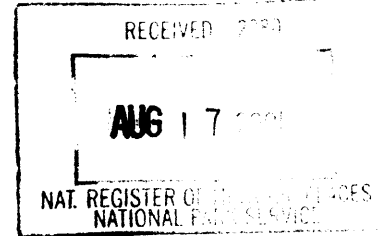


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

AUG -7 2001
1009



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 any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional 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 Syndicate Block

other names/site number McCoy Building

2. Location

street & number 501 E. Locust not for publication N/A
city or town Des Moines vicinity N/A
state Iowa code IA county Polk code 153 zip code 50309

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Rowell J. Lake August 9, 2001
Signature of certifying official Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
X 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 Keeper Entered in the National Register Date of Action 10/1/01

Syndicate Block
Name of Property

Polk County - Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

F- 0/14

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

Contributing Noncontributing

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|------------|
| <u>1</u> | <u> </u> | buildings |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> | sites |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> | structures |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> | objects |
| <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | 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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE/TRADE/business
- DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
-
-
-
-
-

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- WORK IN PROGRESS
-
-
-
-
-

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

- LATE VICTORIAN/Renaissance Revival
-

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation STONE: Limestone
- roof WOOD
- walls BRICK
- other

Narrative Description

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

Syndicate Block
Name of Property

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1883

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 a 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.

Significant Dates

1883

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Christy, William
Cady, T.H.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical 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:

Syndicate Block
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15 449100	4604170	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 Jan Olive Nash

organization Tallgrass Historians L.C. date February 01, 2001

street & number 2118 South Riverside Dr. telephone 319/354-6722

city or town Iowa City state IA zip code 52246

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Preservation Properties LLC (c/o Bernard Van Til)

street & number 400 Locust St., Suite 245 telephone 515/237-0567

city or town Des Moines state IA zip code 50309

=====
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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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name of property

Polk County – Iowa
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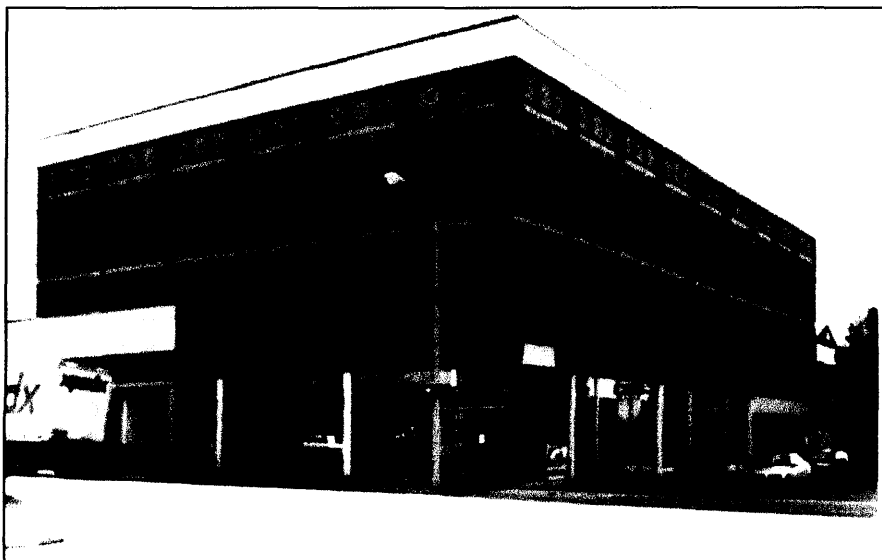
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7. DESCRIPTION

Narrative Description

Exterior

The Syndicate Block is a three-story, flat-roofed, commercial edifice built in 1883 on the corner of a prominent, downtown Des Moines intersection. Despite the fact it was constructed by at least six separate landowners, the building presents a unified, monolithic appearance to the sidewalk observer. Resting on a limestone block foundation, the exterior brick walls are *visually* divided into nine bays on the west side and six bays on the north side.¹ These are the two public sides of the building, past which traffic flows on Locust and 5th streets



Left: The building today. The six bays on the north side (left) front Locust Street; the nine bays on the west side (right) front E. 5th Street. (Tallgrass Historians L.C.)

Original fenestration and decorative details on these two public sides are strong and expressive, and account for the building's Renaissance Revival styling. The less prominent sides, the south and east walls, remain simple and unadorned. The bottom half of the south wall is a party wall shared with a smaller building. The east rear wall has tall windows with segmental-arched lintels. The southernmost bay of the overall building—a former hardware

store—projects farther east into the center of the block in order to accommodate a freight elevator and loading space. Plywood covers most windows but the glass and sashes are largely still extant. At the sidewalk level on the public sides, the current plate glass arrangement post-dates 1940 and replaced a set of storefronts installed in 1916. Thin upright columns separated the 1916 storefronts; wooden, paneled bulkheads supported the display windows. The original 1883 arrangement of street level openings and storefronts is less clear. Newspaper accounts published while the building was under construction applauded the use of offset entrances with a single large display window as a way to accommodate the narrow urban storefronts.² The Syndicate Block's lots are only 20 feet wide.

¹ This is a visual division only. There are three interior structural bays that run in an east-west direction. A masonry wall separated each bay. The ground floor masonry has been partially removed in places and replaced by beams and iron or steel columns in order to open up the space for modern commercial use.

² Register, November 6, 1883.

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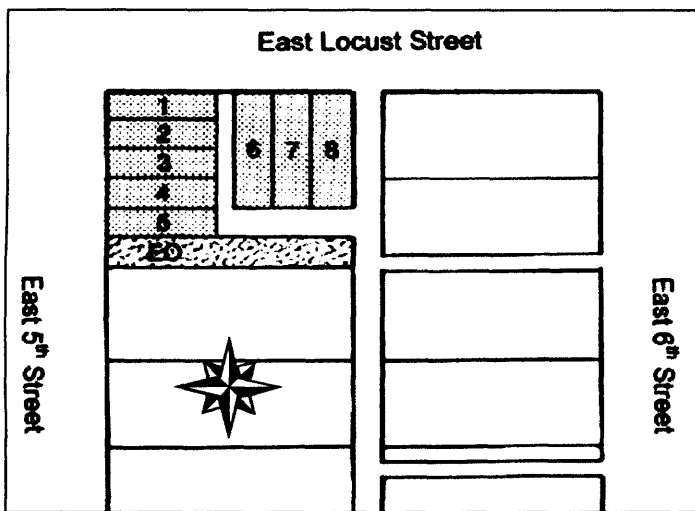
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The real impact of the building's architectural style is seen above the street level, where the pattern of windows, red-brick interfenestration, and white masonry details are bold and suggestive of classical Renaissance architecture. Each visual bay (six on the north, Locust St. side, and nine on west, 5th side) is separated by a brick pilaster. Each window is separated by a brick mullion.³ Two large windows fill each bay on the 2nd floor; three smaller windows fill the space above on the 3rd level. White concrete or stone trims the top and bottom of the windows to form belt courses between floors. It also trims the capitals of the pilasters and mullions. Coffered squares of white masonry, each filled with a paterae, appear just above the 3rd-story windows. The large metal cornice that once capped the building was removed sometime in the last few years and replaced by a flat panel of unknown material.⁴

Interior

The *basement* of the building is unfinished except for a portion of the north bay and the historic masonry wall divisions under the entire building are intact. Large pieces of limestone rubble form the outside foundation walls of the basement and a remnant of what appears to be a brick bake oven is extant under the west end of the old Empire Bakery bay (lot 5). The north bay (lot 1) housed a barber shop from the beginning. Today a portion of that bay's floor is raised and tiled in small white hexagon ceramic tiles similar to the tiles found upstairs on the street level. Flooring on both levels is probably from a 1916 remodeling project that divided this north bay into three smaller retail spaces.



Left: Property lots underlying the Syndicate Block are numbered 1 through 5 (of the Conrad Dietz Subdivision) and "EO" (for owners Entwistle & O'Dea). Lots 6, 7, and 8 underlie empty land and are not a part of this nomination (Taken from the abstract of title.)

The *street level* spaces of the building have been rearranged over the years. The original six narrow shops that fronted 5th Street were opened into three larger spaces by the installation of iron uprights in place of solid walls. Once enlarged in this manner, the new north bay was then subdivided by partition walls in 1916 (since removed) into three smaller stores, reoriented to face Locust Street. A shoe store and a drug store occupied the new space. The drug store

³ How much load these vertical brick members support is unknown. They no longer align with ground floor uprights because of modern renovations.

⁴ Project plans include the re-installation of a metal cornice at the roofline. Historic photographs will be used to determine the details of shape and size.

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tenant was F.H. Kitchen who had occupied the whole original narrow north bay. He maintained the prominent corner space of the rearranged bay.⁵ In 1945, Mendel G. Silver acquired the building and together with his brother operated Silvers Department Store. The extant street level plate glass windows probably date to this period

Today the northern two bays are again open inside, the 1916 partition walls having been removed. A gate leg staircase with a “mortar board” newel cap, remnants of the white hexagon ceramic tile floor, and an ornate tin ceiling remain from the 1916 remodeling. The ceiling may actually date to an earlier period. Much of the ceiling surface throughout the ground floor bays is covered by similar tin ceilings. The next two, middle, bays to the south still contain the evidence that their back wall once opened onto a narrow alley. Along this back wall are large sash windows and a freight door. The final two, southernmost, bays contain the best-preserved storefront dating to the early twentieth century. A central doorway is flanked by two display windows and elevated display floors. These display cases are lined with fumed-oak inset paneling (though one side is painted) and overhead early electric fixtures for incandescent light bulbs are positioned in a row. Above the door and display windows, a prism glass transom remains though hidden at the present. The flooring in this bay is composed of narrow hardwood boards set on the diagonal. Iron columns down the center of the space are boxed in and painted white. At the rear of the store is a freight elevator and an early staircase to a small mezzanine. All in all, the interior of these southern two bays contains the most historic fabric of any of the street level spaces.

The 2nd and 3rd floors contain a variety of chambers, offices, hallways and staircases (see floor plans). Much of the upper floors appear to have been unused for several decades.⁶ The four north bays originally contained offices on both the 2nd and 3rd floors.⁷ Of these, the northern two bays are trimmed in woodwork from the turn of the century or the 1916 remodeling. The next, middle, two bays exhibit a different and probably earlier wood trim. Double hung sash windows that originally helped cast light and fresh air into the interior of the building pierce partition walls in these central bays of the second floor. The main hallway in these middle bays (running east/west) is exceptionally wide on the 2nd floor and probably reflects the public nature of the space, when the tenants were a variety of professionals and small businesses. The same hallway on the 3rd floor is wide also, but has a partition wall awkwardly placed down its center. This might reflect a concern for privacy and a residential use of space. The final two, southernmost bays, above the original bakery and hardware store, are open storage areas and appear to have always been such. The wide wood plank floors above the hardware store have wooden platforms and ramps laid over the base floor. This may have been for the ease of rolling carts or hardware inventory to and from storage places.

While the principal masonry walls that divide the building into its three main parts are still present in the upper floors, they have been punctured in several spots to permit access between bays. These openings could have been made anywhere from a year ago to two or three decades. Most of the exterior window sashes and glazing—now covered by red-painted wooden panels—appear to be intact. The historic floor plans, staircases, and woodwork also remain largely intact in these upper floors. There are a couple of airshafts toward the center of the building and what

⁵ The 1916 remodeling project was handled by Des Moines architects Sawyer and Watrous but it is unknown how much if any of the interior was designed by the firm. According to Wesley Shank, Sawyer—the senior partner in the firm—“was the designer; Watrous was the partner with business connections and scientific interests.” The partnership was formed in 1905 and their earlier work included “houses for prominent people such as Gardner Cowles Sr., the Meier Rosenfelds, and the Pfeiffers.” Shank, *Iowa’s Historic Architects* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 171, 146.

⁶ Curtains with a decidedly 1940s (at least) floral pattern still hang in tatters from a window on one of the chambers to the rear of the middle bays.

⁷ Sanborn fire insurance maps are hard to read but seem to say “offices 2nd and 3rd” in 1884; just “offices 2nd” in 1891; and nothing about the upper floors in 1901. By 1920, there were fire escapes from the upper windows, though they could have served offices or residential tenants.

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appears to be a coal closet also. There are no bathroom or kitchen fixtures on the upper floors, but there may have been a minimum of space devoted to such functions in any event.

The integrity of the building is good despite its longevity at the intersection of busy Locust and E. 5th Streets, within sight of the state's capitol. The ground floor commercial space has, predictably, undergone the most remodeling and alteration over the years as old tenants left and new ones sought to update the appearance of their shops.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary Statement

Though the Syndicate Block is not an academic example of Renaissance Revival architecture,⁸ its designer clearly employed classical elements—three-part vertical division, pilasters, capitals, coffered panels—to define the public sides of the massive square building and to hint at an Italian palazzo. The period of classical architecture from which the building draws its style also defines the Iowa state capitol, its contemporary and neighbor just three blocks to the east, and this is probably no coincidence. The substantial footprint of the 1883 commercial edifice, and its prominent location near the state's capitol, combine to assure the commercial building a significant role in the historic streetscape of East Des Moines. Built during a booming construction period on the East Side, the stylish new building proclaimed the rising importance of the area for businessmen, investors and financiers in a growing urban Des Moines. As its brick walls took shape and classical details appeared, the building suggested a new architectural trend for the intersection of East 5th and Locust, where Victorian Italianate buildings predominated. The Renaissance Revival building remains an excellent example of its style as applied to a commercial building, and it serves as a prominent reminder of the 1880s period of physical development on the East Side of Des Moines. Its unified and stylish appearance is remarkable considering the informal syndicate of businessmen responsible for its construction. The building is locally significant under Criterion C for its distinctive architectural features and classically-inspired Renaissance Revival styling. Currently, the building is being rehabilitated for commercial and residential use.

Constructed by an informal group of established East Side businessmen, 501 E. Locust St. also stands as a testament to Des Moines' participation in the booming economic times of the 1880s when business organizations nationwide were changing and the culture of downtown living and working was rapidly modernizing. The men who acted in concert—as a syndicate—to accomplish this project were mature capitalists and entrepreneurs with varying motives but a joint vision and goal. Many of them had been in Des Moines since the flurry of construction that resulted from Des Moines' designation in 1857 as the new state capital. Through cooperation, the syndicate could accomplish a major construction project that might have overwhelmed individual pocketbooks. This form of business cooperation reflects the increasingly corporate nature of American enterprises, a trend initiated by the railroad industry earlier in the century. By the time the transformation of the business industry was complete, a virtual "revolution" had taken place that involved both the nature of work and the physical work place.

⁸ For example, the building lacks the traditional round arches often associated with Renaissance architecture and its nineteenth-century revivals. On Renaissance architecture, see Bruce Boucher, "The Renaissance," in *Architecture of the Western World*, Michael Raeburn, editor (London: MacDonald & Co, Ltd., 1988), 129-160; and Frederick Hartt *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, 3rd Edition (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989), especially Part Four, "The Renaissance" 497-686. On the Renaissance Revival, see Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture since 1780* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1990), 75-82.

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In 1883, East Des Moines was in the midst of a building boom.⁹ Growth all over the city was rapidly swelling the population from its 1870 level of 12,035 (it would reach 50,093 by 1890), and new streetcar lines brought people in and out of the city from its new suburbs. Nine major railroad lines connected the city with regional and national markets, and five more lines were under construction, making Des Moines the railroad center of the state. “Coinciding with the period of active railroad construction was the emergence of Des Moines as the state’s wholesale and retail trading center.”¹⁰ Prosperous and well-known Iowa businesses, such as Younkers Department Store and Bankers Life Association, got their start in Des Moines during this period.¹¹ Others like Equitable of Iowa significantly expanded during the prosperous 1880s. Though Des Moines’ commercial center was on the west side of the river, the presence of the state capitol and the operations of state government drew their own cadre of workers and residents. Additionally, especially after 1880, ethnic neighborhoods of newly arrived Jews and Italians developed on the east side between and north of the capitol and the river.¹²

With both mobile and resident populations on the East Side, and prosperous economic times in the early 1880s, well-connected businessmen began to look at land along East 5th Street for redevelopment. Conrad Dietz, a 67-year old German farmer and one of the first settlers to Polk County in 1847, was an East Side landowner who owned nearly a half block of land along 5th and Locust.¹³ Though he acquired the land almost thirty years earlier,¹⁴ Dietz had only sold one lot, in 1876 to the hardware firm of [George] Entwistle & [Thomas] O’Dea, which had constructed a frame store on it. Dietz leased the rest of his land to various shopkeepers and craftsmen, who in turn had built their own wood-frame store buildings as leasehold improvements. In 1883 then, 5th Street near its intersection with Locust, sported a row of small wood-frame store buildings and retained the appearance of an early village Main Street.

Local newspapers, however, reveal that demand for commercial space was growing in this East Side neighborhood in the early 1880s. Change was in the air. “Not a day goes by,” the Leader lamented, “that applications are not made for good rooms which would largely increase business if it could be supplied.”¹⁵ In early spring, 1883, the newspaper approvingly reported on the commencement of a number of new East Side construction projects. It also indicated that an expected sale of the 5th and Locust land had been aborted. “The Deets [sic] property, corner of 5th and Locust,” reported the Leader, “would have had eight fine three-story buildings this spring but the old gentleman backed out from his sale and prefers to pay the enormous taxes rather than build or sell.”¹⁶ What this reporter did not know, however, is that the deal Conrad Dietz was working on was apparently far from dead. Just two months later, in one fell swoop on May 11, Dietz subdivided his remaining land into eight lots and two public alleyways and sold each lot to eight new buyers. The instruments were recorded four days later on May 15, 1883. Frame store buildings owned by Dietz’s lessees were excepted from the sale and his lessees were permitted to remove them, which they promptly did. Just days later, construction on the site commenced. Excavation of basements for the six coordinated

⁹ “Des Moines, Center of Iowa,” 23.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹¹ Founders of both businesses arrived in Des Moines in 1879. *Ibid.*, 24, 29.

¹² Des Moines Community Preservation Plan, maps at 56-57.

¹³ Dietz left Germany in 1842 to settle briefly in Pennsylvania before coming to Iowa in 1846, the year Iowa became a state. By 1880, Dietz had a 458-acre farm near Des Moines as well as investment land in the town itself. He and his wife, Susan, purchased the 5th and Locust property in 1856. History of Polk County, Iowa (Des Moines, Union Historical Society, 1880), 639. See also Abstract of Title.

¹⁴ Dietz may have been speculating on rising land values resulting from the selection of a site nearby for the new seat of state government. Iowa City lost its capital city status to Des Moines in 1857.

¹⁵ Leader, March 9, 1883.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

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buildings along 5th street—Entwistle and O’Dea had decided to join the effort with a new brick building of their own—was underway in less than a month after Dietz’s sale.

Though the land redevelopment deal was informally coordinated, the relatively large group of shopkeepers, firms, and real estate developers who were involved were clearly acting in concert to create the new office and commercial building. The local newspaper that chided Dietz for preferring to pay high taxes now crowded with approval. “East Des Moines,” the Leader commented on May 26, 1883, “has the appearance of the West since the building boom has struck it. Brick piles and the demolishing of frame structures can be seen on almost every street, and it will soon catch up with the West Side at this rate. Hensens’ brick block on Sixth and Locust and Schmucker &



Loper on the opposite corner [a Dietz lot], will give East Des Moines a metropolitan appearance and will boom Locust Street.” The building under construction on Conrad Dietz’s lots would be organically different from the small frame stores (with their upstairs owner’s quarters) that it replaced. Though built on six discreet lots and possessed by six different owners, the large three-story building was constructed with a uniform exterior appearance that made it look like a single large office block.

Left: The Syndicate Block is seen in the right middle area of this early photograph. (Collection of the State Historical Society of Iowa)

Beginning with the corner lot, at the intersection with Locust, and moving south along E 5th, the owners and/or early tenants are described as follows:¹⁷

Lot 1 — 335 E. 5th: This corner lot was purchased by D.R. Schmucker and J.C. Loper who replaced a two-story wood frame building with their portion of the extant brick building. They operated the Schmucker & Loper drug store from the new building and sold “pure drugs and medicines, paints, oils, glass, putty, school books, fine stationery, [and] toilet articles,” as well as “fine tobacco and cigars.” The Svithoid, a Swedish newspaper, occupied one of the 3rd floor offices, early on. The basement housed a barbershop from the beginning. Neither Schmucker nor Loper is well remembered in the historical record.

Lot 2 — 333 E. 5th: This lot was purchased by T.H. Cady, who appears to have been the first owner to start excavating his basement. The Plain Talk interviewed Cady on June 9, 1883, when he claimed to have “applications every day from [busin]ess men who wish to rent” from him. He eventually rented the ground floor shop space to the Dockstader

¹⁷ These data were compiled from the abstract of title, newspaper accounts, city directory entries, and fire insurance maps, all of which are listed in the references section of this report.

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& Wilkins dry goods firm. A barbershop also operated from the basement of this building. T.H. Cady was in the building trades, and was a dealer in lime and cement, among other construction materials. He was 45 in 1883 and had been in Des Moines since 1859.

Lot 3 — 337 E. 5th: A local east side baker, S.B. Garton purchased the 3rd lot from the corner and replaced a small grocery store (and restaurant perhaps) as well as his own old, wood-frame bakery shop. After the new building's completion, another dry goods store operated by Barnett Bros. leased the finished space. C.W. Henry operated a "tonsonial parlor"—another barber shop—in the basement.¹⁸ Both S.B. Garton and his older brother, W.T. Garton, were bakers and had shops nearby. They were English and had been in Des Moines since 1856. This project was, apparently, a purely financial investment for Garton who had moved his bakery to a new brick building nearby on Locust.

Lot 4 — 329 E. 5th: Barnett Bros. also sold clothing from the fourth bay of the ground floor, which was separated from Garton's property only by iron posts. H[orace] E. Teachout owned this fourth lot and this portion of the building. At the time, Teachout was only 37, having been proprietor of the Capital City Ice Company since 1876 when he arrived in Des Moines.¹⁹ By 1880, Teachout was already prominent in local politics, serving on the school board and as chairman of the Polk County Republican Central Committee. Like Garton, Teachout apparently had purely investment motives for participating in the syndicate. The close connection between Garton and Teachout's buildings continued through at least 1896 when they jointly installed a single steam boiler to heat both their bays. The abstract of title records their agreement to share the boiler but private ownership of their respective radiators.

Lot 5 — 327 E. 5th: Fifty-eight year old William Christy, a Philadelphia native and a prominent long-time Des Moines resident by 1883, purchased and developed the 5th lot from the corner. He leased the ground floor and the basement to J.J. Winslow who operated the Empire Bakery from it. In a significant departure from the upper floor treatment of the first four lots, the 3rd floor over this lot was left open and leased as a lodge hall to the Knights of Pythias. Owner William Christy left a historical record that reflects a man of multiple talents and interests. Three years before the project, he was described as a contractor and builder, having learned the carpentry trade in Philadelphia before moving to Des Moines in 1857. A Civil War hero, Captain Christy returned home to become cashier of two different banks. He was also elected State Treasurer. By 1883, when the subject building was constructed, Christy had also served as private Secretary to Governor Sherman. The 1890 county history book described him as "a current and 15-year member of the Polk County board of supervisors, Overseer of the Poor, and Justice of the Peace." "Probably no man has been more closely connected with the upbuilding of the capital city of Iowa, than our subject," wrote one historian in 1890.²⁰

Entwistle & O'Dea Lot — 325 E 5th: This lot is not a part of the Conrad Dietz subdivision. Rather, the Entwistle & O'Dea hardware firm purchased their lot from Dietz a number of years before and had constructed a frame building on it for their store. When the deal was struck between Dietz and the five businessmen for lots 1 through 5 of his new subdivision, the hardware firm was able to join the "syndicate" and own a part of the new brick building. The owners, George Entwistle and Thomas O'Dea, moved their frame building off the lot and onto the sidewalk and street where they continued to conduct business until the new brick store was finished. Entwistle and O'Dea carried stoves,

¹⁸ Plain Talk, December 29, 1883.

¹⁹ Teachout's son was also named H.E. Teachout, but would have been too young to have been a part of the 1883 project.

²⁰ n.a., Portrait and Biographical Album of Polk County, Iowa (Chicago: Lake City Publishing Co., 1890), 397.

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hardware, and tin ware and had a separate tin shop (nonextant) in back of their building to handle that line. The firm also advertised architectural components such as “Builders’ Hardware...and TIN WARE”. It is possible that the firm supplied the original cornice (nonextant) for the exterior of the building, as well as the interior pressed-metal ceilings (extant) found on the ground floor of much of the building.

Other Owners and Tenants. Generally, the ground floor retail tenants over the years made physical changes that resulted in structural bays being opened up to provide larger commercial spaces for fewer proprietors. Spatial functions and tenants on the upper floors changed over time too. Where the upper stories were constructed as office



chambers (lots 1 through 4), the space was for many years—probably for decades—leased to a variety of professionals and business firms, including real estate offices, justices of the peace,²¹ public notaries, insurance offices, and lawyers. As early as 1909, a medical doctor, C.C. Shope and his wife, Mary Hast Shope, began to acquire the building’s lots under their singular ownership.²² The 1916 remodeling of the north bay (see plans above) was undertaken during the Shopes’ ownership.

Above: Locust Street, 2000. (Tallgrass Historians L.C.)

By 1917, city directories were calling the north two bays (lots 1 and 2) the “Shope Building” and many of the office tenants on the 2nd floor were doctors, surgeons, and dentists. During World War II, Marcus Silver, a department store owner, acquired lots 1 through 4, and across the alley to the east, the four-story “Robertson Block” on lots 6, 7, and 8. Silver reduced the Robertson Block to a single story and together with a relative, Mendel Silver, ran his department store from this location into the late 1960s.

The 3rd floor over lots 1 through 4 slowly converted to residential use. City directory coverage is not good until the turn of the century, but at that point there were already a few 3rd floor roomers. Widows, barbers, firemen, packing house workers, watchmen, miners, streetcar conductors, clerks, custodians, cooks, salespeople, waitresses, and other working class and low rung white-collar workers took rooms in the upper floors. Without an elevator, the highest floor continued to be the least desirable for residential use and therefore probably inexpensive housing.²³ Small rooms without kitchens or private bath facilities, however, meant the roomers needed to obtain many of their

²¹ One of whom was William Christy, himself, who from at least 1902 through 1908 was listed in a 2nd floor office of 335 E. Locust (the corner building).

²² C.C. Shope’s father, G.W. Shope, was a real estate developer/agent who had offices in the building. G.W. Shope was Des Moines City Treasurer in 1883, when the building was constructed.

²³ Once elevators became common, the phenomenon reversed itself and the top floors of residential buildings—those farthest from the traffic and noise of the street—became more desirable.

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daily essentials from others. Restaurants, commercial laundries, and other neighborhood-based businesses catered to these downtown residents. City directory records are sketchy, but it looks like many of the upper floor residents were gone by 1950. The middle bays (lots 3 and 4) were definitely empty by that time. Post-war prosperity and the associated mass flight to the suburbs probably explain the declining number of upstairs tenants.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, in Conrad Dietz Subdivision of Lot 1 and the North 2/3 of Lot 2 of Block “D” in Griffith’s Addition to East Fort Des Moines; *and* the South 20 feet of Lot 2 of same Block “D” in Griffith’s Addition to East Fort Des Moines.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes only the building and land historically associated with the initial owners of the Syndicate Block, and does not include the adjacent building to the south, the Block “D” public alleyway to the east, nor any sidewalk along Locust or E. 5th Street.

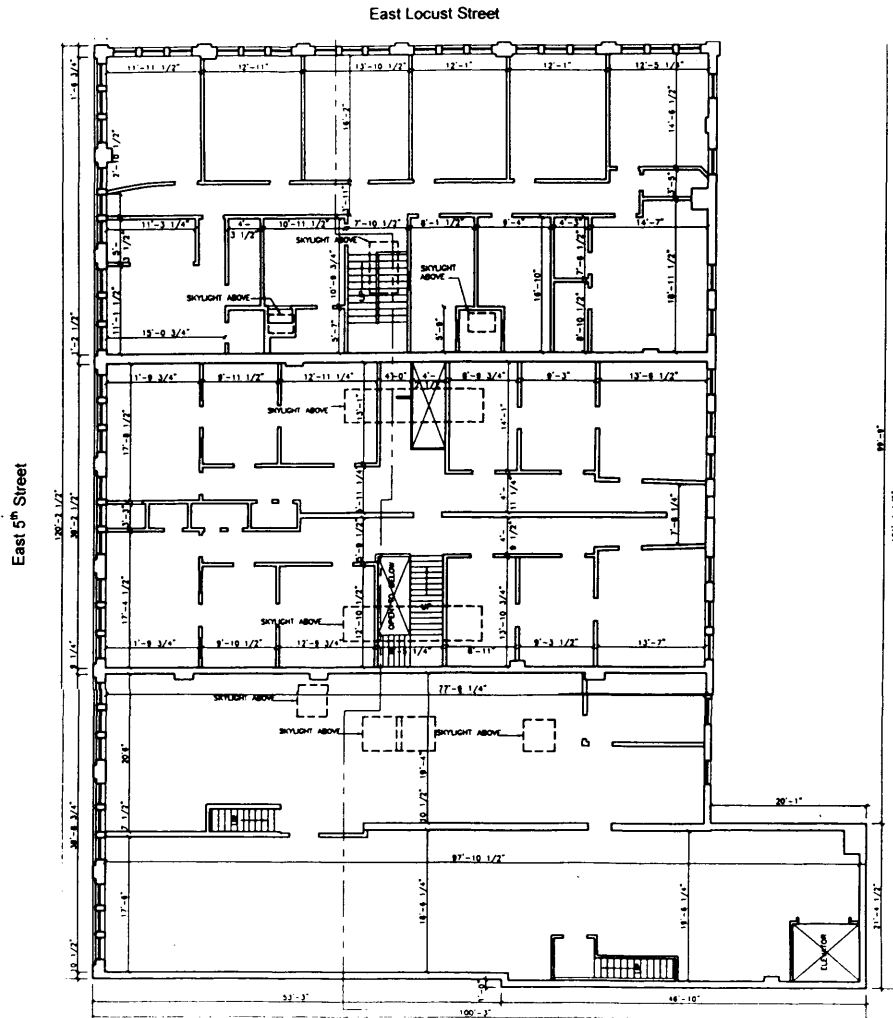
United States Department of the Interior
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**Third Floor Plan – Existing.
Provided by Preservation Properties L.L.C.**

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

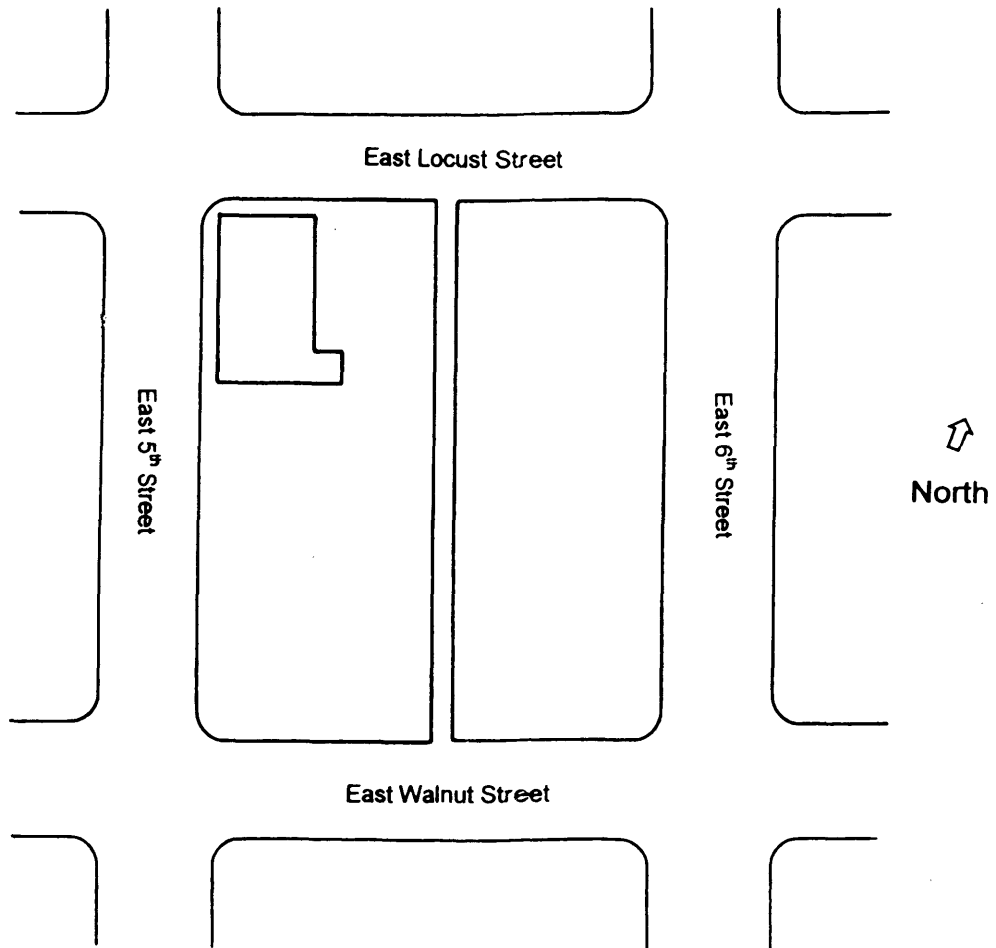
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Site Map



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Photographs

1. *All photographs:* Syndicate Block
2. *All photographs:* Polk County, Iowa
3. *All photographs:* Marie Neubauer
4. *All photographs:* July 2000
5. *All photographs:* Tallgrass Historians L.C.

6. *Views:*

- #1: landscape view of Syndicate Block (middle right) from Locust Street, looking east towards the Iowa State Capitol
- #2: public facades fronting Locust Street (north side) on left and E. 5th Street (west side) on right
- #3: Syndicate Block is the larger of the two white-painted buildings, views are of south party wall on left end and east rear wall
- #4: exterior detail of upper floor decoration and fenestration, west façade
- #5: interior basement view of barber shop space with white and black hexagon tile floor, north bay next to Locust Street
- #6: interior ground floor view of paneled display window and central entrance, stairway to 2nd floor, and pressed metal decorative ceiling, southernmost bay fronting E. 5th Street
- #7: representative view, 2nd floor hallway