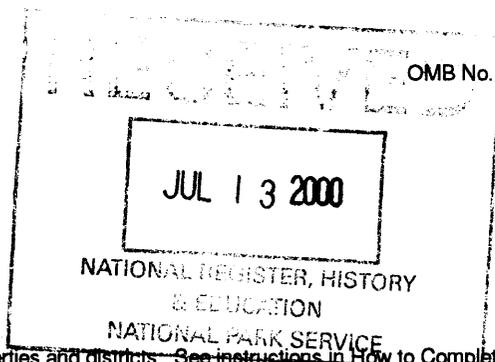


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

919



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name New Orpheum Theatre

other names/site number Orpheum Electric Building

2. Location

street & number 520 - 28 Pierce Street

N/A  not for publication

city or town Sioux City

N/A  vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Woodbury

code 193 zip code 51101

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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

*Jane McElwain*

8/25/00

New Orpheum Theatre  
Name of Property

Woodbury, IA  
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	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

none

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE/theater  
 COMMERCE & TRADE/business

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE & TRADE/business

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/  
 French Renaissance

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE  
 walls BRICK  
 roof ASPHALT  
 other TERRA COTTA

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark an "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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

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**Period of Significance**

1927- 1949

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**Significant Dates**

1927

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**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Sanford, Arthur

---

**Cultural Affiliation**

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**Architect/Builder**

Rapp & Rapp, Architects

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

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New Orpheum Theatre  
Name of Property

Woodbury, IA  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References ZONE 14  
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 N 4707940 E 713300

3 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gretchen E. Schalge, planner Community Development Department

organization City of Sioux City date 9/10/99

street & number Box 447 telephone 712/279-6159

city or town Sioux City state IA zip code 51102

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name LeGrand & Company, L.C.

street & number 520-28 Pierce St telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Sioux City state IA zip code 51102-0506

**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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**Continuation Sheet**

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New Orpheum Theatre  
Woodbury Co., Iowa

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Architectural Classification (continued)

MODERN MOVEMENT / Art Deco

**Narrative Description**

Occupying slightly more than an entire quarter block on the southeast corner of the intersection of 6<sup>th</sup> and Pierce Streets in downtown Sioux City, Iowa, the Orpheum Theater is a tall, 8 story, blond-brick and terra cotta building of eclectic design. The building was constructed in 1926-27 as a combination theater and commercial block and connected to the eight-story Francis Building (NRHP-eligible) on the south side by a three story bridge. The office portion of the building was originally four stories tall - the top four floors were added in 1949, but designed in such a way as to copy the architectural detailing of the original building. Originally, the theater structure rose a full two stories above the smaller office building. The high theater walls were needed to accommodate balcony seating, the vaulted and domed auditorium ceiling, and the backstage "flywall" (area where curtains, backdrops, lighting was held).

**Exterior**

The Orpheum fronts onto both Pierce Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Street. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street façade (the north elevation) has eight bays and the Pierce Street facade (the west elevation) has twelve bays. Each bay has paired windows and terra cotta detailing in floral patterns between each of the floors. Separating the paired windows is a fluted terra cotta pier that rises from the base of the second floor windows to the top of the eighth floor windows. Each bay is divided by a brick pier that rises from the second floor to the roof line. The building has no ornamentation at the cornice line.

The building has two large recessed entrances on the west façade; one to the theater and the other to the offices. The theater entrance is located in bays two through four (counting from the north to the south) and the office entrance is located in the eighth bay. A steel frame, box-type marquis is located over the theater entrance.

Also along the west façade are five smaller recessed entrances; each featuring a single, commercial styled door and being only one door-width in depth.

Along the north façade there are two small recessed entrances. One entrance is located in the second bay (counting from the east to the west) and another is in the seventh bay. Like the smaller entrances along the west façade, both of these north façade entrances are small, with a single, commercial style door.

The building's south façade faces the city alley. Here a narrow alley splits the theater from the office building. Its purpose was to allow access to a large elevator (See attached building footprint). Also along the south façade is a bridge that connects the Orpheum office building to the Frances Building on the second, third and fourth floors. Original to the Orpheum and constructed using the same blond brick and terra cotta detailing, the bridge is stepped back from the main façade, has paired double hung windows and adds architectural interest by providing an arched entrance to the city alley below.

The building's exterior ornamentation is rather simple. It is limited to decorative terra cotta beneath the window sills and terra cotta panels between each of the windows. The second floor window

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New Orpheum Theatre  
Woodbury Co., Iowa

sills are designed in a floral pattern that merges into a stylized bird's head. Beneath all other window sills there is a simple wave-type pattern with each crest and dip punctuated by a circular indentation.

## Alterations

Since its construction in 1927, this building has undergone moderate alterations. In 1949, the Sioux City Gas and Electric Company purchased the New Orpheum Theatre. Desiring additional space, in that year the company constructed four stories to the building which resulted in the removal of decorative capping on each brick pier and the decorative terra cotta paneling that ran along the roof line. Additionally, at some time the 1927 storefront façade was removed and replaced with large squares of smooth, blond stone (unknown as to type). The existing smooth stone is the second known alteration of this type. A photo dating from the 1940s indicates that sometime between the building's construction and the 1940s, a dark-hued marble was added to the storefront. It is unknown as to when the dark marble was removed and replaced with the existing blond-colored stone. Other alterations include the storefront windows. Originally the building had traditional tall storefront windows with transom above and stone bulkhead below. Sometime after 1949, and most likely when the blond-colored stone was added, the storefront window openings were shortened and narrowed and replaced with standard aluminum clad frames.

Further alterations to the storefront included removing several of the recessed entrances along the north façade. Originally, a recessed theater entrance was located in the first bay of the north façade. This entrance has since been removed. Three other recessed entrances appear to have been located along 6<sup>th</sup> Street. The entrances were angled 45 degrees from the sidewalk. Today, there are only two entrances along the 6<sup>th</sup> Street façade and both meet the sidewalk at a 90 degree angle.

All of the building's double hung, wood framed windows have been replaced with metal sliding windows with a transom-type window above. Like the storefront windows, these sliding units have aluminum frames.

Finally, in 1994 a modern skywalk was connected to the west façade of the Orpheum at the second floor level. This skywalk is located in the southwest corner of the building, occupying the tenth bay.

## Interior

The interior of the Orpheum is divided into two sections: the offices and the theater. The office building is a narrow "L" shaped structure that conceals the theater on the north and west sides. All of the offices overlook either 6<sup>th</sup> Street or Pierce Street and are accessed by a narrow corridor that runs along the inside "L" of the building. All of the offices have been remodeled: doors have been removed, the ceilings have been lowered and covered with acoustical-type tile, the floors have been carpeted or covered with asbestos floor tile, and any architectural detailing that was original to the office space has been removed or concealed.

The theater portion of the building consists of the large auditorium, a spacious two-story lobby, backstage, and below-stage dressing rooms, restrooms, and basement lounge areas for patrons. When it

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New Orpheum Theatre  
Woodbury Co., Iowa

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was constructed in 1926-27, the theater's interior, not the building's exterior, was the focus of the December 19, 1927 dedicatory program:

"The New Orpheum theatre seats approximately 2,600 people. Its architecture is of the French Renaissance [interior], its graceful arches, long promenades, sumptuous foyers, art objects, hangings and decorations reflecting the grace, charm and beauty of this notable period in French history. It has scores of interesting features and innumerable accessories contributing to the comfort and convenience of patrons.

The are, for instance, an elevator to take patrons to upper floor levels, a nursery for children, cosmetique salons for ladies, smoking rooms for men, lounges for men and women, and many other features.

The exterior of the theatre, striking as it is, gives little hint of the beauty of the interior. From the ticket lobby [measuring 20x38 feet] one passes into the spacious main lobby from which lead the stars to the upper and lower floors. The grand foyer and promenade leads directly from the main lobby and to one of the supreme beauty spots of the theatre. The walls of the commodious foyer are treated in crotcheted Italian walnut and the ceiling is on ivory and gold. Three large chandeliers of ormolu gold and innumerable crystals are suspended from the ceiling of the foyer-promenade. The draperies are of damask in mandarin flame color with black figure, chosen to blend perfectly with the other decorations. The carpet is black, gold and red and of imported texture, especially made for the New Orpheum.

The nursery for children, ladies' cosmetique salon, men's smoking room and the general lounge are under the auditorium. The women's lounge, which adjoins the cosmetique salon, has a general color scheme of rose-lavender, the carpet and wall hangings both reflecting this treatment of color design. The hangings are damasks and brocatelles and the walls are adorned with etchings and oil paintings by such famous artists as Hardy, Icart, Guilbert, Reboius and others. The cosmetique salon is finished in the same color scheme.

The men's lounge, which also leads from the general lounge, is furnished more severely. There are chairs and davenports, with red-leather covered seats, many ash trays, a drinking fountain, interesting prints on the walls and other attractive features.

It is in the spacious auditorium that the full magnificence of the New Orpheum is most pronounced, however.

The ceiling and walls are elaborately decorated, all ornamentation being handwork and all relief work in gold finish. The walls are covered with antique French damask with a red, green and gold figure on a warm ivory background. Draperies throughout the auditorium are of crimson and gold of beautiful texture and design.

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New Orpheum Theatre  
Woodbury Co., Iowa

Suspended from the huge dome of the auditorium is a large chandelier with innumerable cut crystals of glistening brilliance which project their light to every part of the theatre.

The stage is 30 feet deep and 76 feet wide, sufficiently large to accommodate the largest and most pretentious productions....The seventeen dressing rooms, as well as the rooms for the orchestra and stage employees, are provided with every convenience. The artists' dressing rooms are handsomely furnished. Beneath the stage is a large N.V.A room [National Vaudeville Association] where artists may fraternize during leisure moments.

The new theatre is provided with a mammoth cooling system which produces thoroughly cleansed cool air in the summer time and warm air in the winter to any temperature desired.<sup>1</sup>

## Interior Alterations

After vaudeville stage productions began to fade in popularity during the 1930s the theater was used primarily as a movie house and secondarily as a stage for theatrical productions. By 1968, touring stage productions were a thing of the past and the old theater was used solely for showing movies. In June of that year the interior of the grand theater was substantially remodeled although theater owner Irwin Dubinsky, president of Dubinsky Bros. of Lincoln, Nebraska stated, "We plan to keep the grandeur of the theater, but modernize it considerably".<sup>2</sup> Changes included removing the old seats and adding new; new carpeting; new heating, venting and cooling system; remodeling the lobby, the grand lobby and box office; the basement and balcony were closed; a new projection booth added in the balcony; part of the balcony was cut-off; a new suspended ceiling covered the hand painted, vaulted auditorium ceiling; restrooms were added on the first floor; and the refreshment stand was remodeled. Also at this time, the theater's original Wurlitzer pipe organ was dismantled and reassembled in the Sioux City Municipal Auditorium where it remains today.

In keeping with national trends, the theater was again remodeled in 1982 this time to carve twin theaters out of the single large theater. Remodeling included placing a wall down the center of the main auditorium; creating a dropped ceiling in the lobby that covered the three large ormolu gold crystal chandeliers; adding a second, suspended ceiling in the main auditorium thereby covering the old balcony projection room; and constructing a new projection room at the rear of each "twin". Remodeling also included polishing several small glass lights and hanging them over the new concession stand. At some time during the 1968 or the 1982 remodeling, holes were carved into the decorative plasterwork on either side of the stage. Presumably, this was to accommodate the large speakers needed for stereo sound systems.

<sup>1</sup> *Souvenir and Opening Program of The Orpheum Circuit's New Orpheum Theatre Sioux City, Iowa.* 19 December 1927. Vertical File Collection. Sioux City Public Museum.

<sup>2</sup> *Sioux City Journal.* 9 June 1968.

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Of special note is the fate of the theater's five large gold ormolu crystal chandeliers (smaller chandeliers survive in the theatre lobby). Originally located in the theater's main auditorium, the chandeliers (the largest of which weighed an estimated two-tons) were removed, probably during the 1968 remodeling, and placed in the building's basement storage. In 1985 they were discovered missing, and were later found in a Florida restaurant. Exactly how they arrived in Florida remains a mystery.<sup>3</sup>

Remarkably a great deal of the original interior ornamentation remains today. The dropped ceiling in the main auditorium has been removed thereby revealing the tall vaulted, hand painted ceiling. The ceiling is in fair condition, some sections having suffered water damage. The false ceiling in the lobby area has been removed exposing the ormolu gold crystal chandeliers. The original carpet is still extant in the mezzanine hallway. The grand staircase with railing and bronze balustrade is intact with only minor, easily removable, modifications. The lounges, smoking rooms restrooms, terra cotta drinking fountains located in the basement are very much intact, although in need of restoration. The back stage dressing rooms, NVA entertainment room, orchestra pit and stage - in short, the general floor plan of the theatre- has not changed since the time of construction.

**Statement of Significance**

Constructed in 1926 and completed in 1927, the Orpheum theater was designed by the nationally known Chicago architectural firm of Rapp & Rapp. The building is locally significant under National Register Criteria A for its association with the Orpheum Circuit and for being the last remaining of three Orpheum theaters in Sioux City. The building is also significant under National Register Criteria B for its association with well known Sioux City builder and philanthropist Arthur Sanford, the moving force behind the theater's construction.

Sioux City's relationship with the Orpheum Circuit can be traced to 1906 when owners of the popular Lyric theater, a vaudeville house located at 615-617 Fifth Street (razed), sold the theater to the Western Vaudeville Association, an organization headed by Fred Buchanan of Des Moines. Buchanan announced that the Lyric would offer high class, nationally recognized vaudeville entertainment from the Orpheum [Western United States], Kohl and Castle [Chicago], and Keith [New York] vaudeville circuits. The main reason why Sioux City was included on the national vaudeville circuit was the fact that the city was located between the larger theaters in Omaha and Minneapolis. Vaudevillians could book their shows into Sioux City without having to lose, through travel, their engagement time in either of the two larger cities.<sup>4</sup>

Locally, vaudeville was very popular. The Lyric was completely remodeled to a high class theater that could seat about 1,150 people. The opening day performance of Sioux City's first Orpheum featured a seven-act bill and a kinodrome picture (an early form of silent movie).<sup>5</sup> By 1918, the city had out-grown the Lyric/Orpheum theater. On March 11<sup>th</sup> of that year, the second Orpheum theater located

<sup>3</sup> Poole, Richard. "The Orpheums of Sioux City: Elegance Downtown" . pp. 24-25.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 16.

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at 414 Nebraska St. (razed), and the first to be constructed specifically for the Orpheum circuit, opened to a packed house. The theater offered 1,456 seats, two shows daily- three on weekends, an orchestra, and a silent film all served up in plush surroundings.<sup>6</sup> The theater was a hit. In 1922 the *Sioux City Spirit of Progress* reported that attendance ranged from 8,000 to 10,000 per week and that the theater was the entertainment focus of the city. It was so successful and profitable that a third theater, the “New Orpheum Theatre”, more grand in size and opulence was planned for construction in 1926-27.<sup>7</sup>

**Vaudeville and Sioux City’s New Orpheum Theatre**

Nationally, vaudeville’s rise in popularity began during the late 1800s when a New York theater owner decided to offer clean entertainment without the alcohol and “rank vulgarity” of the more common variety-type shows.<sup>8</sup> He found that his clean, wholesome entertainment proved to be quite popular and attracted a wider patronage than the bawdy variety shows. It quickly became the chosen form of entertainment among the working class, but was looked upon with disdain by “legitimate” theater performers. At its height, however, vaudeville attracted far more patronage than any other form of entertainment, so much so that several “legitimate” artists such as Ethel Barrymore and Sarah Bernhardt performed in vaudeville in order to keep their names before the public.<sup>9</sup>

Vaudeville reached its peak in the mid 1920s and, with its rise, individual theater owners organized circuits some of the largest being the Keith-Albee circuit in New York and the east coast, the Kohl and Castle from Chicago, and finally, the Orpheum Circuit in the west and mid-western United States.<sup>10</sup> Vaudeville’s popularity quickly waned however, as talking pictures and radio demanded center stage.

During the teens and early 20s, vaudeville was able to coexist with silent film by offering a movie between live stage shows. This benign association ended with the 1927 production of the first “talkie”, *The Jazz Singer*. Many of vaudeville’s star performers flocked to Hollywood to try their hand at film while other vaudevillians fled to radio. The formation of NBC in 1926 and CBS in 1928 created a real threat to vaudeville. Radio became a popular form of entertainment as it provided free variety and comedy shows for the entire family in the comfort of one’s own home.

Although vaudeville’s popularity began to decline nationally, it remained the entertainment of choice among Sioux Citians. Local promoter and developer Arthur Sanford forged ahead with his construction plans because Sioux City’s theater patrons demanded a bigger, more elaborate entertainment palace.<sup>11</sup> Sioux City’s new entertainment palace opened December 18, 1927. It was designed following the principals set by Orpheum Circuit – that of clean, wholesome entertainment by the foremost artists - amid the finest surroundings in which entertainment had ever been conceived –

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 18-19.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Stein, Charles, editor. *American Vaudeville As Seen By Its Contemporaries*. p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. xi.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 167.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

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and at prices every man and woman could afford.<sup>12</sup> The cost of the project was estimated at \$1,750,000 and it was Sioux City's largest valuation of the year.<sup>13</sup>

Although Sioux City was one of the junior theatres on the Orpheum Circuit, its New Orpheum theater rivaled that of the larger cities. No expense was spared. The theater provided its patrons with opulent surroundings from its French damask wall coverings, to its European oil paintings, to its crystal chandeliers and plush carpeting. For 10 years from 1927 to 1937 movies, both silent and "talkies", played along-side vaudeville acts in the New Orpheum theater.<sup>14</sup>

In fact, on March 10, 1929, just 15 months after opening its new theater, Sioux City's Orpheum presented its first "talkie" when it showed Richard Barthelmess in "Weary River". By this time Sunday newspaper advertisements began playing-up the feature film over the vaudeville entertainment. In large type the *Sioux City Journal* announced that "Weary River" would be shown in conjunction with the same big Radio-Keith-Orpheum programs." Theater manager Fred LeCompte reassured patrons that the vaudeville program would be "of the same high standard as we have offered the last year and it is with pride that we enter upon a new era of entertainment for Sioux City in presenting talking pictures."<sup>15</sup> The stage production was "WLS Showboat", a unit show made up of broadcasting stars from station WLS in Chicago.<sup>16</sup>

In 1927 the Keith-Albee Circuit of New York and the east coast merged with the Orpheum, creating one of the largest theater circuits in the United States. Shortly thereafter, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) purchased controlling interest in the Keith-Albee-Orpheum and incorporated under the name RKO – Radio-Keith-Orpheum. By January 20, 1929 Sioux City's New Orpheum Theater began advertising itself as the RKO New Orpheum Theatre. This event was significant for vaudeville's future as it was the first time an entertainment company owned both the vaudeville theaters and had the capability of making movies. RKO now could package a one-hour stage show (a "unit show"), route it through the major theaters, and play it along side their feature film. Often, producing these "unit shows" was cheaper than a bill of well known vaudeville stars. This may have been a way for the motion picture industry to wean audiences away from the live stage shows of vaudeville. Clearly, vaudeville became merely a backdrop for the feature film.

In 1928 Sioux City's New Orpheum offered a five-act bill, playing three-times-a-day on Sundays and Thursdays, plus a feature film. Shows began at 2:45, 6:45, and 9:10, with photoplays preceding and following the stage show.<sup>17</sup> According to *American Vaudeville: As Seen By Its Contemporaries*, this was a typical bill of the small-time or "Junior theaters". The five-act bill usually consisted of the following type of acts:

<sup>12</sup> Souvenir and Opening program of The Orpheum Circuit's New Orpheum Theatre. 19 December 1927. No page.

<sup>13</sup> *Sioux City Journal*. 11 December 1926. p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> Poole. p. 22.

<sup>15</sup> *Sioux City Journal*. "Talkie Opens at Orpheum". 10 March 1929.

<sup>16</sup> *Sioux City Journal* 15 April 1928. p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> *Sioux City Journal*. 2 September 1928.

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A bicycle act  
A pair of dancers  
A musical number  
A comedy team or single  
Acrobats<sup>18</sup>

After 1937, however, movies became the theater's staple entertainment, with intermittent touring music and dramatic attractions. It was during this period that Sioux City eclipsed its vaudeville-era junior theater status by drawing such stage notables as: Ethel Barrymore appearing in the play "White Oaks"<sup>19</sup> and later in "The Corn is Green"<sup>20</sup>; Helen Hayes in "Candle in the Wind"<sup>21</sup>; author Sinclair Lewis provided the prologue and epilogue of his play "Angela is Twenty-two"<sup>22</sup>; Alfred Lunt & Lynn Fontanne in "There Shall Be No Night"<sup>23</sup> and "The Taming of the Shrew"<sup>24</sup>; John Barrymore in "My Dear Children"<sup>25</sup>; Lillian Gish in "Life With Father"<sup>26</sup>; and Katharine Hepburn, Van Heflin and Joseph Cotton in "The Philadelphia Story"<sup>27</sup>.

**Arthur Sanford**

Sioux City's Orpheum theatre is also significant for its association with Sioux City promoter, developer, and philanthropist Arthur Sanford, known locally as Sioux City's Greatest Builder. A native of Minnesota, Sanford was educated at the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce at the University of Pennsylvania. After serving in France during World War I, Sanford came to Sioux City in 1920 to manage the financing of a construction project for his employer, a Minnesota finance company. He only intended to remain in Sioux City for six months but was so impressed with the business climate that he decided to stay and open his own company.

Within a few years of his arrival he had constructed a number of buildings, including the Bellevue apartments and the Frances Building, and in 1926 he began organizing the financing for the New Orpheum project, his first known entertainment-related endeavor. In succeeding decades Sanford went on to build hotels, apartment buildings, office buildings, and industrial plants throughout the Midwest. In addition to the Bellevue Apartments, the Frances Building and the Orpheum theatre, Sanford's Sioux City projects included the Warrior Hotel (NRHP), the Davidson Building (offices, NRHP), the Insurance Exchange Building (offices), the Sioux Apartments, and the Sioux Soya Company soy bean plant. Additionally, Sanford and his wife Stella were very active in Sioux City's

<sup>18</sup> Stein, p. 176, 178.

<sup>19</sup> Playbill. 10 January 1939.

<sup>20</sup> Playbill. 18 November 1942.

<sup>21</sup> Playbill. 12 May 1942.

<sup>22</sup> Playbill. 1 February 1939.

<sup>23</sup> Playbill. 10 January 1939.

<sup>24</sup> *Sioux City Journal*. 29 October 1939.

<sup>25</sup> McLean, Monica. Personal Papers. Sioux City Public Museum. Playbill. 3 May 1939.

<sup>26</sup> *Sioux City Journal*. 23 February 1942.

<sup>27</sup> McLean, Monica. Personal Papers. Sioux City Public Museum. Playbill. 12 December (no year given).

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community affairs and gave substantially to public causes. One such cause was the construction of a multi-cultural community house which today is known as the Sanford Center.

A 1955 *Des Moines Register* article noted that since the 1920s Sanford had built an average of \$1 million per year in new residential and business construction. The article went on to explain that Sanford not only financed and promoted various projects, but he was a pioneer in good design and modern construction as well. One of his architects was quoted as saying, "He is a very discerning observer, knows materials and will not accept bad taste or imitation from a designer." The article went on to report that "the streets of Iowa in numerous places are more attractive because it was Sanford who had the final say on how the buildings would appear."<sup>28</sup>

Sanford's influence is evident in the construction of the New Orpheum Theatre. A June 17, 1926 *Sioux City Spirit of Progress* article boldly announced that an eight-story theatre would be constructed at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Pierce Streets and the financing would be provided by a group of Sioux City and Chicago financiers, headed by Arthur Sanford.<sup>29</sup> By September 1926 the *Sioux City Spirit of Progress* announced that the theatre would be six-stories and the surrounding office building would only be four-stories, but constructed with "a foundation sufficient to carry an eight-story building".<sup>30</sup> Possibly during the planning stages, Sanford determined that the project's available financing could not support the construction of an eight story building. Instead of reducing the ornamentation or compromising on the architectural design, Sanford settled for a four-story office building, but had the foresight to insist that the building be constructed with the more substantial foundation.

Today, the upper floors of the building and the storefronts are occupied by office and retail users. The theatre remains vacant although the city of Sioux City has partnered with a not-for-profit organization to restore the theatre to its original grandeur. The projects estimated completion date is 2002.

### **Bibliography**

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*Sioux City Journal*. 11 December 1926; 30 December 1927; 1 January 1928; 8 January 1928; 15 January 1928; 22 January 1928; 29 January 1928; 5 February 1928; 12 February 1928; 19 February 1928; 26 February 1928; 26 February 1928; 11 March 1928; 18 March 1928; 1 April 1928; 15 April 1928 "Radio Minstrels at the Orpheum"; 29 April 1928; 6 May 1928; 8 July 1928; 5 August 1928; 12 August 1928; 2 September 1928; 17 March 1929; 18 November 1928; 9 December 1928; 16 December 1928; 7 March 1929; 10 March 1929 "Talkie Opens at Orpheum"; 29 October 1939; 23 February 1942.

<sup>28</sup> Clipping File. Sioux City Public Library. Biography - Sanford, Arthur.

<sup>29</sup> *Sioux City Spirit of Progress*. 17 June 1926. p. 137.

<sup>30</sup> *Sioux City Spirit of Progress*. "Sioux City's New Million Dollar Theater Building Project Begun". September, 1926. p. 199.

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*Sioux City Spirit of Progress*. 17 June 1926.

*Sioux City Spirit of Progress*. "Sioux City's New Million Dollar Theater Building Project Begun".  
September, 1926.

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Knopf, 1984.

### **Geographical Data**

#### **Verbal Boundary Description**

Lot 4 except the south 16 feet, all of Lots 1- 3, and the vacated east/west alley adjacent to Block 10 in  
Sioux City East Addition, Orpheum Building Condo, Sioux City, Iowa.

#### **Boundary Justification**

The nominated boundary is the boundary historically associated with the subject property.

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**SITE PLAN**

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## **AREA MAP**

**CITY OF SIOUX CITY, IOWA**



Source: City of Sioux City Planning Division. Sioux City, Iowa. 1999.

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Photograph Documentation

Historic Photographs

1. Photographer: Unknown  
Date: c.1939  
Location of Negative: Unknown (photograph obtained from the Sioux City Public Museum)  
View: Looking southeast from the intersection of 6<sup>th</sup> and Pierce Streets.
2. Photographer: Unknown  
Date: c.1960  
Location of Negative: Unknown (photograph obtained from the Sioux City Public Museum)  
View: Looking southeast from the intersection of 6<sup>th</sup> and Pierce Streets.

Current Photographs

3. Photographer: Bruce Meyer  
Date: November 30, 1999  
Location of Negative: City Hall, Sioux City, Iowa.  
View: Building exterior showing north and west facades. Camera facing SE.
4. Photographer: Bruce Meyer  
Date: November 30, 1999  
Location of Negative: City Hall, Sioux City, Iowa.  
View: Interior theater showing chandeliers in the lobby.
5. Photographer: Bruce Meyer  
Date: November 30, 1999  
Location of Negative: City Hall, Sioux City, Iowa.  
View: Interior theater showing main stairs in the lobby.
6. Photographer: Bruce Meyer  
Date: November 30, 1999  
Location of Negative: City Hall, Sioux City, Iowa.  
View: Interior theater showing stair rail detail.
7. Photographer: Bruce Meyer  
Date: November 30, 1999  
Location of Negative: City Hall, Sioux City, Iowa.  
View: Interior theater showing stage.

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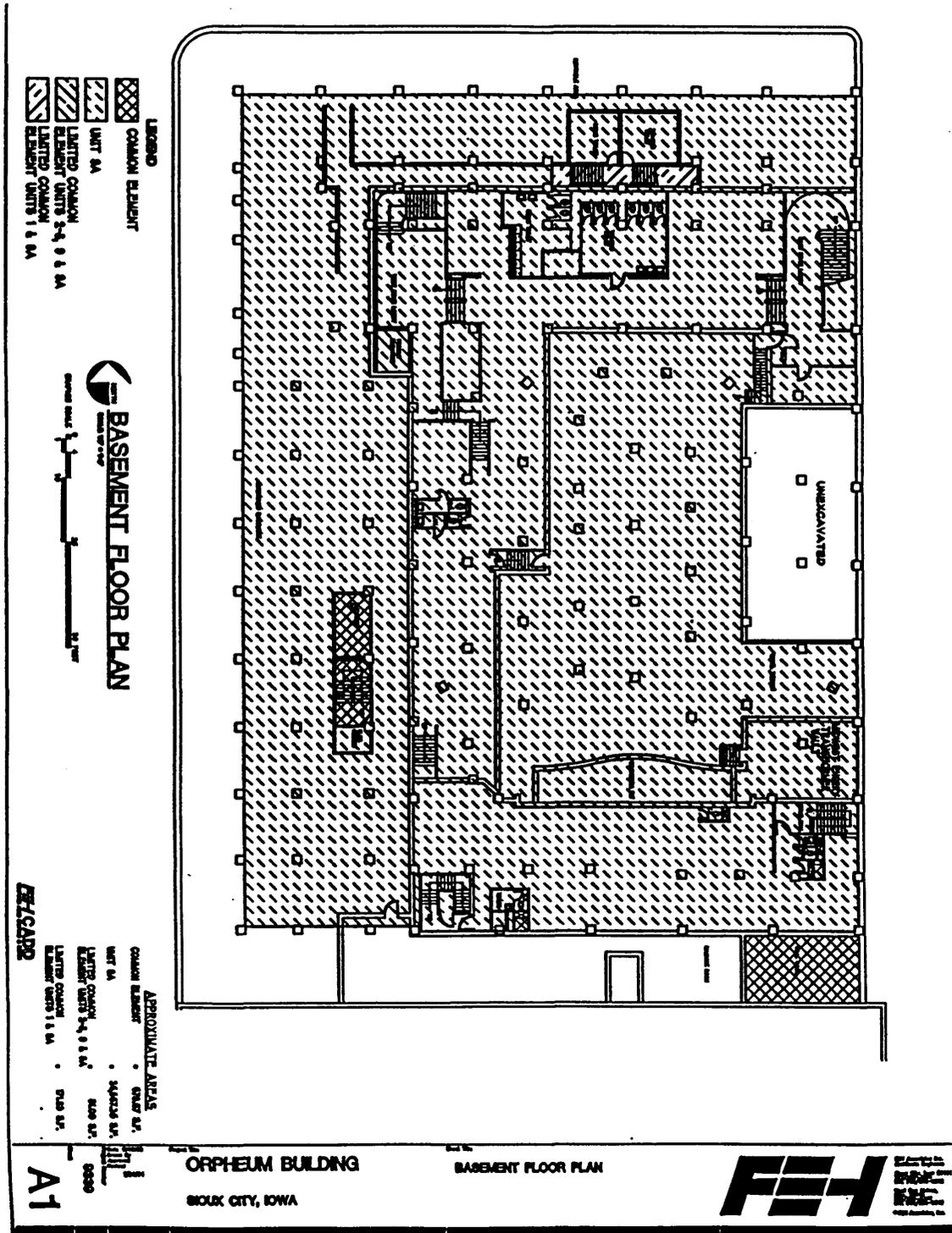
8.     **Photographer:** Bruce Meyer  
       **Date:** November 30, 1999  
       **Location of Negative:** City Hall, Sioux City, Iowa.  
       **View:** Interior theater showing detail of announcement board. This is one of a pair located on either side of the stage.
  
9.     **Photographer:** Bruce Meyer  
       **Date:** November 30, 1999  
       **Location of Negative:** City Hall, Sioux City, Iowa.  
       **View:** Interior theater showing painted ceilings located in the main auditorium.
  
10.    **Photographer:** Bruce Meyer  
       **Date:** November 30, 1999  
       **Location of Negative:** City Hall, Sioux City, Iowa.  
       **View:** Interior theater showing typical door surround located in the balcony.

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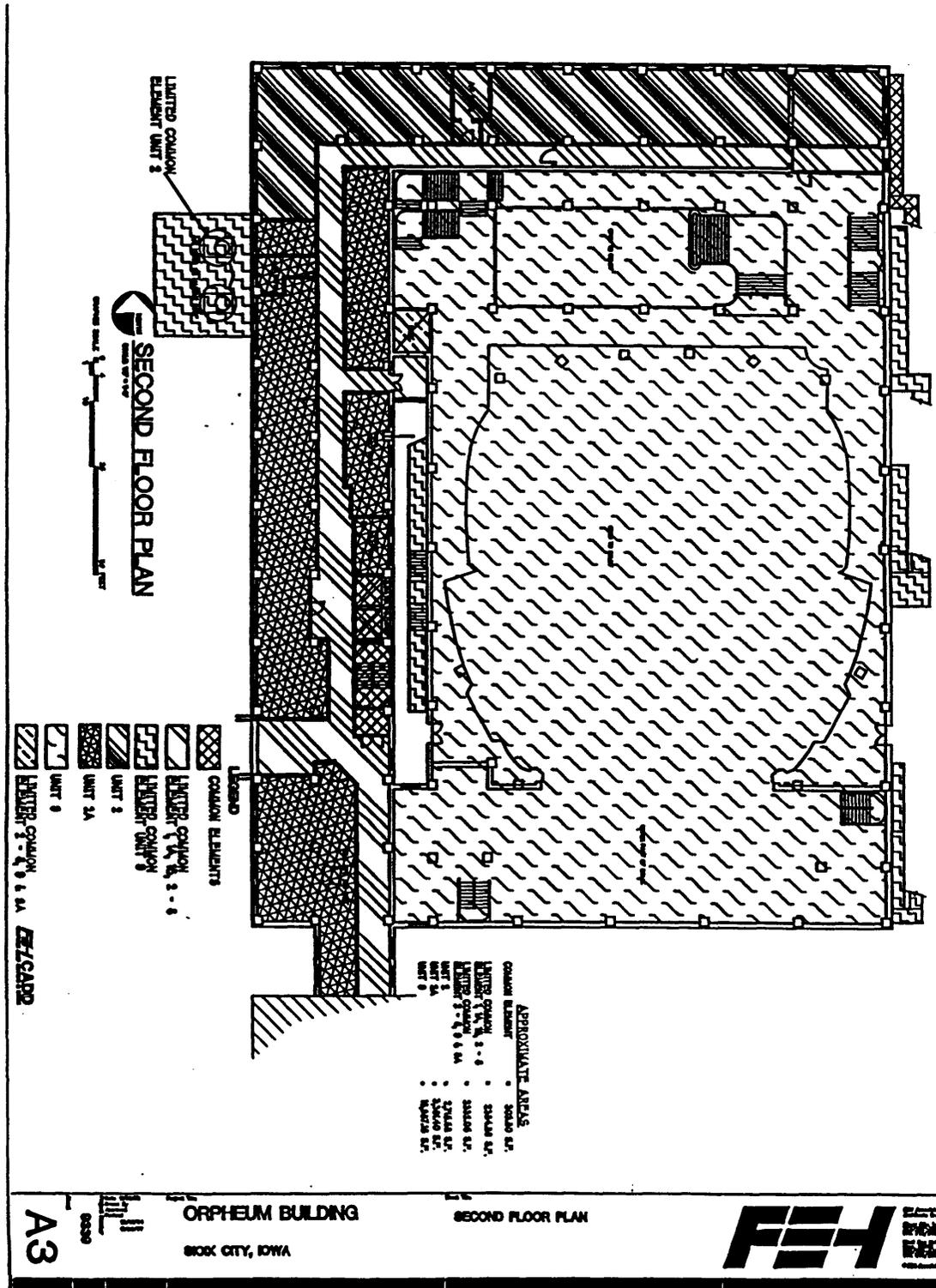


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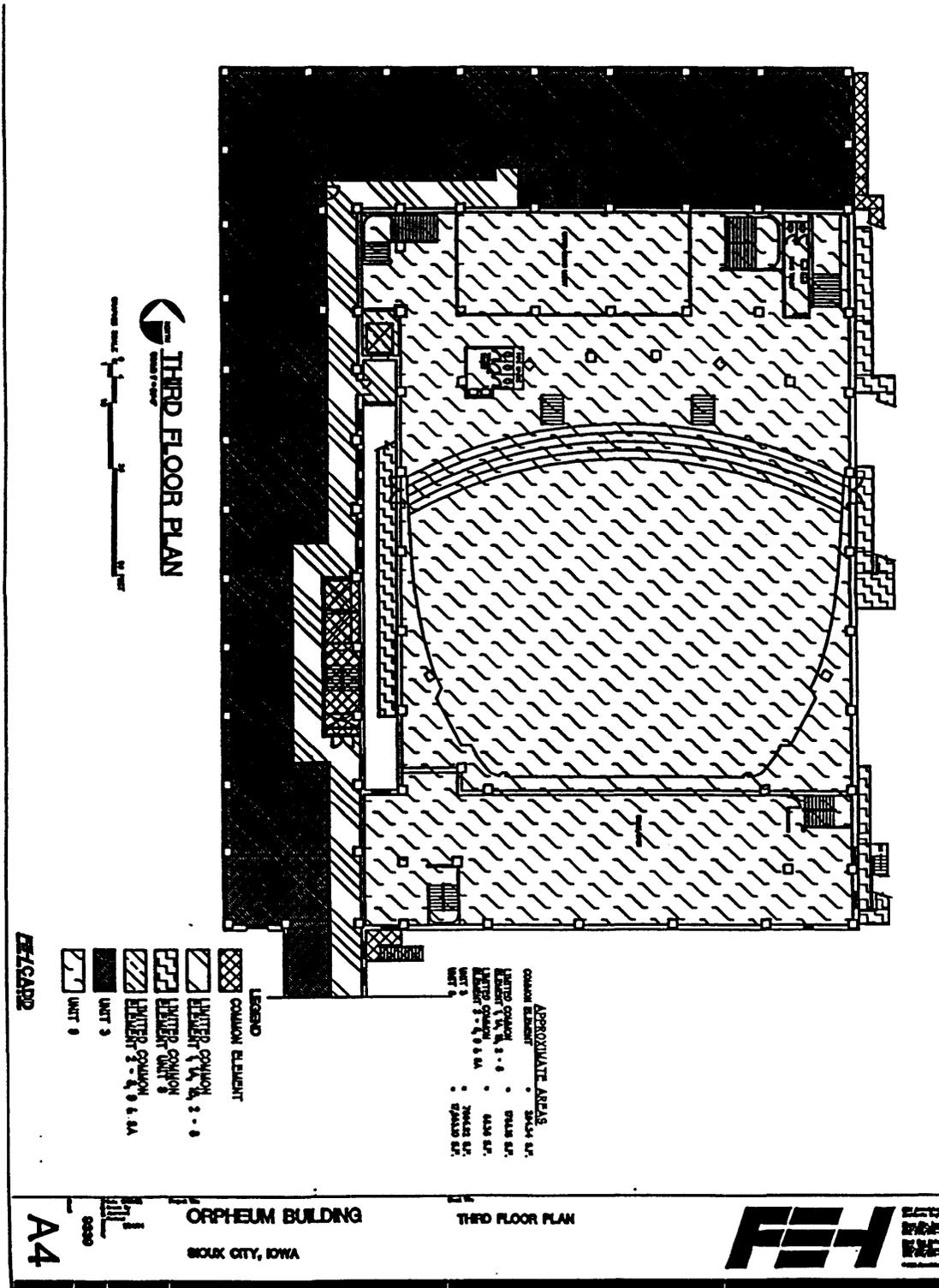


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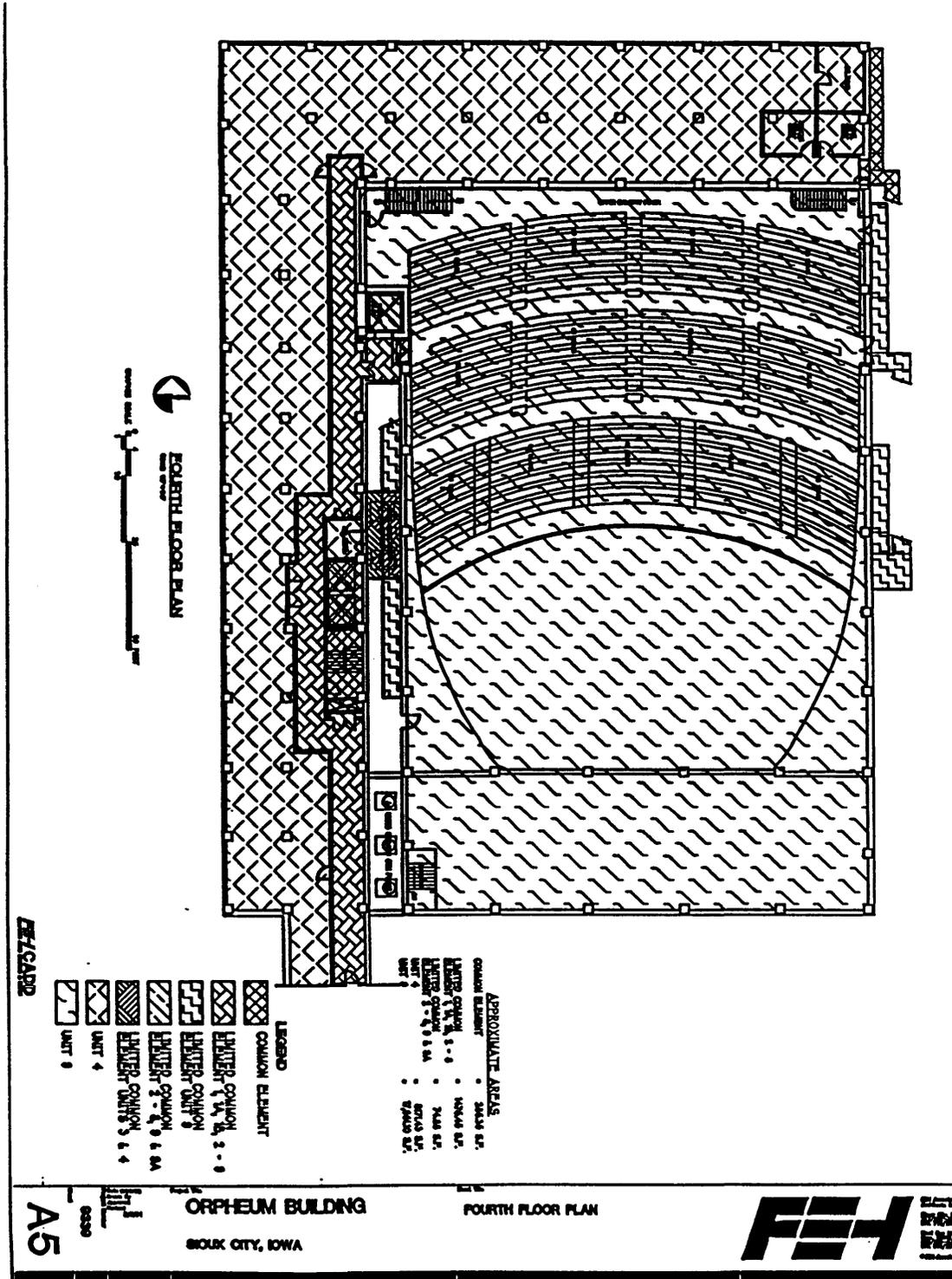


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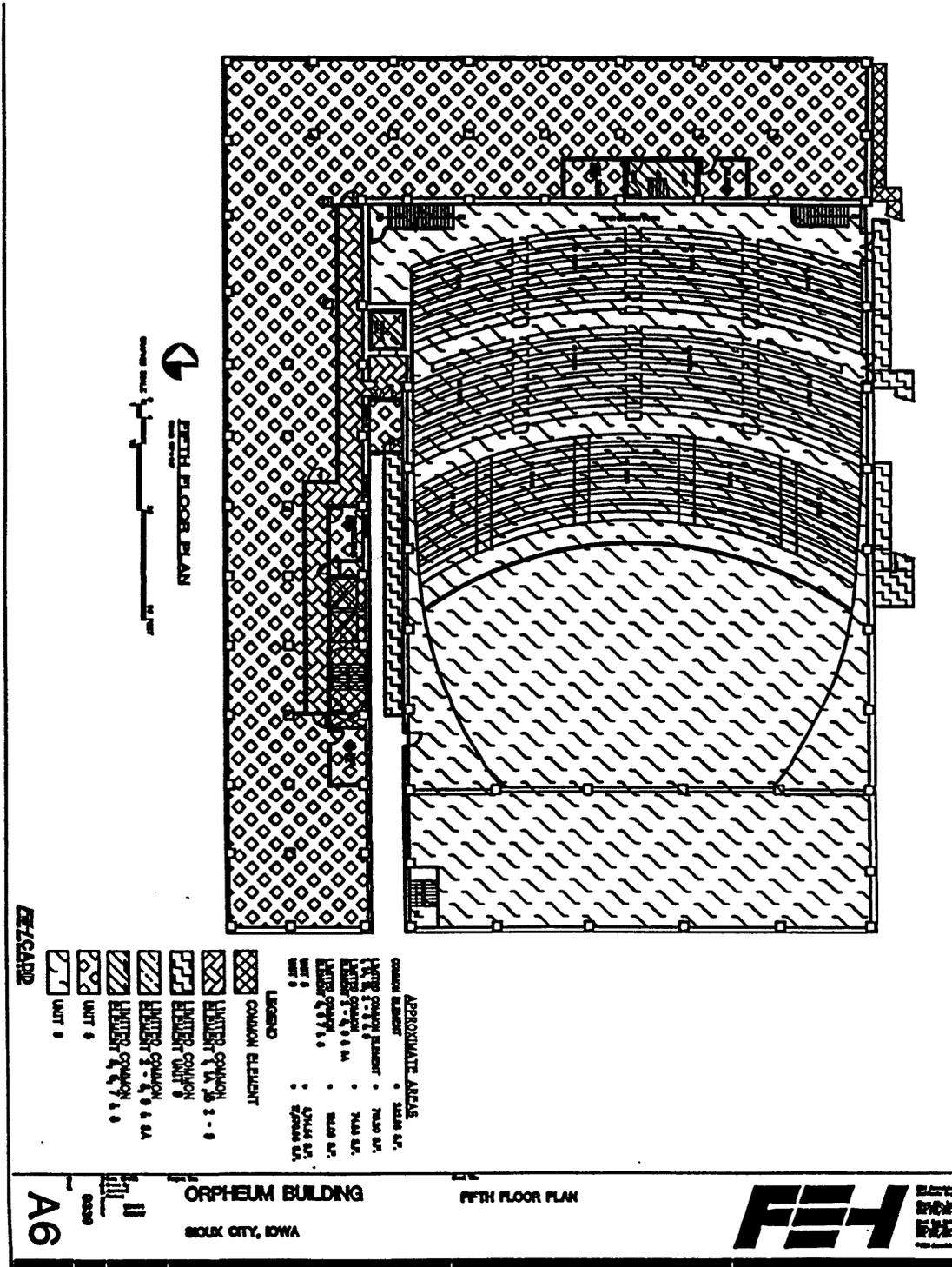


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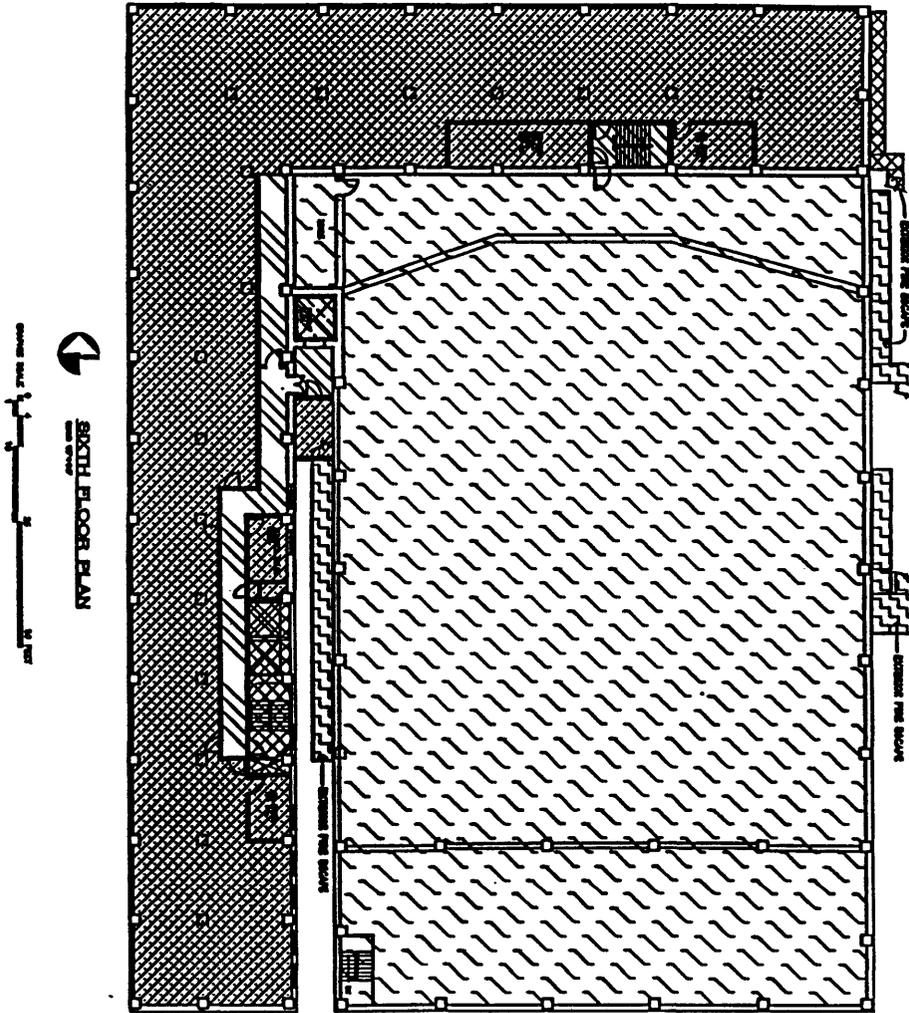


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**LEGEND**

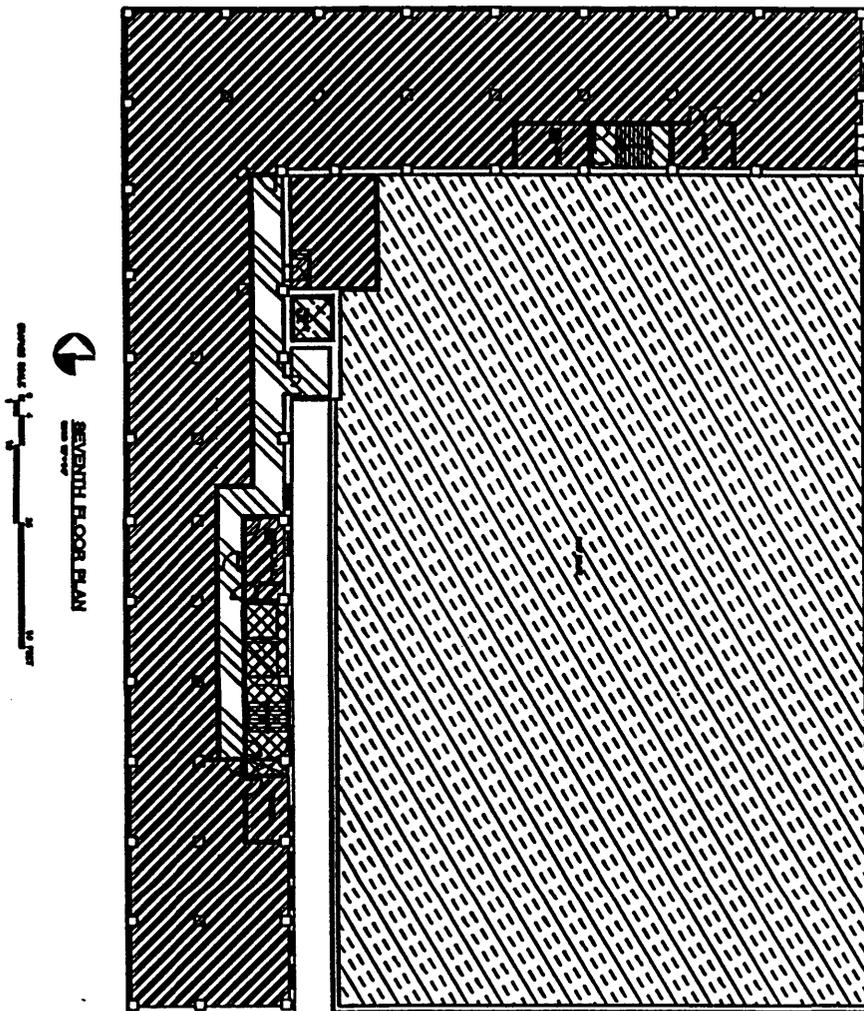
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	UNIT 4
	UNIT 2
	UNIT 1
	UNIT 3
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	UNIT 48
	UNIT 49
	UNIT 50

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- LEGEND**
- COMMON ELEMENT
  - UNIT 6 COMMON
  - UNIT 6
  - UNIT 7
  - UNIT 7 COMMON
  - UNIT 8 COMMON
  - UNIT 8
  - UNIT 9 COMMON
  - UNIT 9
- APPROXIMATE AREAS**
- COMMON ELEMENT
  - UNIT 6 COMMON
  - UNIT 6
  - UNIT 7 COMMON
  - UNIT 7
  - UNIT 8 COMMON
  - UNIT 8
  - UNIT 9 COMMON
  - UNIT 9

ENCARD

A8

ORPHEUM BUILDING  
SIOUX CITY, IOWA

SEVENTH FLOOR PLAN

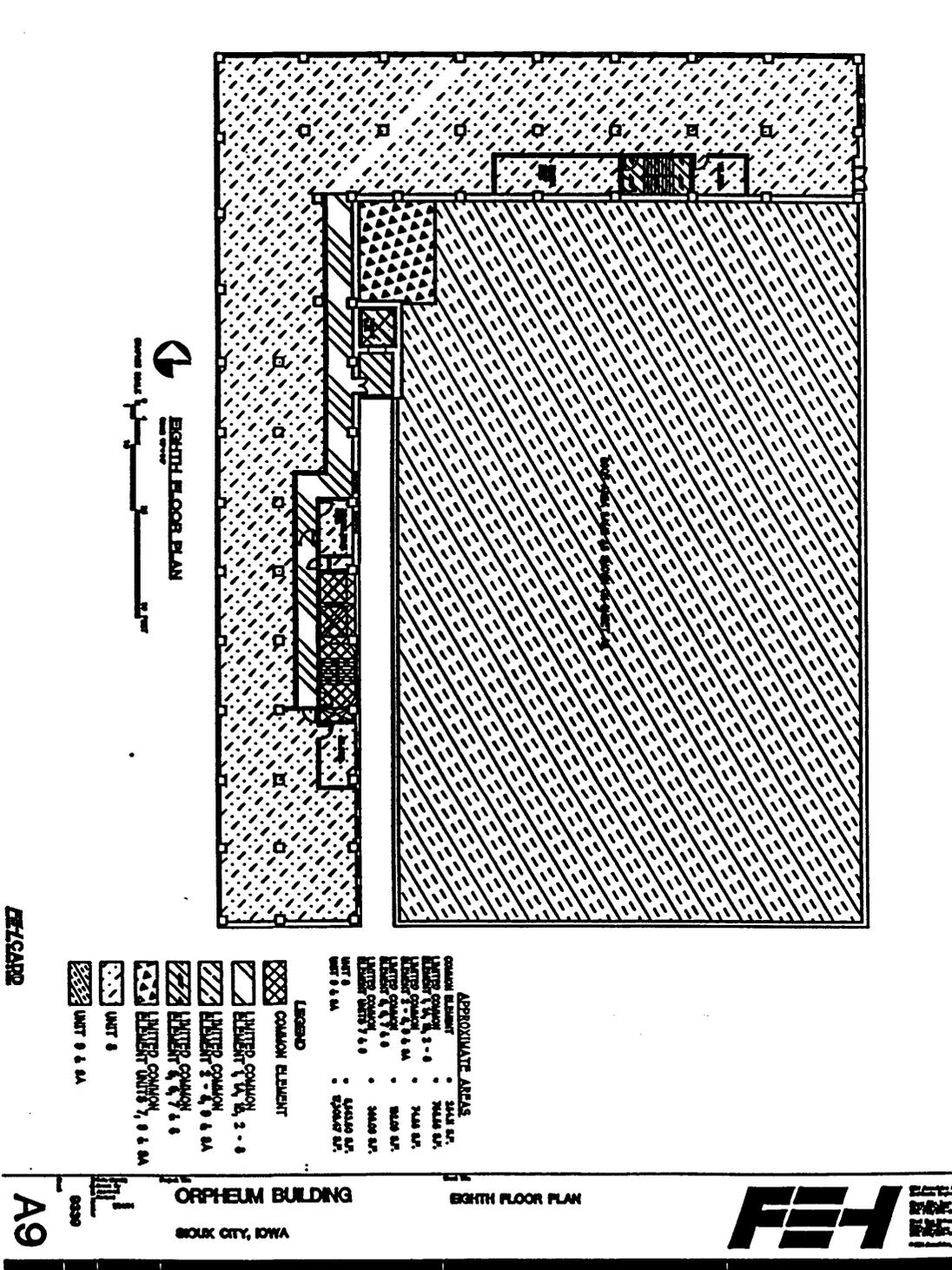


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