

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Iowa State Historical Building

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

East 12th and Grand Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Des Moines

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fourth

STATE

Iowa

VICINITY OF

CODE

19

COUNTY

Polk

CODE

153

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

\_\_DISTRICT

X PUBLIC

X OCCUPIED

\_\_AGRICULTURE

X MUSEUM

X BUILDING(S)

\_\_PRIVATE

\_\_UNOCCUPIED

\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_PARK

\_\_STRUCTURE

\_\_BOTH

\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_OBJECT

\_\_IN PROCESS

X YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_NO

\_\_MILITARY

\_\_OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

State of Iowa (State Historical Department)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Des Moines

VICINITY OF

STATE

Iowa 50319

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Secretary of State, Capitol Building

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Des Moines

STATE

Iowa 50319

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_FEDERAL \_\_STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The State Historical Building was designed by O.O. Smith in 1898. The west wing was completed in 1899, the central and east sections by 1910. The building is Beaux Arts in style, 260' across the front and 70' deep. Exterior walls are of hollow tile, faced with limestone. The facade is organized into five parts, with three projecting pavilions connected by hyphens. The elevation has three stages: a basement level faced in rusticated stone, a two-story second stage, and a high parapet stage. The central pavilion is dominated by a portico which is distyle in antis and which uses the Ionic order. This configuration is reflected in the end pavilions, which feature recessed loggias screened by a minor Ionic order (two columns set in antis). The screen is contained within an arch; above the entablature is a tripartite thermal window featuring a metal grill (since replaced with glass block). Fenestration is marked by a gradual decrease in window height from first story to parapet. First story windows have flat pediments, while windows of the second story have flat, dog-ear surrounds. Inscriptions in the parapet panels of each of the three pavilions indicate original uses of the building. East and west elevations vary slightly in window treatment and arrangement. Pilasters divide the west facade into five regular bays, with round-arched windows in the three middle bays of the second story. The east facade features a center frontispiece -- tripartite windows between coupled pilasters -- flanked by blank wall surface to either side.

The central pavilion is a Greek cross in plan, in which wide halls radiate from the central rotunda on all floors. Small rooms (offices, special collections, etc.) fill in the angles between the arms of the cross, while the wings contain large open areas (reading rooms, stack areas, galleries, etc.). The dome is covered in copper.

Walls and ceilings are plastered, and wainscoting and main hall pilasters are executed in scagliola marble. Molded stucco forms interior cornices and ceiling decoration. The main staircase has marble treads and risers, brass or oak rails and iron balustrades. The floor of the rotunda is covered with a mosaic of marble. Art glass decorates windows above the north and south main entrances, as well as windows above some interior doorways, and is also found on the rotunda ceiling.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1898-9; 1904-10

BUILDER/ARCHITECT O.O. Smith, Des Moines

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The State Historical Building is a good example of Beaux Arts classicism. Important features of the style exhibited in this building include the five-part facade with domed, prominent central mass, and the clearly articulated terminal features of the wings. Along with the State Capitol, the Historical Building is among the oldest structures of the "capitol complex", which overlooks the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers. The Historical Building, located across Grand Avenue from the capitol, presents a low, horizontally-distended character which contrasts nicely with the relatively compact verticality of the latter building. In this, the Historical Building complements the capitol but does not seek to compete with it.

Oliver O. Smith (1868-1916) was associated with a number of well-known Des Moines architectural firms during his career, including Foster and Liebbe, F.A. Gutterson, and Wetherell and Gage. At the time he designed the Historical Building, Smith was working with Gutterson. Among his other buildings are exhibition pavilions on the state fairgrounds, the Monroe County Courthouse, and a number of libraries and other public buildings.

The State Historical Department was formally established by the state legislature in 1892, and was in the first years housed in three rooms of the capitol building. The west wing of the Historical Building was completed in 1899 and occupied by March, 1900. In 1904, the legislature appropriated funds for the completion of the building, which was not achieved until 1910.

