

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Interior Telephone Company Building  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 815 5th Avenue [ ] not for publication  
city, town Grinnell [ ] vicinity  
state Iowa code IA county Poweshiek code 157 zip code 50112

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Architectural and Historical Resources of Grinnell, Iowa  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 sets forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheets.

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official  
State Historical Society of Iowa  
State or Federal agency and bureau

10/23/90  
Date

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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.  See continuation sheet.  
 Removed from National Register.  
 Other, (explain:)

Beth Boland

10/20/90

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Industry/Communications facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Commerce/Business

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)  
Commercial Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick

roof shed: tar & gravel

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Interior Telephone Company Building is located on 5th Avenue mid-block between Main and Broad Streets and adjacent on the east to a north-south alley. The building faces south. It is situated one-half block west of the United States Post Office. The building is surrounded by other commercial buildings ranging in height from one to four stories.

This building was constructed as a 1-story, stand-alone structure with a raised basement. There is a walkway between the building and its neighbor on the east--an unusual feature in a commercial area and perhaps related to fire safety.

The building is 1-story above a raised basement. The basement is emphasized on the exterior facades with a deep, mauve-brown brick laid in raised and recessed horizontal courses. The foundation of the building is exceptionally high, emphasized with horizontal brickwork. The west side of the building duplicates the material and decoration appearing on the east facade including decorative brickwork and fenestration.

The street facade's first story has the main entrance located on the right side, and the remaining facade space is occupied by a grouping of three windows. Entrance to the building is gained by a series of concrete steps from grade to the front door. Because it was built for a service business rather than a retail one, the windows are not large expansions of plate glass, but double-hung sashes in the front and steel commercial style along the sides. Two rectangular windows on the street facade have been boarded in, as has a transom light over the entrance. These panels have raised molding recalling fretwork patterns. The basement windows along the side facades are irregularly spaced but align with ones on the first story whenever they do appear. Although the brick on the main level is a tannish color, bands of darker brick at the basement level separate the windows and the door. All the brick has random speckles of black oxidized iron. Mortar joints are exceptionally narrow. The entrance is recessed deeply into the plane of the facade with exterior stairs ascending to it. Above the fenestration, a more variegated, tannish brick delineates rectangular panels in the cornice beneath corbeling. The corbeling continues along the side facades about one-third of the distance. In the cornice along the side facades, raised brick panels spell out "I.T.C.," the initials of the firm. The building is narrow and deep; the shed roof slopes to the rear.

The interior of the building has retained little visible integrity of original material and the architectural significance of this space has been impaired.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally       statewide       locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories form instructions)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1912  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1912  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Unknown at present  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Interior Telephone Company Building, located in the northern part of Grinnell's central business district and constructed in 1912, is significant under Criterion C in illustrating an architectural design which embodies a period of style. Influenced by the commercial style of architecture, the building is distinguished by a rich pallette of brick coloration and texture, and also by brick patterns. The quality materials and architectural detailing on the building convey a feeling of integrity to the viewer, an important asset for a service related business to project. The building also calls attention to the expansion of Grinnell's historic business district to the north.

The building's first floor rests on a high foundation illustrating the nature of its original occupant, a telephone exchange. A high basement was necessary to house telephone equipment. The siting of the building is also significant. Safety precautions appear to have required the building to stand-alone. The building shares no common walls with other buildings. Executed in brick, it is a fine, single-story example of the commercial style as interpreted in Grinnell. Horizontal patterns are achieved in the brickwork through courses laid flush and recessed. Brick color varies with mauve-brown, tan, and dark brown. The sides of the building feature "I. T. C.," the initials of the firm, worked in brick, a charming and naive conceit suggesting a brick-mason's responsibility for design.

The building is in almost unaltered condition. It was not built as a store front but as a telephone exchange and office, so it differs in design from retail buildings of the period. This is most evident in the above grade first floor. No architect has yet been identified for this building.

The Interior Telephone Company appears to have been organized to provide local service to Grinnell and environs. There was also a competing local telephone company in Grinnell. (An intensive survey of the Grinnell business district did not identify a building constructed by this competing company and it is thought that it may have leased offices in Grinnell). Iowa was in the forefront of states in the Upper Midwest to adopt the telephone as a means of communication. By 1920, 86% of Iowa farms were reportedly on telephone exchanges. About half of the telephones at that time were owned by the Northwestern Bell Company. The remainder were owned by more than 500 independent telephone companies providing local service and connecting to the Bell system for long distance. Independent telephone companies remain strong in Iowa. As of 1951, for example, more than 37% of Iowa telephones were still independently operated. The Interior Telephone Company operated in Grinnell into the 1960s.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

Grinnell, A Century of Progress 1854-1954.

Petersen, William J.; The History of Iowa, Progress of an American State; Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc; New York; 1952; Vol. II; pp. 615-618.

Oral Informant; John Kleinschmidt w/W. C. Page; Winter 1989.

See continuation sheet

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

Report # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

State historic preservation office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A  1 5  5 2 2 9 0 0  4 6 2 1 2 8 0 B

C           D

See continuation sheet

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Verbal Boundary Description

The west thirty (30) feet of south ten (10) feet of Lot 11 and the west thirty (30) feet of Lot 12 in Block 6 of the original plat of Grinnell, Iowa, also known as Lot E in Block 6.

See continuation sheet

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Boundary Justification

This boundary includes all property associated with the building and excludes all other buildings.

See continuation sheet

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title W C PAGE, PUBLIC HISTORIAN  
organization The Dunbar/Jones Partnership date DECEMBER 1989  
street & number 110 SOUTHWEST FIFTH STREET telephone 515/280-8026  
city or town DES MOINES state IA zip code 50309

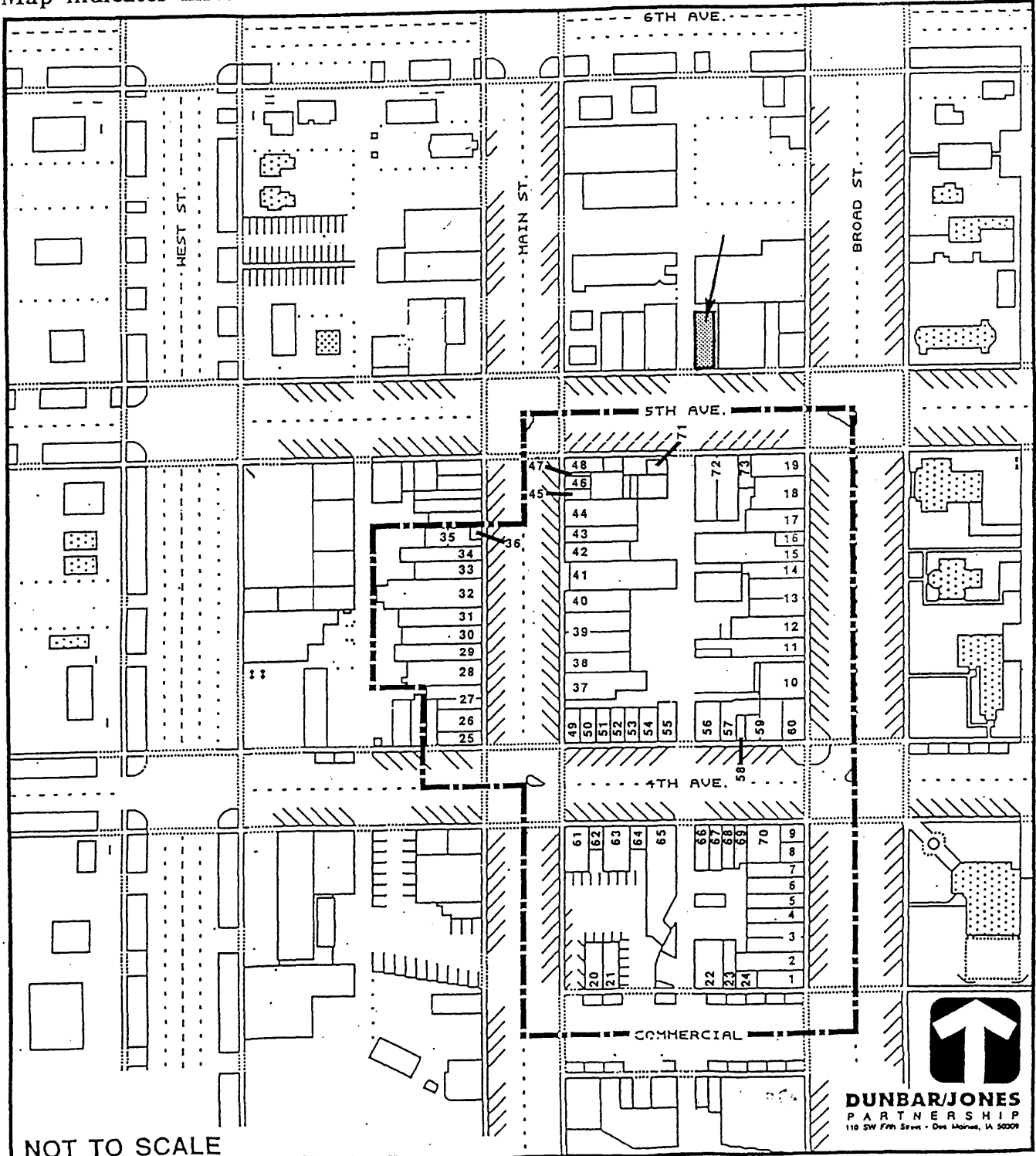
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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 2

CFN-259-1116

Map indicates historic district site numbers



NOT TO SCALE  
Interior Telephone Company Building



**DUNBAR/JONES**  
PARTNERSHIP  
110 SW 77th Street - Des Moines, IA 50309

GRINNELL, IOWA  
PHASE TWO  
NATIONAL REGISTER PROJECT  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT CERTIFIED

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 2

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The Interior Telephone Company building relates in scale, design, building type, and materials to its neighbor on the west, the "Grinnell Herald" Building. Erected in 1916, this building is also being nominated under "Architectural and Historical Resources of Grinnell, Iowa" multiple property listing.

The Interior Telephone Company Building, taken together with the "Grinnell Herald" Building next door at 813 5th Avenue and the Grinnell Armory at 816 5th Avenue, all illustrate the physical growth of Grinnell's central business district into 5th Avenue.

The Interior Telephone Company is a fine, single story, brick building from the second decade of the Twentieth Century and remains in almost unaltered condition. It was not built as a storefront, but as a telephone exchange and office, so it differs in design from retail buildings of the period. Executed in brick, it rests on a high foundation with horizontal (stone-like) emphasis. Throughout the building, the decorative elements are created by brick patterning. No architect has yet been identified for this building.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 10 Page 2

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### LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Interior Telephone Company Building  
815 - 5th Avenue  
Grinnell, IA 50112  
Looking north  
Dan Ogata, Photographer  
March 1990