dies of Pneumonia," *The Des Moines Register*, November 10, 1914: 07.

⁸ *Iowa Official Register* (Des Moines: Iowa Secretary of State, 1901), 481.

⁹ *Des Moines City Directory*, 1900.

¹⁰ *Sanborn Company Fire Insurance Map*, 1901 (Sheet 271).

¹¹ "A Progressive Firm. Davidson Brothers to Construct a Four Story Building for Their Business," *Des Moines Capitol*, April 02, 1901: 01.

¹² *Des Moines City Directory*, 1900: 271.

¹³ "To Distribute Ice Cream," *The Des Moines Register*, April 23, 1911: 34.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

also be installed.” Expected to be one of the best of its kind in the region, the addition was estimated to cost \$60,000 plus new machinery at a cost of \$15,000. The enlarged facility was expected to increase workforce to fifty in the candy department resulting in a gain of not less than \$30,000 in wages annually.¹⁴ During this period, the company estimated they were \$15,000 behind on its orders, with markets across the state of Iowa, east into Chicago, and west into the Dakotas. The expansion would allow Davidson’s to resolve the back log and support continued growth in the coming years.¹⁵

Some delays early in the planning process occurred due to conflict regarding the alley north of the Rock Island depot, between 3rd and 4th streets. Review of fire insurance maps suggest that the alley in question ran north-to-south at the middle of the block. The ground was needed for the addition, but the City disputed the proposed arrangement for transfer of the land. The issue was eventually settled, with the land sold to F.M. Hubbell, owner of “the land on either side of the alley and which is to be leased to the commission firm for the erection of the new building” for \$1,500.¹⁶ When completed, the addition filled the entire former alley and abutted the rear (east) of the Three Star Hotel which fronted W. Fourth Street.¹⁷

The discussion around a conflict involving the alley is the first hint of the involvement of F.M. Hubbell in the Davidson property. Not long after, local news accounts expanded upon the real estate developer’s role in the company, noting that F.M. Hubbell, Son & Co. was making arrangements for the construction of two new business buildings in the city. “A new building will go up directly west of the present building of the Davidson company on West Third street, near the railroad tracks... the new building will cover a site of 60x60 feet and will be used by the Davidson company in enlarging the plant.”¹⁸

The addition to the Davidson Bros. plant was completed by autumn of 1912. While nothing more is reported regarding its construction, the 1920 fire insurance map documents the three-story addition (plus basement) as “Fire Proof Construction” with “Reinforced Con[crete] Floors & Roof” and “Brick Curtain Walls.” In the original building, the fire insurance map places the ice cream factory and banana room in the basement, wholesale fruits in the basement and 1st floor, the chocolate department and box goods on the 2nd floor, and the candy factory on the 3rd floor. In the addition, shipping and stock was on the 1st floor, and the candy factory was located on the 2nd and 3rd floors.¹⁹

In the years after completion of the addition, Davidson Bros. Co. remained actively marketed in the Des Moines newspapers with product advertisements and want ads for workers appearing regularly. The advertisements featured the range of the company’s products, including fresh fruit, “Nucoa, nut margarine”, “Dandy” margarine, HighLife beer, and Courtello cigars. While representative of the variety of products they distributed, the content of the advertisements illustrates a growing emphasis on the manufacture of candy, particularly of chocolates. In 1916, the company promoted itself as the “largest chocolate manufacturers in Iowa” with five signature chocolates, including “Davidson’s Dollar Dainties” and “Davidson’s Blue Bell Chocolates.”²⁰ This range of specialty chocolates expanded upon the company’s earlier “Society Chocolates” which, in 1908 were

¹⁴ “Plans Are Drafted For Improvements,” *The Des Moines Register*, March 24, 1912: 15 and “New Candy Plant Under Construction,” *Des Moines Tribune*, August 12, 1912: 07.

¹⁵ “Plans Are Drafted For Improvements,” *The Des Moines Register*, March 24, 1912: 15.

¹⁶ “Schramm Objects Sale of Alley,” *Des Moines Tribune*, March 18, 1912: 02.

¹⁷ *Sanborn Company Fire Insurance Map*, 1920: Sheet 17.

¹⁸ “Two New Buildings to be Erected by Hubbell Company,” *Des Moines Tribune*, July 10, 1912: 02.

¹⁹ *Sanborn Company Fire Insurance Map*, 1920: Sheet 17.

²⁰ Advertisement, “Davidson’s Chocolates,” *Des Moines Tribune*, December 12, 1916: 07.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

promoted in *The Midwestern* as “the pinnacle of confectioner’s art” with “no superior and no equal.”²¹ The company went so far in their promotion of “Davidson’s Society Chocolates” as to have the name embossed in Carnival glass bowls.²²

Self-described as “the largest chocolate manufacturers in Iowa” may have been a promotional stretch for the company. Other chocolate manufacturers in the state include the Gardner & Gould Candy Co., which opened in an existing linseed factory in Burlington, Iowa in 1900, with an addition constructed in 1910. Gardner & Gould manufactured and distributed their “Fern Brand” chocolates throughout the country, remaining in business through 1957.²³ Like Davidson’s “Society Chocolates”, Gardner & Gould had the name of their premier product pressed into Carnival glass bowls for advertising pieces.²⁴

Another manufacturer dating to this era was the M.M. Johannsen Candy Company which was established in Dubuque, Iowa in ca.1907. The company remained in business for a relatively short period, having closed in ca.1929.

Palmer Candy Company of Sioux City appears to be the likely candidate for Iowa’s number one chocolate manufacturer. Like Davidson Bros., the Palmer Company was first a wholesale grocery business, established by brothers William B. and Charles E. Palmer in 1892. By 1898, however, candy making became the company’s focus and its success led to construction of a “modern and efficient” facility in 1900 with an addition constructed 1908. With a work force of more than 100, the company manufactured and distributed hard candy and chocolate. The 1920s saw a shift in the candy business, with candy bars sold in grocery stores becoming the most popular form of chocolate sales; before this time, chocolates were primarily sold from candy counters or in drug stores. The creation of nearly 40,000 different candy bars in the 1920s changed that previous pattern. Palmer Candy responded to that shift, creating the Bing candy bar in 1923, which the company still manufactures.²⁵

While Davidson Bros.’ claim as the state’s largest chocolate manufacturer appears to have been a marketing tactic, the company was competitive in the local market. To illustrate the local context specific to the manufacture of candy, the following table represents city directory entries under “Candy Manufacturer” and “confectioner – Wholesale and Manufacturing” at select years during the peak of the Davidson’s period of chocolate manufacture and distribution.

²¹ Advertisement, “Davidson’s Society Chocolates,” *The Midwestern*, Vol. 3 (Des Moines: Greater Des Moines Publishing Co., 1908).

²² <https://www.ddoty.com/davidsons.html> and, “carnival glass” is an iridescent pressed glass that was produced beginning in 1908 and ultimately became popularized as prizes to be won at carnivals, hence the name. Produced by a number of glass manufacturers, the piece bearing “Davidson’s Society Chocolates” was produced by the Northwood Company.

²³ “Will Enlarge Plant,” *The Burlington Hawk Eye*, March 27, 1910.

²⁴ <http://www.internationalcarnivalglass.com/carnival-glass-articles/fern-brand-chocolates/>. Retrieved 05/02/2022.

²⁵ Sioux City History. <http://www.siouxcityhistory.org/commerce/126-palmer-candy-company>. Retrieved 06/06/2022.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
 Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
 County and State

Table 01. Candy Manufacturers in Des Moines – 1911-1925

Company Name	Address	"Candy Manufacturer"	"Confectioner – Wholesale & Manufacturing"	1911	1912	1913	1920	1925
Davidson Bros. Co.	106-110 3 rd St.		x	x	x	x	x	x
Geren Candy Co.	211 9 th St.	x	x	x	x			
Martin Candy Co.	1118 Grand Ave.	x		x				
Windsor-Purity Candy Co. ER Hutchinson Co.	125-129 W. 2 nd St. 224-226 2 nd St.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Baker Candy Co.	200-202-204 Court Ave.		x	x	x	x		
The Booster Company	113 Court Ave. 206-210 2 nd St		x		x	x	x	x
Home Candy Co.	1441 E. 12 th St.		x		x			
Dow Cigar Co.	210 4 th St.		x				x	
Goldman Harry & Co.	201-203 Court Ave.		x				x	x
Irwin Candy Co.	1 st and Grand Ave.		x				x	
Northwest Candy Co.	416 E. Locust St.		x				x	
Crist Candy Factory	607 8 th St.		x					x
Northwestern Candy Co.	606-608 E. Locust St.		x					x

While the entries above do not reflect production numbers or distribution areas, they do document the longevity of Davidson Bros. relative to other local manufacturers of candy. Only the Windsor-Purity Candy Co. (later known as E.R. Hutchinson Co.) was in business as long as Davidson Bros. However, the company operated under three entities over the course of its existence and did not occupy the same building for the entirety of that period. Notably, none of the buildings used by Purity Candy Co., its successor Windsor-Purity Co., or its successor E.R. Hutchinson Co., remain extant. In this context, it is reasonable to assert that Davidson Bros. Co. was Des Moines’ longest-lived candy manufacturer.

On December 30, 1921, local newspapers reported on a devastating fire at Davidson Bros. The fire, which originated on the top floor where pine shipping boxes were located, destroyed much of that floor along with candy and supplies stored on the floor below. Water damage extended into the lower levels. The Davidsons reported that the company’s entire stock of fruit and candy was destroyed. The initial estimated loss totaled \$300,000 with the Hubbell’s loss standing at \$50,000. A decision about how to proceed was pending at the time of the report. In the meantime, Davidson Bros. reopened in temporary quarters.²⁶

Unfortunately, no subsequent reports appeared to document the decision-making or plans for repair of the building. Advertisements and city directories, however, confirm the continued presence of Davidson Bros. Co. at 106-110 3rd Street through 1928, though the company’s strength and impact in the market had apparently waned. By 1924, the company is listed at 110 3rd Street, with the Des Moines Potato and Apple Exchange and Growers Exchange located in 106 3rd Street.

²⁶ “Davidson’s Will Continue in Business,” *Des Moines Tribune*, December 30, 1921: 01.
 Section 8 page 17

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

James C. Davidson remained actively engaged in the family business through 1927. In that year, his image appears in a local newspaper along with others of the city's leading businessmen. His company was noted as "Davidson Candy Company, 110 3rd Street, Makers of Candy." The company last appeared in the city directory in 1928.²⁷

The building was vacant in 1929. In 1930 the Des Moines Wholesale Grocery Co. assumed occupancy. At the time the building was surveyed for the 1950 revision of the 1920 fire insurance map, the building was occupied by Russell-Miller Milling Co., wholesale feeds.

The Davidson Bros. Company Warehouse was renovated in 1988 for adaptive re-use as an office building with remodeling of the first floor completed in 2015. Despite the alterations the building retains a strong sense of its historic function as an industrial plant and warehouse.

The Davidson Brothers

Little is currently known about the Davidson brothers, Elmer J. and James C. Davidson.

Elmer J. Davidson was born April 30, 1867 in Girard, Illinois, moving to his father's family farm near Carthage, Missouri as a young child. Davidson came to Des Moines from Minneapolis in 1899 and he and his brother James C. Davidson engaged in the wholesale fruit business.

At the time of his death in 1914, Elmer J. Davidson was president of the Davidson Bros. Whole Fruit company and Manufacturing Confectioners. Elmer Davidson was actively engaged in the workings of the city as a member of the Des Moines Club and the Chamber of Commerce. His obituary notes there were five Davidson brothers, only one of which (James C.) came to Des Moines.

James C. Davidson was born in Missouri in 1870. He married and had two children. No record of his death has been located.

Des Moines' Historic Warehouses for Comparative Purposes

As noted in the statement of significance, the Davidson Bros. Warehouse building design is set apart from other comparable properties by the dominant use of the round arch for first-floor door and window openings; its use on the north elevation, in particular, is a significant character-defining feature. The following examples illustrate the more typical design character – minus round arch openings – exhibited in historic warehouses found in Des Moines.

²⁷ "These Men Are Helping Make Des Moines an Industrial Center," *The Des Moines Register*, January 18, 1927: 05.
Section 8 page 18

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

Hawkeye Transfer Warehouse, 1902 – 702 Elm Street (NR, 2010)



(Source: <https://www.maps.google.com>. Retrieved 08/15/2023.)

L. Harbach & Sons Wholesale Furniture Warehouse, 1906 - 300-316 SW 5th Street (NR, 2015)



(Source: <https://www.maps.google.com>. Retrieved 08/15/2023.)

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

Hubbell Warehouse, 1913 – 340 SW 5th Street (NR, 2010)



(Source: <https://www.maps.google.com>. Retrieved 08/15/2023.)

Brown-Camp Hardware Company Warehouse, ca.1924 – 100 Market Street



As the three examples of National Register listed resources illustrate, the warehouse as a property type is typically masonry, has a lot of windows, and is utilitarian in character. Some, like the Hubbell Warehouse, have a more refined and stylistically driven primary façade. Although other examples of the use of round-arched openings like those at the Davidson Bros. Warehouse appear in Des Moines – the Brown-Camp Warehouse being one example – the character exemplified in the National Register listed resources dominates in the city. As a result, it is the round arches of the Davidson Bros. Warehouse – used on the three elevations of the first floor – that stands it apart from other examples of the warehouse property type.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

Potential for Historic Archaeology

No evaluation for potential historic archaeology was completed as part of this nomination. However, because the building occupies the entirety of the property parcel, no potential is believed to exist.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Brigham, Johnson. *Des Moines: The Pioneer of Municipal Progress and Reform of the Middle West, Together with the History of Polk County, Iowa, the Largest, Most Populous and Most Prosperous County in the State of Iowa, Vol. 2.* Des Moines, IA: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co, 1911.

Iowa Official Register. Des Moines: Iowa Secretary of State, 1901.

Jacobsen, James E. "Hawkeye Transfer Company Warehouse." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2010.

Morton, Hal. "Gardner & Gould Candy Co." Iowa Site Inventory Form, 2010.

R.L. Polk & Co.'s Des Moines City Directory. Des Moines, IA. R.L. Polk & Co., 1900

Newspapers

Des Moines Capitol. "A Progressive Firm. Davidson Brothers to Construct a Four Story Building for Their Business." April 02, 1901.

The Des Moines Register. "To Distribute Ice Cream." April 23, 1911.

Des Moines Tribune. "Schramm Objects to Sale of Alley." March 18, 1912.

The Des Moines Register. "Plans Are Drafted For Improvements." March 24, 1912.

Des Moines Tribune. "Two New Buildings to be Erected by Hubbell Company." July 10, 1912.

Des Moines Tribune. "New Candy Plant Under Construction." August 12, 1912.

The Des Moines Register. "Elmer J. Davidson Dies of Pneumonia." November 10, 1914.

Des Moines Tribune. Advertisement, "Tomorrow is Orange Day." March 17, 1916.

Des Moines Tribune. Advertisement, "Davidson's Chocolates." December 12, 1916.

Des Moines Tribune. "Davidsons Will Continue in Business. Produce Firm Wiped Out by Fire Resumes." December 30, 1921.

The Des Moines Register. "These Men Are Helping Make Des Moines an Industrial Center." January 18, 1927.

Online Resources

The Field Guide to Carnival Glass. <https://www.ddoty.com/davidsons.html>. Retrieved 05/01/2022.

Library of Congress.

<https://www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/sanborn/city.php?CITY=Des%20Moines&stateID=17>. Retrieved 08/01/2023.

Sioux City History. <http://www.siouxcityhistory.org/commerce/126-palmer-candy-company>. Retrieved

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

05/06/2022.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- 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 _____

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	41.584380	-93.620240	3	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Per Polk County Assessor: INTERV VAC ALLEY & -EX W 109.1F ON N LN & W 109.05F ON S LN- LT 5 & ALL LT 8
BLK 25 FORT DES MOINES

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

The property is bounded by 3rd Street on the east, a vacated alley on the south, a narrow strip of seeded yard on the west and a parking lot on the north (a 4-ft. strip of land between the building and the parking lot falls within the property boundary).

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property boundary includes all portions of the historic parcel to which the building was associated during the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Alexa McDowell/Architectural Historian date 11/21/2023
organization AKAY Consulting telephone 515-491-5432
street & number 526 40th Street email akaymcd@hotmail.com
city or town Des Moines state IA zip code 50312

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

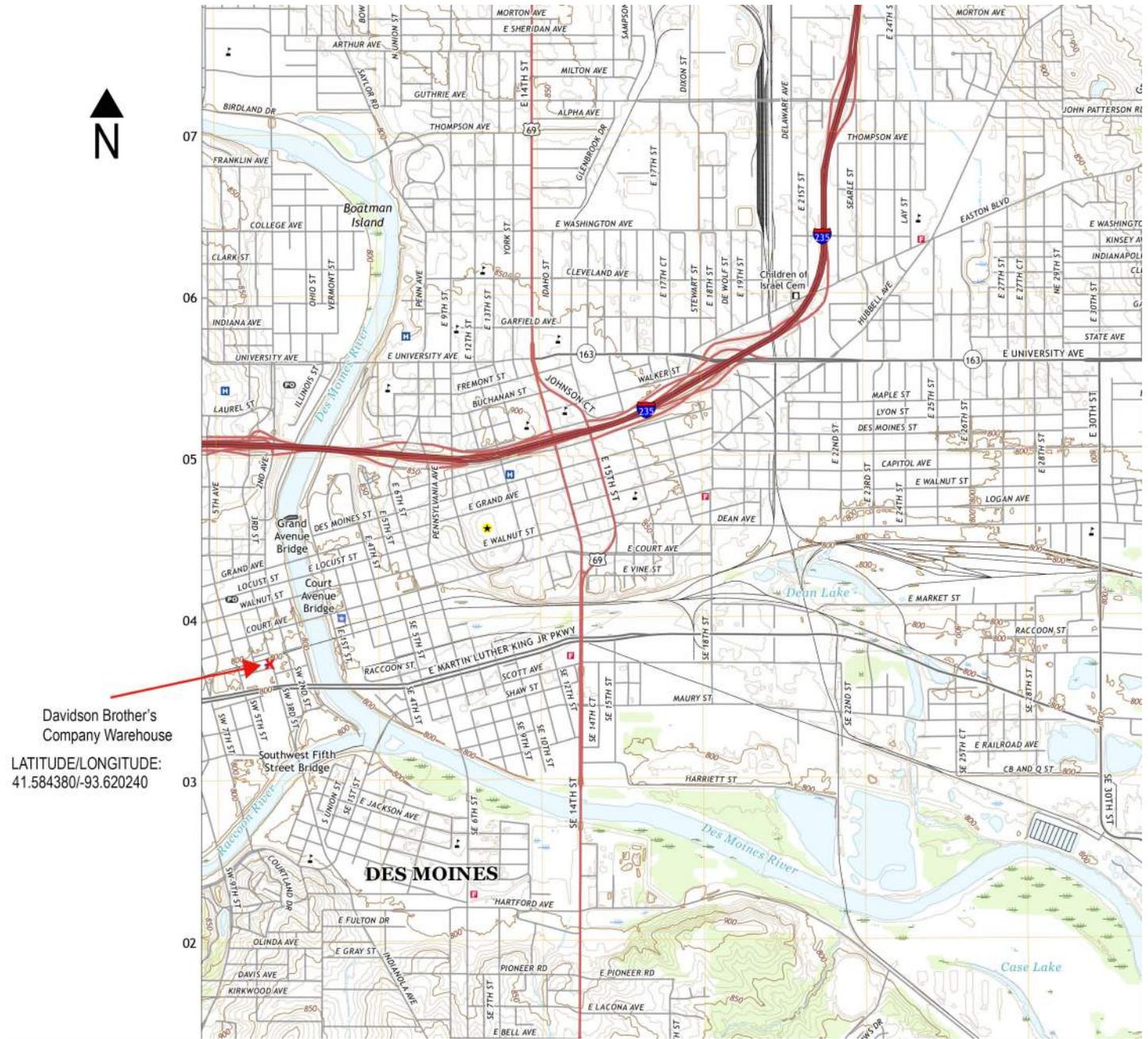
- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION: MAPS

01. USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Map – SE Des Moines Quad - 2018



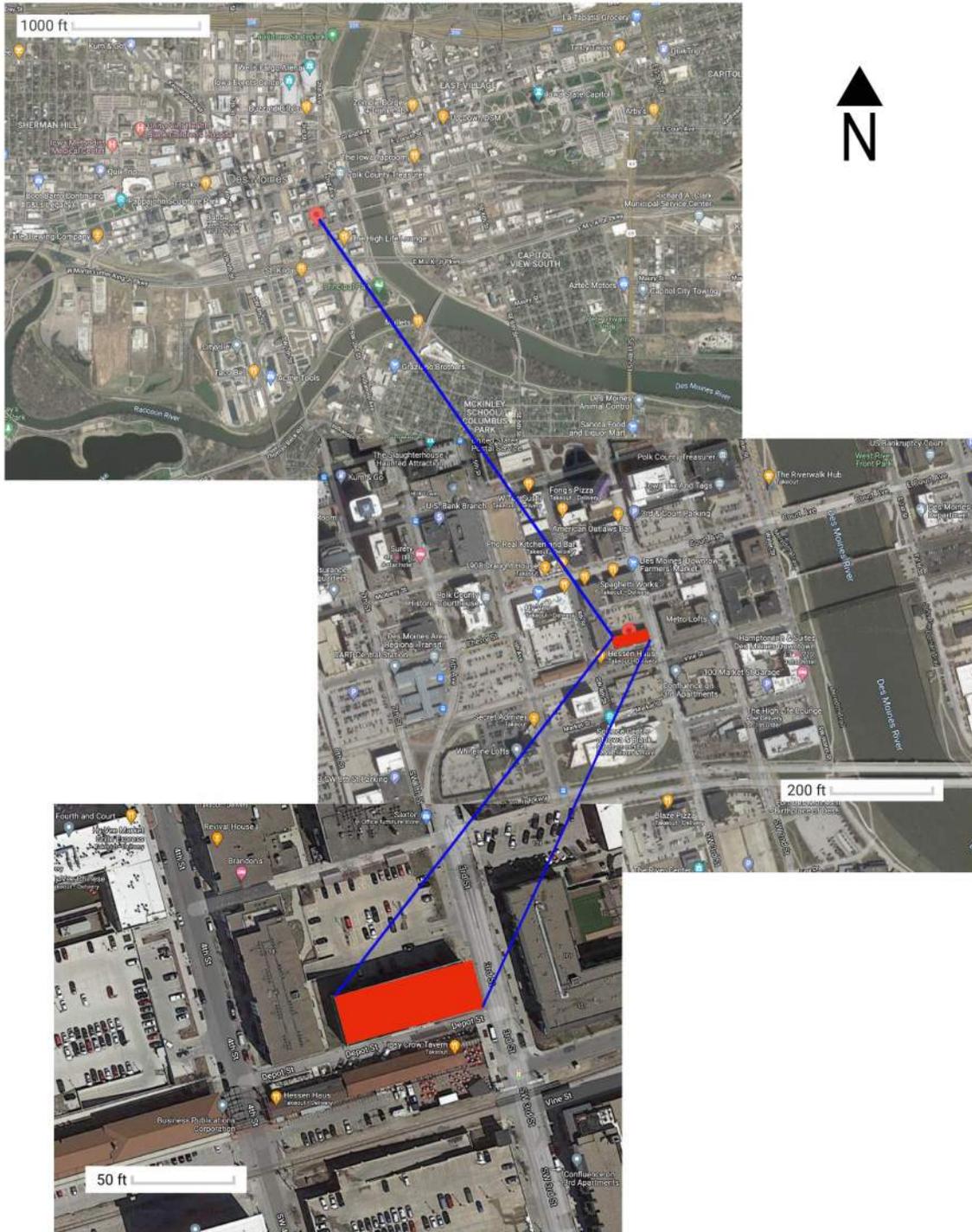
Davidson Brother's
Company Warehouse
LATITUDE/LONGITUDE:
41.584380/-93.620240

(Source: <https://www.usgs.gov>. Retrieved 11/15/2022.)

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

02. Locator Map - 2023

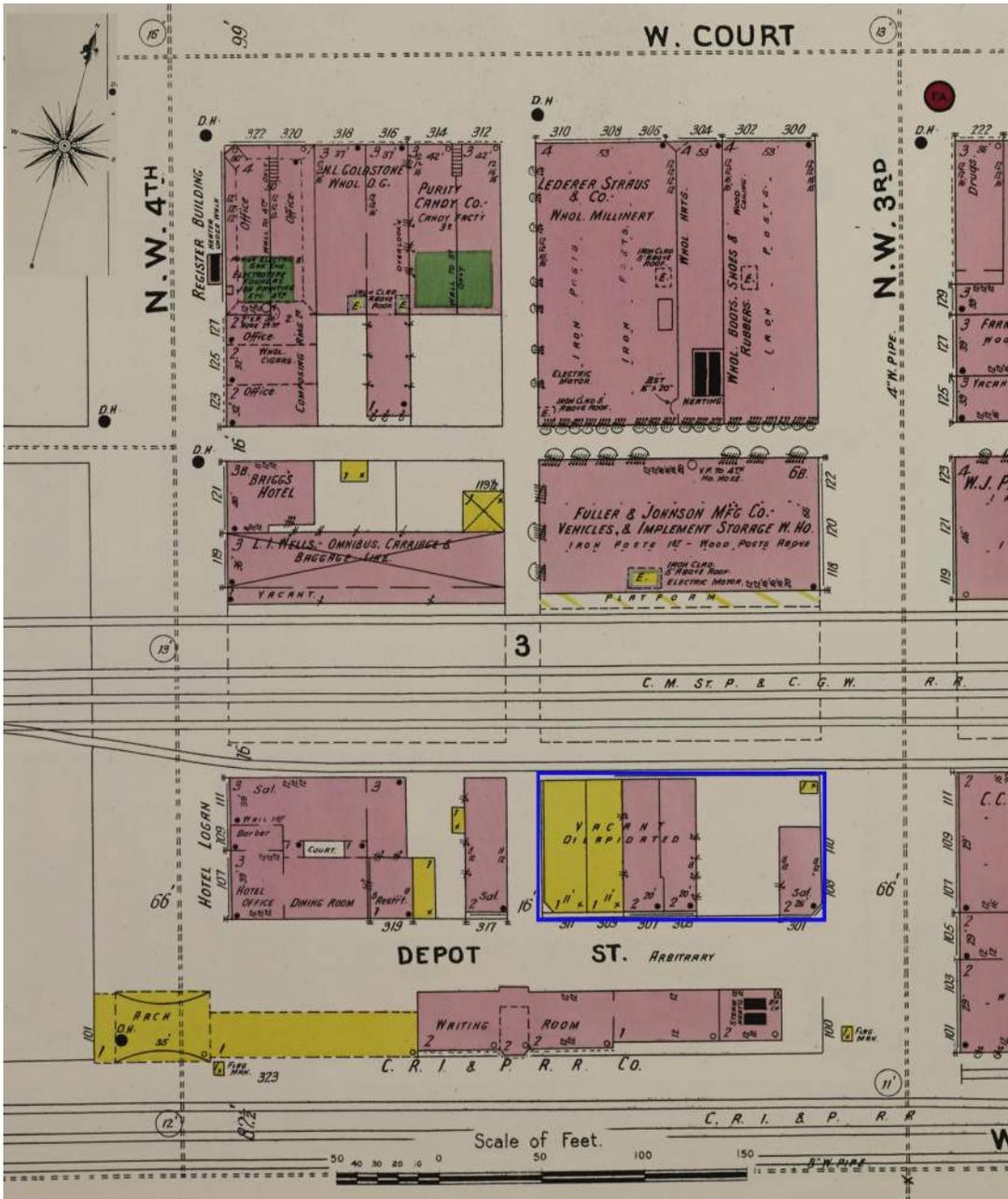


(Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/108+SW+3rd+St,+Des+Moines,+IA>. Retrieved 12/01/2022.)

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

03. Fire Insurance Map – 1901



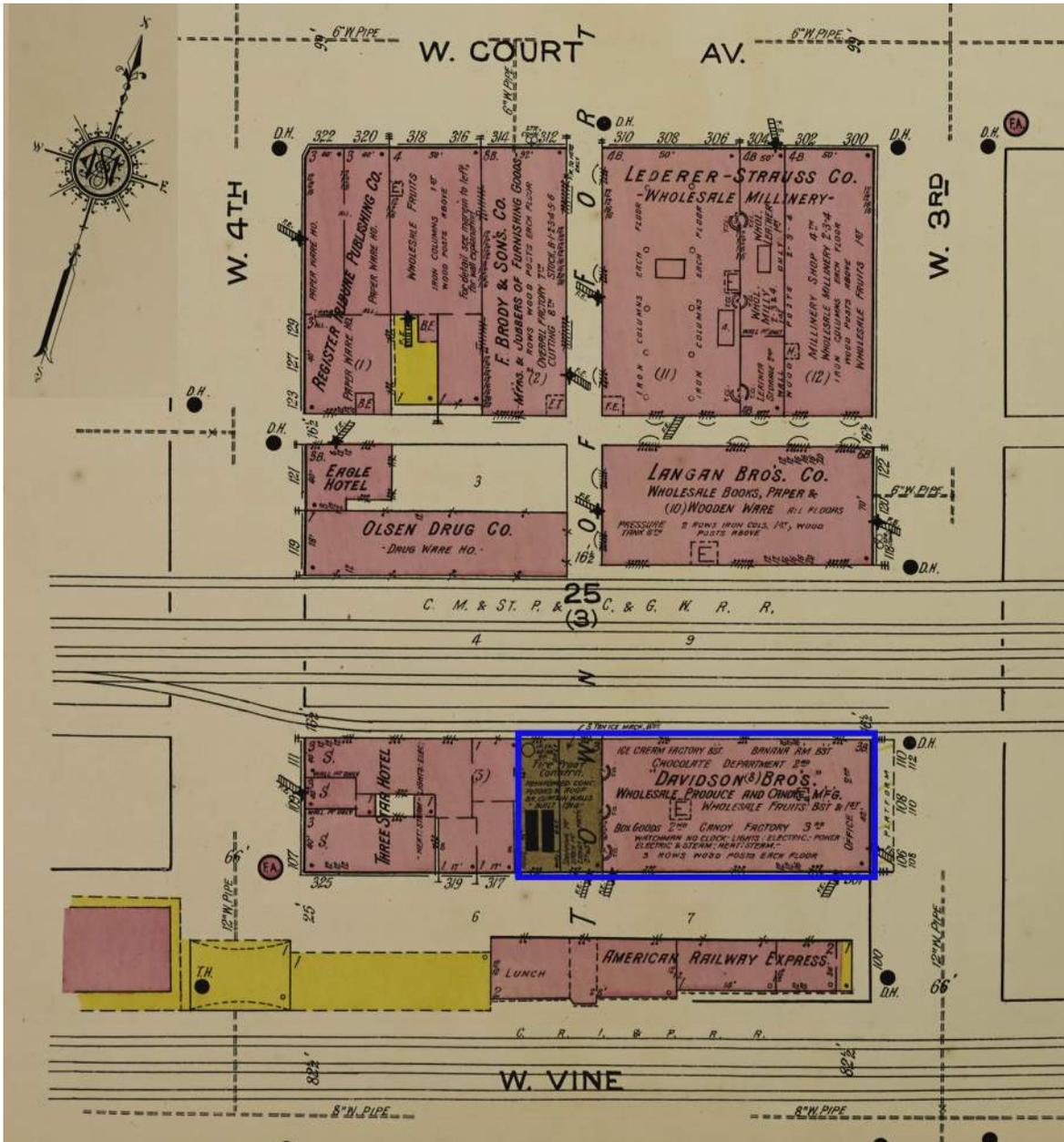
(Source: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/about-this-collection/>. Retrieved 06/01/2022.)

The site of the warehouse is outlined in blue. At this time (just prior to construction of the building), the site was occupied by a mix of small-scale buildings. Note the proximity to rail lines on the north and the south as well as to the depot on the south.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

04. Fire Insurance Map – 1920



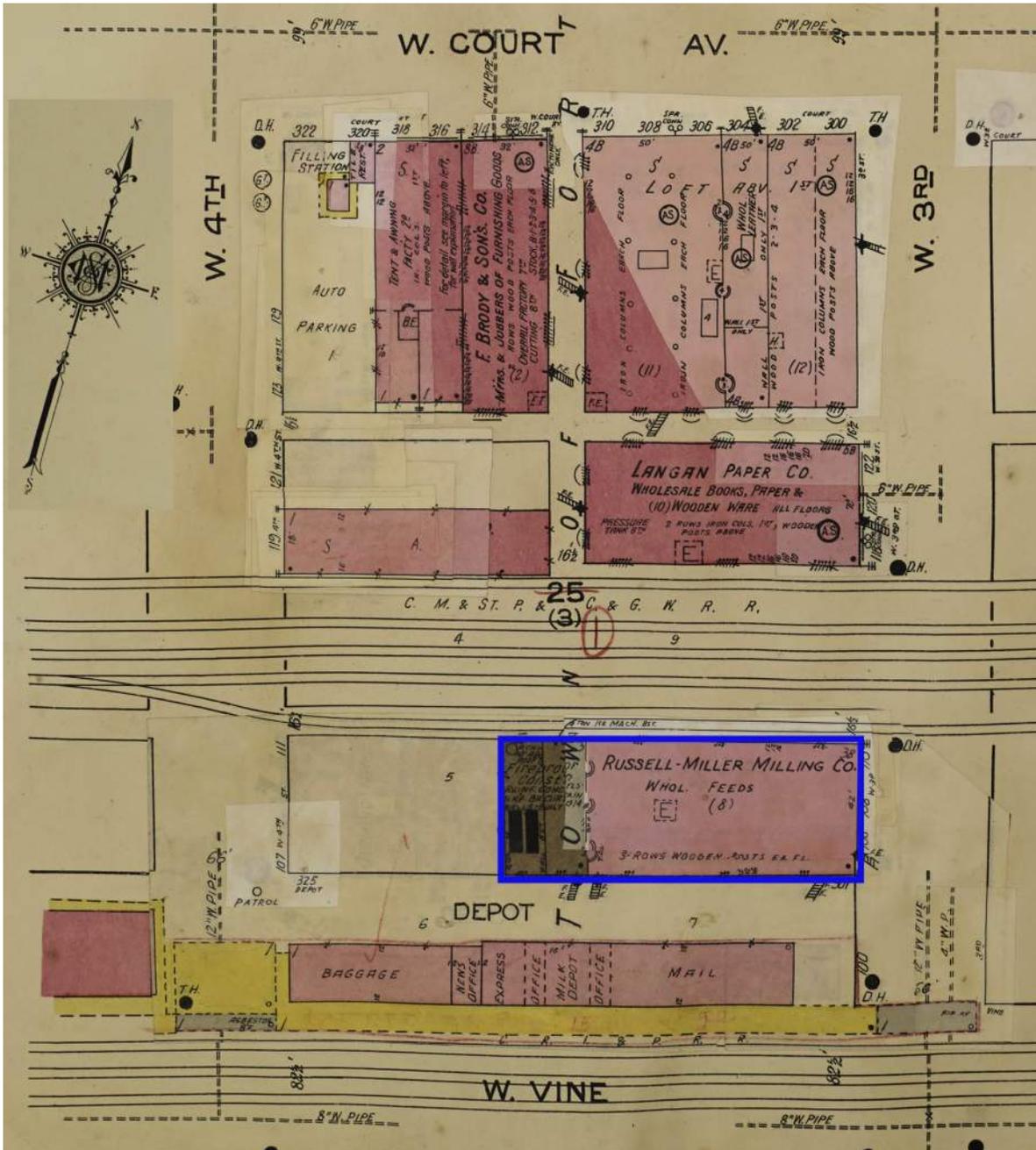
(Source: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/about-this-collection/>. Retrieved 06/01/2022.)

The site of the warehouse is outlined in blue. By this time, the addition was in place (the color brown indicating a concrete “fire proof” construction). The map confirms the functional use as “Wholesale Produce and Candy Mfg.” with departments noted by floor.

Davidson Bros. Co. Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

05. Fire Insurance Map – 1950 (rev. 1920)



(Source: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/about-this-collection/>. Retrieved 06/01/2022.)

The site of the warehouse is outlined in blue. At the time of this revision in 1950, the building was occupied by Russell-Miller Milling Co.

Davidson Bros. Company Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Davidson Bros. Company Warehouse
City or Vicinity: Des Moines
County: Polk **State:** Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell
Date Photographed: 01/18/2022 and 05/03/2023

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

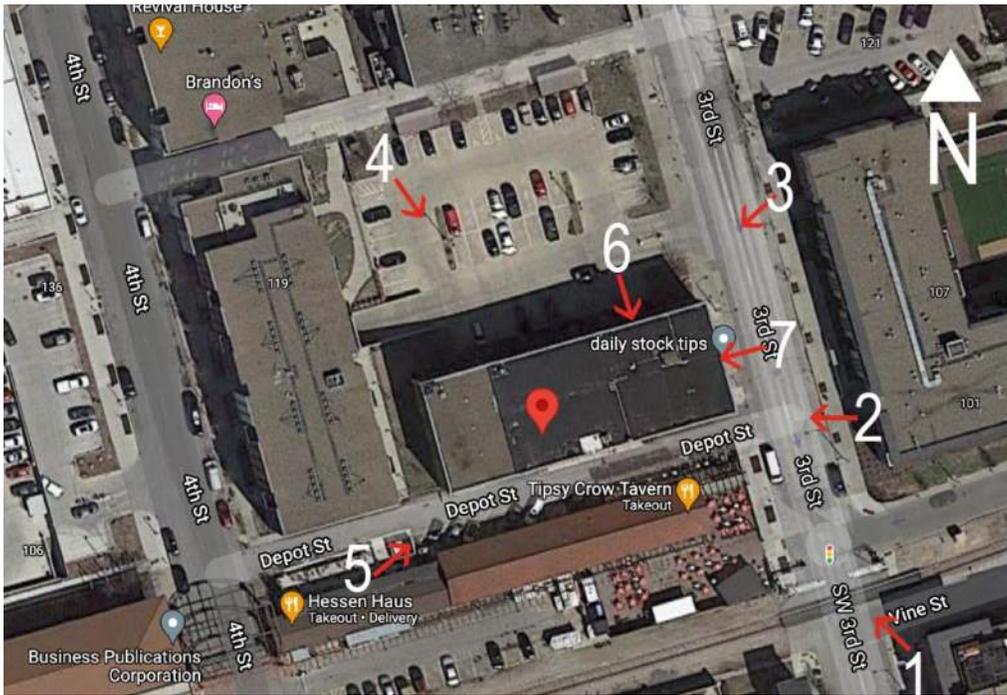
- Photo 1 of 19: Site view, looking NW across Vine Street (railroad tracks) and SW 3rd Street
- Photo 2 of 19: View of the façade (east) and south elevations, looking NW
- Photo 3 of 19: View of the façade (east) and north elevations, looking SW
- Photo 4 of 19: View of the north elevation, looking SE
- Photo 5 of 19: View of the west and south elevations, looking NE
- Photo 6 of 19: View of the south elevation, looking east
- Photo 7 of 19: Typical 1st floor, round-arch opening
- Photo 8 of 19: Interior 1st floor, looking west
- Photo 9 of 19: Interior 1st floor, looking NE
- Photo 10 of 19: Interior 1st floor, looking north
- Photo 11 of 19: Interior 1st floor, looking NW
- Photo 12 of 19: Interior 1st floor (rear section), looking SE
- Photo 13 of 19: Interior 2nd floor, looking SW
- Photo 14 of 19: Interior 2nd floor, looking NE
- Photo 15 of 19: Interior 2nd floor, looking SW
- Photo 16 of 19: Interior 3rd floor, looking south
- Photo 17 of 19: Interior 3rd floor, looking SE
- Photo 18 of 19: Interior basement, looking NE
- Photo 19 of 19: Interior basement, looking east

Davidson Bros. Company Warehouse
Name of Property

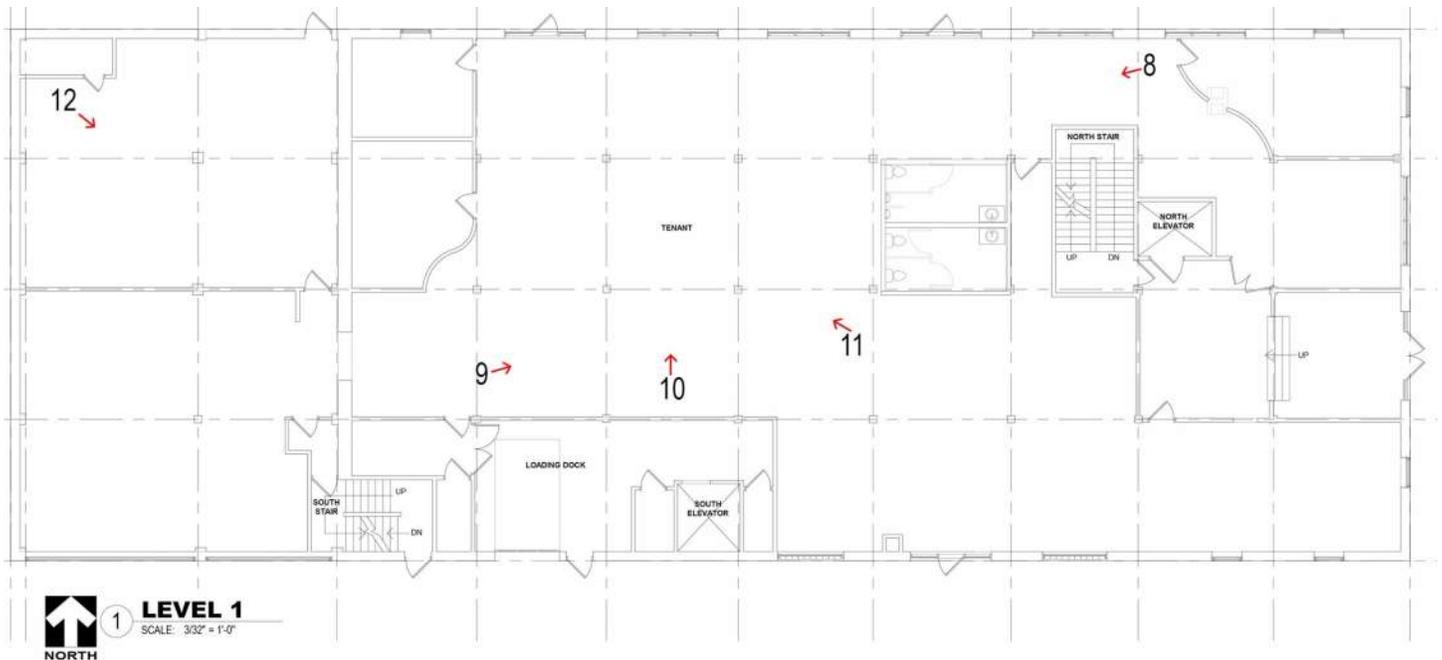
Polk County, Iowa
County and State

PHOTO KEYS

01. EXTERIOR



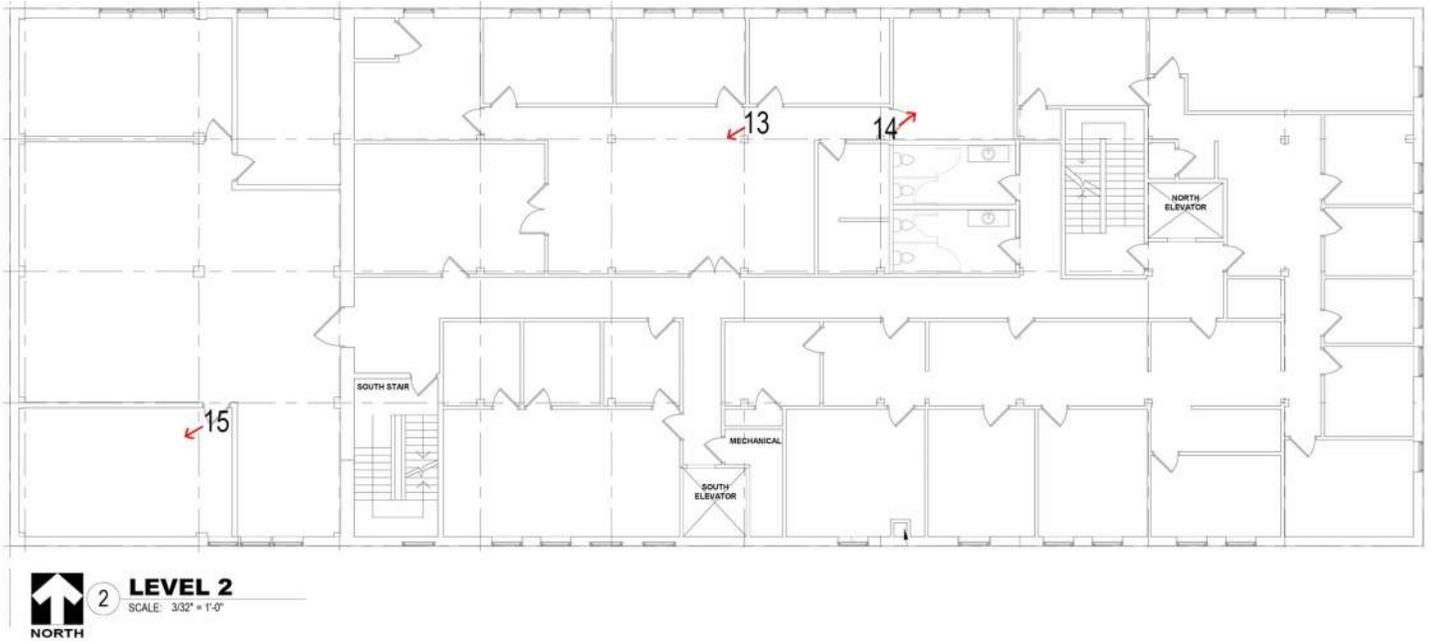
02. Interior – 1st Floor



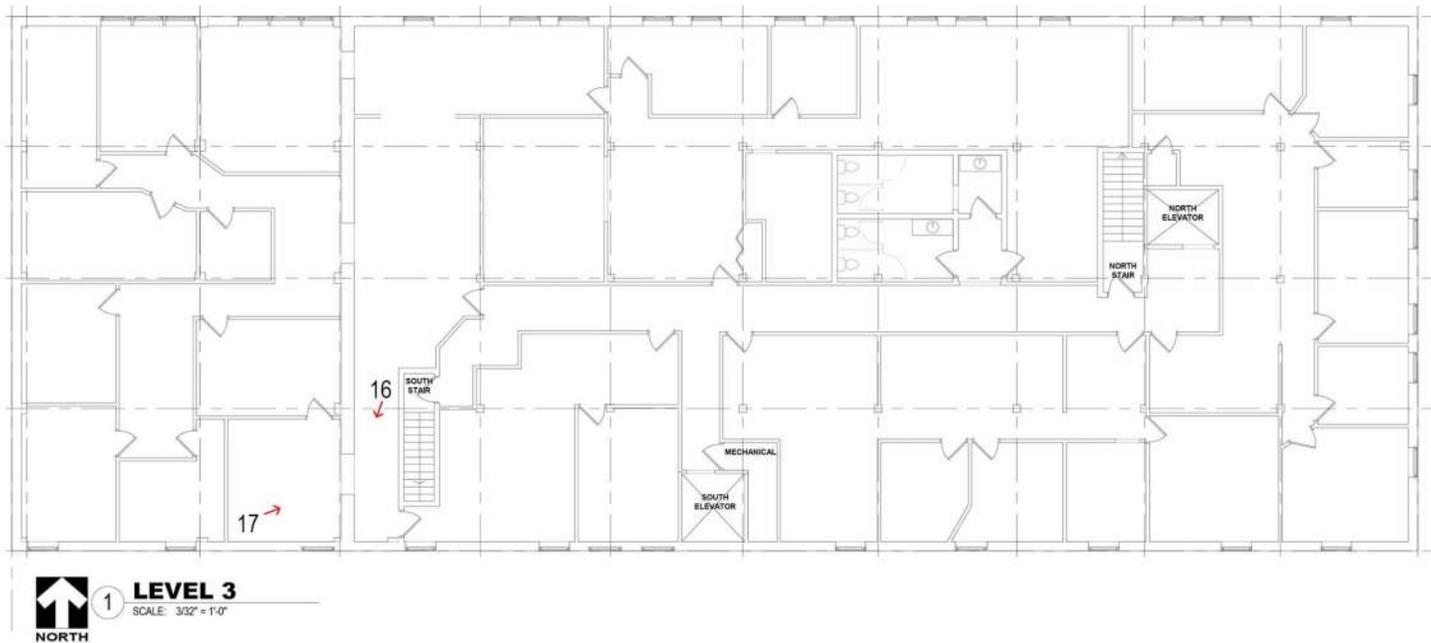
Davidson Bros. Company Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

03. Interior – 2nd Floor



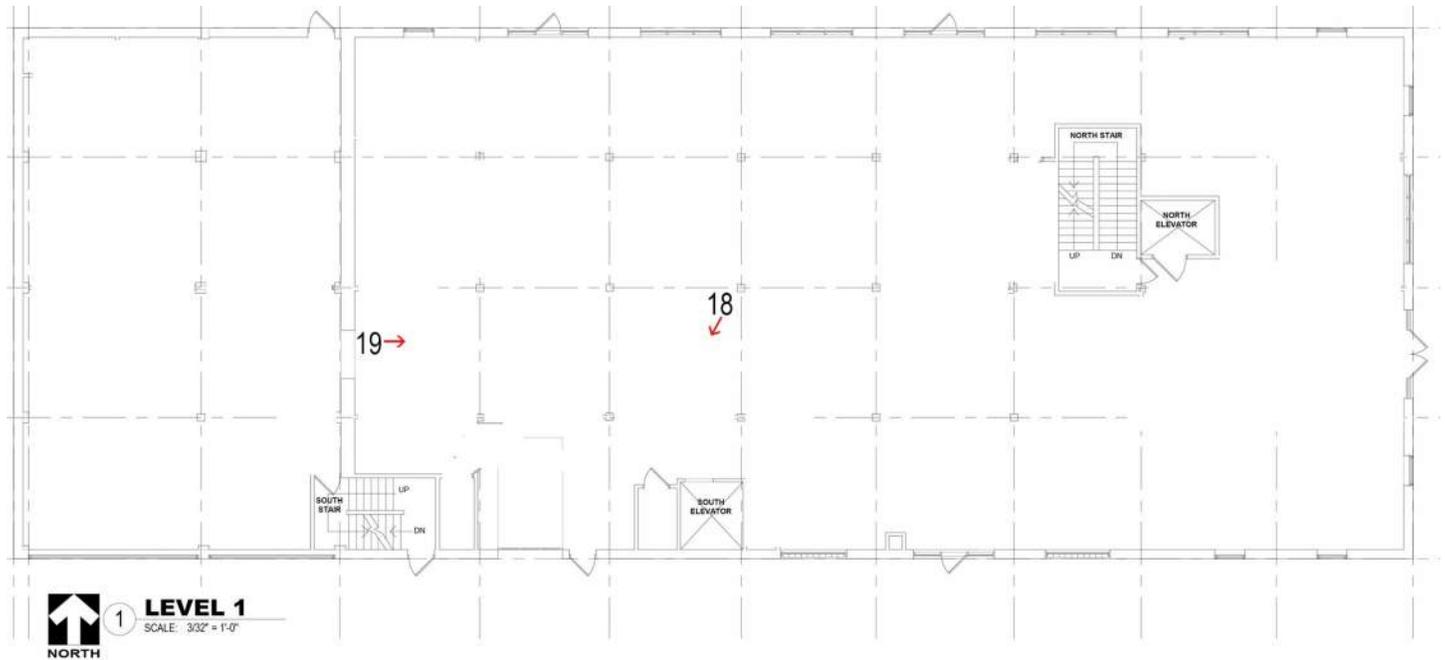
04. Interior – 3rd Floor



Davidson Bros. Company Warehouse
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

05. Interior - Basement



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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

other names/site number Senator Francis House

Name of Multiple Property Listing N/A

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

2. Location

street & number 4140 Grand Avenue not for publication

city or town Des Moines vicinity

state Iowa county Polk zip code 50312

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X 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 X local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B X C D

Signature of certifying official/Title: State Historic Preservation Officer _____ Date _____

State Historic Preservation Office of Iowa
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 or 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 the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

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

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing		Noncontributing		
1		1		buildings
				site
				structure
		4		object
1		5		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY
REVIVALS/Other/Chateauesque

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE
walls: STONE

roof: SYNTHETIC
other: METAL/copper
GLASS

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph (Briefly describe the current, general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

The William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House at 4140 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa, is an excellent local example of a house designed in the Chateausque style. The three-story Bedford limestone residence stands out as one of only a few houses in the city known to have been built in the Chateausque style of architecture, showcasing characteristic turrets, towers, stone carvings, and stained-glass windows. The interior is richly finished with native oak wood floors, carved wood central staircase, wood trim and paneling, wood beamed ceilings, and three fireplaces with glazed tile surrounds and hearths. Designed in 1901-1902 and constructed 1902-1904, the Coffee House showcases the work of master architecture firm Hallett & Rawson and general contractor W.F. Mitchell & Co., both of Des Moines. The house retains significant architectural integrity. The period of significance is 1904, the date of construction completion for this locally significant property.

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable.)

(Iowa SHPO Additional Instructions: After the main **Narrative Description**, discuss any physical alterations since the period of significance under the subheading **Alterations**, and the seven aspects of integrity as it applies to the resource in a **Statement of Integrity** with each aspect discussed in its own paragraph.)

Setting

The Coffee House lot, 4140 Grand Avenue, is situated on the eastern slope of a narrow ridge that widens to the north as the highest point in the City of Des Moines (Figure 1). From the ridge, there is a glen to the east and a valley to the west. To the east, landforms slope downward toward the central business district some two miles away. In the late nineteenth century, these highlands were with abundant trees and good views, which attracted wealthy residents to build large residences progressively westward from the congested downtown area, with the largest houses being built on and around Grand Avenue. Single family houses constructed prior to 1930 predominate in the surrounding neighborhoods, where old-growth oak trees remain abundant. Some institutional buildings and twentieth-century and contemporary apartment and condominium buildings are interspersed on and near Grand Avenue.

Across Grand Avenue to the north and extending east lies the 80-acre heavily residential Greenwood Park Plats Historic District (NRHP 2013). This district includes resources dating 1879 through the 1940s, including the 1922 Gothic brick St. Augustine Church (542 42nd Street, NRHP) across the street from the Coffee House, as well as the 1924 picturesque Spanish Revival Wetherell Apartments (4024 Grand Avenue, NRHP), a half block to the east. The residential neighborhood south of Grand Avenue, known as "South of Grand," includes curvilinear streets with a mix of large parcels with estate-style houses and smaller lots with smaller houses.

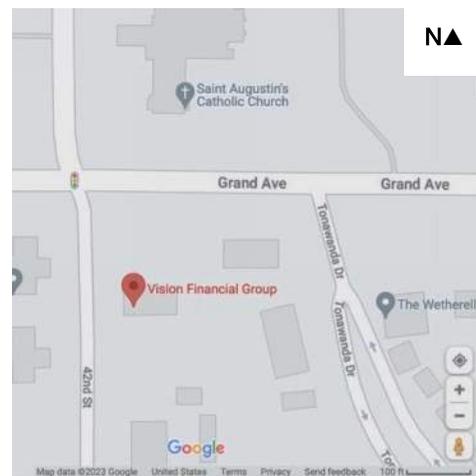
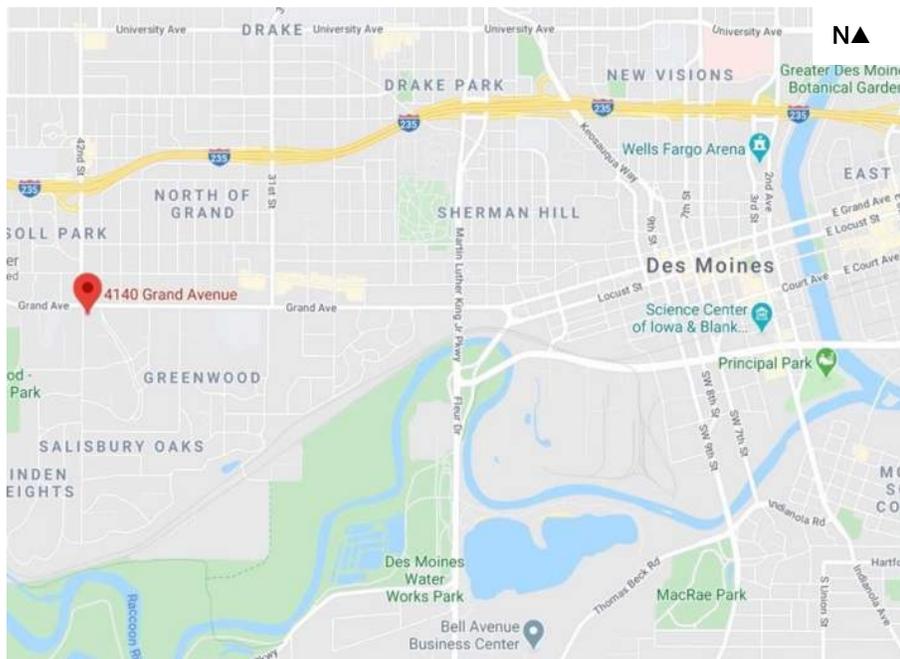
Beyond the Coffee House east property line, the land drops sharply into a narrow glen containing two adjacent low-rise apartment buildings built in the early 1960s that front Tonawanda Drive (formerly known as 41st Street); the steep slope and mature trees at the property line visually screen the apartment buildings from the site. To the south is a 1970 apartment building that is screened by mature trees, dense shrubbery, and fencing.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State



Figures 1-2. Left, location map showing 4140 Grand Avenue on the west side of Des Moines, Iowa. Right, location detail showing the Coffee House at the southeast corner of Grand Avenue and 42nd Street. (Google maps 2023, with north arrows added).

Site

The Coffee House has a visually prominent placement on a large L-shaped lot (Lot 1, Browns Woods Plat 2), occupying the southeast corner of Grand Avenue and 42nd Street (Figures 2-3). The façade of the house fronts Grand Avenue with public paved sidewalk, with the lot measuring 132 feet wide, east-west, and the house setback on the lot 120 feet south from the avenue. This deep front lawn contains mature trees and a remnant tree stump recently carved into an eagle. The northwest corner of the lot is the high point of the site, and non-historic stacked limestone walls edge the corner and western planting beds; there is a contemporary monument sign. Near the house, a pea-gravel path follows the route of the former front driveway, leading from the west public sidewalk adjacent to 42nd Street to the main north entrance. On the west the property is edged by 42nd Street and a public concrete sidewalk; this frontage is 316 feet north to south. The southern rear of the lot is wider, measuring 175 feet at the south property line; the lot's L shape is formed by a nearly 100-foot-wide (north-south) projection extending east more than 40 feet. The site slopes gradually downward from the west to the east property line, where the topography drops substantially.

Landscaping along the east, south, and west elevations provide wooded privacy and shield views from the street. Along 42nd Street, a tall, dense privacy hedge grows from the rear of the lot to the house with an opening for the driveway that provides access to the rear parking lot. A variety of trees and bushes cluster around the west elevation of the house for further privacy, and a thicket of trees and shrubs grows along the east and south property lines, providing serene green scenery. Behind the rear of the house, non-historic masonry retaining walls with stucco finish and limestone caps flank concrete stairs and wood platforms that allow access to rear first-floor and basement entrances. At the southeast corner of the lot stands a non-historic 1945 gable-roofed two-car garage with upper apartment built of painted concrete masonry units, with a later addition single-story garage bay at the east. The two-story main garage and apartment have been remodeled into office space, and the western two garage doors have been replaced by windows. In summary, the house is a contributing building and there are no contributing site features.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

There are four post-period of significance non-contributing elements: a rear 1945 garage (building), late-twentieth-century stacked stone landscaping walls and rear retaining walls (structures), and a contemporary flagpole and sign (objects).

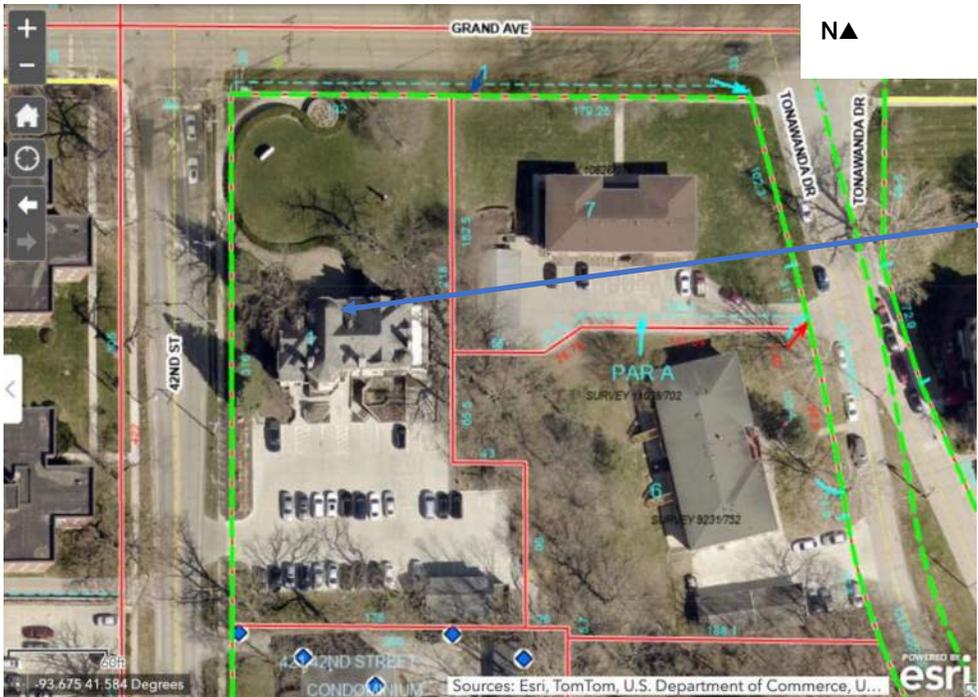


Figure 3. Polk County real estate map shows the Coffee House parcel; arrow points to the house. (Polk County Auditor Real Estate Map, 2022; north arrow added).

House Exterior

The three-story house with full basement was completed in 1904 in the Chateausque Revival style (Figure 4). In keeping with Chateausque architecture styling, the design is asymmetric in plan, massing, roofline, and fenestration, and yet unified by the monolithic rough stone on all elevations.¹ The house is nominally rectangular, spanning approximately 75 feet long east-west with widths ranging from 35 to 47 feet. The building's complex massing includes a broad round tower with conical roof on the façade, with a hexagonal tower that aligns on the rear, and two turrets on the east side, where a side porch with upper walk-out balcony adjoins. The exterior features uniform rock-faced coursed-ashlar gray Bedford (Indiana) limestone on all exterior walls, visible foundations, and the east side porch columns (Figure 5). Alternating narrow and wide stone courses and convex mortar bed joints provide a horizontal counterbalance to vertical building elements. The same limestone dressed with a fine linear tooled finish differentiates sills, jamb returns, belt courses, turret corbels, engaged colonettes, chimneys, door surrounds, blind windows, drip molding, and gabled dormer cornices and copings. Detailed vine and acanthus leaf patterns decorate the deeply recessed arched front door opening, which is reached from stone entrance steps with an integrated carriage step with a curved face (Figure 6). Similarly patterned carved stonework also highlights gabled dormer faces and corbels (Figure 7). Carved stone columns flank diamond-lite casement windows in the rounded front tower. An original stone porch at the east end of the house retains stone foundation walls, stone columns, and

¹ The author acknowledges invaluable construction analysis provided by Steve Stimmel, AIA, retired member of the BBSAE architecture firm that is a successor to the Hallett & Rawson firm by way of the Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson firm.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

vining metal railings that repeat at the porch rooftop level, which is a walk-out terrace; contemporary fixed aluminum windows and stucco panels inset between the columns and railings enclose the space for year-round use.



Figure 4. The Coffee House north facade looking south from the Grand Avenue sidewalk across the deep front lawn. (All photographs by Jennifer James Communications, October 2022).

The picturesque roofline is comprised of moderately steep hipped roofs, gabled and hipped dormers, turrets, and tall chimneys braced to the roof. A round tower with conical roof projects from the façade and a corresponding polygonal roof caps a hexagonal bay on the rear elevation. These primary roofs are steep and clad in dark gray slate-look shingles with copper flashings. The roofline is visually animated by cross-hipped roofs, gabled and hipped dormers, and conical roofed corner turrets on the east. The roof terminates at its tallest point with a projecting round tower with conical roof on the north façade, and a polygonal roof capping a hexagonal bay on the rear south elevation. Roof eaves feature painted wood cornices with moldings and brackets. Three rectangular dressed stone chimneys with recessed panels and corbeled caps are laterally supported from the roof by metal chimney braces. Curved copper roofs cover primary entrances. A copper-clad first-floor bay window is a feature on the rear elevation. In addition, copper conductor heads and downspouts drain into box gutters that are anchored to the stone with copper brackets featuring leaf designs. At the east side elevation, the minimally sloped side porch roof doubles as a walk-out roof terrace with stone posts and original metal railing panels.

Most wall openings are rectangular, with a few Roman-arched door and window openings. Within the masonry openings, there are deeply recessed original wood windows in a variety of configurations. On the façade, fenestrations include the original rounded glazed front door, radiused double-hung wood windows in the round tower and northeast turret, and large stepped windows with upper stained-glass transoms provide daylight to the central open staircase and a second set of smaller stepped windows is located beneath, illuminating the central basement stairs. Other fenestrations include stained-glass French doors at the second-story terrace; radiused stained glass windows in the southeast turret; numerous one-over-one double-hung wood windows; in-swinging casement windows with diamond-shaped lites at the third story;

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

and gable dormers on the east end featuring a Palladian window effect of a Roman-arched window flanked by rectangular windows. There are some fixed non-historic aluminum-framed windows at the below-grade basement level and east porch infill, which are obscured by their positioning and landscaping. On the rear at the first story and basement level, there are a total of five entrances containing non-historic doors (three metal-framed glazed single-leaf doors and two metal doors).



Figure 5. The Coffee House is fully stone, including the rear south elevation, which continues the fine detailing from the more visible front.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State



Figures 6-7. The ornate stonework showcases masterful craftsmanship, including the carved arched main front entrance and curved wall of the north tower (left), and carved gable dormers and chimneys, plus southeast turret at the rear (right).

House Interior

On the interior, the three-story house has finished first, second, and third floors, and a partially finished basement. The floor plan for the house, much of which dates to 1904, was designed for early-twentieth-century family life and entertaining, however, the house has been used for office purposes since 1981.² Openings through basement ceilings reveal the structural framing system as wood framing spanning between masonry bearing walls. Inside the historic north entrance, the historic vestibule leads to the midpoint of the primary circulation path, a wide east-west hall that extends the entire length of the house. This double-loaded center hall repeats on all four levels, with the hall widest on the first floor and narrower on the other levels. There are two staircases that provide vertical circulation: The grand staircase is located along the north wall and is open from the first to second floors, forming a U-shape with treads of varying widths. The stairs continue through a door beneath the grand stair to the basement, and with a break from second to third floor as a narrow, mostly enclosed single stair to the third floor. The second staircase is a narrow, steep switch-back service stair located on the west wall, extending from basement to third floor, and intersecting with the center hall on the second and third floors. Overall, the house retains much of its 1904 plan, with limited partitions removed under prior owners and additional partitions added, mostly in the

² *Des Moines Tribune*, "Rebirth planned for mansion," February 9, 1981: 3. As detailed under Significance, the house was converted to multi-family housing by 1957, and then used as a nursing home from approximately 1958 through the late 1970s. Starting in 1981 the building was converted to office use.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State

basement.



Figure 8. The grand stair at the first-floor central hall typifies the ornate finishes, including wood flooring, wood paneling, wood ceiling beams, in the well-appointed Coffee House, view looking north.

First floor: On the first floor, a wide central hall provides linear circulation the width of the house, from east enclosed porch to west kitchen, with rooms opening off the hall, many with sliding pocket doors; at the center of the hall arises the open grand stair, leading to the second-story reception room. The central hall is accessed from the north entrance door, which opens to a small entry with doors to the central hall and the grand open staircase on the north wall (Figure 8). Beneath the grand stair is a smaller arched-top doorway that opens to stairs leading to the basement, originally used as a ballroom. Opposite the entry is a small restroom and then the sitting room (now used as a waiting room), which can be enclosed by pocket doors and has a rear entrance door. At the east end of the hall there are two formal rooms, each with a replacement wall along the corridor (the northeast room has an added restroom and closet); the hall terminates at the door to the east side porch, enclosed for year-round use in postwar era and including a south egress door. To the west of the grand stair, the hall leads to the formal tower rooms, originally used for dining and entertaining; the rounded north tower room and hexagonal south tower room both include tall pocket doors that can be opened or closed to create one large room or three smaller rooms (Figure 9). At the far west end beyond a swinging wood glazed door is the northwest kitchen, restroom, and narrow service hall to the steep west service staircase, storage room, and southwest egress door.

The first floor retains many original finishes and features. Overall, the historic walls are painted plaster and finished with oak base and wide trim moldings. Some rooms have a tall paneled oak wainscot, along with oak pocket and panel doors (some glazed). Several of the original plaster ceilings feature oak beams and crown moldings, while other ceilings have acoustical ceiling tile installed to facilitate recessed lighting without damage to plaster ceilings (Figure 9). There are oak strip floors (some under carpet) in the central hall, grand staircase, and all formal rooms except the northeast corner room, which has an original blue terrazzo floor. The grand stair is open and U-shaped along the north wall; it features a gentle slope with wide treads of varying widths and Classical Revival-style oak newel posts, balusters, paneled wainscot, and boxed stringers (Figure 8). A built-in oak bench is located at the base of the staircase, which is paneled with oak;

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

beneath the grand stair is an oak Roman-arched door leading to the narrower basement north stair. The west tower rooms—a round north tower and octagonal south tower—have curved and faceted perimeter walls, respectively, with vertically grooved wood wainscot, wood beamed ceilings, and glazed pocket doors. In the southeast room, there is an original elaborate fireplace with wood surround and ceramic tilework. The adjoining east porch is reached via original double wood doors; the porch was enclosed post period of significance, and it retains a wood beaded-board ceiling and original stone partial walls, columns, tooled railing caps, and carved corbels.³ The kitchen, restrooms, and service sub-corridor have contemporary flooring and fixtures. The west service stair retains original walls, wood steps with carpet, and wood railings.



Figure 9. The first-floor central hall includes woodwork including boxed ceiling beams, paneled pocket doors, wood wainscot, fluted pilasters, and wood-strip flooring, view looking west toward west tower rooms.

Second floor: On second floor, the floor plan is designed around the main open reception hall that extends the full width of the house from the top of the grand stair to the south exterior wall (Figure 10). The east-west central hall continues through the west tower room (originally two bedrooms separated by the hall, with the partition walls removed) to the west service stair. To the east are two former bedrooms with a shared bathroom; the southeast bedroom has double doors that open to the upper terrace over the east side porch (Figure 12). A narrower staircase at the northwest corner of the reception room leads to the third floor.

The second floor retains mainly original finishes and features. The reception hall is crowned by a tall wood-beamed ceiling visually upheld by oak fluted columns. At the north where the grand staircase ascends, one pair of columns on plinths integrate into the grand stair's oak balustrade, with corresponding pilasters at the east and west walls framing the stairwell (Figure 10). A corresponding pair of columns and pilasters at the south side of the room visually frame the large fireplace, which is finished with green ceramic tile and trimmed in oak (Figure 11). The historic oak mantle is supported by paired pilasters at each end; built-in wood benches flank the fireplace. The two east bedrooms (now used as offices) each contain a round turret with built-in wood window seats. The southeast room features a Classical Revival-style oak fireplace

³ The porch has a glazed brick-type floor that may have been added later.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

surround with a mirror and mottled green ceramic tile framing the firebox and hearth (Figure 12). The southeast room also has stained-glass windows and wood double doors leading to the upper terrace. Both east rooms have wood floors, woodwork, paneled doors, plastered walls and ceilings (ceilings are mostly covered by acoustical tile to insert additional overhead lighting without damage to plaster). On the west end of the plan, the woodwork is simpler and painted. In the tower room, there is a south window bench and original window trim. There are a few smaller rooms near the west service staircase, with simpler wood trim.



Figure 10. The grand stair opens to the second-floor reception room, illuminated by stained-glass transom windows, view looking northeast.



Figure 11. The second-floor reception room showcases rich finishes and features including a large fireplace hearth with built-in benches, wood columns, and ceramic tilework, view looking south.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State



Figure 12. The second-floor southeast bedroom features stained-glass windows, stained-glass doors to the upper balcony, fireplace, and turret window seat, view looking southeast.

Third floor: On the third floor, reached via the north central stair and west service stair, there is a narrow central double-loaded corridor. At the east end is an open room (possibly the original children's playroom and gymnasium). The west end has a north round tower room and south hexagonal tower room. There are other assorted smaller rooms (two used as restrooms). Throughout the third floor, much of the historic wood base molding, plain wood window casings, and some wood panel doors (all painted) remain. There are some non-historic gypsum board partitions and soffits, ceramic tile, and carpet, along with a pull-down access to the attic, where some mechanical equipment is located.

Basement: At the basement level, the north staircase steps down to a raised platform with historic built-in wood benches (painted), marking the entrance to what was originally a ballroom. Columns exist, imbedded in walls and encased; the center of the former ballroom is open between column lines, with spaces on either side subdivided by the late twentieth century and used as offices. There is a concrete subfloor, plaster walls, and plaster ceiling covered by contemporary finishes of carpet and ceramic tile, gypsum wallboard, wood paneling, and acoustical ceiling tile. To the west up two and three steps are two narrow halls leading to additional office space, restrooms, and unfinished storage and mechanical spaces. To the east, through a hidden door, is an unfinished storage and mechanical space beneath the enclosed side porch.

Alterations

Overall, the Coffee House retains significant key character-defining floor plan elements, finishes, and features that date to its 1904 completion, as noted above, despite multiple owners and conversion to multifamily and office use. This is a testament to the original high-quality construction and materials. Some changes began during Dr. William O. and Mattie M. Coffee's ownership of the property (1901-1916), during which time they sold off lots from the original larger multi-acre parcel as land values rose, and they made improvements such as building a 1905 barn, which caught fire in 1909.⁴ State Senator Leslie E. and Mary

⁴ Abstract of Title; *The Improvement Journal*, "Des Moines," March 4, 1905: 23; *Des Moines Tribune*, "Bark of Dog Saves Property," December 17, 1909: 10.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

Francis moved to the house (1917-1939), after which an insurance company purchased the property (1940-1945), with plans to convert the property to ten apartments; however, the property appears to have remained vacant until after World War II.⁵ The house returned to single-family owner occupancy under Dr. Grace Doane, M.D. and her husband, publisher Dante Pierce (1945-1956); they updated the house for the automobile era, building a 1945 concrete masonry unit garage with upper apartment along the southern property line, removing the front entrance porte-cochere on the north, re-landscaping the property, updating plumbing and electrical, and redecorating.⁶ The widowed Dr. Doane sold the property to a developer in 1956, who inserted apartments into the floor plan and sold off the low-lying eastern portion of the property, bordering Tonawanda Drive.⁷ By the late 1950s through the late 1970s a nursing home operated within the house. In 1975, a bomb blast at a church diagonally across the street damaged the second-story stained-glass stair-stepped windows on the façade. These were replaced with clear glass infills, with the stained-glass transoms surviving.⁸ In circa 1981 a new owner removed the non-historic nursing home buildout and inserted offices largely within the original floor plan, with some typical office finishes added. Except for a brief attempt to create condominiums in 1990, the building has remained in office use with some finishes updated over time. The current ownership has undertaken a rehabilitation that restored historic windows, cleaned and repointed the stone exterior, replaced the damaged slate roof and some copper, and updated mechanical systems.

Integrity

The Coffee House exhibits a high degree of integrity according to the seven aspects of integrity—location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association—as defined in the National Register Bulletin No. 15: “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.” This examination, which follows, finds the building retains significant historic integrity.

Location: The Coffee House remains on its original site on the west side of Des Moines, Iowa. With regard to location, its integrity is excellent.

Design: The integrity of design is excellent. As a resource considered eligible under Criterion C, integrity of design and materials are of particular importance. The house continues to reflect the historic function as an important mansion designed by Hallett & Rawson and built by W.F. Mitchell & Co. on the city’s premiere street, in the locally unusual Chateausque style, with a fully stone exterior. The interior strongly reflects its 1904 construction date with the retention of major rooms and many of the original finishes, including oak woodwork, hardwood floors and terrazzo floor, pocket doors, beamed ceilings, three fireplaces, stained-glass windows and doors, and built-in benches. The careful design adapting the building for office use has inserted ceilings and partitions in a manner that they can be removed without significant damage to character defining features.

Setting: The immediate site with a large front lawn containing old-growth trees located on a high ridge within the city remains essentially unchanged since 1904. Surrounding properties on Grand Avenue also have deep lawns, including two churches and a few apartment buildings built in the 1920s. In the midcentury, the eastern low-lying portion of the lot was sold and redeveloped into apartments, which are set at a much lower grade and thus are unobtrusive. In the far rear corner, a garage was built in 1945 by a prior owner, and with the postwar multifamily and nursing home uses the rear yard was adapted for parking. Thick hedges and

⁵ *Des Moines Register*, “Old Francis Home To Be Apartments,” June 27, 1940: 9.

⁶ *Des Moines Tribune*, “Pierce Home Sold,” October 31, 1956: 12. Dante Pierce died in 1955.

⁷ City of Des Moines building permit log; Abstract of Title; Polk County Assessor.

⁸ *Des Moines Tribune*, “Sift Piece-by-Piece Through Blast Site,” December 16, 1975: 1; Abstract.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

dense plantings of trees and shrubs shield views. In sum, the integrity of setting is very good on the façade and fair in the rear, offset by the landscape screening from the public street.

Materials: The integrity of materials is very good; the exterior of the house and structure remains nearly unchanged from original construction, except for enclosure of the east side porch and removal of the small porte-cochere in the circa 1940s. To create accessible entrance into the house, which has narrow, steep front stone steps, a rear doorway (which may be original) provides at-grade entrance into the building and is convenient to handicapped parking; this configuration has preserved the original front entrance, façade, and front lawn. Important original rooms with their highly crafted millwork, grand stair, fireplaces, and other finishes have been retained in the original public areas of the house and some of the private rooms. The building has withstood continual use and changes in occupancy. Modern heating and cooling, plumbing, and light fixtures, with some acoustical ceilings to assist with insertion without disturbing ceilings, have been added, as is typical for a house that is more than 115 years old.

Workmanship: The integrity of workmanship is excellent, exemplified on the exterior by the stonework finishes and carvings, turrets with curved windows, stained glass, metal porch and terrace railings, and copper work. Workmanship is readily apparent in the interior millwork, hardwood floors, terrazzo floor, and finished walls and ceilings.

Feeling: The integrity of feeling is excellent. The house stands apart from other houses due to the unique architectural design and cohesive exterior. The exterior and the interiors readily convey historic character as the work of masters who sought to provide customized design solutions for a client seeking a visually prominent statement of their place in the society suitable for entertaining in addition to a home for the family.

Association: The house strongly retains its association as a palatial mansion built on the city's most prominent street to express the status and wealth of the Coffee family, and as a testament to the architectural design mastery and fine craftsmanship of the builders. Coffee family members would readily recognize the house, as would the original architects and builders.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

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 grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1904

Significant Dates

1904

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hallett & Rawson, architects

W.F. Mitchell & Co., general contractor

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

Statement of Significance

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House at 4140 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C – Architecture as an excellent local example of a house designed in the Chateausque style. The residence stands out as one of only a few houses in the city known to have been built in the Chateausque style of architecture. Designed in 1901 to 1902 and constructed 1902 to 1904, the Coffee House showcases the work of master architecture firm Hallett & Rawson and general contractor W.F. Mitchell & Co., both of Des Moines—further emphasized by Hallett & Rawson’s architectural rendering published in a national building magazine in 1902. The house retains significant architectural integrity. The period of significance is 1904, the date of construction completion for this locally significant property.

Narrative Statement of Significance

 (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

(Iowa SHPO Additional Instructions: For properties not nominated under Criterion D, include a statement about whether any archaeological remains within or beyond the footprint of the property were assessed as part of this nomination under the subheading **Archaeological Assessment**.)

Architectural Significance:

Coffee House as an Excellent Local Example of Chateausque Architecture

The William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House at 4140 Grand Avenue, in the South of Grand neighborhood in Des Moines, Iowa, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C – Architecture as an excellent local example of residential Chateausque style. In 1901, Dr. William O. Coffee, M.D. (1859–1927) and Mattie Merle Coffee (1863–1942) purchased a large parcel of land on which to build a masonry mansion, which they named Woc-Merle Court, (sometimes spelled W.O.C.-Merle Court), after William’s initials and Mattie’s middle name. Completed in 1904, the 12,000-square-foot stone Coffee House was the design of architects in the Hallett & Rawson firm, as built by the local master general contractor firm of W.F. Mitchell & Co.

The Chateausque style was used in designing “palatial palaces,” which architect John Milnes Baker describes in his book *American House Styles* as being extra-large American houses built between 1880 and 1930 to showcase wealth and status.⁹ The style draws on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century French manor houses and castles, popularized in the mid-1880s through 1910 by East Coast architect Richard Morris Hunt. Hunt incorporated Gothic French and Italian Renaissance elements into designs for summer houses in Newport, Rhode Island, and the country’s largest private residence, Biltmore House, the Chateausque-style mansion in North Carolina built for George Washington Vanderbilt II (constructed 1889 to 1895), which inspired additional “palaces.” Baker calls Biltmore “the apotheosis of the palatial palace.... there was a pervasive determination among the new social class to establish an aristocracy of wealth.”¹⁰ The Chateausque style demanded masonry construction—typically Roman brick or smooth limestone. Steeply pitched roofs, dormers including wall dormers that interrupt the roofline,

⁹ Baker: 91-93.

¹⁰ Baker: 92-93: “Although Richard Morris Hunt returned to the United States from Paris before our Civil War, not even the most extravagant of his clients were ready for the so opulent and palatial a style until the 1880s. At that time, however, it became the ultimate style for the conspicuous consumption of wealth,” Baker states.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

rounded turrets, fanciful chimneys, windows defined by hood molds, and ornamental railings, are some of the hallmarks of the style.¹¹

The Coffee House exterior design employs key elements of the Chateausque style, with some Richardsonian Romanesque elements:¹²

- Three-story massing and sprawling 12,000-square-foot asymmetrical floor plan.
- Picturesque projecting towers and turrets.
- Uniform rock-faced limestone exterior with contrasting finely tooled and carved detailing including the arched recessed front entrance and decorated dormers.
- Complex roofline comprised of steep conical roofs on the round tower and turrets, moderately steep hipped roofs, and multiple gabled and hipped dormers.
- Tall stone chimneys braced to the roof.



Figure 13. This c. 1914 view of the Coffee House, identified as “WOC-Merle — Residence of Dr. W.O. Coffee,” appeared in the 1915 photogravure book *Art of Des Moines*. Note the summer screening on the upper walk-out terrace, which may have been used as a sleeping porch. (Artwork of Des Moines).

On the interior, the Coffee House incorporates classically derived architectural elements and features in keeping with the Chateausque style including:

- First-floor central hall containing grand staircase with multiple-width treads, classically derived balustrades, and newel. The hall extends the width of the house.
- To the west, first-floor former dining rooms/entertaining spaces occupy the round

¹¹ Baker: 96: Baker notes the style is “too extravagant to be mannered in wood.”

¹² Baker 94: Baker notes the Richardsonian Romanesque style as also popular for palatial houses. The style also employed stone and masonry construction (specifically rusticated ashlar stone), turrets, towers, and multi-gabled roofs as popularized by architect Henry Hobson Richardson. He studied at the Ecole de Beaux-Arts in Paris and by 1872 moved to Boston to design Trinity Church, houses, and more in the massive pre-Gothic masonry style popular 1880 to 1900. (Baker: 94)

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

- north tower and octagonal south tower, with curved and faceted perimeter walls with wood beamed ceilings, oak wainscot, and pocket doors.
- Second-floor reception hall features wood columns, pilasters, beamed ceiling, and massive fireplace with ceramic surround.
 - Key rooms have plaster walls, paneled oak wainscot, beamed ceilings, wide trim and casing, and floors. One first-floor room has a terrazzo floor, with blue diamond pattern.
 - Oak panel and pocket doors, some glazed, some with original hardware.
 - Two additional fireplaces, with classically derived wood mantels
 - Built-in benches at the grand stair, basement stair, southeast first-floor oriel window, second-floor reception room fireplace, second-floor turrets, and second-floor tower room.

To date only three late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth-century Chateausque style houses have been identified as extant in Des Moines, including the Coffee House (Figure 13). In addition to the Coffee House, the 1890s W.H. Stoner House designed by architect George E. Hallett, AIA, and the Byer House designed by an unknown architect are discussed below. As demonstrated below, the Coffee House stands out locally for its historical integrity, use of stone rather than less expensive brick, and its unusually large size as compared to the other two extant examples.



Figures 14-15. Architect George E. Hallett designed the W.H. Stoner House in Des Moines. Left, an 1890s photograph from the Hallett & Rawson scrapbook is captioned “Chateau, Louis XII, Residence of Wm. H. Stoner, Des Moines, Iowa.” Right, the house in 2021. (Scrapbook photo courtesy of BBSAE and Steve Stimmel, AIA; Google 2021).

Hallett designed a three-story red brick Chateausque house in circa 1896 for William H. Stoner, (692 17th Street; NRHP 2012 within the Sherman Hill Historic District). The house is depicted in the Hallett & Rawson scrapbook, noted as being in the French Chateau style of Louis XII (Figures 14-15).¹³ In the Sherman Hill Historic District nomination, historian William C. Page describes the W.H. Stoner House as “...Constructed in 1896 from a design by George E. Hallett and heavily influenced by French Renaissance styling, the building features a steeply pitched

¹³ Hallett & Rawson scrapbook image, courtesy of BBSAE and Steve Stimmel, AIA.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

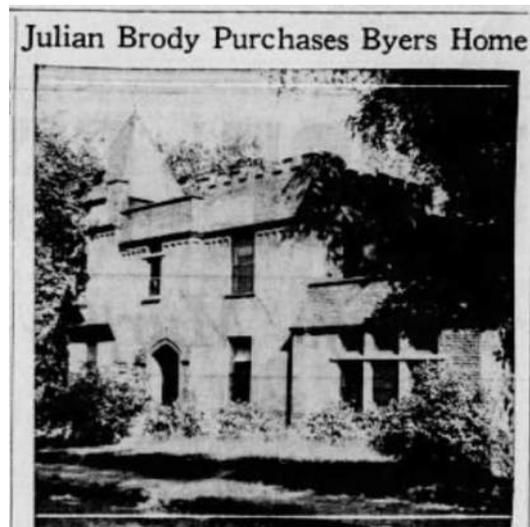
Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

roof and a busy roofline, including multiple dormers and pinnacles. Nothing like it stood in Sherman Hill (and few others in Des Moines) at the time. Its construction reaffirmed Sherman Hill's status as a neighborhood of architectural pretension. Its use of brick reintroduced this material for residential construction in the neighborhood, in abeyance then for at least a decade."¹⁴ Page also noted the fire damage to the house after years of nursing home use; the house has been partially reconstructed since then with some alterations that have diminished the house's architectural integrity as compared to the Coffee House.

A second extant late-nineteenth-century brick house in Des Moines with Chateausque detailing is the 1894 Byers House, and also known as St. Helen's (2300 Terrace Road, Des Moines) (Figures 16-17). Newspaper coverage about construction of this house has not yet been located and the architect is unknown. A 1914 story about picturesque river homes in Des Moines included the Major and Mrs. S.M.H. Byers house, which the writer noted was based on architecture the couple enjoyed while stationed at the U.S. consul service in Switzerland.¹⁵ The Byerses socialized with the Coffees and attended one of the opening social events hosted by the Coffees in 1904 to celebrate completion of their Woc-Merle Court mansion.¹⁶ A 1933 newspaper story about sale of the Byers' mansion described it as "one of the city's show places.... The brick house, built at the top of a hill overlooking the Raccoon River, is located just south of Grand Ave. and is opposite the F.W. Hubbell home."¹⁷ The 1933 photograph of the Byers house shows a squared corner tower and recessed arched front door (Figure 16). The facade appears to have been remodeled over time, diminishing its architectural integrity as compared to the Coffee House.



Figures 16-17. Left, the Byers House was pictured in a 1933 newspaper story about the sale of the "show place." Right, a contemporary image of the façade. (*The Des Moines Register*, September 3, 1933: 2L; Google 2021).

¹⁴ Page: 8-142.

¹⁵ *The Sunday Register and Leader*, "Beauties of the Des Moines Rivers," July 19, 1914: Magazine 1.

¹⁶ *The Des Moines Register*, "The day's social pleasures..." December 10, 1904: 5.

¹⁷ *The Des Moines Register*, "Byers Mansion Sold to Brody," September 3, 1933: 1L. The Italianate Hubbell house, also known as Terrace Hill, now serves as the Iowa governor's mansion and is a National Historic Landmark.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State



RESIDENCE OF DR. COFFEE, GRAND AVENUE, DES MOINES, IOWA.

Figure 18. A national building journal published Hallett & Rawson's rendering of the Dr. Coffee residence in 1902. The firm's name is shown in the lower right corner. (*The Improvement Bulletin*, "Residence of Dr. Coffee, Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa," October 4, 1902: 12).

Architectural Significance: Coffee House as a Master Work of Architects Hallett & Rawson and Contractor W.F. Mitchell & Co.

The Coffee House reflects the sophisticated design of the Hallett & Rawson architecture firm, under master architects George E. Hallett, AIA, and younger protégé Harry D. Rawson, AIA. Begun in 1901 and completed in 1904, the three-story Coffee House also reflects the careful craftsmanship of local master general contracting firm W.F. Mitchell & Co. The national publication of the design further calls attention to the architectural design: Hallett & Rawson's rendering of the "Residence for Dr. Coffee" appeared in the October 1902 national building magazine *The Improvement Bulletin* (Figure 18).¹⁸ Although George Hallett's work and that of the Hallett & Rawson firm are documented in a variety of National Register of Historic Places nominations, as described further below, the firm's involvement designing the Coffee House had been lost to time until recent research for this National Register nomination.¹⁹ Digitized

¹⁸ *The Improvement Bulletin*, "Residence of Dr. Coffee, Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa," October 4, 1902: 12, with rendering by Hallett & Rawson.

¹⁹ As detailed by retired firm member Steve Stimmel, AIA, who provided generous insights into Hallett & Rawson and the surviving records of the firm, courtesy of BBSAE: The main repository of information about the firm resides with successor architectural firm Brooks Borg Skiles AE, which maintains the firm's project logbook, scrapbook, and drawing archive. Although a wealth of information, the archive has limitations due to the log book including only client names and project numbers, but not dates or addresses, and the drawing archive missing drawings, including those of the Coffee House. As such, new information continues to come forth about commissions completed by the firm, including the Coffee House. The firm retained the log entry for the W.O. Coffee commission, but the file contained drawings for the Dr. Percy Coffee House at an undetermined address and the nonextant Dr. W.O. Coffee infirmary, which was located in the central business district. Percy Coffee was the son of William and Mattie Coffee, and a physician practicing with his

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

building journals provided the missing links, including a published rendering of the Coffee House with the Hallett & Rawson name included on the drawing, as described further below (Figure 18).

Architect George E. Hallett, AIA, was born in Des Moines in 1863. He started his building career as a carpenter, moving in the 1880s to Denver, Colorado, to study architecture with architect Fred A. Hale. Hallett returned to Des Moines in 1890 and began an architectural practice specializing in custom houses, business buildings, civic projects such as the Iowa State College campanile, and transportation-related commissions as the architect for the Des Moines Railway streetcar company.²⁰ Hallett practiced solo prior to taking Rawson as a partner in 1898. Hallett also participated in civic and professional organizations: He ran for Des Moines alderman in 1900 and served on the executive committee of the Iowa Chapter AIA (American Institute of Architects) from at least 1905 to 1908.²¹

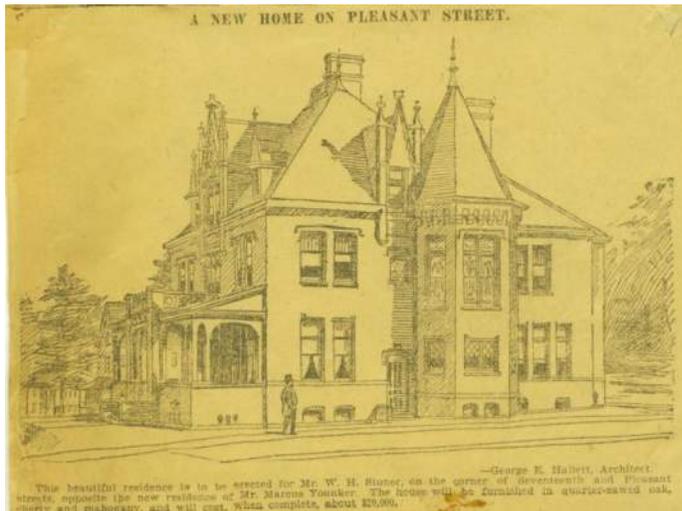


Figure 19, Hallett's Chateausque design for William H. Stoner's "New Home on Pleasant Street" was published in a circa-1896 local newspaper; clipping is included in the Hallett & Rawson scrapbook. (Image courtesy of BBSAE and Steve Stimmel, AIA).

In his solo practice, Hallett designed at least two French Renaissance-inspired Chateausque houses in the 1890s, which are documented in the Hallett & Rawson scrapbook and logbook. One was the aforementioned brick Stoner House (692 17th Street, Des Moines; NRHP 2012 Sherman Hill Historic District), partially reconstructed after a fire. The design was published in a local newspaper, which reported the house would cost \$20,000 and was modeled after the style of French King Louis XII's sixteenth-century castle, Château de Blois (Figure 19).²² Hallett's second documented Chateausque design is seen in an undated advertisement for Platt Pressed and Fire Brick Co., of Van Meter, Iowa. The advertisement includes a Chateausque house rendering captioned "A Design for a Buff-Pressed Brick Building," and the sketch is signed

father.

²⁰ Shank; *The Brickbuilder*, "Memorial Campanile, architect Geo. E. Hallett," March 1899 Vol. 8, No. 4: 80; *Des Moines Leader*, "Cleaning the Streets," February 10, 1898: 8.

²¹ Shank: 73-74; *Western Architect*, "Association Notes," December 1905: 11.

²² Hallett & Rawson scrapbook courtesy of Brooks Borg and Skiles AE and Steve Stimmel.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

“Geo. E. Hallett” in the right corner.²³ This advertisement was included in the Hallett & Rawson scrapbook; it is not known if this design was constructed (Figure 20). Both the Stoner House and Platt brick house designs feature brick walls with dormers, towers, turrets, steep roofs with decorated chimneys, and front porches with tracery designs in keeping with Chateausque style.



Figure 20. Hallett’s Chateausque rendering for a “buff-pressed brick building,” signed in the lower right corner, was used in an undated brick advertisement and included in the Hallett & Rawson scrapbook (Image courtesy of BBSAE and Steve Stimmel, AIA).

A third published design by Hallett further showcases the architect’s fluency in incorporating European design elements into a cohesive whole: Hallett’s 1896 German Renaissance Revival style three-story brick design for the Turner Society, which made the front page of *The Des Moines Leader* newspaper in 1896 (Figure 21).²⁴ The large massing and steeply pitched cross-gabled roofs are embellished with stepped Flemish gables, an elaborate entrance with recessed arched doorway topped by a shapely gable and flanked by wall dormers, a corner turret, elaborate chimneys, and differentiated exterior materials draw the eye. It is unclear if this building was constructed; if it was, it is nonextant.

²³ Hallett & Rawson scrapbook courtesy of Brooks Borg and Skiles AE and Steve Stimmel.

²⁴ *The Des Moines Leader*, May 15, 1896: 1.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State

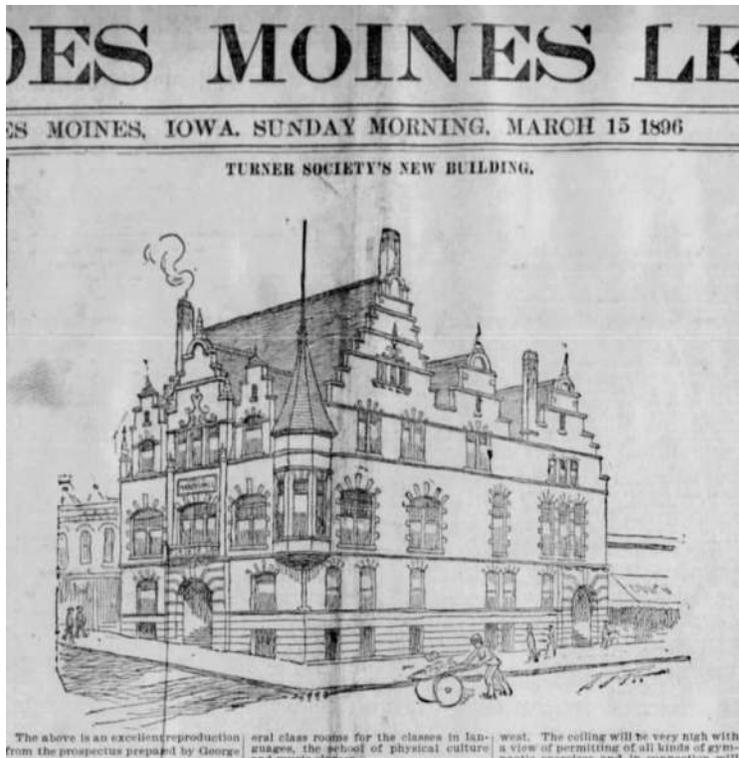


Figure 21. Hallett's German Renaissance Revival style proposed Turner Society building merited front-page coverage in 1896 (*The Des Moines Leader*, "Turner Society's New Building," May 15, 1896: 1).

Hallett invited Harry D. Rawson into his architectural practice in 1898. Rawson was born in 1872, the youngest son of a prominent Des Moines pioneer family. He began his higher education at Grinnell College in Iowa, then spent two years completing his degree in architecture from what became Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1896. He then toured Europe on a bicycle to study architecture, he returned to work for a Chicago architectural firm for two years before moving back to Des Moines. As Hallett & Rawson, the firm designed a prodigious array of buildings in a variety of architectural styles, from spacious houses to commercial buildings to civic and institutional buildings, with most known commissions in Iowa.²⁵ One of the first projects for the firm was a design for an ideal Des Moines Public Library building; Hallett & Rawson took second prize for their design.²⁶ The firm joined the Des Moines Commercial Exchange, a forerunner of the chamber of commerce, in spring 1899.²⁷ "In a relatively few years, this partnership was responsible for a substantial number of projects, the best known of which is the old Union Station [in Des Moines]," Des Moines-based master general contractor Rudolph Weitz wrote of the firm's work, as cited by architecture professor emeritus Wesley I. Shank in his *Biography of Iowa Architects*. Shank notes that Rawson's prestigious degree from MIT and social connections helped the firm win commissions including buildings for Grinnell College and Still Osteopathic College, lodge halls, Carnegie libraries, banks, and civic projects including one of four firms that designed the Des Moines Municipal Building (1910; NRHP as part of the Civic

²⁵ Long 1988: E3-4; Harlan: "Harry D. Rawson."

²⁶ No rendering available; *The Daily Iowa Capitol*, "Smith and Gutterson Get It," January 30, 1899: 3.

²⁷ *The Des Moines Leader*, "City in Brief," April 6, 1899: 5.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

Center Historic District).²⁸ In addition, Hallett & Rawson designed other buildings for the Coffee family, including a house for Coffee son Dr. Percy Coffee and a medical office commercial building for Dr. W.O. Coffee (building nonextant, but recorded in the Hallett & Rawson Log Book and drawings extant).²⁹

After Hallett retired in 1910 and moved to California, the younger Rawson then joined with the prestigious Des Moines firm Proudfoot & Bird to form Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson.³⁰ Rawson brought the Hallett & Rawson drawings, logbook, and scrapbook with him.³¹ As documented in the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Document "The Architectural Legacy of Proudfoot & Bird in Iowa, 1882-1940," under Rawson's tenure the Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson firm became the leading architectural practice in Iowa and expanded into new building types. Long examined how Rawson arrived at the firm at the time of unprecedented prosperity in Iowa, thanks to high crop prices and high demand for new construction. Growth in urban population, business starts, and school children increased total architectural commissions, especially those of the Proudfoot firm, which she attributes to Rawson: "Strengthened by political and social connections of Rawson, the newly formed Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson emerged as the foremost architectural firm in the state."³²

The Coffee House also highlights the general contracting expertise of Des Moines-based W.F. Mitchell & Co. The company namesake, William F. Mitchell (1860–1941) was a general contractor in Des Moines by the 1890s.³³ A 1903 advertisement for W.F. Mitchell & Co. general contracting firm lists some of the buildings constructed by the firm. Among those listed: The \$75,000 D.S. Chamberlain residence, also known as West Chester, built 1901-1903 (3520 Grand Avenue, Des Moines; NRHP 1984); other mansions on Grand Avenue that appear to be nonextant; H.R. Rollins House (1611 Arlington Avenue; NRHP "The Oaklands" Historic District 1996); the Hallett & Rawson Flats building (nonextant); and the Dr. W.O. Coffee residence, listed as under construction as a \$30,000 project (Figure 22).³⁴ In 1907, Mitchell made updates to the Hoyt Sherman Place Victorian mansion and built the art gallery addition after the Des Moines Women's Club acquired the property through the city (1501 Woodland Avenue; NRHP 1977 and NHL 2003); Mitchell's wife was president of the influential club at the time.³⁵ Mitchell also served as a city councilman, superintendent of streets, overseeing public improvements including planning for Keosauqua Way beginning in the mid-1910s through circa 1920s. Upon his death in 1941, Mitchell was praised for his political efficacy and for contributing to the city through his private building construction company.³⁶

²⁸ Shank: 73-74.

²⁹ *The Midwestern* magazine, April 1909, Vol. 3, No. 8: 92; BBSAE and Stimmel.

³⁰ Long 1988: E3-4; Harlan: "Harry D. Rawson."

³¹ Stimmel.

³² Long 1988: E6, E4-11; Shank: 138-139; James 2013: 8. Rawson leveraged his family's political ties and connections to win commissions for his firm. Oldest brother Charles became chairman of the Republican State Central Committee (1912-1922), in 1922 appointed U.S. senator, and then served as a member of the Republican National Committee (1924-1932). Brother Hollis "Hallie" was married to the daughter of Iowa Governor and U.S. Senator Albert Cummins, who twice ran for president.

³³ City directories.

³⁴ *Des Moines Register*, March 29, 1903: Commercial. The advertisement listed that the W.F. Mitchell & Co. also offered asbestine building stone. The final cost for the Coffee House was much higher, perhaps reflecting additional scope and decorating and furnishings.

³⁵ Forker: 5.

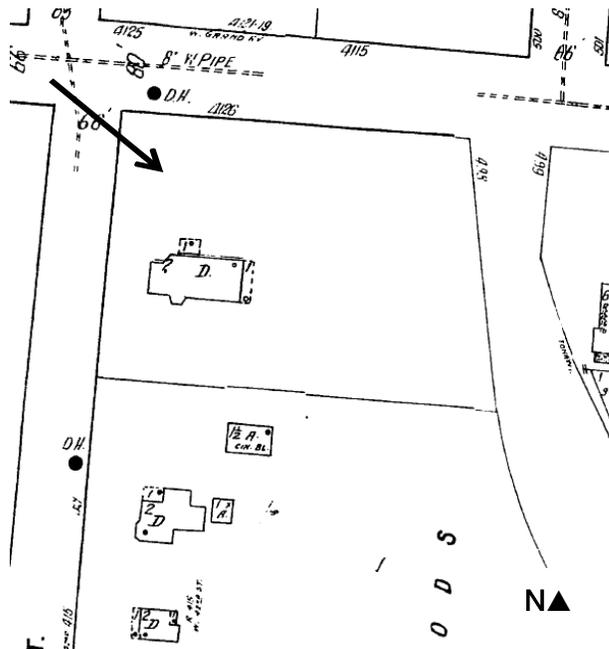
³⁶ *Des Moines Tribune*, "Mitchell's Life Praised," July 31, 1941: 16; "Editorial: W.F. Mitchell," August 2, 1941: 4.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State

Historical Background: Brief History of Grand Avenue and Coffee House Construction:

In Des Moines, Grand Avenue was the premiere street for building show-stopping mansions set on large lots from the late 1860s through around 1920 (Figure 25). Grand Avenue attained status as the preeminent address in Des Moines by 1866, with construction of the B.F. Allen Second Empire brick mansion, "Terrace Hill," now the Governor's Mansion (2300 Grand Avenue; NRHP 1972, NHL 2003).³⁷ Private interests constructed and operated the first permanent location for the Iowa State Fair in 1879 on Brown's Woods recreational park a few blocks north, with the railroad connection via a rail spur bringing visitors from the south to approximately the current intersection of Grand Avenue and Tonawanda Drive. This recreational use of land near Grand Avenue acquainted a larger portion of the central Iowa population with the suburb of Greenwood Park and the large mansions being built upon Greenwood Avenue and south of Grand Avenue. In 1881, residents incorporated the 1,000-acre Town of Greenwood Park, which included the fairgrounds and the Coffee House site (Figure 22). In 1883, T.E. Brown platted the area containing the rail spur as T.E. Brown's Addition. In 1885, the fair relocated, and the former fairgrounds were platted as a residential subdivision, Greenwood Park Plats, reflecting development pushing west along Grand Avenue and adjoining streets (the fair moved to the east side of the city). The Town of Greenwood Park voted to allow annexation by the City of Des Moines in 1890.³⁸



Figures 22-23. Left, detail of 1882 map of Des Moines shows the future location of the Coffee House (arrow points to northwest corner of Coffee House lot) in relation to the old Iowa State Fair Grounds. Right, the 1920 Sanborn fire insurance map, the earliest to show the Coffee House, is shown with an arrow pointing to the northwest corner of the lot. (Mills & Co. map; Sanborn; north arrow added).

³⁷ Long 1982: 3-3, 3-6. Noted by historian Barbara Beving Long in a 1982 historic study.

³⁸ James. See also Jacobsen's Greenwood Park Plats Historic District National Register nomination, which further records the history of the fairgrounds use and later platting. This historic district's period of significance begins in 1879, reflecting the state fair use.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

The Jaquith family purchased land within T.E. Brown's Addition and in the 1880s built a house near the southeast corner of Grand and Park avenues (Park was later renamed 42nd Street).³⁹ In 1901, Dr. William O. and Mattie M. Coffee purchased the Jaquith family house.⁴⁰ This was a prominent location for siting a house due to the undulating tree-studded landscape that defined western Grand Avenue as the city's premiere residential district (Figure 24). As described on a circa-1910 postcard of Grand Avenue: "This is not only the finest residential district in the city, but West Grand, for three miles of its length, is generally pronounced the equal, if not the superior to any residential street in the west. The ground is naturally rolling and the great groves of elm and oak with which nature blessed it, have been preserved by the landscape artists."⁴¹

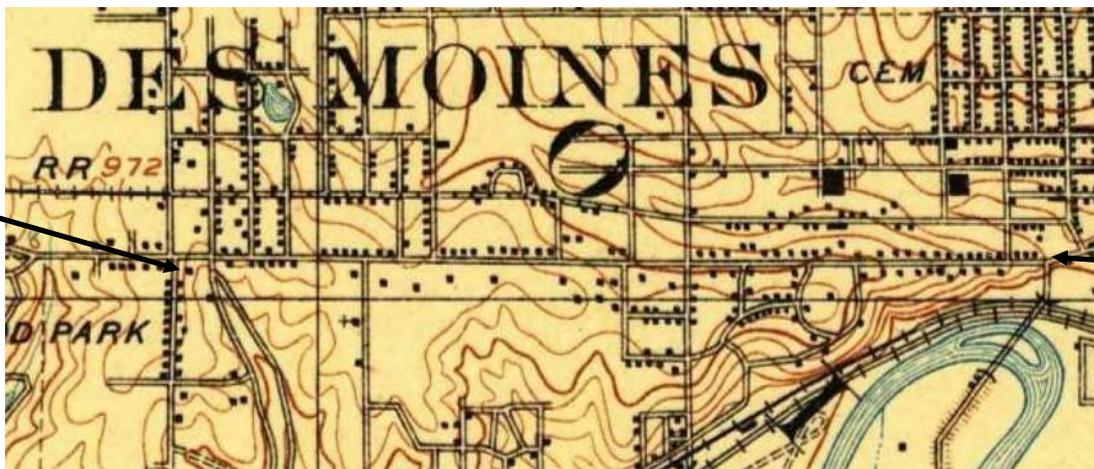


Figure 24. This detail of the 1907 USGS map of Des Moines shows Grand Avenue between 18th Street (right arrow) and 42nd Street (left arrow). The left arrow points at the Coffee House and shows the topography that sharply drops off to the east. (USGS)

As noted above, the Coffees hired Des Moines architects Hallett & Rawson in 1900, tasking the firm first with improving the existing Jaquith house. The following year the firm oversaw moving the old house south to make way for the new mansion. From the Coffee's temporary residence (which appears to be nonextant), the couple could view construction of their new house. Plans for the mansion evolved between 1900 and 1902. In 1901, plans called for the house to be built of pressed brick and red sandstone, costing \$25,000.⁴² A 1901 notice in a building journal noted that plans had been drawn and a contractor, H.P. Snider, was selected; however this was not the contractor who completed the house, W.F. Mitchell & Co.⁴³ In fall 1901, a local newspaper noted that the Coffees planned to rent out the old Jaquith house after completing their new home, noted to be built of stone, for a cost of \$30,000.⁴⁴ The 1902 published architectural

³⁹ Abstract of Title; city directories.

⁴⁰ Abstract of Title; Ancestry.com, death certificate for Mrs. W.O. Coffee/Mattie Merle Coffee, sometimes Merle M. Coffee.

⁴¹ Grinnell collection postcard.

⁴² *The Des Moines Register*, "Dr. Coffee Will Build New Home," August 15, 1900.

⁴³ *The Improvement Journal*, "Des Moines," September 14, 1901: 15.

⁴⁴ Hallett & Rawson were overseeing construction of the downtown Plymouth Church (nonextant) in 1900-1901, and various stones were considered including Bedford stone, as noted in *The Des Moines Register*, "Plymouth Omits the Bell," January 31, 1901: 5.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

rendering by Hallett & Rawson shows the exterior matching the existing building, of rusticated Bedford limestone. In a front-page story published in summer 1902, the leading daily newspaper reported that W.F. Mitchell & Co. had been awarded the first contract to build the Coffee House, with cost now listed as \$60,000, with various rooms for entertaining, fireplaces, built-in benches, and beamed ceilings being features called out. No estimated completion date was given.⁴⁵

The Coffee House was completed in late 1904, and the 1920 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map is the first such existing map to include the Coffee House (Figure 23). The Coffees began entertaining at their "beautiful \$100,000 home" in December 1904, with a luncheon for 200.⁴⁶ Guests of honor in December included Mrs. Shaw, wife of the U.S. secretary of the treasury, who was the first to stay over at the Coffee House.⁴⁷ To commemorate the completion of the Coffee House, Major S.H.M. Byers, a former diplomat and resident in another Chateausque house in Des Moines, composed a poem, "Ballad of Woc-Merle." *The Des Moines Register* reported that he presented the work at one of the social events hosted by the Coffees in December 1904: "In this ballad, Major Byers extended a welcome to the guests of Woc-Merle Court, telling the meaning of the name, and closing by narrating what the poet saw and found amid the surroundings of the Coffee home."⁴⁸ The Coffees continued to open their house for entertaining during their tenure, which ended in 1916 when the family moved to Davenport, Iowa. While in Des Moines and continuing in Davenport, Dr. Coffee and his son, Dr. Percy Coffee, practiced at their eye and ear medical clinic and affiliated mail-order medical business.⁴⁹

Postscript

Former State Senator Leslie E. and Mrs. Francis occupied the house from 1917 to 1939 while he practiced law in the capital city. The introduction of the automobile rapidly changed Grand Avenue by the 1930s, when Grand Avenue had become a busy highway. Under development pressure, many mansions were converted to commercial, institutional, or multi-family uses by the midcentury, and their open spaces once dedicated to family yards and gardens remain as deep lawns and parking lots.⁵⁰ The Francises sold the Coffee House in 1939 and moved to another mansion on Grand Avenue; the buyer, an insurance company, planned to convert the house to apartments, but it appears the work was not undertaken.⁵¹ The house apparently sat vacant during World War II before the 1945 purchase by agricultural publisher Dante Pierce and Dr. Grace Doane, a pioneering woman physician who specialized in ear-nose-throat care.⁵² Following the death of her husband, Dr. Doane sold the house in 1956 to a developer who converted the single-

⁴⁵ *The Des Moines Register*, "Dr. W.O. Coffee's New Residence," July 20, 1902: 1.

⁴⁶ *The Des Moines Register*, "Wocmerle Court the home of Dr. and Mrs. Will Oakley Coffee..." December 7, 1904: 5.

⁴⁷ *The Des Moines Register*, November 23, 1902: 5.

⁴⁸ *The Des Moines Register*, "The day's social pleasures..." December 10, 1904: 5.

⁴⁹ *The Midwestern*, 1908 advertisement; Adams 102-106; "Let Me Cure Your Eyes and Save Your Sight... I Want to Save You From Blindness," Dr. W.O. Coffee advertised in 1908. However, the infirmary and related medical businesses were accused of fraud and quackery, with author Samuel Hopkins Adams accusing Coffee and others in *Collier's* weekly magazine and republishing in his book *The Great American Fraud*. Adams including the architectural rendering of the Coffee House in both his magazine article and his book, with the caption "The House the Quack Built: Residence of W.O. Coffee of Des Moines, built from the dollars of dupes."

⁵⁰ Long 1982: 3-3, 3-6.

⁵¹ *Des Moines Tribune*, "L.E. Francis Is Dead at 85," February 11, 1957: 1, 7.

⁵² *The Des Moines Register*, "Dante Pierce Buys Francis Home," July 1, 1945: 8X; *Des Moines Register*, "Dante Pierce Dies, Headed Farm Paper," July 28, 1955: 1, 6; Dr. Grace Doane oral history, 1977; she was a graduate of the Drake University medical college, graduating in 1913.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

family residence to the St. James Apartments by 1957 (Figure 26).⁵³ By 1958, the property was operating as the Golden Age Rest Home, with nursing home use continuing through the late 1970s despite protests and citations from the city and neighbors over lack of compliance with regulations.⁵⁴ The house was surveyed and identified as possessing locally important historical and architectural heritage beginning in the mid-1970s. In circa 1981 a new owner removed the non-historic midcentury nursing home buildout and restored the original floor plan and features for use as executive offices.⁵⁵ This office use continues today.



Figure 25. Sale of the Coffee House in 1956 garnered a newspaper photograph. Note that that the portecochere had been removed by this time. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "Pierce Home Sold," October 31, 1956: 12).

Local Recognition for the Coffee House Architecture

Through the decades, the Coffee House's architecture has been celebrated in the local press. Newspaper stories written after the initial Coffee residency have continued to recognize this stone mansion as a landmark through the decades. Upon the death of Dr. Coffee in 1927, the *Des Moines Tribune* ran a front-page obituary that referenced the Coffee House: "Other residents will recall quite vividly the erection of the handsome white stone Coffee residence at Forty-Second Street and Grand Avenue. At the time and for many years afterward it was the outstanding residential property of the city and one of the show places of Des Moines."⁵⁶ The

⁵³ *Des Moines Tribune*, "Converts Old Pierce Home," March 11, 1957: 9. The story detailed St. James Apartments as two- and three-bedroom units inserted into the floor plan, with an elevator and air conditioning added.

⁵⁴ *Des Moines Tribune*, "Mrs. Wilson Rites," November 13, 1958: 19; *The Des Moines Register*, "Must Move Rest Home's 47 Residents," September 2, 1959: 1. In 1958, the operators of the Golden Age home were taken to court over fire safety violations, for example.

⁵⁵ *Des Moines Tribune*, "Rebirth planned for mansion," February 9, 1981: 3.

⁵⁶ *Des Moines Tribune*, "Dr. Coffee Dies At Davenport, Ia." October 5, 1927: 1.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

state's largest newspaper, *The Des Moines Register*, described the Coffee House as a "three-story stone mansion... built like a castle" in a 1955 story about a later co-owner of the house, publisher Dante Pierce (Figure 25).⁵⁷

The Coffee House was highlighted by architectural historians David Gebhard and Gerald Mansheim in their 1993 statewide survey book *Buildings of Iowa* (Buildings of the United States), Society of Architectural Historians series. Listed under the name "Francis House," the book includes the stone mansion as an example that is "generally French Chateausque in style, the detailing conveys the impression of classical restraint." The authors highlight the towers and turrets with conical roofs, as well as "pattern of two groups of stepped windows that mirror the principal staircases of the interior."⁵⁸ Two additional books, both dedicated to Des Moines architectural history, devote pages to the Coffee House: The 1993 Des Moines sesquicentennial history book by Robert R. Denny and the 2015 survey of Des Moines's architectural portfolio, *Des Moines Architecture & Design*, by architectural writer Jay Pridmore. The architecture of the Coffee House is a "striking trophy" that reflects the wealth of Dr. W.O. Coffee and the substantial design of the architects, Pridmore noted.⁵⁹

Coffee House Representation in Historical and Architectural Surveys

Through the decades, the Coffee House's architecture has been represented in a variety of historical and architectural surveys—and for more than 40 years the building has been recommended for individual listing to the National Register of Historic Places. The Coffee House was included in the 1974 windshield architectural survey of Des Moines, undertaken by Steven Elmets of the Iowa State University Department of Architecture.⁶⁰ The 1975 architectural survey by Iowa State University architecture professor John Maves identified the Coffee House as deserving of further historic consideration (Figure 26).⁶¹ In 1976, the Coffee House was included in the first Des Moines report on local historic sites worthy of inclusion within the National Register of Historic Places; this report, *Des Moines' Heritage: A Survey of Significant Architecture (Phase I)*, conducted by the Des Moines Plan & Zoning Commission was a culmination of Maves' survey work. Maves described the Coffee House (listed as the Sen. Francis House) as a French and English stone house with Victorian influence; he recommended the house for individual listing to the National Register.⁶²

In 1976, the City of Des Moines commissioned the *Des Moines' Heritage: A Survey of Significant Architecture Phase II*, conducted by the Des Moines Plan & Zoning Commission with Jack Lufkin. This survey recommended the Coffee House, 4140 Grand Avenue, as one of nine residences in Des Moines for individual National Register of Historic Places listing possessing local historical and architectural importance.⁶³ In 1979, the Division of Historic Preservation, Iowa State Historical Department, affirmed the Coffee House as a historic resource deserving of individual listing to the National Register of Historic Places: "We are... very much interested in seeing that the property is nominated to the National Register. In

⁵⁷ *The Des Moines Register*, "Dante Pierce Dies, Headed Farm Paper," July 28, 1955: 1, 6. Pierce owned the house with his wife, Dr. Doane, an early woman physician in Des Moines.

⁵⁸ Gebhard and Mansheim: 221.

⁵⁹ Denny: 61- 62; Pridmore: 69.

⁶⁰ Elmets.

⁶¹ Maves 1975.

⁶² Maves 1976.

⁶³ Lufkin.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

fact, we have a volunteer from Des Moines that is willing to fill out the application and do the necessary research....”⁶⁴

In 1983, architectural historian Barbara Beving Long included the Coffee House within the 1983 survey *Des Moines, Center of Iowa, Survey of Historic Sites*. Long noted the house’s architecture as the overriding criterion for National Register eligibility, while also identifying two past notable owners, the former State Senator Leslie E. Francis and agricultural publisher Dante Pierce.⁶⁵ In 1990, a new property owner, Philip Bender, inquired about the historical status of the house, and Lisa A. Linhart, then Iowa’s National Register of Historic Places coordinator, responded that the Dr. W.O. Coffee House had not yet been listed to the National Register, despite staff desire for it to be included.⁶⁶



Figure 26. The 1975 architectural survey of Des Moines included the Coffee House, 4140 Grand Avenue. This Iowa Site Inventory Form photo shows the north façade and east side elevation looking southwest from the sidewalk at Grand Avenue, with the building’s façade little changed since then. (Maves 1975)

⁶⁴ Stiefel, letter to new property owner. The volunteer was Lufkin, then a curator of the State Historic Society of Iowa’s museum, who had previously authored the 1977 report recommending the house be listed to the National Register.

⁶⁵ Long 1983: 2, 116, 144.

⁶⁶ Linhart: “...According to letters in this file, the task of documenting the property was supposed to have been done, but nothing ever came out of it. It appears we will have to start from the beginning on nominating this property....”

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Abstract of Title for 4140 Grand Avenue.

Adams, Samuel Hopkins. *The Great American Fraud: Articles on the Nostrum of Evil and Quacks, in Two Series, Reprinted from Collier's Weekly*. Chicago: P.F. Collier and Son, 1907. The original magazine articles ran in 1905 and 1906.

Ancestry.com. *Virginia, U.S., Death Records, 1912–2014* [database on-line].

Artwork of Des Moines. Chicago: Photogravure Company, 1915. Images from this book are viewed from Drake University's online "Historic Des Moines: Images of Des Moines, 1904–1914," available online < www.lib.drake.edu/heritage/odm/article.html.>

Baker, John Milnes, AIA. *American House Styles*. New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1994.

Baldwin, Sara Mullin. *Who's Who in Des Moines, 1929: Biographical Sketches Of Men and Women of Achievement*. Louisville: Robert M. Baldwin Corporation, 1929.

BBS Architects-Engineers (Brooks Borg Skiles Architects-Engineers), Des Moines, Iowa. Hallett & Rawson logbook, scrapbook, and drawings. Graciously provided by Brooks, Borg, Skiles AE with Steve Stimmel, AIA. (BBSAE)

The Brickbuilder, as noted in text.

City directories for Des Moines, Iowa. Various publishers and dates. Collection of the Des Moines Publiclibrary.

City of Des Moines. Building Permit Log, Grand Avenue pages. Records on file with the city's permit and development center.

The Daily Iowa Capitol, as noted in text.

Denny, Robert R. *Sesquicentennial Salute to Des Moines and the State of Iowa*. (Des Moines, 1843-1993, Iowa 1846-1996). Des Moines: Educators Press, 1993.

The Des Moines Leader, as included in citations.

The Des Moines Register and *Des Moines Sunday Register*, and predecessor newspapers, as included in citations.

Des Moines Tribune, and predecessor newspapers, as included in citations.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

Doane, Dr. Grace, M.D. Oral history recorded by the Des Moines Public Library, September 7, 1977. <Interview available online archive.org>.

Elmets, Steven. "4140 Grand Avenue," Iowa Site Inventory from Architectural Windshield Survey. 1974. On file with the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.

Forker, Idabelle. "Pride In Our Past," history of Hoyt Sherman Place presented to the Des Moines Women's Club in October 2007. <Available online <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54ba8952e4b06fad9b9858cc/t/54bc2426e4b0023bcfd2577a/14216166958/PRIDE+IN+OUR+PAST+dmwc.pdf> >

Gebhard, David and Mansheim, Gerald. *Buildings of Iowa* (Society of Architectural Historians, Buildings of the United States). New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Grinnell College, Special Collections and Archives, Postcard Collection: Des Moines postcard: "Grand Avenue and English type of house and grounds, Des Moines, Iowa." Portland, Maine: Hugh C. Leighton Co., circa 1910.

Grow, Lawrence. *Old House Plans: Two Centuries of American Domestic Architecture*. New York: Universe Books, 1978.

Harlan, Edgar Rubey. "Harry D. Rawson," *A Narrative History of the People of Iowa, Vol. IV*. Chicago: American Historical Society, 1931.

The Improvement Journal, "Residence of Dr. Coffee, Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa," architecture's rendering by Hallett & Rawson, October 4, 1902: 12.

Jacobsen, James E. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: "Greenwood Park Plats Historic District." 2013. On file with SHPO.

James, Jennifer Irsfeld. National Register of Historic Places Nomination: "Apperson-Iowa Motor Car Company Building," 1420 Locust Street, Des Moines, Iowa. 2013. (Note: This building was designed on land formerly occupied by the Still Osteopathic College, which Hallett & Rawson designed and redesigned in the late 1890s through early 1900s; later, Rawson's firm in the early 1920s designed an auto dealership that Rawson and his brothers personally owned.) (James 2013)

James, Jennifer Irsfeld. National Register of Historic Places Nomination: "Washington and Elizabeth Miller Tract and Center-Soll Community." 2017. On file with the SHPO. This nomination encompasses part of the Town of Greenwood.

Larson, Paul Clifford, Ed. and author of "H.H. Richardson Goes West: The Rise and Fall of an Eastern Star," in *The Spirit of H.H. Richardson on the Midland Prairies: Regional Transformations of an Architectural Style*. Ames: Iowa State University Press. 1988.

Linhart, Lisa. State Historical Society of Iowa letter, March 23, 1990, addressed to Philip Bender. Copy on file with State Historical Society of Iowa.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

Long, Barbara Beving. *Cultural Resources of the CBD Loop Arterial Project Area: History and Architecture*. Des Moines: Prepared for City of Des Moines by Brice, Petrides & Associates, 1982. (Long 1982)

Long, Barbara Beving. *Des Moines, Center of Iowa, Survey of Historic Sites*. Des Moines: Des Moines Plan & Zoning Commission, 1983, reprinted 1986. (Long 1983)

Long, Barbara Beving. "Iowa Site Inventory Form." Circa 1983, *Des Moines, Center of Iowa, Survey of Historic Sites*. (Long 1983b)

Long, Barbara Beving. "The Architectural Legacy of Proudfoot & Bird in Iowa, 1882-1940." Multiple Property Listing Documentation Form for the National Register of Historic Places, available from the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office. 1988. (Long 1988)

Lufkin, Jack and Des Moines Plan & Zoning Commission, with research assistant Sheila Hainlin. *Des Moines' Heritage: A Survey of Significant Architecture Phase II*. Des Moines: City of Des Moines, 1977. (Lufkin)

Maves, John. Iowa Site Inventory Form for 4140 Grand Avenue as part of a preliminary architectural survey of Des Moines, Iowa, by Maves, an Iowa State University architecture professor and consultant. List and photographs of some 200 buildings plus potential historic districts identified in summer 1975 windshield survey. On file with State Historic Preservation Office. (Maves 1975)

Maves, John and Des Moines Plan & Zoning Commission. *Des Moines' Heritage: A Survey of Significant Architecture*. Des Moines: City of Des Moines, 1976. (Maves 1976)

McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses, Second Edition*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

The Midwestern:

- Dr. Coffee Eye and Ear Infirmary advertisement, September 1906, Vol. 1, No. 1: 73.
- Dr. Coffee advertisement National Eye and Ear Infirmary, January 1908, Vol. 2: 2

Mills & Co. map of Des Moines, 1882.

Page, William C. National Register of Historic Places Nomination: "The Oaklands' Historic District." 1996 On file with SHPO. (Page 1996)

Page, William C. National Register of Historic Places Nomination: "Sherman Hill Historic District (Increase, Decrease, Amendment)." 2012. On file with SHPO. (Page)

Polk County Assessor's Office. Property tax records for 4140 Grand Avenue and other properties, Des Moines, Iowa. Available online.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

Pridmore, Jay. *Des Moines Architecture & Design*. Charleston: The History Press, 2015.

Sanborn Company Maps. "Des Moines." New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1901, 1920, 1920–1950, and 1957. Accessed online from the Des Moines Public Library as well as Library of Congress.

Shank, Wesley I. *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999.

Stiefel, Phyllis, Division of Historic Preservation, Iowa State Historical Department, letter, December 14, 1979, to property owner Don Moyer, Des Moines, regarding National Register of Historic Places listing for 4140 Grand Avenue, Des Moines.

Stimmel, Steve, AIA. Informant interviews with retired BBSAE architect about George E. Hallett, Harry Rawson, the Hallett & Rawson firm and records, and the Coffee House architectural design. 2019-2021.

UrbanDSM.com website.

U.S. Geological Survey, USGS 1:62500-scale Quadrangle for Des Moines, IA, 1907. (USGS)

Western Architect, as noted in text.

Wilson, Richard Guy. Correspondence between the Commonwealth Professor of Architectural History at University of Virginia and Steve Stimmel, AIA, regarding the Coffee House architectural style and influences. 2020

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State Agency
 - Federal Agency
 - Local Government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Brooks Borg Skiles AE

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.054 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	_____	_____	3	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
	41.351497	93.380184			
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Coffee House boundary is Lot 1 of Browns Woods Plat 2, located at 4140 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This legal description has been the property boundary for the house since the Coffee family sold the property in 1916.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer Irsfeld James date March 2023

organization Jennifer James Communications telephone 515-250-7196

street & number 4209 Kingman Blvd. email Jenjames123@gmail.com

city or town Des Moines state IA zip code 50311

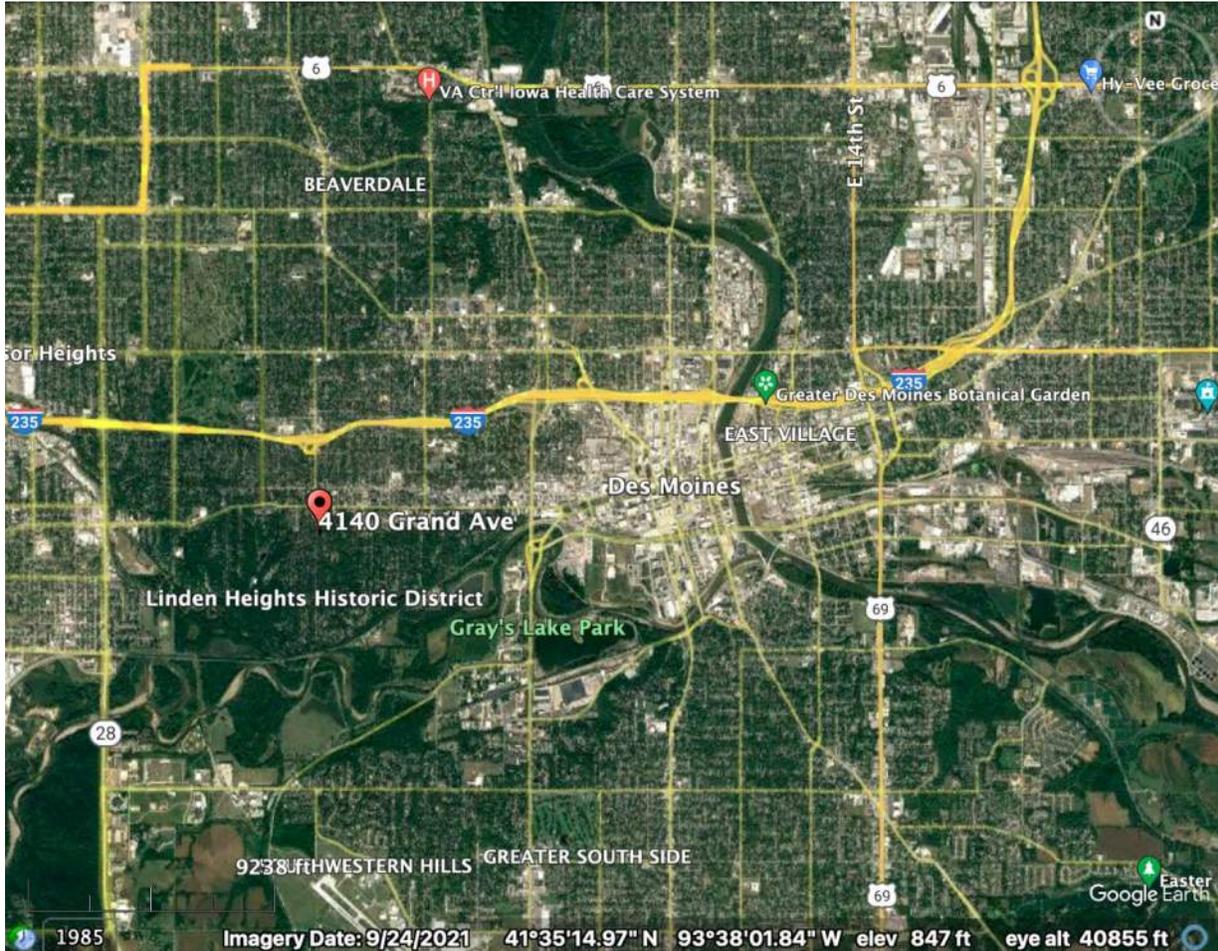
Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**

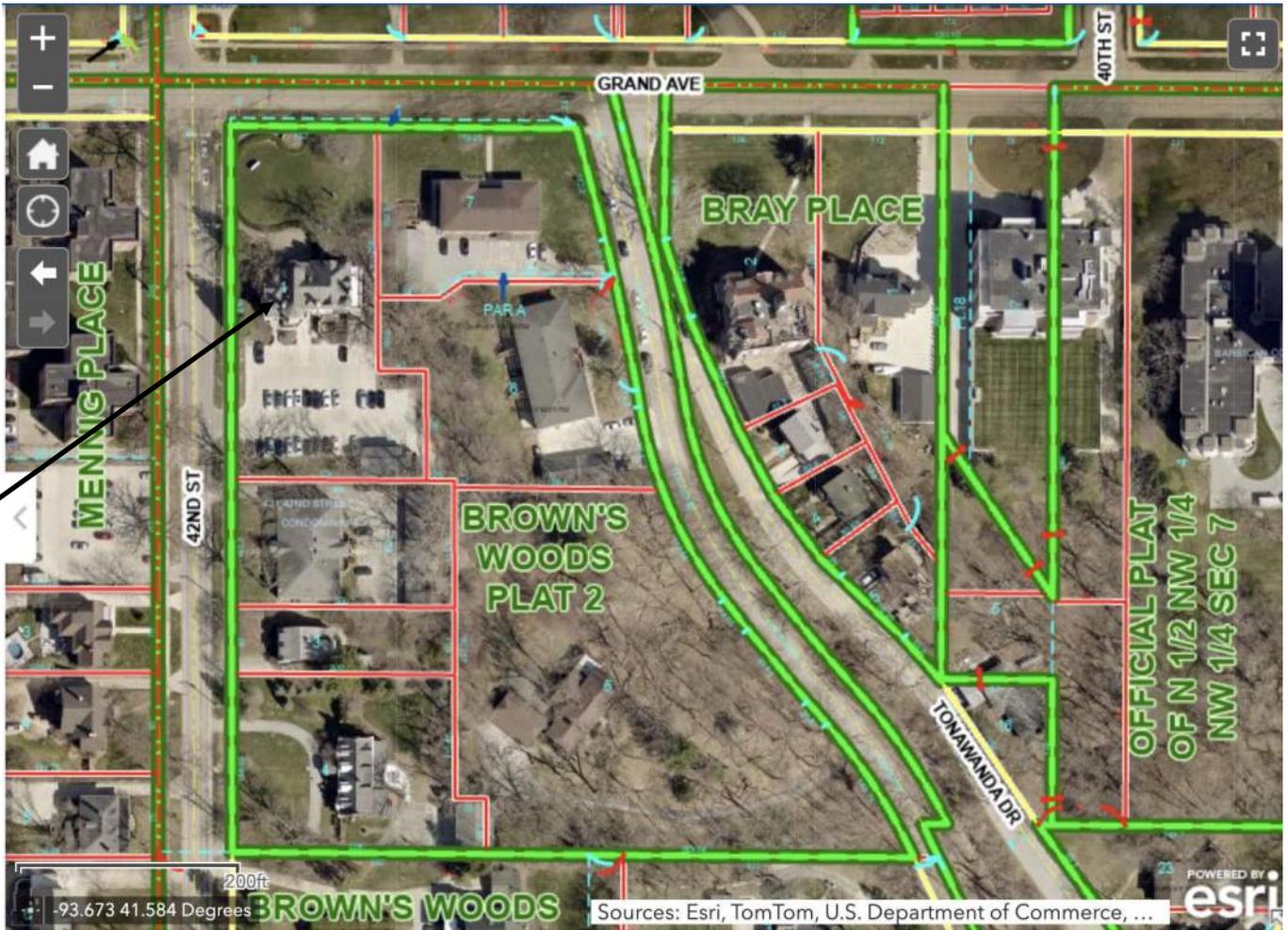


GIS Location Map: The following map shows the subject property, marked with a red pin, located on the western side of the City of Des Moines, Iowa. (Google Earth, 2023)

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State

• Local Location Map

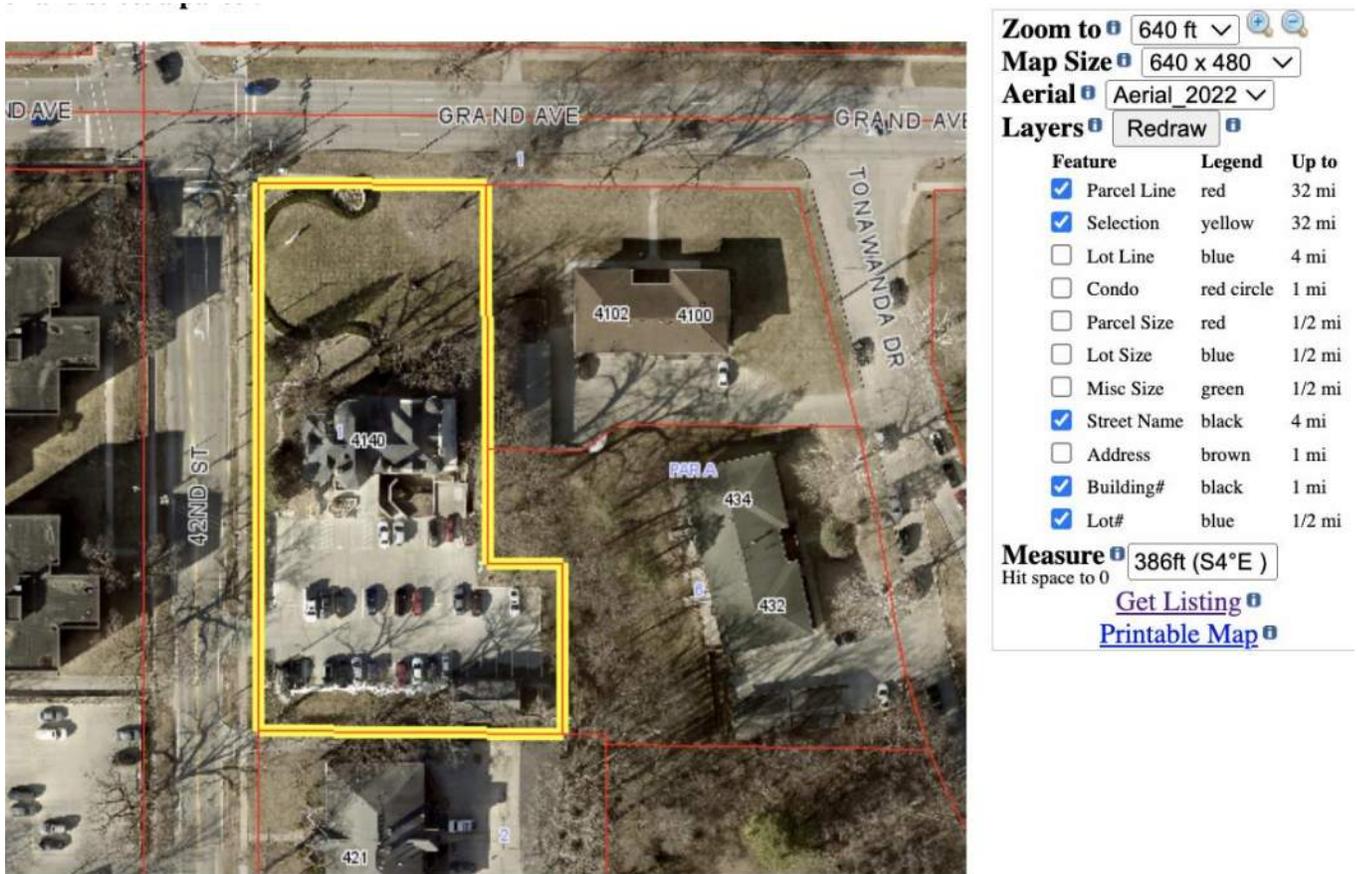


Local location map: Coffee House site has arrow pointing to the corner property, 4140 Grand Avenue. North is top of the map. (Polk County Auditor, 2023)

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State

• **Site Plan**



Site plan: Coffee House site outlined in yellow. North is top of the map. (Polk County Assessor, 2022 aerial photograph)

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs under separate cover. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and does not need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Coffee House

City or Vicinity: Des Moines, Iowa

County: Polk **State:** Iowa

Photographer: Jennifer Irsfeld James

Date Photographed: October 2022

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

Photo 1 of 12: Coffee House north facade look south.

Photo 2 of 12: Coffee House north facade closer look south.

Photo 3 of 12: Coffee House north main entrance look south.

Photo 4 of 12: Coffee House west side look east from sidewalk.

Photo 5 of 12: Coffee House south rear elevation look northeast.

Photo 6 of 12: Coffee House southeast corner look northwest.

Photo 7 of 12: Coffee House detail east elevation roof and dormers from east property line look west.

Photo 8 of 12: Coffee House front entrance hall look west.

Photo 9 of 12: Coffee House main grand stair look north.

Photo 10 of 12: Coffee House main grand stair, stained glass from 2nd floor reception room, look north.

Photo 11 of 12: Coffee House 2nd floor reception hall fireplace look south.

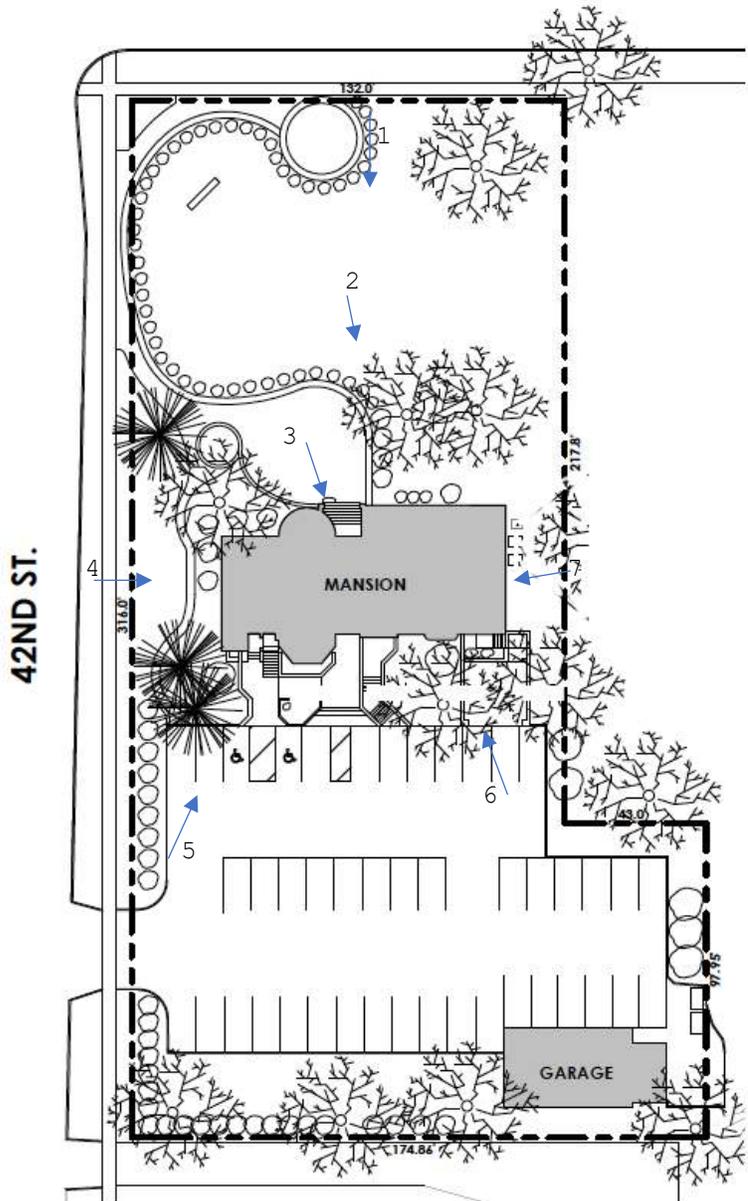
Photo 12 of 12: Coffee House 2nd floor bedroom look southeast at stained glass and fireplace.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State

- **Floor Plans, Photo Key, and Photo Location Map**
(Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

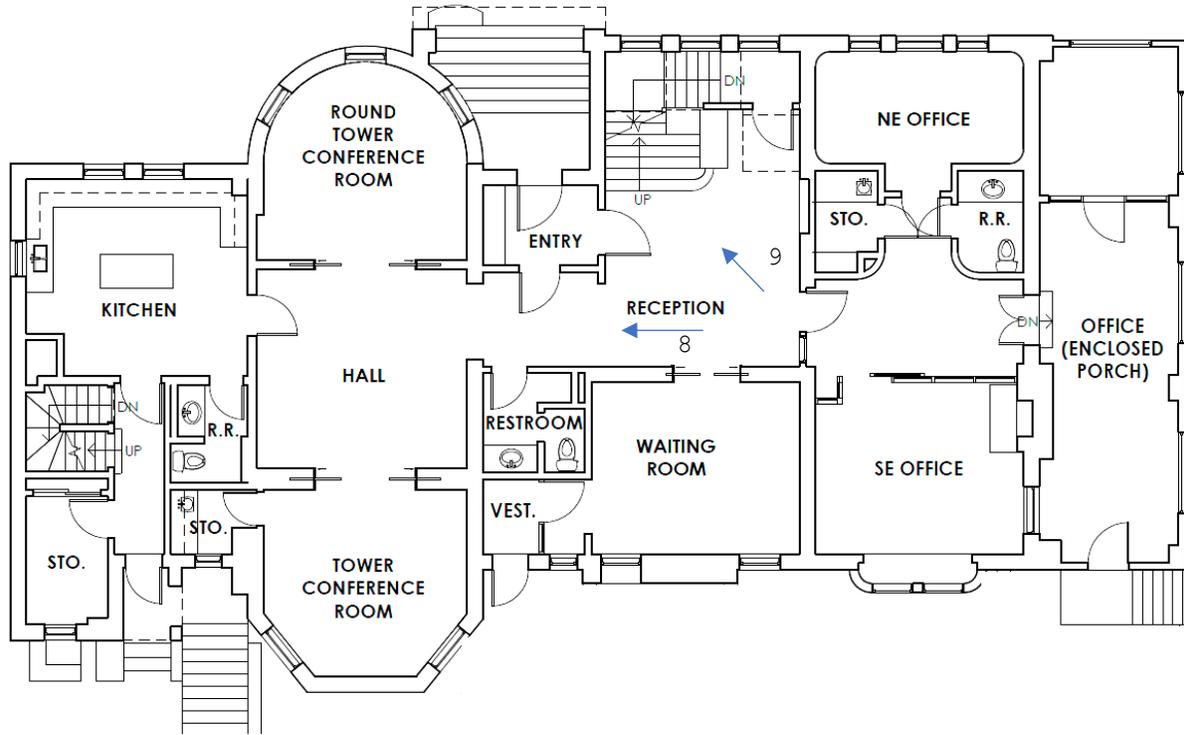
GRAND AVE.



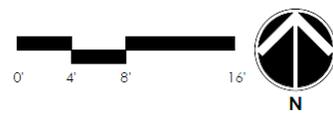
All photo key plans and site map by ID8 Architects, 2021.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State



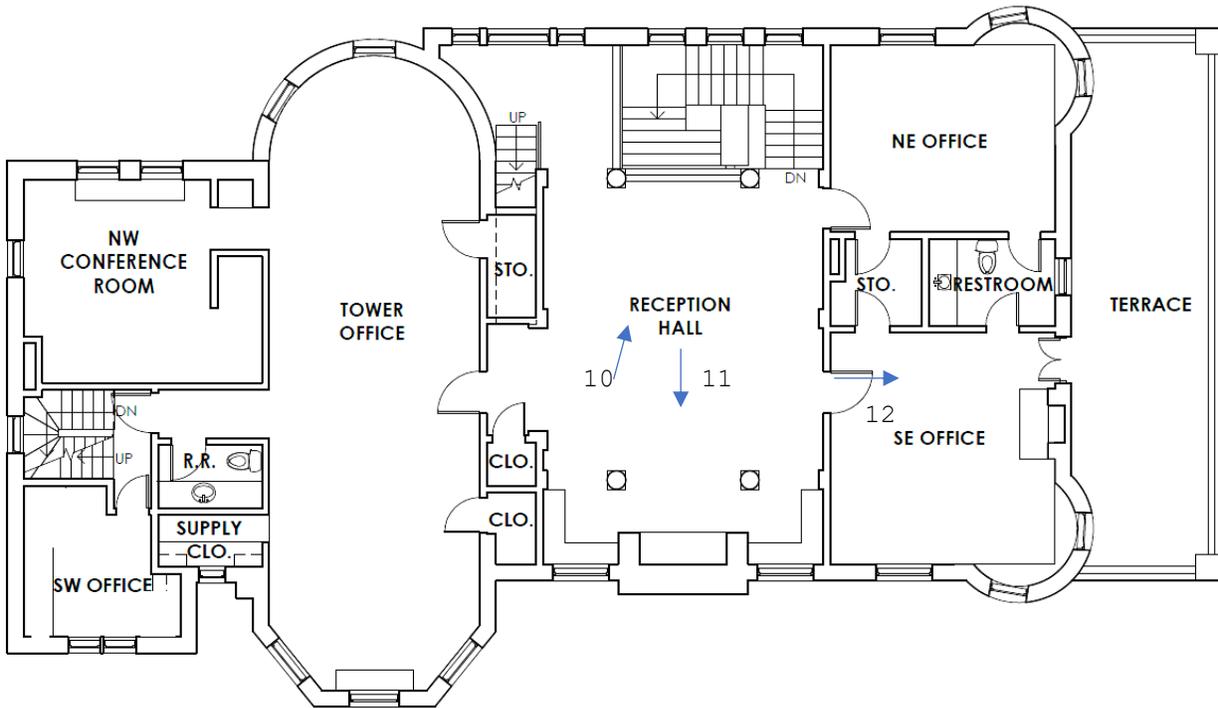
1 **FIRST FLOOR**
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



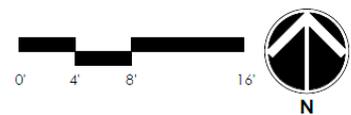
All photo key plans and site map by ID8 Architects, 2021.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State



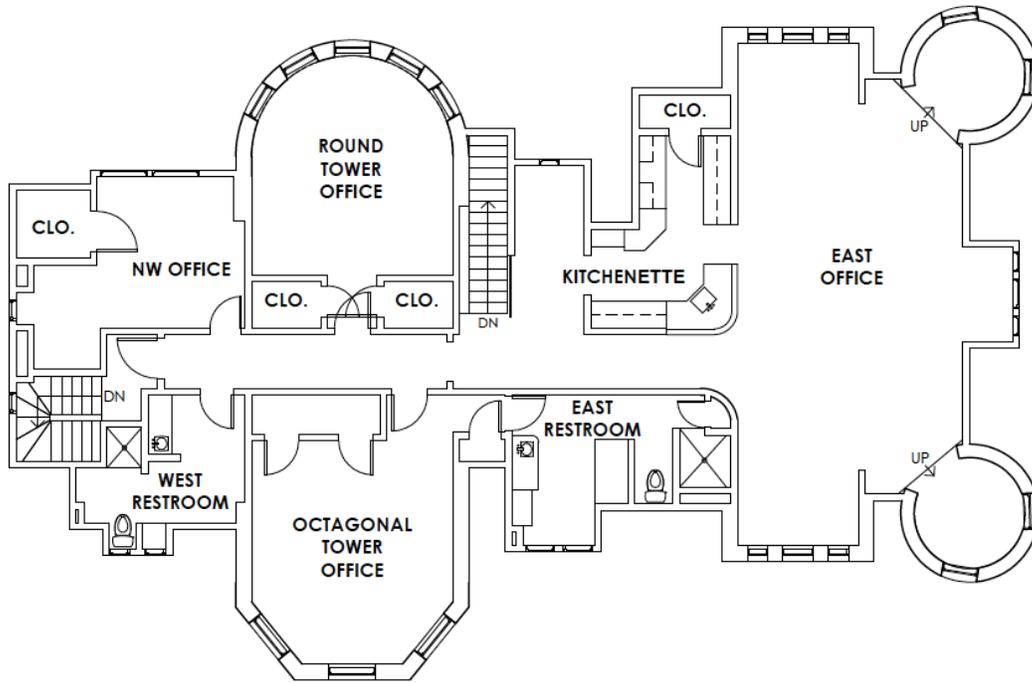
1 SECOND FLOOR
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



All photo key plans and site map by ID8 Architects, 2021.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State



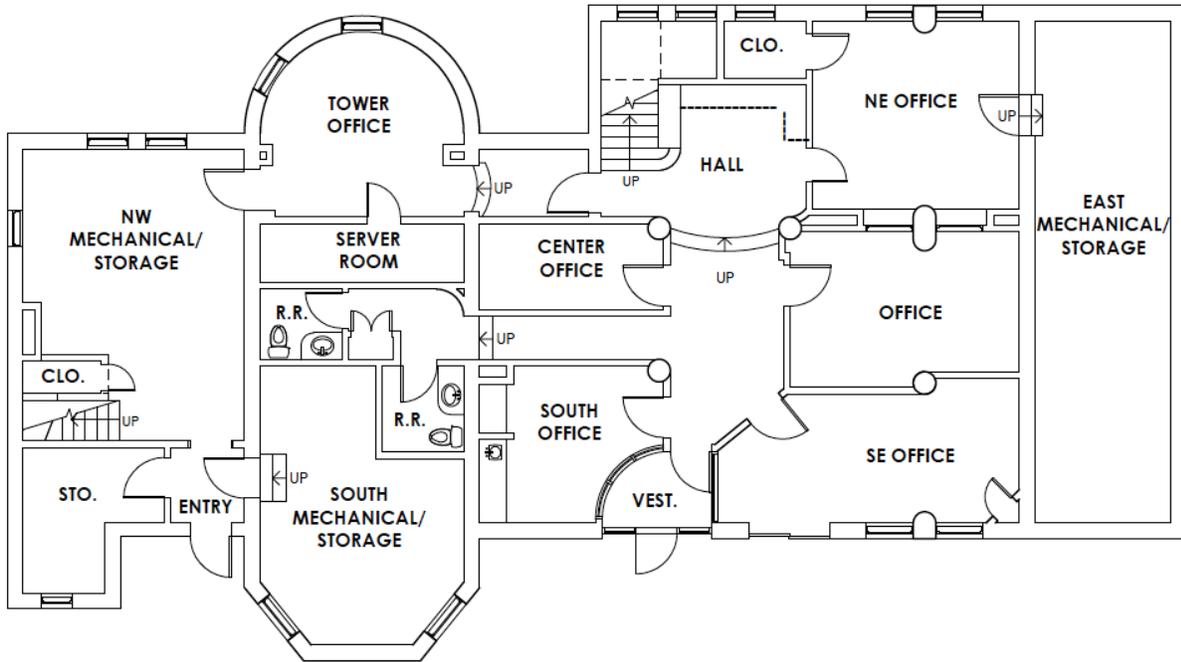
1 **THIRD FLOOR**
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



All photo key plans and site map by ID8 Architects, 2021.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State



1 **BASEMENT**
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



All photo key plans and site map by ID8 Architects, 2021.

William O. and Mattie M. Coffee House

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

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.