

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received DEC 6 1984

date entered JAN 3 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic The Boston Block

and or common Aalfs Manufacturing Company

2. Location

street & number 1005-13 East Fourth Street not for publication

city, town Sioux City vicinity of

state Iowa code 019 county Woodbury code 193

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Balle, Inc.

street & number Box 3038

city, town Sioux City vicinity of state Iowa 51102

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk's Office

street & number Woodbury County Courthouse

city, town Sioux City state Iowa 51101

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Boston Block (1890-1) is a good and remarkably well preserved example of a Richardsonian influenced commercial design. Its high degree of exterior and interior integrity, and detailing, and its scale make it the best representative of a series of major commercial constructions which were financed by the Boston Investment Company in the early 1890's.

This five story building fills nearly a quarter block, being a broad rectangle on plan (100' by 140'), standing 70' high. The main facade fronts to the south, the east side wall fronting on an alley (Sioux City blocks are quartered by two alleyways).

The main facade is veneered with rusticated gray Ohio sandstone, which rises above an unusual two story glass and cast iron storefront. The facade is divided into five bays, which are focused upon a recessed square-cut entrance. Decorative square cast iron columns separate each bay, with intervening plate glass windows being divided vertically in turn into two and three sub-sections with clerestories on the first and second floors respectively. The third and fourth floor front consists of five tall window pairs. These are defined by stack bond piles of large sandstone blocks. Slightly recessed spandrels, composed from top to bottom of sill, a row of square cut blocks, and a single long block, split the windows between third and fourth floor levels. The upper halves of the windows are capped with semi-circular arch of stone voisoirs with a drip mold. The stonework above these arches consists of small rusticated blocks set in random ashlar fashion. The fifth floor front retains the same stack bond courses which define the five bays, these beginning at a broad projecting sill level which serves as the base for five triple window sets, which are topped with single stone block jack arches. A stone cornice consists of alternating belt, and plain courses, a single course of small square stones, and a dentillated projecting sill. Five projecting stone caps, in line with the bay division points are part of a castellated parapet wall above the cornice line. The facade, in addition to its design and scale, is unusual in that the pinkish colored Ohio gray limestone was imported from the east during a period during which regional quartzite granite was preferred. The double cast iron and glass storefront is also locally unusual, being one of two such known to have existed, and the only one to survive.

A secondary main facade, on the east alleyway face, is fully fenestrated, is faced with a higher quality yellow brick, and has a single bay width wrap-around of the main facade's stone veneer and lower storefront on its southeast corner. While many windows on this face have been infilled with temporary materials, the facade is generally intact. Nine bays are defined by alternating broad brick piers or pilasters and paired window sets. Slightly recessed brick spandrels with stone sills separate each window pair vertically, being topped with stone sills. Above the fifth floor level, the brickwork is stepped out forming a series of belt and plain courses or bands, and is topped by a flat continuous parapet wall with stone coping. Fire escapes are located in the third and fifth bays from the front. First floor windows (former service doors?) are filled with block glass. A broad service door has been added at the base of the eighth bay from the front. The foundation line has been stuccoed. The rear building wall matches the east wall fenestration pattern with the exception that the central bay consists of a vertical line of single doors with a fire escape. The brickwork is plain and of plainer quality. The first floor windows are set below grade level due to a raised alleyway. A metal awning covers the east end and center of the first floor. The west side wall is only partly fenestrated, in the upper three floors of its center (two rows of seven above a row of three, all with segmental brick arches). This facade is similarly constructed with common

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brick laid in American bond (5/1) as are the other brick walls. An adjoining two story commercial building on the front half prevented additional fenestration. Its replacement with a single story building allowed the addition of two second story windows, both of which are now filled in. Similarly a small service door at the base of the fifth bay from the front has been filled in. The parapet wall on this face is stepped down towards the rear of the building with a series of levels.

Inside, the notable original feature is a combination front paneled oak open elevator and a wrap around elaborate wooden stairway with oak balusters and newels. The undersides of the staircase are faced with narrow car board. A front atrium has been added in the front two story area (see alterations). The building interior is richly finished for a building of its type. Wainscoting, baseboard, and frame window surrounds were employed on most or all of the floors. Two rear freight elevators are found in the rear of the building. These are of uncertain date, although the original building had at least one rear elevator. That in the northeast corner dates at least to 1924.

Structurally the building is supported by its deep load bearing walls and interior system of cast iron tubular columns (twelve inch diameter, two inch thick iron wall). 10 foot square brick footings support the main facade, and rise to the first floor level. Open cribbing areas separate these piers and are set forward beneath the sidewalk on the building front. Footings of undetermined size support the interior column system, which rises from the basement floor level. These columns define five bays from side to side and 9 bays from front to rear, for a total of 45 bays. These bays measure roughly fifteen by nineteen, the greater dimension being that which runs east and west. The columns support the five floor levels which have heights of 20, 16, 16, 16, and 12 feet respectively. The elevator/stair system is centered in the rear of the second bay from the front. The beams which support the 3" by 12" floor joists are steel I-beams. This is possibly an example of an early use of steel in combination with the iron columns. The influence of eastern architects and financiers in the building design and construction is perhaps again evidenced by this fact. The wall footings are supported on wooden pilings but no data is available concerning their dimension or quantity. It is known that two pile drivers were used on the site. The exterior walls have settled some four inches since construction, evidencing some type of foundation problem which hindered construction. First floor brick walls are 34" thick and these narrow to 24" by the fifth floor level. The east and north walls at least employ a combination pier/pilaster and bearing wall support system.

Each iron column section is marked with a specific locational roller mark coding. Basement columns are marked "B₃", first floor columns "B_{A3}", fifth floor columns "B_{E3}". The facade columns are marked from left to right "BF, BE, BC, B, BB, BA" and a front spandrel bears the marking "Jones & Laughlin."

Alterations:

By 1924 a roof top gravity feed water tank was in place on the northeast (rear) corner (not extant, post 1940). A rear freight elevator, located in the rearmost rank of bays, one bay from the east wall, appears on Sanborn Insurance Maps by 1924, and remains extant. Similarly the rear entrance canopy of tin dates to at least 1924. A first floor office/storefront in the east front occupies two bays in width, four in depth as of 1924, and expands to incorporate the vestibule area in the 1940 Sanborn Map.

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In 1948 extensive storefront alterations resulted in a two story brick front. This front allowed for a single glass and aluminum storefront, but otherwise minimized fenestration. It did employ contrasting brick colors, corbelled brick belt courses and corner pilasters in its design. At this time aluminum Jalousie windows replaced the originals, while retaining the 1/1 sash pattern. In 1984 the original building was restored with the removal of the new front. A front atrium area was added in the front three bays on the first two floors. The entry vestibule was retained, as were the vertical and horizontal structural members. Removed floor joists were sliced in section into one inch strips and these were laid in sequential order in herringbone fashion on the atrium floor. The atrium is open on the second floor level with a balcony enclosure.

Exterior signage presently consists of a three color "Aalfs Manufacturing Company" sign in the upper southwest corner. Previous larger signage at this same point, now blacked out, included "Aalfs Paint & Glass" with a products list, and a sign for Baker Co. Frontal signage appears to have been limited to painted signage on the first floor glass ("Sioux City Upholstering Co., c. 1891) and a date plate (1890) centered above the second floor. Unlike the other Boston Investment Company buildings, the Boston Block does not appear to have had a name plate stone on its facade.

Context:

Boston Block was one of a large number of significant large buildings which were raised on the east end of Fourth and Fifth streets beginning in the late 1880's as the original commercial downtown area began to grow. It was one of the largest of these buildings in terms of its scale. The Fourth street area was the focal point for this growth and today offers a rich array of large commercial buildings with elaborate terra cotta, quartzite or sandstone fronts. In its immediate urban setting, demolitions on either side of the Boston Block have isolated it visually. Its neighboring commercial structures, two to four stories tall, date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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Boston Block, c. late 1890's, reproduced courtesy of the Sioux City Museum.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600-1699	XX architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian
XX 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
___ 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1890-1 **Builder/Architect** Unknown, John G. Mainland, Supervising Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Boston Block (1890-1) is a good and remarkably well preserved example of a Richardsonian influenced commercial design. Its high degree of exterior and interior integrity, and detailing, and its scale make it the best representative of a series of major commercial constructions which were financed by the Boston Investment Company in the early 1890's.

Sioux City experienced a surge of growth and major building construction beginning in the late 1880's and continuing until the economic depression of the early 1890's. A range of major buildings, including the Metropolitan Block, Iowa Savings Bank, United Bank Building, and the Peavey Grand Opera House were built in 1889 and this trend continued the next year. According to the Sioux City Weekly Times;

"A Big Building Year

There will be more large blocks erected this year than ever before in a single season. That more new buildings are needed is evidenced from the fact that there is not an idle store room in the city."¹

A dominant role in this building mania beginning in 1890 was to be played by a coalition of local and East coast financiers in the form of the Boston Investment Company, an organization which by October of that year had invested 1.5 million dollars in thirty city properties. This land acquisition had begun as early as 1887 in the case of the Boston Block site. Henry R. Barker, the president of the company, was Mayor of Providence, Rhode Island. Treasurer Porte W. Hewins was also president of the Massachusetts Real Estate Company of Boston (this firm owned the Boston Block from 1903 until the 1930's). Major local community builders and investors such as A. S. Garretson and George Leonard were company directors.

Three building projects, all started in mid 1890, were to be the greatest of the many large buildings which were built by Boston Investment Company. Each occupied nearly an entire quarter block. The Massachusetts Block, 4th and Jackson (southwest corner), no longer extant, was six stories tall and had the same basic facade as did the Boston Block, incorporating stone veneer with a two story iron and glass storefront. Its corner location provided for two public fronts, but its massing was deceptive due to its ell plan. The Boston Block was at 4th and Virginia (northeast corner) stood five stories tall. The Plymouth Block, 4th and Locust (southeast corner) was also five stories tall. A fourth building, the Bay State Block, also built that year, was only four stories tall and its shallower depth was broken on the first floor into five separate storefronts.

Plans for these buildings were announced on in that same source. The Boston Block was first described from its plans;

"A building will this year cover the old site of the Davenport house on Fourth street, which will be 100 by 140 feet and five stories high. The first two stories will have glass and iron front on Fourth street. The contract for this block was to have been let to day, but the Boston Investment company have decided to erect the building under their own supervision."

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property ~~less than one acre~~

Quadrangle name Sioux City South IA-NEB_S.DAK

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A

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4	7	0	8	7	3	0
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B

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C

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The east two thirds of Lots 10, 11, and 12, Block 33, Middle Sioux City Addition, Sioux City, Woodbury County, Iowa. Includes only subject property.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Iowa SHPO date 15 November 1984

street & number East 12th & Grand Ave. telephone 515-281-4137

city or town Des Moines state Iowa 50319

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Adrian A. Anderson

title Executive Director Iowa State Historical Department date 11/19/84

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date 1-3-85

for Allison Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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By 8 May work on the Boston Block was actually underway, probably in the form of the removal of the Davenport or Mountainier House on the site. At this time this block of Fourth Street was unevenly developed, with scattered frame residences and stores, and a few half blocks of two and three story brick storefronts.

The Sioux City Weekly Times boasted at this time "...Taking all in all, Sioux City has larger and better blocks than can be found in any town in Iowa, with few equals in the West." And this was said at a time when the Boston Investment Company buildings were only on paper.³

As the summer progressed other company projects were in the works. These bespoke both the interrelatedness of the company with the city as well as the sophisticated scale upon which company projects were being planned. A steam heating plant was one project, "...for heating and lighting three of their large blocks in the east end of the city. They will also supply steam and light to neighboring buildings."⁴ By 8 January 1891 the finishing touches were being made to an "...elegant new merchants club house on Fifth Street" which was a community project led by several company directors.⁵

The impact of these projects was felt by the community in other ways. During the week ending 5 June 1890 alone for example some fifty houses were "on wheels" to other parts of the city to allow for new construction, site grading, and so on. On 9 October 1890 Bricklayer's Union #5 joined the growing list of new city labor unions.

As their new blocks arose the Boston Investment Company sought tenants for the massive building interiors.⁶ Perhaps because so many major contracts were underway at once there are few detailed references to any one project. On 10 July 1890 a local source noted work progress;

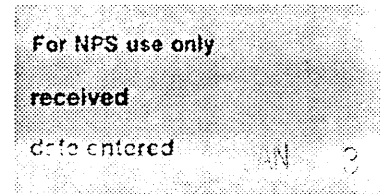
"The big buildings of the Boston Investment Company are progressing rapidly. The hot weather has been hard on the men, but work has not been stopped."⁷

A scarcity of local brick masons forced the Plymouth Block project to import Chicago workers.⁸ The need for foundation pilings at the Boston Block site apparently slowed its progress. "Contractor Wakefield has received his second pile driver and it will be in operation on the site of the Boston block very soon." Pilings were not mentioned at the other site references. The piling work apparently resulted in the partial collapse of the adjoining Arthur building at the Boston block site, damages which the Boston Investment Company had to pay for.⁹ It is possible that work on the Boston Block was delayed by these foundation problems.

No references to foundation work are found in local papers, however by the end of August, most of the Boston Investment Company projects were into bricklaying. "Never before in the history of Sioux City were bricks piling one upon another as rapidly as now."¹⁰ The Massachusetts Block work raced ahead of the Plymouth and Boston blocks. Capstones were being placed on the former by mid December 1890. The block stood "...with the name standing out boldly. All of the big blocks have their names prominently displayed except the Boston Block."¹¹ This reference indicates that the Boston Block facade was high enough for its missing nameplate to be noticed. There is no indication that a nameplate for this block was ever intended however. Only a cast iron date plate was installed above the entrance.

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By 1 January the lower floors of the Massachusetts Block were encased in a wooden envelope to allow for interior work. It is interesting to note that these massive building projects were begun late in 1890 and that work was continued regardless of season and weather. The Massachusetts Block references are an indication of what was to occur at the Boston Block site with some time lag. Perhaps because it was the furthest along and one of several similar projects, the Massachusetts Block dominates the attention of the local press. If it wasn't for a construction accident, the Boston Block would have escaped notice totally. On 10 February 1891 two painters fell twenty-five feet from a collapsed scaffold at the southeast corner of the facade. A. B. Walker, the project paint contractor and J. B. McCally, a sign painter, were the victims. Walker recovered but McCally suffered massive head injuries and died. A description of the accident also describes the state of building progress.

"The men were painting the outside of the great iron pillars that reach to the second story. The building is temporarily inclosed by a false front that extends to the third floor, and a scaffold was placed near the top of this inclosure."¹²

By January 1891 the buildings were lauded by local newspapermen.

"SOME BIG BUILDINGS, The Improvements in this Line During the Past Year, Nearly All On Fourth Street, An Expenditure of over \$1,500,000 Represented in Them, The Finest Buildings In Iowa, Some Will Be Devoted Entirely to Offices and Others to Wholesale Purposes...From Perry creek to the railroad tracks Fourth street has been a very hive of industry, with new and splendid buildings arising in nearly every block...One company alone, the Boston Investment company, has built six of the largest of these...They may be recognized ...from the characteristic names which savor of the New England idea: The Boston, the Plymouth, the Lexington, the Bay State, the Massachusetts...The largest building that has ever been erected in Sioux City for exclusively mercantile purposes is the Plymouth block...It is built of pressed brick, with terra cotta trimmings...The Massachusetts building...is one of the largest in the city...is arranged with the view to rental to a single wholesaling establishment...The first two stories are of iron and glass exclusively, the stonework beginning on the third floor...The Boston block, located on the north side of Fourth street, between Virginia and Court, is of Ohio gray sand stone, which makes a very handsome front. The first story is entirely of iron and glass. The block is 100 feet 5 inches on Fourth street by 90 feet 6 inches on the alley, and is five stories high. It is also built for wholesaling purposes, and a single firm will probably occupy it. A passenger elevator is located in the front of the building, while a freight elevator is in the rear. The building cost about \$100,000. The Bay State block...is of the same dimensions as the Boston block, except that it is only four stories high. It is likewise built of Ohio gray sandstone, with the first story entirely of iron and glass. On the first floor are five stores...The Lexington block is ...the smallest of the Boston company's buildings, as it contains only two store-rooms on the ground floor. It is four stories high, finished in pressed brick with terra-cotta trimmings, and will be used for retail and office purposes. The handsomest of all the buildings of the Boston company, is the Merchant's club-house...The material used in its construction is red sandstone, cut in elaborate designs...The club which will occupy it has not yet been organized, but will be as soon as the building is ready for occupancy. Among the leaders in the movement to organize the club and secure these beautiful quarters, are capt. R. J. Chase, A. S. Garretson, and F. W. Little."¹³

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The building boom continued in early 1891.

"All of the architects in the city are busy furnishing estimates, offering suggestions and preparing plans for new structures."¹⁴

The new commissions included major residences, the city library, the Y.M.C.A., the Tollerton building, and the J. S. Reese building. The visual impact of the new buildings were noted in the midst of the winter season;

"The business blocks on Fourth street with granite fronts presented a pretty picture this morning. They were covered with a light coat of frost, which sparkled beneath the rays of the sun, attracting the attention of even the most prosaic pedestrian."¹⁵

Bitter cold weather hindered construction work in late February but an early spring in March allowed even outside work to proceed. By 7 March 1891;

"The false fronts on several of the new Boston buildings are being taken down today, and reveal some magnificent store fronts."¹⁶

A final completion date for the Boston Block is illusive, but probably was reached in late spring, 1891. The block is listed in the 1890-91 city directory. One of its first tenants was the Sioux City Upholstering Company. By 1902 the building was vacant except for the first floor, where buggies and carriages were being housed. The Hicks-Fuller-Pierson Dry Goods Company was tenant by 1908 and is listed there through 1922. Aalf's Paint and Glass Company and H. A. Baker and Company, the latter manufacturers of industrial clothing, shared the building after 1923. The 1924 Sanborn Map notes the use of floors one through three as a wall paper, paint and oil, and glass warehouse, with office usage on part of the first floor. The two uppermost floors were vacant. The 1940 Sanborn map noted clothing manufacturing on the fifth floor, clothing warehousing on floors two through four, and a wallpaper and paints store on the first floor with storage on parts of the next two floors. Aalfs-Baker Company resulted in 1939 when the former bought out the latter. The firm manufactured and wholesaled work clothing. Hooker Glass and Paint Company was a tenant between 1955 through 1961. Aalfs now manufactures clothing for national firms and this building is its national corporate office. The remodeling was carried out by out by this firm.

Nittert Aalfs, founder of Aalfs Paint and Glass Company, brought his firm to Sioux City in 1909. The firm expanded its wholesaling trade remarkably and added glass to its business involvements. Aalfs also distributed major high quality regionally produced paints and varnishes. The Boston Block replaced outgrown quarters in what was called the Gilman Block, also on 4th Street.

The role of the Boston Investment Company in promoting and financing Sioux City growth went beyond merely providing financial backing to aid that expansion. Arthur Samuel Garretson (1851- ?) settled in the city in 1874. His early involvement with local banking led him to help organize the Boston Investment Company. He also promoted the Sioux City and Northern Railroad, Morningside College and the local library movement. As a director with the Boston group, he was representative of the coalition of local and eastern entrepreneurs who collectively played a major role in promoting city growth.

John G. Mainland was supervising architect for the Boston Block construction and other company projects. Usually such a role implies that he was not the actual architect. He actively consulted with other eastern architects during his work in Sioux City. On 15 January 1891 for example, he returned from Boston after consultations which concerned a new building planned for the corner of 5th and Nebraska streets.¹⁷

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E. C. Wakefield, Sioux City contractor, had settled in the city in 1880 and was noted for his work with bridge and large building construction. He had the stonework contract for the Bay State and Boston Blocks.

William H. Burns (1850- ?) was a noted Sioux City cornice maker who settled in the city in 1876. He had the cornice contracts for the Boston company's buildings. Since those on the Boston Block were composed of stone and not tin it is not certain that he was involved with this particular building.

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FOOTNOTES:

- 1 Sioux City Weekly Times, 1 May 1890.
- 2 ibid.
- 3 ibid., 8 May 1890.
- 4 ibid., 5 June 1890.
- 5 ibid., 8 January 1891.
- 6 ibid., 23 October 1890.
- 7 ibid., 10 July 1890.
- 8 ibid., 17 July 1890.
- 9 ibid., 21 August 1890.
- 10 ibid., 28 August 1890.
- 11 ibid., 11 December 1890.
- 12 Sioux City Tribune, 10 February 1891.
- 13 Sioux City Journal, 1 January 1891.
- 14 Sioux City Tribune, 14 February 1891.
- 15 ibid., 23 February 1891.
- 16 ibid., 7 March 1891.
- 17 Sioux City Weekly Journal, 15 January 1891.

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- Adams, John D. Three Quarters of a Century of Progress. Sioux City: Verstegen Printing Company, 1923, p. 169.
- Marks, Constant R. Past and Present of Sioux City and Woodbury County, Iowa. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1904, p. 657.
- Schmidt, John F. A Historical Profile of Sioux City. Sioux City: Sioux City Stationery, 1969, pp. 200, 274.
- Sanborn Insurance Maps, Sioux City, Iowa, 1886, 1890, 1902, 1924, 1924/40.
- The Sioux City Tribune, 10, 14, 18, 23, 25, February, 7, 10, 12 March 1891.
- The Sioux City Journal, 1 January 1891.
- The Sioux City Weekly Journal, 11 December 1890, 1, 8, 15 January 1891.
- The Sioux City Weekly Times, 1 May, 5, 26 June, 3, 10, 17 July, 7, 21, 28 August, 9, 23 October 1890.