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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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 Cedar Rapids Central Fire Station

other names/site number Cedar Rapids Hose Company No. 1, Cedar Rapids Science Station

2. Location

street & number 427 1<sup>st</sup> Street SE not for publication N/A  
city or town Cedar Rapids vicinity \_\_\_\_\_  
state Iowa code IA county Linn code 113 zip code 52401

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.)

Steve King 3/12/2014  
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:  
 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 Patrick Andrews Date of Action 4/29/2014  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cedar Rapids Central Fire Station  
Name of Property

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**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**

Contributing Noncontributing

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

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

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

N/A

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/fire station

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS /

Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation OTHER/Clay Tile Block

BRICK

CONCRETE

roof ASPHALT

walls BRICK

CONCRETE

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

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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)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1918-1964  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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**

1918  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

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

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Dieman, Charles A.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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:  
\_\_\_\_\_

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CONTINUATION SHEETLinn County, Iowa  
county and stateSection 7 Page 1**7. Description***Summary Paragraph*

Constructed and put into service in 1918, the Cedar Rapids Central Fire Station (lesser known as Cedar Rapids Hose Company No. 1), is located on the east bank of the Cedar River in Cedar Rapids, county seat of Linn County, Iowa. The city's downtown retail shopping district is just two blocks to the north and northwest, while the Cedar River flows parallel to the alley immediately behind the Central Fire Station. This entire area, including the city's central shopping district, was heavily inundated with flood water in 2008 and the repair and redevelopment of water-damaged buildings throughout the region continues even today. Historically, Central Fire Station was separated from the retail district by a small warehouse district and these attached buildings still exist on the station's city block along the river. Especially notable is the 1890s Warfield-Pratt-Howell Company warehouse, a four-story red brick behemoth at the other end of the station's block. Smaller, historic, attached brick warehouse buildings fill the block between Central Fire Station and the Warfield building. To the north and east of this block, the land has been largely redeveloped with low- and high-rise office buildings and parking structures. To the immediate southeast of Central Fire Station is a sensitively-attached "IMAX" theater (2000), constructed when the Central Fire Station served as the city's "Science Station" museum (1986 to 2008). Beyond the fire station's block to the southeast are open parking lots that fill the space formerly occupied by railroad tracks and, beyond those, is a tall modern office building. Directly across the street from the office buildings is a surviving large nineteenth-century brick warehouse. A second large parking lot separates the modern office building from the new federal building father away. This is a large multi-purpose building constructed since the flood. Roughly square in shape, Central Fire Station has a footprint of about 60 by 65 feet, with a smaller two-story addition (c. 1950) to the rear that added kitchen and locker room space. Behind this addition is a separate, modern, concrete block dumpster enclosure (noncontributing). The fire station faces northeast due to the property's location within the original town plat, which is aligned toward the diagonal route of the river rather than cardinal directions. The two-story building, designed by local architect Charles A. Dieman, is veneered with a smooth red brick and gray mortar, and trimmed with cast stone architectural details. Fenestration on the front elevation consists of six-over-six double-hung sash windows (some windows are in storage awaiting flood restoration) and four large drive doors that opened onto the street in front of the building. The interior is in a state of flux since the flood, but has been stabilized by removal of the porous surface materials from the Science Station days on the ground floor and in the basement. Removal of wall board and carpeting revealed the original glazed tile wall surfaces and concrete flooring.

*Exterior: Primary Façade overlooking 1<sup>st</sup> Street SE*

The front wall is dominated at ground level by four large arched doorways, at least three of which were used by the fire trucks. As built, these openings were of equal height, but two later were enlarged to accommodate the increasing size of fire equipment. Historic photographs from the Carl & Mary Koehler History Center in Cedar Rapids indicate the far northern door was enlarged between 1935 and 1938. The doorway two doors to the south was enlarged between 1956 and 1962. The far southern doorway originally contained a pedestrian door surrounded by a multi-light transom and side panels. Based on a 1962 photo, that door led into an office area. The three drive doorways also originally contained doors with a great deal of glazing in order to permit more daylight to the interior. The original large drive-doors were side hinged and opened inward; but these were replaced before 1962 with paneled overhead doors. The present doors appear to be solid paneled overhead doors (though there may be a row of painted glass panes). The southern, pedestrian doorway, was bricked in for a time between 1969 and 1983, but was reopened for use by the science museum in the mid-1980s and now contains a modern glass door and side lights. Surrounds on all four openings are gray cast-stone. They have broad segmental arches with a scrolled console bracket at the traditional keystone location. These molded brackets are identical to the consoles supporting the balconies above on the second floor except that they are upside down and have an additional acanthus leaf detail. The repetitive arches of these large doorways across the façade suggest an arcade, one of the popular features of Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission styled buildings of the

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early twentieth century.

The second-story façade has four large window openings, each holding a grouping of three double-hung windows with six-over-six sashes. The windows in the two center openings share a simple masonry sill. The two outside window openings are more embellished, though their actual windows are identical in size, shape, and configuration to the central windows. These perimeter window openings each has a narrow concrete balconette, another Southwestern colonial architecture detail, enclosed by a decorative open metal railing and supported by paired console brackets. Window surrounds on all four openings are of stretcher bricks that slightly project from the plane of the wall. Above the second-story windows is a cast-stone ovolo or projecting beltcourse—a convex molding that forms a strong visual base for a full-façade-width panel of bricks laid in a herringbone or modified chevron pattern. This elegant, but hardly noticeable, band of decorative brickwork is located within the deep shadow of the pent roof. It has contrasting cast-stone diamonds appearing singly and in pairs across the width of the façade and is best viewed close up from the sidewalk in front of the building.

The façade's pent roof, a Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission feature of the building, extends nearly the full width of the front elevation between the second-story windows and the parapeted front roofline. Originally covered by clay tiles, the pent roof structure is now clad with asphalt shingles. What at first glance appears to be exposed rafter tails supporting the pent roof are actually wood brackets spaced rather close together and elaborately carved into a complex profile of curves and points, a sculptural effect not frequently seen in simple Mission styling. The brackets are easily viewed from the sidewalk; the roof of the pent structure is not.

The prominent parapet of the façade suggests yet another nod to the popular Southwestern styling, though true California missions often had a more Baroque curving pediment shape rather than the rectilinear parapet of the Central Fire Station. This is perhaps where budget considerations or regional preferences overtook stylistic precision. Located toward the center of the facade, under the tallest peak of the parapet, is a date block that reads "1917" (though the building was not completed and occupied until later, in 1918). Cast stone or concrete coping caps the top of the façade.

*Side Elevation -- Southeast*

The red brick southeast wall is broken by single and double windows, and several door openings. Windows currently on this elevation have been removed and are being stored pending renovation. Sills are cast stone and headers are unadorned running stretchers, suggesting a steel structural member behind the brick. Window sashes are six-over-six and double hung; however a historic photo indicates the two ground-floor single windows closest to the front of the building were once closed in with glass block that was later removed during the Science Station museum days. The windows in storage for these openings are, therefore, replacements that matched the original six-over-six sashes. One of the two doorways on the ground level has been infilled with brick.

This is the side wall to which the modern IMAX theater (2000) was attached for Science Station purposes. It covers approximately the rear half of this southeast side wall of the fire station. The new theater—now permanently closed off from the historic fire station and occupied by the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance (a consortium of economic development groups)—is set well back from the façade wall of the Central Fire Station. A recessed glass walkway once allowed passage between the two buildings through an existing fenestration opening on the ground level (only) of the fire station. The glass walkway has a high ceiling but does not have a second floor, and even at its tallest point it is still lower than the side wall of the fire station. There was no access between the buildings at this upper level. Behind this glass passageway, along the rest of the fire station's long southwest wall to the rear corner, the IMAX theater is actually touching the station's brick wall. However this physical proximity is not observable by the public from the front sidewalk or street. The former IMAX theater itself is clearly of modern design but pays homage to the historic brick buildings along this block through the use of two tall red-brick free-standing walls set at 90-degrees to each other and pierced by glass-paneled walls and overhangs. The effect was to sensitively

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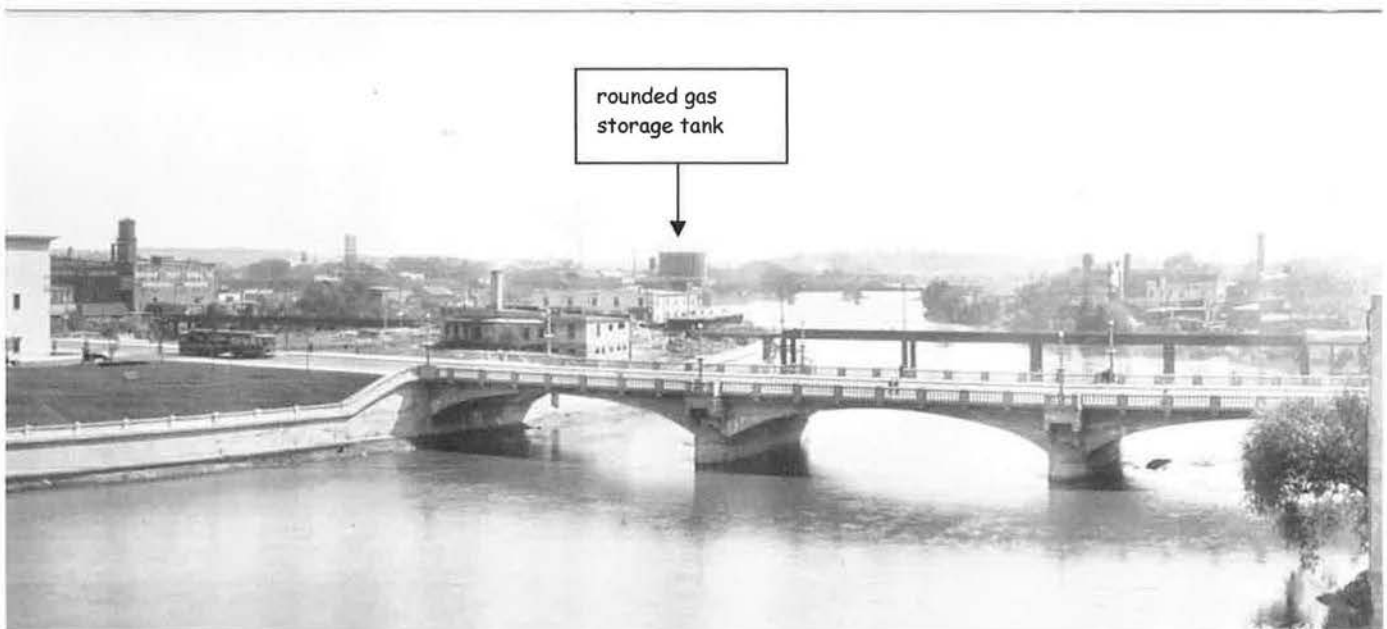
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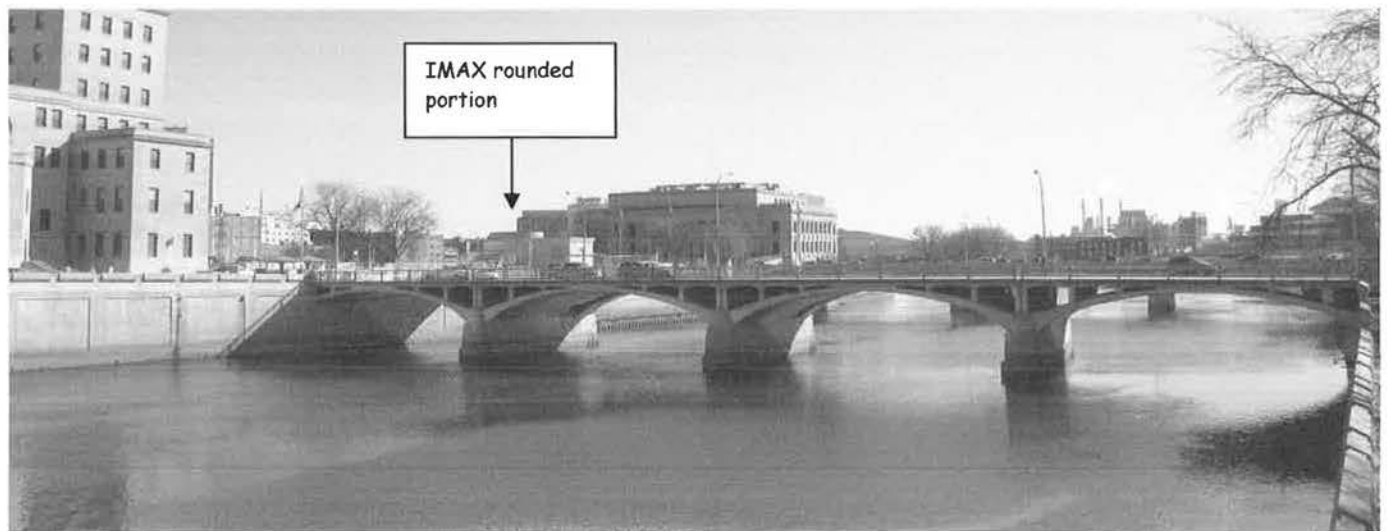
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add a building to the block without seriously affecting the view of the Central Fire Station itself. A rounded portion of the IMAX theater is taller but toward the back of this modern construction and located in the corner farthest from the fire station. From certain sidewalk angles, this rounded portion of the IMAX is visible, but in no way does it dominate the streetscape around the fire station or the fire station itself. Interestingly, the rounded portion of the IMAX actually echoes the historic rounded gas tanks that long stood in approximately the same location (see photos below). The tanks were on the site of the Cedar Rapids Gas Co. according to the Sanborn fire maps (1913-updated to 1949). The presence of a rounded structure along the riverbank at this location is not an unusual sight.



**Figure 1** Detail from 1914 panorama of Cedar Rapids riverbank landscape. Source: Library of Congress.



**Figure 2** Current view of approximate the same area as seen in Fig. 1 Source: Emily Meyer, Ryan Companies US, Inc., 2012.

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The fire station's cast-stone projecting beltcourse wraps around from the façade to span its southeast side wall too, but loses the rounded profile to become flat. The beltcourse lies above a header-course of bricks and additional relief for the brick wall is provided by diamond-shaped cast-stone medallions positioned between the first and second story windows. Coping at the top of the wall is composed of terra cotta tiles.

*Side Elevation -- Northwest*

The opposite side wall, on the northwest, is separated from the 1923 fruit warehouse next door by only a couple of feet. Window openings, where they oppose the warehouse wall, were closed in with concrete block at an unknown date. Toward the rear of the fire station is a short, brick-veneered, passageway between these two buildings that provided Science Station access to the warehouse, making the interconnection modern and not historically functionally related to the fire station.

*Rear Elevation*

A two-story rear kitchen addition and a tall hose tower/elevator housing were added by the fire department by mid-century to the rear of Central Fire Station, based on historic photographs that show they existed by 1956.<sup>1</sup> The interior chamber of the tower apparently was retrofitted for elevator purposes, but the portion extending *above* the roofline was newly added by 1956. The 22-by-34-foot rear kitchen addition, constructed around 1950, was executed in a matching red brick laid in a common bond pattern with gray mortar. The flat rooftop of this addition is fenced. There is no cast stone or other masonry detailing on this addition and windows are fixed single-lights sitting on a brick sill and with no visible header. A second rear staircase tower was added, roughly behind the elevator housing, in the 1980s to provide additional egress from the fire station building and access to the roof.

<sup>1</sup> The elevator tower is a bit of mystery. It is clearly not on a 1925 photograph, nor is it on the one Sanborn fire map that shows the building (1913, updated to 1949). On the other hand, a 1918 local newspaper article mentions a "big tower" where an impressive length of hose could be dried at one time. The entrance to this tower was in one corner of the basement ("Great Improvements in our Fire Department During Year," *Cedar Rapids Republican*, 12/25/1918). One possibility is that the portion of the 1918 "big tower" that extended above the roofline was wooden and had been removed by 1925, but later rebuilt in brick.

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**Figure 3** This photograph is dated at 1925 and shows the fire station without any visible tower. Compare this photograph to Fig. 2 below. (Carl & Mary Koehler History Center)



**Figure 4** This 1956 photograph clearly shows the addition of a tall tower at the rear corner of the fire station. The projecting structure behind the roof's crown pediment is the station's chimney, which is extant. All of the warehouse buildings seen in this view are extant as well. The tallest stepped wall on the right is the southern wall of the Warfield-Pratt-Howell Company. (Carl & Mary Koehler History Center)

*Yard Structure*

A modern and much smaller single-story detached dumpster enclosure (c. 1986) (25-by 14-feet, noncontributing) sits behind the fire department's kitchen/locker room addition. The structure is built with rough-textured concrete block and has no windows but has two metal doors on the wall facing the alley. A short concrete drive connects this structure to the alley.



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*Interior*

The basement is essentially an open space with a concrete floor, concrete pillars, and walls that mix clay tile block, concrete block, and glazed terra cotta block. The ceiling overhead is cluttered with a jumble of utilities, including plumbing pipes. Doorways are framed with metal casings.

The ground floor equipment bays have their original white and dark green glazed brick or tile wall surfaces. The applied wallboard from the museum days has been removed but the metal studs remain on the wall surfaces. Interior museum partition walls have been removed but a decorative metal ceiling grid work remains in place. The floor is concrete. The rear addition, which added the fire department's kitchen to the fire station, has its original cream-colored glazed masonry walls, and terra cotta tile floor. A modern drop ceiling is present.

The second level retains more of the Science Station museum finishes. Toward the front of the building there is a large opening in the floor surrounded by a fence that was added for museum purposes. This is near the location of a smaller opening that accommodated the fire pole (extant) between building levels. Floors here are covered with carpet; walls are painted. Modern men's and women's restrooms are located midway on the second floor on the northwestern side wall. Windows are covered over and painted like the walls (but plans are to remove this window paint). A short flight of stairs is necessary to access the locker room (lockers extant) that occupied the second floor of the rear addition. This room is likewise painted and has carpet on the floor.

*The IMAX Theater (2000)*



**Figures 3 and 4** The IMAX theater (2000) is shown on the left, with a small portion of the Central Fire Station visible at the far right edge. In the right photograph, the glazed passageway between the IMAX theater and the fire station is visible at the left edge.

The IMAX theater was designed by a relatively new firm to Cedar Rapids, at the time, consisting of [Scott] Olson, [Thomas] Popa, and [James] Novak. This firm was organized in 1979 and is the precursor to today's successful OPN Architects.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>2</sup> *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, May 27 and June 5, 1979. Recently OPN was chosen to design, in concert with the international firm of Pelli Clarke Pelli, the new Hancher performing arts theater in Iowa City, Iowa, 25 miles south of Cedar Rapids. The original Hancher auditorium (architect Max Abramovitz, 1972) was so damaged by 2008 flooding that it stood vacant for five years until it was torn down in the last

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IMAX design is modernistic with a façade of glazed walls enclosed by larger free-standing brick walls. The main entrance is at the opposite corner from the Central Fire Station, a position that directs the focus of pedestrians away from the fire station building.

*Integrity of the Cedar Rapids Central Fire Station*

The building is relatively unaltered and has good historic integrity. The primary exterior changes that were executed between 1986, when the fire department left the building, and 2000 include the construction of the IMAX theater adjacent to the rear half of the fire station's long southeast elevation (including a passageway to the fire station that is now permanently closed), and the new glazed pedestrian doorway near the façade's southeast end, located within one of the large façade ground-floor doorways. Also in this category are the short brick-veneered passageway between the historic warehouse on the northern side wall, and the reproduction southeast side windows that are now in storage awaiting repair. Interior alterations since the fire department left the building primarily *improved* integrity by the removal of flood-soaked materials installed in the 1980s. Comments on specific integrity aspects are as follows:

- (1) location: the building is in its original location;
- (2) design: the exterior is largely unchanged except for the alterations noted above, especially on the important 1<sup>st</sup> Street façade which determines the style of the building and preserves the most familiar elevation for the public; the interior maintains a number of historic finishes. Part of the southwest side wall is covered by the later, attached IMAX theater; however, this addition is well set back and separated by glass panels where visible to the public. The glass panels are clearly modern and easily allow the public to understand where the historic fire station stops and the IMAX theater begins. The traditional public view of this building is from the ground, not from the air above the river and street. Current aerial imagery *may* be helpful for understanding the scale of one building to the other, but cannot be the only factor to consider. Because of perspective anomalies and resolution issues, aerial imagery is of limited value in the case of the Central Fire Station and the attached IMAX theater.
- (3) setting: the surrounding neighborhood has undergone redevelopment changes in the blocks beyond the fire station to the southeast. This is especially noticeable in the block directly across the street, which now has a modern commercial building, and two or more blocks to the southeast where new buildings have been constructed in recent years. The immediate landscape to the southeast of the fire station's block was once occupied by railroad tracks and now consists of parking lots that preserve the open riverbank landscape. The fire station block, itself, maintains the historic warehouses that once served as the fire station's neighbors. Farther to the northwest, beyond the fire station's block, is a large, multi-story, c. 1900, red brick department-store building with a low midcentury addition (1950s). To the near southeast across the street is another large, multi-story brick warehouse from the late nineteenth century. The impulse to replace the city's hard-hit historic flood-buildings may be lessened for the Central Fire Station by its successful listing on the National Register;
- (4) materials: the exterior materials are largely original; modern interior finishes on the second floor mostly remain but have been removed on the ground floor to reveal original surfaces;
- (5) workmanship: the workmanship employed in the building is reflected best in the skills needed to lay the brick and the decorative masonry, as dictated for the overall façade design by architect Charles A. Dieman. These are intact;
- (6) feeling: integrity of feeling is strong because of the good exterior condition; integrity of feeling inside the building is not

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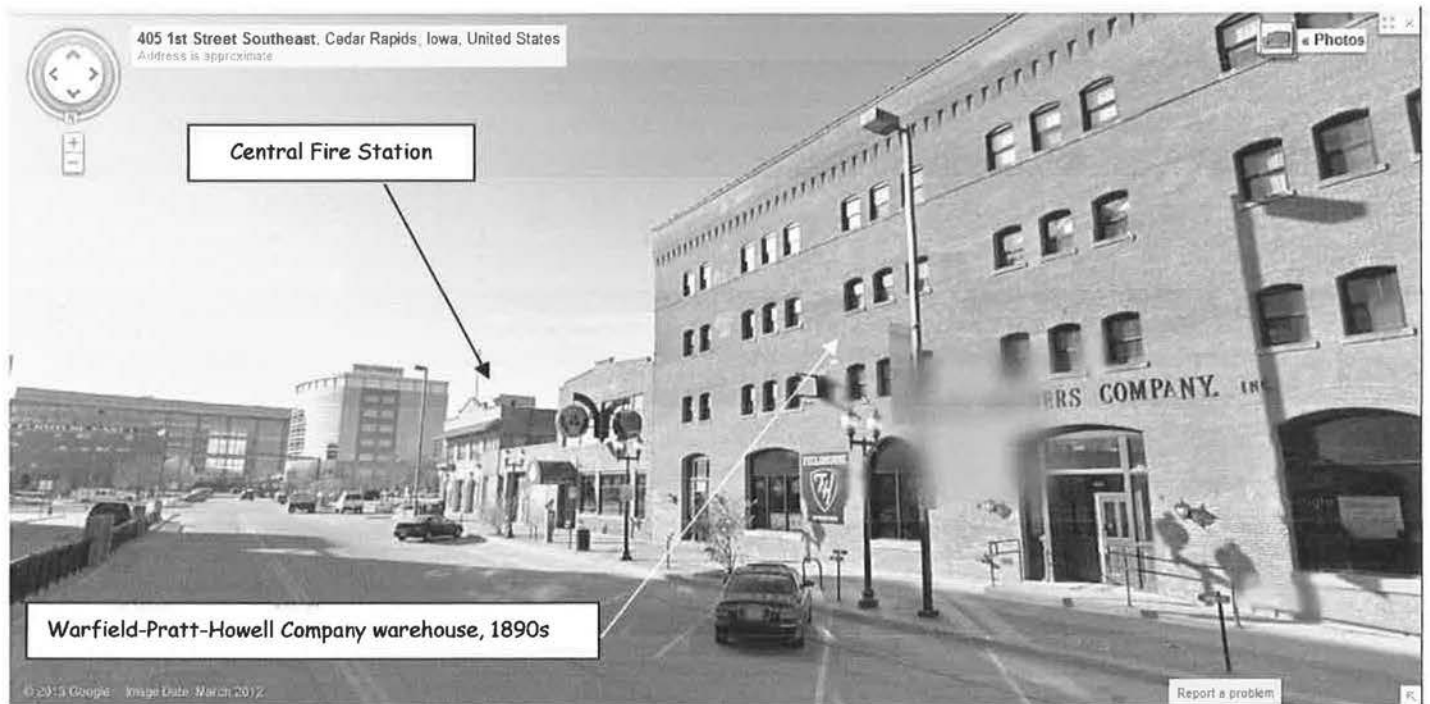
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intact because of the adapted use and, later, the flood;

(7) association: a number of the warehouse neighbors of the Central Fire Station are extant and date from the 1890s to the 1920s. They preserve the association of the fire station to its neighborhood and the businesses and residents it served. The impulse to replace the city's hard-hit historic flood-buildings may be lessened for the Central Fire Station by its successful listing on the National Register.

*The following pages contain images primarily from "Google.com" at the street level view (along with two repeated historic photos for comparison purposes). They were obtained between October 17, 2013 and November 21, 2013. They are intended to help understand any impact on the fire station of the IMAX theater. Note, these images have a distortion factor that makes objects at the left and right edges appear larger than they actually are. These street level views cannot, therefore, be a wholesale substitute for actual, pedestrian examination of the building in order to judge integrity. Also be aware that at the time the black/white current views for this nomination were shot in late summer, 2013, the street in front of the property was torn up and under construction, making the following views impossible to shoot at that time.*



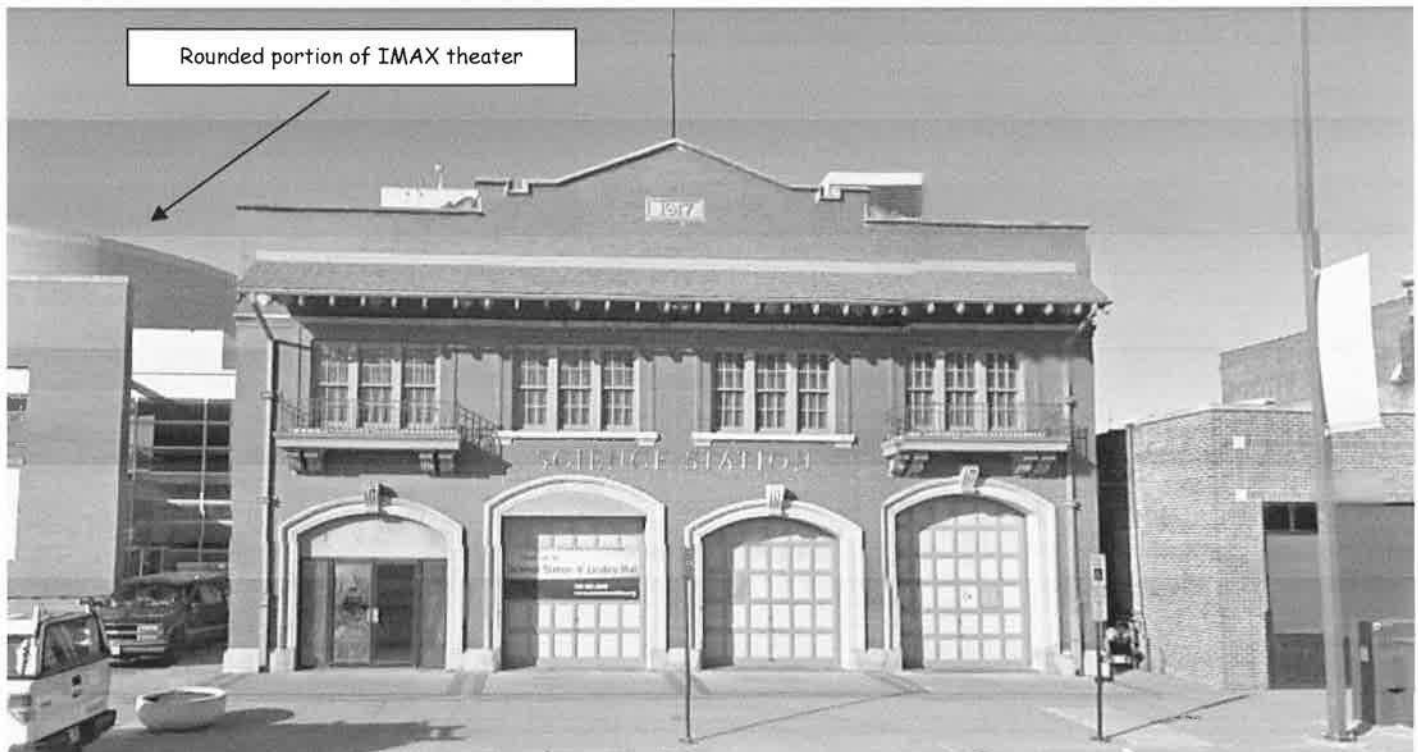
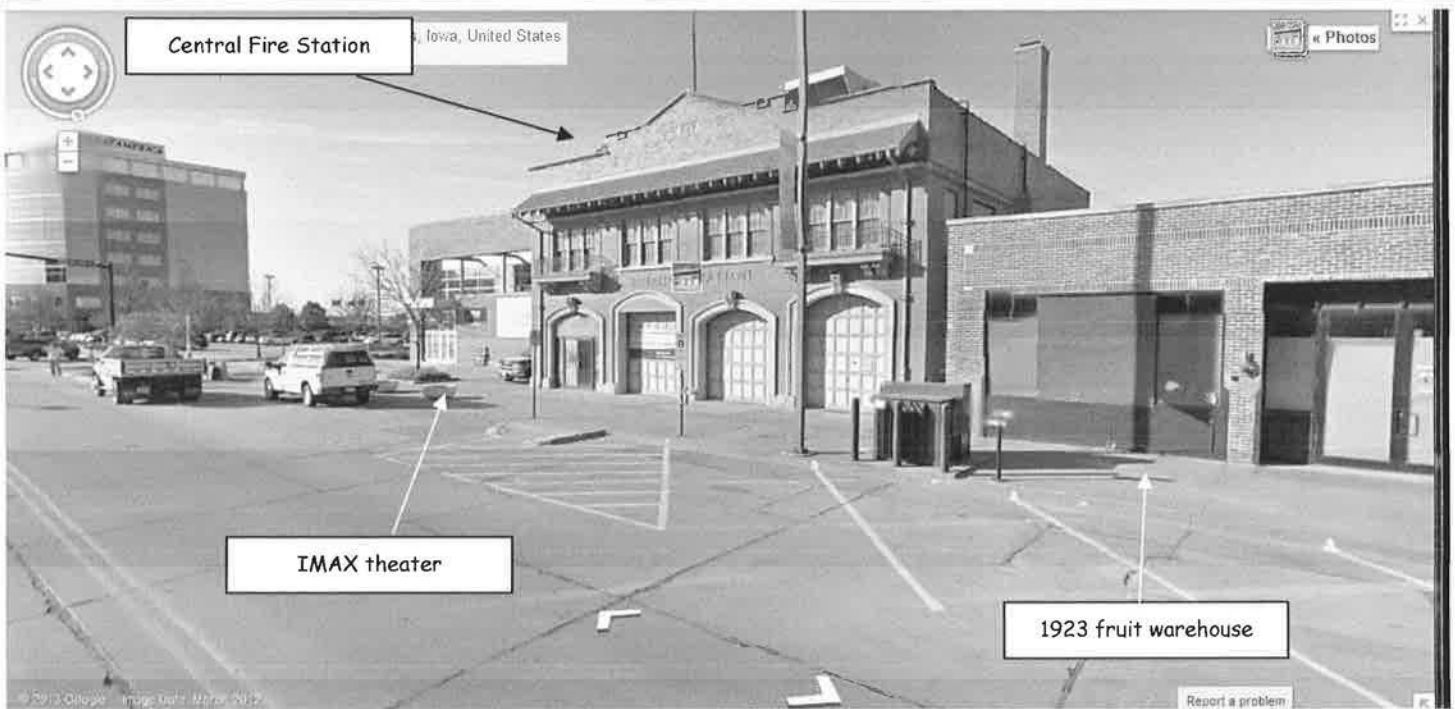
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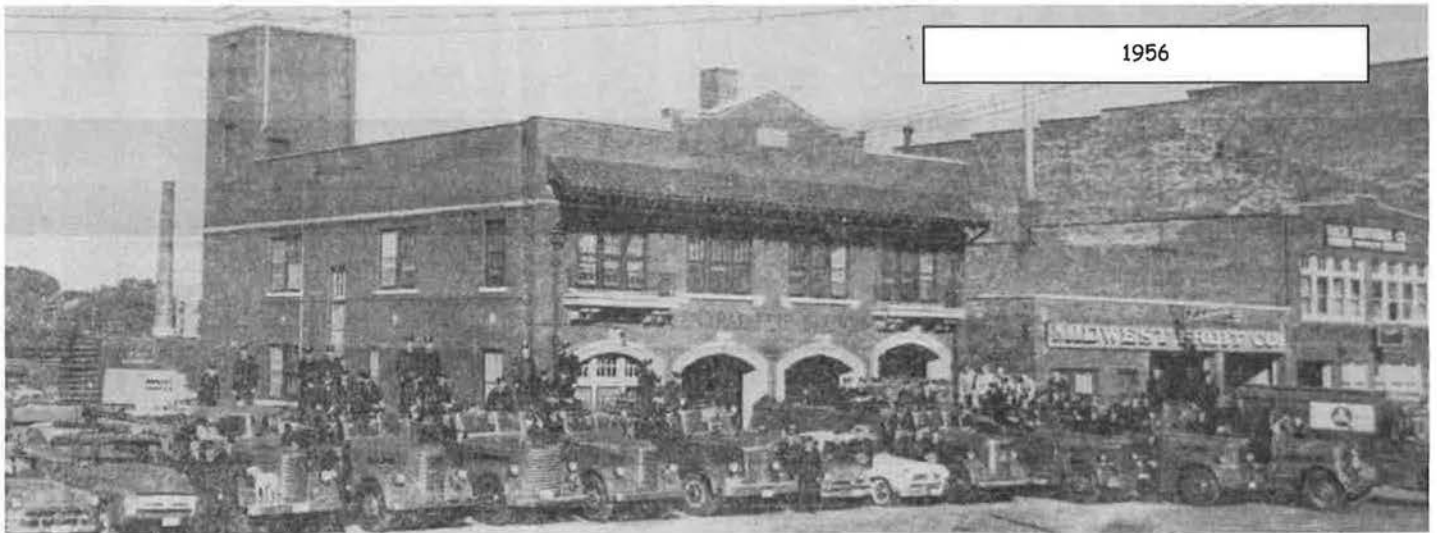
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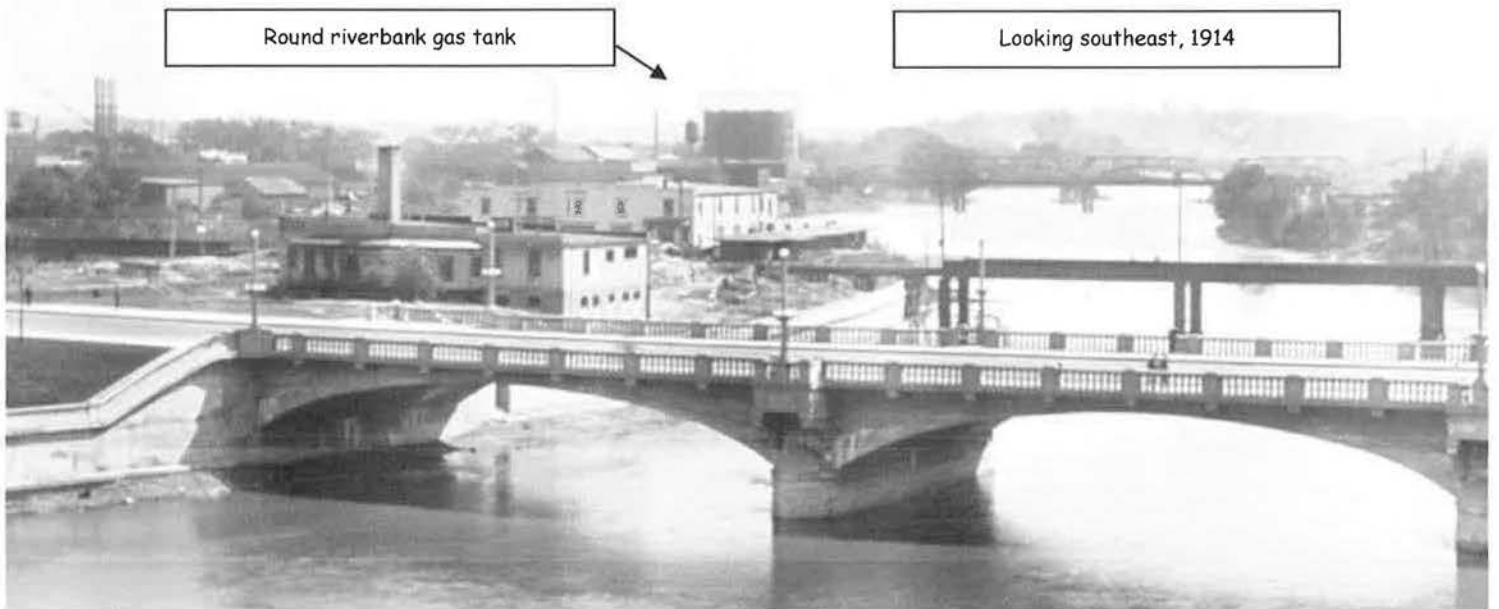
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## 8. Narrative Statement of Significance

### *Summary Paragraph*

The Cedar Rapids Central Fire Station in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is significant under Criterion A as the largest and most important historic component of the city's fire fighting efforts. For nearly 70 years it served as headquarters for the municipal department (1918-1985) and as the fire house in closest proximity to downtown commercial and warehouse districts and, nearby, the city's most important manufacturing sites. Straddling the era of horse-drawn pumper wagons and modern fire engines, pumpers, and hook and ladder trucks, the Central Fire Station was designed to help the city modernize its fire house facilities and upgrade its fire fighting equipment, enabling firefighters to respond faster and save more lives and property. Central Fire Station remains the building most closely associated with the historical development of the municipal fire department and firefighting during the Progressive Era. It was the centerpiece of an early twentieth century wave of fire station construction in this city, which occurred in response to disastrous fires, changing technologies, and the city's growth in both size and prominence. The period of significance runs from the building's placement into service in 1918 until the 1964, the moving 50-year rule of the National Register program.

### *Development of Fire Departments and Facilities Generally*

Because building fires have disastrous consequences for life and limb, organized firefighting traces its roots to ancient times when the Roman emperor Augustus is said to have first stationed *vigils* (watchmen) to spot and suppress fires with hand-carried buckets of water. Passing brimming water buckets down a line of men from the water source to the fire continued to be the primary fire suppression technique into early modern time.<sup>1</sup> Following the great fire of London in 1666, insurance companies organized the bucket brigades for their own obvious purposes. The Town of London did not become involved in the effort formally until 1865. In the United States, a major Boston fire in 1631 prompted promulgation of what were thought to be the first fire regulations, and New York City (then known as New Amsterdam) hired its first firefighters, called "wardens," in 1648.<sup>2</sup> Major fires often prompted the organization of formal firefighting brigades in American communities and the Cedar Rapids fire department was no exception.

In this country, rural areas and small towns, historically (and still today) typically relied on volunteers—area residents who were unpaid but perhaps trained in fire fighting methods.<sup>3</sup> During the nineteenth century, larger towns and cities eventually relied on paid professionals and more elaborate facilities and fire houses. Specialized buildings, typically of red brick, were built in central locations where there was room for them. While these large new buildings tended to stand "out from other buildings in their neighborhoods as emblems of city government,"<sup>4</sup> few of them were designed by leading architects of the day such as Henry Hobson Richardson or Julia Morgan, the latter of whom "often used Mission or Spanish Revival" styles, similar to Central Fire Station's style.<sup>5</sup> According to one source, "the modern department with salaried personnel and standardized equipment [and, likely, a specialized fire house] became an integral part of municipal administration only in the late nineteenth century."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The early modern period is roughly defined as the 15<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in European history.

<sup>2</sup> National Academy of Emergency Dispatch, *The History of Fire Fighting* (accessed at <http://www.emergencydispatch.org/articles/historyof-firefighting.html> on 10/23/2013). While this source appears to be authoritative, the usual caveats about online sources should be kept in mind.

<sup>3</sup> The tiny town of Hills, Iowa, for example, has a volunteer fire department composed of residents and area farmers who raise money for equipment by private fundraising and through public events, such as an annual pancake breakfast. Small-town volunteer departments commonly assist in fighting fires in each other's jurisdictions.

<sup>4</sup> Rebecca Zurier, *The Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History* (1982. Reprinted New York: Artabras Publishers, 1991, reprint used), 89.

<sup>5</sup> Rob Leicester Wagner, *Firehouses* (New York: MetroBooks, 2001), 51.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

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Modern fire departments are generally organized as “companies” under a captain, with separate specialties based on the type of equipment they operate. Engine companies provide the pumping power to feed the hoses. Ladder companies are capable of reaching upper stories of tall buildings to spray water and attempt rescues. And rescue squads carry an array of emergency equipment that may be needed. “The first fire engines, which appeared in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, were simply tubs carried on runners, long poles, or wheels,” and provided the reservoir of water for the bucket brigade. Hoses eventually took the place of buckets in the nineteenth century, along with the development of steam pumpers to draw water from lakes and rivers. The great 1871 Chicago fire that leveled most of the city was fought with steam-pump fire engines pulled by horses.

Horse power was replaced by the internal combustion engine in the early twentieth century. Horses were slower and tired quickly after a certain distance pulling the heavy steam-pumper engines. They required constant care and upkeep, whether there were any fire calls or not, and could break down relatively quickly under the difficult work.<sup>7</sup> Motorized fire engines with powerful pumper capabilities completely replaced steam pumpers and horse teams by 1925.<sup>8</sup> During this transition from horses-and-wagons to motor vehicles during the first decades of the twentieth century, the shape and size of the building that housed a municipal fire department changed to accommodate the equipment advances. Increasing size and complexity of the trucks, apparatus, and the fire companies throughout the twentieth century continued to demand adaptation and remodeling of the physical facility that housed them.

### *Historical Development of the Cedar Rapids Fire Department*

Like all communities, Cedar Rapids was shaped by the effects of unintentional fires, large and small. Building conflagrations altered the city’s landscape and triggered waves of construction that resulted in larger, more modern, and more fire resistant buildings. An 1867 fire that destroyed a bank and a dry goods store in Cedar Rapids prompted the establishment of the city’s first organized fire department in 1869.<sup>9</sup> This 200-plus member volunteer department became a paid professional force of just seven men in 1894 with a fire station located at 223 Second Street SE, close to the commercial district.<sup>10</sup> The department grew in step with the community, upgrading its equipment and buildings along the way. Neighborhood fire stations or “hose houses” were built in various districts of the growing city to assist the central fire station, which was located by the turn of the century near the present Quaker Oats manufacturing facility on Third Street between A and B Avenues.<sup>11</sup>

Positioning a fire station in a central location had the obvious benefit of being roughly equally distant from any potential fire, though this geographic descriptor would lose its precision as the town grew over time and neighborhood hose houses were built to protect outlying areas. The traditional “central” fire station, however, remained the headquarters for the entire department and was kept in a location that could quickly reach the city’s important core commercial district. At its founding in 1841, Cedar Rapids’ first log and wood-frame commercial buildings were located along the Cedar River’s east bank in the area that included the future site of the Central Fire Station. Buildings were “clustered along today’s 1st, 2nd and 3rd Streets,

<sup>7</sup> The initial selection of horses for firehouse work was critical, but once they became part of a station’s crew, they were well cared for and well trained. See “The Firehouse Fire Horse” in Gerry and Janet Souter, *The American Fire Station* (Osceola, WI: MBI Publishing Company, 1998), 106-108. The Cedar Rapids Fire Department began to replace its horses as early as 1914 (“Motorizing Cedar Rapids Very Rapidly,” *Cedar Rapids Republican*, 3/18/1917).

<sup>8</sup> *The History of Fire Fighting*.

<sup>9</sup> Pam Hinman, “1867 Fire Triggered City Action,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette* (undated but post-1992; clipping file Koehler History Center Collection).

<sup>10</sup> Gary Peterson, “First C.R. Fire Department was Formed 100 Years Ago,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, no date but circa 1994 (clippings file, Carl and Mary Koehler History Center). This location is about a block and a half north of the Central Fire Station, but the building is nonextant.

<sup>11</sup> This location is few blocks north of the first central fire station, but is nonextant.



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SE between 1st Street and 4th Avenues, SE.”<sup>12</sup> Economic growth coupled with frequent fires, and the fear of *future* fires, shaped this historic downtown as it developed. By the 1880s, larger masonry buildings had replaced the first generation of wooden commercial buildings and by the turn of the century, yet another generation of three-, four-, and five-story buildings had been built. Soon after the turn of the century, ten-story and taller office buildings would be constructed. Ironically, floods have pestered the commercial streets closest to the river almost as much as fires.

Before 1869 fires were fought by *ad hoc* citizen groups using the bucket brigade method. Following the catastrophic 1867 bank and dry goods store fire, the city acted to better protect its citizens and property by organizing volunteer fire companies in 1869. It built cisterns around town to store water and provided two-wheel reservoir carts. The city also bought its first horse-drawn steam pumper and 500 feet of hose. The efforts of these many companies (there were at least 11 in 1868), however, were frequently complicated by “bitter rivalries” between them.<sup>13</sup>

The year 1894 brought the final major transition in the organization of Cedar Rapids’ firefighting efforts when the hundreds of volunteers were replaced by the much smaller staff of paid professionals.<sup>14</sup> City fire department headquarters initially were shared with the police but soon were moved to a new two-story, wood-frame “Central Fire Station” located at 214 3rd St NE in 1899 near the present Quaker Oats factory site.<sup>15</sup> City growth and changing technologies resulted in three additional neighborhood stations by the turn of the century.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, the new professional fire department soon was called on to fight a succession of major fires, starting in 1897 with a boiler room blaze at the town’s three-story Washington High School.<sup>17</sup> The deaths of seven individuals at the Clifton Hotel in 1903 provoked an outcry over the lack of water pressure available to firefighters and led to the first building inspections.<sup>18</sup> In 1905 the American Cereal Company plant was destroyed following an explosion, despite the location of the fire department’s then Central Fire Station headquarters just a half block away and the assistance of departments from several nearby communities. This same plant had suffered disastrous fires twice in the late 1800s, and there were fears in 1905 that the \$1.5 million facility would not be reconstructed. Ultimately, the plant was rebuilt, and the business reorganized under the name Quaker Oats Company. Thus Cedar Rapids retained its principal industry, with Quaker’s plant to this day remaining the largest such facility in the world.<sup>19</sup>

Soon after the American Cereal disaster, the City approved hiring two additional firefighters, a pay raise for the department, and the purchase of a new pumper truck and deluge sets to project water to higher elevations. This was followed in short order by the 1908 construction of Hose Station No. 2 at 423 5th St NW,<sup>20</sup> built to serve the rapidly-growing west side and, in 1910, House Station No. 5 (Robert R. Mayberry, architect) “at the intersection of C and First streets and Eleventh avenue

<sup>12</sup> Marlys A. Svendsen, “Commercial and Industrial Development of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, c. 1865 - c. 1945” (National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1997), 5.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Glenn, “Bucket Brigades, Cisterns, Horses: All Part of Early Firefighting,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 3/20/1983 (clippings file, Carl and Mary Koehler History Center); Hinman, “1867 Fire Triggered City Action.”

<sup>14</sup> Hinman, “1867 Fire Triggered City Action.” Domestic-scaled and -styled firehouses in outlying neighborhoods often were modeled after the popular residential styles of the day, the bungalow for example. In such smaller buildings, hose closets were adopted to eliminate the tall hose towers previously used. See Souter, *The American Fire Station*, Chapter 5; also, Zurier, Chapter 6, “The Beginnings of the Modern Fire Station,” *The Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History*, 157-171.

<sup>15</sup> Glenn, “Bucket Brigades...”

<sup>16</sup> Cleon F. Dolezal. *Cedar Rapids Fire Department, Past and Present: 1869-1992* (Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Company, 1993), 29.

<sup>17</sup> “Fire Spurs Formation of First Paid Department” (likely published in *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, no date [clippings file, Carl and Mary Koehler History Center]).

<sup>18</sup> Dolezal. *Cedar Rapids Fire Department*, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Svendsen, “Commercial and Industrial Development of Cedar Rapids,” 31-32.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 49. This building, across the Cedar River from the present Central Fire Station, is a two-story dark red brick building that has a domestic appearance in order to better fit within the neighborhood. It generally looks like a large brick Foursquare.

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west [sic].<sup>21</sup> This substation was joined in 1915 by “Hose Station 4” at 1111 3rd St SE (Fig. 5).<sup>22</sup> This 1915 fire station is extant and in very good condition. It is a square brick building with a hipped roof, and domestic in scale. The 1915 neighborhood fire station was designed by Charles A. Deiman, the same architect hired two years later to design the Central Fire Station.<sup>23</sup> The similarity to Central Fire Station is seen in the use of brickwork patterns for decorations and the cast stone details. Designed to fit into their residential neighborhoods, these smaller fire house facilities were part of a wave of department construction projects that lasted until 1925.<sup>24</sup>



**Figure 5 Photograph of Hose Station 4 designed by Charles A. Dieman and built in 1915.**

(Image accessed on 11/8/2013 at <https://maps.google.com/maps?ie=UTF-8&layer=c&z=17&iwloc=A&sll=41.970532,-91.659010&cbp=13,235.4,0,0,0&cbll=41.970704,-91.658675&q=1111+3rd+St+SE,+Cedar+Rapids,+IA&ei=9F19Uuf3DMqiyAHi8IGoCA&ved=0CCoQxB0wAA>)

<sup>21</sup> “A Fire Station to be Proud Of,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 5, 1910. This building appears to be nonextant.

<sup>22</sup> Svendsen, “Commercial and Industrial Development of Cedar Rapids,” at 57. A newspaper article from the July 1, 1915 *Cedar Rapids Daily Republican* edition indicates another station was built in 1914 at 4<sup>th</sup> Street and 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue. There is no longer a fire house at this intersection but there is a modern apartment building there, while all other buildings nearby are early twentieth century dwellings.

<sup>23</sup> *Cedar Rapids Daily Republican*, July 1, 1915.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 28. Central Fire Station seems not to have influenced the style of any later extant neighborhood fire houses. The style of post-1918 nonextant fire houses was not researched.

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*The "New" Central Fire Station*

Early in 1915, the local press reported on an expansion plan by Quaker Oats, a large employer in town that was certainly profiting from the increased agricultural prosperity in America brought about by World War I.<sup>25</sup> The short newspaper piece suggested the seductive possibility that the "city [could] secure a new central fire station without expense to the tax payers," mentioning that the "present fire station is old and of frame construction."<sup>26</sup> In other words, the big company's expansion plan needed the land on which the current central fire station sat on Third Street NE and it was casting the potential acquisition in the most favorable light.

Negotiations apparently stalled or were long and involved because the city did not actually sell the central fire station building to Quaker Oats until June, 1917, two years later. At the time of the sale, the Cedar Rapids Republican newspaper reported city council negotiations step-by-step and in detail, hinting at the cat and mouse game played by the two parties. Robert Stuart, president of Quaker Oats, and other top officials, attended the council meeting in person. Stuart laid out the company's position and clearly suggested what was at stake for the city of Cedar Rapids. Vacation of a block of B Avenue that included the central fire station was critical to company expansion plans, Stuart explained, adding that "the company liked Cedar Rapids and would much rather expand its plant here than enlarge any of its other plants, provided it get the necessary room." The stakes were clear: sell the land or risk Quaker Oats moving its large investment to a different city. However, the city council members were rather clever too. One had vociferously argued against the sale completely. When the fire station's sale price was discussed, the company offered \$14,500, the same price paid for an adjacent parcel already acquired, stating "they thought this was the top price, being more than they have paid for any other piece of property in the city." But the city countered with \$20,000, asserting that the move would be costly, a new station would take some time to erect, and the firefighters would have to occupy an "old livery barn" in the meantime.

The relative strength of the two sides' bargaining positions quickly became clear, as well the benefit of having the president of the company in attendance, with the next exchange. No sooner had Stuart agreed to the \$20,000 purchase price, than another council member "suggested to Mr. Stuart that he raise the offer to \$22,000 and he did so." After further discussion, "finally, Mayor Roth asked Mr. Stuart to add another \$1,000, making the price \$23,000. This Mr. Stewart [sic] did and the council agreed unanimously to the sale.<sup>27</sup> The only item left to decide was the new central fire station's location, but that would have to wait for a report by an official charged with finding an affordable lot.

Less than two weeks after the sale, the Commissioner (council member) in charge of the Department of Public Safety reported that the city's businessmen were unhappy with the location being scouted and that one potential site was across some railroad tracks from them. If that site was selected for the new fire station, the business men feared increased insurance costs would result.<sup>28</sup> With a bit, but not too much, more time, the official was able to find affordable land closer to the central business district. "The city will swap the dead end of Fifth avenue [sic] fronting on the river to the Milwaukee

<sup>25</sup> "Half Million for New Mill Plan of the Quaker Oats?" *Cedar Rapids Tribune*, 3/26/1915. According to historian Leland L. Sage, by 1914 the American farmer was producing such a surplus crop that there was increasing talk of how to reduce the crop in order to support prices. The "23-year 'Golden Age of Agriculture,' 1897-1920," according to Sage, "might have terminated in 1913 had it not been for the coming of World War I," which brought a noticeable prosperity America," particularly the agricultural sector. Leland L. Sage, *A History of Iowa* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1974), 249. The Quaker Oats name and Quaker imagery was trademarked as early as 1877, but the Iowa connection did not take place until sometime before 1890 when "the American Cereal Company [of Cedar Rapids] ran a special all-Quaker Oats train from Cedar Rapids IA to Portland, OR" (<http://www.quakeroats.com/about-quaker-oats/content/quaker-history.aspx>, accessed on 10/28/2013).

<sup>26</sup> "Half Million for New Mill Plan of the Quaker Oats?" *Cedar Rapids Tribune*, 3/26/1915.

<sup>27</sup> "Quaker Oats Company to Spend Million Dollars in Buildings this Year," *Cedar Rapids Republican*, 6/5/1917.

<sup>28</sup> "Council Backs Down Viaduct, Fire Station will not be in Whittam Park," *Cedar Rapids Republican*, 6/16/1917.

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(Railroad) for a lot on the same avenue..." reported the Cedar Rapids Tribune in early July, 1917.<sup>29</sup> That location was "near some of the biggest wholesale buildings and it is just outside the loop district."<sup>30</sup> Further, it did not necessitate crossing any bridges to reach fires in the east side business district. With the location settled, the city again turned to architect Charles A. Dieman for the design of the important new Central Fire Station.<sup>31</sup>

Despite more controversy during its construction, centered around the use of "men from another city while home labor is idle,"<sup>32</sup> by the end of the 1918 the station was completed, the fire fighters had moved in, and the local newspapers could crow about it. "The station itself is a large and handsome building of red brick and white stone, two stories and a high basement" with sleeping facilities for 15 on the upper floor and, interestingly, a second floor "lounging room where the boys knit for the Red Cross when they are not otherwise employed" according to the newspaper reporter. He added the editorial comment "and believe this reporter, they are some knitters." In one final nod of admiration, the reporter wrote that "fire fighters from far and near, with their commissioners and other superior officers, have been sent to Cedar Rapids to study the new fire station, which is so modern in design and so complete in its equipment and conveniences as to elicit their highest praise."<sup>33</sup>

The year 1918, then, saw the construction of the first "real building where [the fire department crew] could work, play and sleep."<sup>34</sup> The new site, chosen at least in part to keep fire insurance rates down, was at the time on fairly open ground where downtown transitioned into a warehouse zone. Ultimately, the station's ability to serve the west side was not what had been hoped, because the planned 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. bridge was never constructed.<sup>35</sup>

Other City projects in the Progressive Era of the teens and twenties heralded the emergence of Cedar Rapids as a major municipality. May's Island was purchased and plans to make it the site of a grouping of local, county, and federal public buildings were carried out over the next two decades. May's Island was also the location of a new 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue bridge linking the two sides of town. In 1919, the long-contested county seat was moved from the nearby town of Marion.<sup>36</sup> The triumph of that year was tempered, however, by the horrific explosion and fire at the Douglas Starch Works that resulted in 43 deaths and \$2,452,117 in damage, and which took ten days to extinguish. The Douglas blast was felt thirty miles away and resulted in broken windows in neighboring towns.<sup>37</sup> News reports of the accident were reported in great detail in the *New York Times* on May 23, 1919, long before the final body count or property costs were known. Firefighters in the new Central Fire Station were located within blocks of the disaster and would have been among the first deployed to what was by far Cedar Rapids' most destructive fire.

The new Central Fire Station was designed to accommodate motorized equipment, the first of which had been purchased in 1914. By 1919, the fire department was fully motorized.<sup>38</sup> The new station was well suited to this major transition to motor drive vehicles, with bays capable of handling "a pump engine, two hook and ladder trucks, and the fire chief's car."<sup>39</sup> The

<sup>29</sup> "Will Trade Land with Milwaukee," *Cedar Rapids Tribune*, 7/6/1917.

<sup>30</sup> "Great Improvements in Our Fire Department During Year," *Cedar Rapids Republican*, 12/25/1918.

<sup>31</sup> Galen Wenger has researched the microfilmed Cedar Rapids newspapers and cites two articles for the selection of Dieman as Central Fire Station's architect. These newspaper editions were not available to the author through online newspaper archives. A check with the local public library revealed the reference librarian could not access them either. Wenger's sources are: "New Fire Station Will Be Elaborate and Handsome," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, 8/31/1917; and "Plans for Fire Station," *Cedar Rapids Republican*, 9/1/1917; but see "Loomis Bros. To Build Central Fire Station," *Cedar Rapids Republican*, 9/15/1917, which also references Dieman's role and was located online by the author.

<sup>32</sup> *Cedar Rapids Tribune*, 4/12/1918.

<sup>33</sup> "Great Improvements in Our Fire Department During Year," *Cedar Rapids Republican*, 12/25/1918.

<sup>34</sup> Dolezal. *Cedar Rapids Fire Department*, 39.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-39.

<sup>36</sup> Svendsen, "Commercial and Industrial Development of Cedar Rapids," 5.

<sup>37</sup> Dolezal. *Cedar Rapids Fire Department*, 39-42.

<sup>38</sup> Hinman, "1867 Fire Triggered City Action."

<sup>39</sup> Svendsen, "Commercial and Industrial Development of Cedar Rapids," 42.

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same year the station was placed in service also saw firefighters unionizing for the first time, another step in the achievement of a modern fire department.<sup>40</sup> Over its nearly seventy years of service, the Station witnessed many advancements in firefighting technology, including the advent of respiration equipment, high expansion foam, and “light water” for fighting flammable liquid fires.<sup>41</sup> Accommodating the changes over the many decades in apparatus and equipment, as well growth in department personnel numbers, required a number of changes to the building. The rear addition was constructed in the fire station’s ensuing decades and the northern most vehicle door was enlarged to allow for more modern equipment. Later, a second doorway was enlarged. Commencing early 1970s, discussions about the building’s outdated infrastructure, small size, and lack of a training room began in earnest. These discussions came to a head with a 1983 bond issue that financed the city’s second major wave of firehouse construction.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to the problem of aging facilities (the 1908 westside station was also being retired), concerns about response times in a growing community were a driving factor in the construction projects. Three million of the four million dollar bond issue would go toward a new central fire station at 222 3<sup>rd</sup> St NW—a west side location that reflected the substantial growth on that side of the river. At 31,642 square feet, the new central station would dwarf the 1<sup>st</sup> Street Central Fire Station, which was retired from service in December, 1985.<sup>43</sup>

Cedar Rapids citizens recognized the 1918 Central Fire Station’s architectural merits and historical significance, and before the firefighters had even moved out, plans were laid to convert the building to a museum.<sup>44</sup> Thus the building served as the Science Station museum from 1986 until the building was flooded in 2008.

*Comments on the Style of the Central Fire Station*

The Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission styles are similar. In fact, the pertinent *National Register Bulletin* at page 26 merges the two under the main category of “Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals” suggesting the two are so similar as to be one subcategory. Both styles make use of tile roofs, balconies, arcades, and prominent pediments. Each style originated on the West Coast and pays homage to the Spanish colonial heritage of the Southwest; however the Mission style came slightly before the Spanish Colonial Revival. According to historian Marcus Whiffen, the main difference other than temporal sequence was that in the Mission style “there is a *complete absence of sculptural ornament*; this negative characteristic distinguishes Mission Style buildings from many, though by no means, all, of those the Spanish colonial [sic] Revival that followed” [emphasis added].<sup>45</sup>

The impetus for the evolution of Mission style into Spanish Colonial Revival was the advent in 1915 of the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego, a chamber of commerce celebratory event where “hundreds of thousands of visitors ... saw the most elaborate kind of Mexican Baroque adapted to the modern purpose of celebrating the opening of the Panama Canal.”<sup>46</sup> The chief architect of the San Diego exhibition was Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue (1869-1924) who had previously authored a “book on Spanish Colonial architecture in Mexico.”<sup>47</sup> Historians Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester

<sup>40</sup> Dolezal. *Cedar Rapids Fire Department*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Peterson, “First C.R. Fire Department was Formed 100 Years Ago.”

<sup>42</sup> Dick Hogan, “Should C.R. Build 5 New Fire Stations?” *The [Cedar Rapids] Gazette*, 8/28/1983.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.; John McIvor, “Central Fire Station Move.” *The [Cedar Rapids] Gazette*, 12/19/1985.

<sup>44</sup> Dick Hogan, “Central Fire Station May Become Museum,” *The [Cedar Rapids] Gazette*, 8/28/1983. Ironically, the 1985 Central Fire Station had a fraction of the longevity of its predecessor, suffering more than 50% damage in the disastrous flood of 2008 after a scant twenty-three years of service. A new Central Fire Station facility has recently been constructed and opened for duty at 713 1<sup>st</sup> Ave SE.

<sup>45</sup> Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to Styles* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1969), 213.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

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elaborated on the architect's goal and impact: "Goodhue wanted to go beyond the then prevalent Mission interpretations and emphasize the richness of Spanish precedents found throughout Latin America. Inspired by the wide publicity given the exposition, other fashionable architects soon began to look directly to Spain for source material."<sup>48</sup> No doubt less fashionable architects simply looked no farther for their inspiration than the West Coast precedents and the popular press covering the San Diego exposition. Because of the close timing of the California exposition to the construction of the Cedar Rapids Central Fire Station, together with the added sculptural embellishments seen on the fire station – largely in the form of cast stone decorations – the building falls in the Spanish Colonial Revival category.

*Architect Charles A. Dieman (1873?-1937)* <sup>49</sup>

The local architect for the Cedar Rapids Central Fire Station, Charles A. Dieman, was an expert at interpreting the popular architectural styles of his day. He was an accomplished architect who spent a large portion of his professional career in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where he drew plans for buildings all over Eastern Iowa and points beyond. Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to a Prussian immigrant father and a Prussian-descended mother, as a youth Charles lived in a working class neighborhood largely populated by Eastern European immigrants. Dieman's father was a carpenter and his neighbors worked as painters, butchers, and in other skilled crafts.<sup>50</sup>

Dieman apparently gained his construction knowledge and design skills on the job and without the benefit of formal architectural schooling. As a young adult, Charles apprenticed as a carpenter and studied under a Professor Schmidt, a graduate of Berlin Polytechnic Institute. Dieman evidenced an artistic interest by taking watercolor courses at a local institution and then worked for the prominent Milwaukee architectural firm of Leipold & Wiskocil.<sup>51</sup> By 1892, Dieman was in Cedar Rapids working for the local firm of Josselyn & Taylor. By 1895, Dieman had been promoted to "chief designer" but just a year later in 1896 he left the firm to establish his solo architectural practice.<sup>52</sup> In 1900, Charles married Mabel E. Ferguson,<sup>53</sup> and in 1919 he married his second wife, artist Clara Leonard Sorensen, who was then studying at the Chicago Art Institute.<sup>54</sup> This was also a second marriage for Clara, a sculptor of considerable talent and ambition. She introduced Charles to Eastern Iowa art circles that included Grant Wood and Marvin Cone.<sup>55</sup> Clara frequently gave lectures on art at various Cedar Rapids groups and organizations, and together the Diemans were a "power couple" of their generation in local arts and

<sup>48</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 418. See also Richard Oliver, "Cram and Goodhue" in *Master Builders: A Guide to Famous American Architects* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1985), 114-117.

<sup>49</sup> Information about Dieman and his professional life is taken from Jan Olive Full, "SOKOL Gymnasium, Cedar Rapids, Iowa," (National Register nomination, 2013), 11-13. A long, but incomplete, table of Dieman commissions in Eastern Iowa is included in that nomination.

<sup>50</sup> Charles' birth year is likely 1873, despite two federal censuses (1900 and 1930) that indicate a birth year of either 1869 or 1870. In addition to the 1880 census, which recorded his birth year as 1873, the 1910 and 1920 censuses, as well as Charles' obituary in 1937, all indicate he was born in 1873. Since the majority of these sources, including two that required someone other than Charles to supply the date (his parents in 1880 and, likely, his wife in 1937), the 1873 birth year seems most likely.

<sup>51</sup> *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, December 5, 1896. While nothing was discovered about Leipold, Augustin V. Wiskocil was a native of Austria or Bohemia, born in 1861, and lived in Milwaukee by the age of 10. He worked with Leipold from the late 1880s through 1891, after which the firm was dissolved and each man set out on his own. Wiskocil left a body of architectural work that has been recognized in Milwaukee for its importance.

(*Historic Designation Study Report: Hrobsky/Berg Building* (2006), published at <http://www.milwaukee.gov/>; obtained on June 29, 2012).

<sup>52</sup> *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, December 5, 1896.

<sup>53</sup> *Cedar Rapids Republican*, November 11, 1914. Mabel died in 1914 at the age of 41.

<sup>54</sup> *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, February 26, 1919.

<sup>55</sup> See for example, *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, September 15, 1921.

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society circles. In 1922, at age 49 and approaching the peak of his professional career<sup>56</sup> Charles, and his wife, moved to Denver, Colorado. They remained in western states for the remainder of their marriage, residing in Santa Fe, New Mexico, at the time of Charles' death in 1937 at age 65.<sup>57</sup>

*Charles A. Dieman's Architectural Career*

When Charles Dieman began solo practicing in Cedar Rapids in 1896, he took three office rooms in the Granby Building (extant) in downtown Cedar Rapids. By 1898, another, other architect occupied the two offices next to Dieman in the Granby Building. This was Ferdinand C. Fiske, a New York state native and 1882 graduate of Cornell University's architecture program in Ithaca.<sup>58</sup> His selection of offices next to Dieman's in the Granby Building almost certainly led to the two men's partnership by 1901.<sup>59</sup> The firm, which also opened a Lincoln, Nebraska office in 1901, was advertised in Cedar Rapids newspapers and city directories as "Dieman and Fiske." The partnership was known in Lincoln as "Fiske and Dieman."<sup>60</sup> Fiske continued to live in Cedar Rapids for two more years, periodically traveling to Lincoln to work on projects, but in 1903 he permanently moved to Lincoln.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, the professional partnership arrangement appeared to operate until 1910, the last year in which the Cedar Rapids directory listed "Dieman and Fiske." In 1911, the Cedar Rapids office was simply called "Charles A. Dieman & Company."<sup>62</sup> Dieman continued to operate under this firm name throughout the rest of his career in Cedar Rapids, which ended in 1922 when he left for Colorado. Dieman never again had a long-term partner in the practice though he did employ several draftsmen over the years. From 1914 through 1918, the period between Dieman's two marriages and the years during which Dieman designed both Cedar Rapids Hose Company 4 and the Central Fire Station, city directories list John M. Gardner as a second architect in the firm, but this may have been a brief and/or relatively unimportant association as Mr. Gardner does not figure in any of the news coverage of Dieman's projects.<sup>63</sup>

Dieman's practice in Iowa was not restricted to residential or commercial buildings, but was a general practice that ranged from large and ornate Queen Anne and Colonial Revival residences, to industrial warehouses, public schools, and civic, fraternal, and organizational facilities such as the heavily decorated Cedar Rapids Sokol Gymnasium (1908; Classical Revival style; listed NRHP, 2013). He clearly stayed current on the decorative programs that could be applied to basic structural forms in order to achieve specific popular styles. Tipton, Iowa, for example, benefited from Dieman's early residential work with a number of well-detailed Queen Anne houses, mostly extant and with very good integrity today. The

<sup>56</sup> Charles Dieman was president in 1921 of the Iowa chapter of the American Institute of Architecture. *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, May 7, 1921.

<sup>57</sup> Denver city directories from 1923 to 1925 list Charles in private practice at various locations, and the 1926 directory also lists Clara as an instructor at the Chapell School of Art. In 1928, the Diemans were "temporarily living in Houston, Texas,"—perhaps because of an architectural commission of Charles'—however Clara was at the same time "executing all sculpture decorations for exterior of new Denver Nat'l Bank Bldg. for Fisher and Fisher, architects." The 1930 federal census listed the Diemans in Houston, but by 1934, the couple had relocated to the "art colony" in Santa Fe, New Mexico. "Charles A. Dieman Dies in Milwaukee," *Santa Fe, New Mexican*, December 13, 1937; Max Binheim, compl. *Women of the West, 1928 Edition* (Los Angeles: Publishers Press, 1928), 108. Clara's biographical essay included her activities as "lecturer on art before clubs and schools...Secretary, Denver Civic Art Commission (2 years). Member: Chicago Art Institute (alumnae), member of Indiana and Colorado Artists Societies."

<sup>58</sup> *Cornell Alumni News*, vol. 6, no. 11 (12/9/1903) and vol. 32, no. 18 (2/20/1930).

<sup>59</sup> Cedar Rapids city directories.

<sup>60</sup> "First National Bank – Steinmeier Building," 10.

<sup>61</sup> *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, June 8, 1903.

<sup>62</sup> Ferdinand Comstock Fiske (1858-1930) continued to practice for the next several decades in Lincoln, where a number of his buildings of various forms and functions, have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. See for example, the list of NRHP-designated buildings found in the Frank M. Spalding House nomination (1999).

<sup>63</sup> Local newspaper coverage of the construction of the Central Fire Station refers to the person, "architect Dieman," not Dieman's firm or any other individual. *Cedar Rapids Republican*, September 15, 1917.

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small town of Clermont, Iowa, gained an ornamented Classical Revival high school by Dieman in 1912, and Belle Plaine's main street district has a distinctive 1919 corner bank by Dieman. The architect also was a good promoter of both the practice of architecture generally, and his own buildings specifically. He marketed his residential designs in the late 1890s through a "book" of "beautiful homes" and declared that "the practice of architecture as a profession has fine art as well as commercial elements."<sup>64</sup> Another example of Dieman's promotional attentiveness was found when, in 1912, the Cedar Rapids Gazette published an extensive "booster" supplement on a Wednesday--with two dozen *unattributed* photos of Dieman's buildings—and by Saturday the paper had run an article specifically listing each building and applauding Dieman as the architect. The body of Dieman's Iowa work reflects not only the range of skills the architect had acquired but also his success as a professional accepted by a wide community of clients including the City of Cedar Rapids. Dieman became a member of the Iowa chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1915 and served as the Iowa chapter's president in 1921, the year before he left the state for larger metropolitan environments in the West.<sup>65</sup>

*Future Plans*

Since the flooding of 2008, the Cedar Rapids Central Fire Station has been vacant, but has been acquired by a downtown development corporation with plans to convert it into office space. Flood-damage windows needing repair will be returned to the building and others that are now covered or painted over from the inside will be returned to their original state. State and federal historic preservation tax credits will be sought.

<sup>64</sup> Alan M. Schroder, *Directory of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Iowa Architects* (Des Moines: Iowa State Historical Department/State Historical Society, 1982), inside front cover. Schroder does not state where the ad was published but it was probably the local city directory.

<sup>65</sup> Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 51.



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## 10. Geographical Data

### Verbal Boundary Description

The nomination includes the approximate 60' by 101' portion of the block identified as FR. 6 of the Original Town plat of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on which the building is located. This property is located at the southwestern side of the T intersection of 1<sup>st</sup> Street SE and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE. The northeast front of the building sits close to the sidewalk along 1<sup>st</sup> Street SE and, to the rear, the building overlooks an alley and Cedar River beyond. The property includes the former IMAX theater, which is partially attached to the rear half (closest to the river) of the southeast wall of the Central Fire Station, but which is no longer interconnected to the station, and is surveyed as a separate property (P.O.S. #858 parcel A & P.O.S. #859 parcel A), owned by others, and used as offices. The property also includes the paved parking area and the modern concrete dumpster enclosure at the rear of the building.

The property does not include the historic former fruit warehouse building to the northwest or the short, modern connector between them.

### Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the majority of parcel historically associated with Central Fire Station during the period of significance and the IMAX theater addition constructed in 2000.

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**Property Owner: Cedar Rapids Central Fire Station**

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

name 4000 LLC (contact: Tom Aller)

street & number 200 1<sup>st</sup> St. SE, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor telephone 319-366-2001

city or town Cedar Rapids state IA zip code 52401

**Property Owner: IMAX Theater Addition**

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

name 501 First Street LLC (contact Emily Meyer)

street & number 625 First St. SE, Suite 175 telephone 319-731-2867  
(email Emily.Meyer@ryancompaines.com)

city or town Cedar Rapids state IA zip code 52401

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**Cedar Rapids, Linn County, Iowa, with approximate location  
of the nominated property circled.**

(detail obtained 5/2/2013 from U.S.G.S. 7.5' topographic map: <http://ortho.gis.iastate.edu/server.cgi?wmtver=1.0&request=map&bbox=607999,4645159,613999,4651159&width=600&height=600&layers=drg24&format=jpeg&srs=EPSG:26915&styles=>)



1 mile



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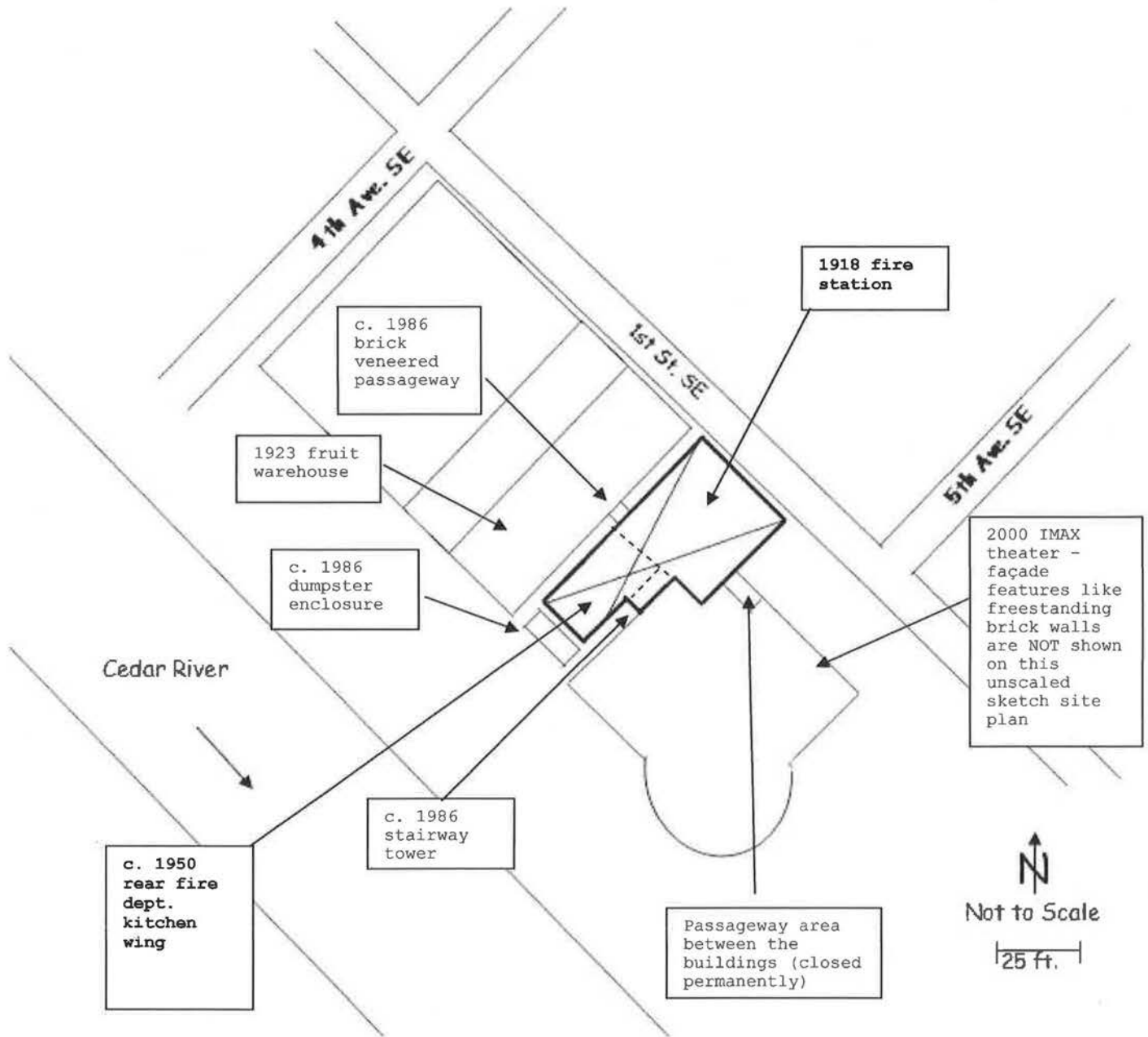
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**Site Plan**

*(sketch map by Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2013)*

*The solid "X" marks the 1918 Central Fire Station and the c. 1950 rear addition*



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National Park Service

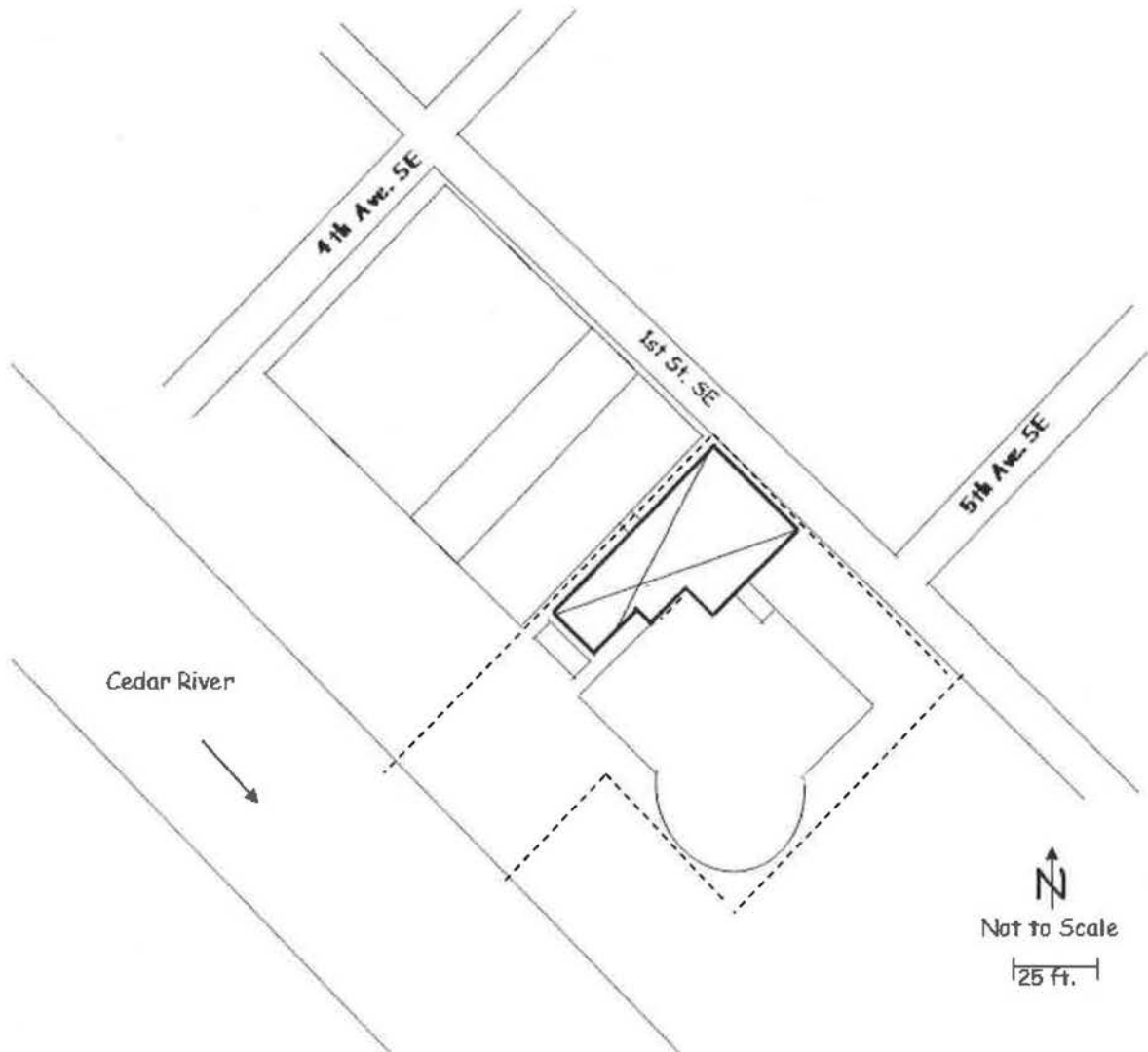
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**Site Plan showing Boundaries of Nominated Property**  
*(sketch map by Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2013)*



The dashed lines reflect the combined surveyed parcel boundaries of Central Fire Station and the adjacent IMAX theater as shown on the Cedar Rapids Assessor's webpage, 11/21/2013.

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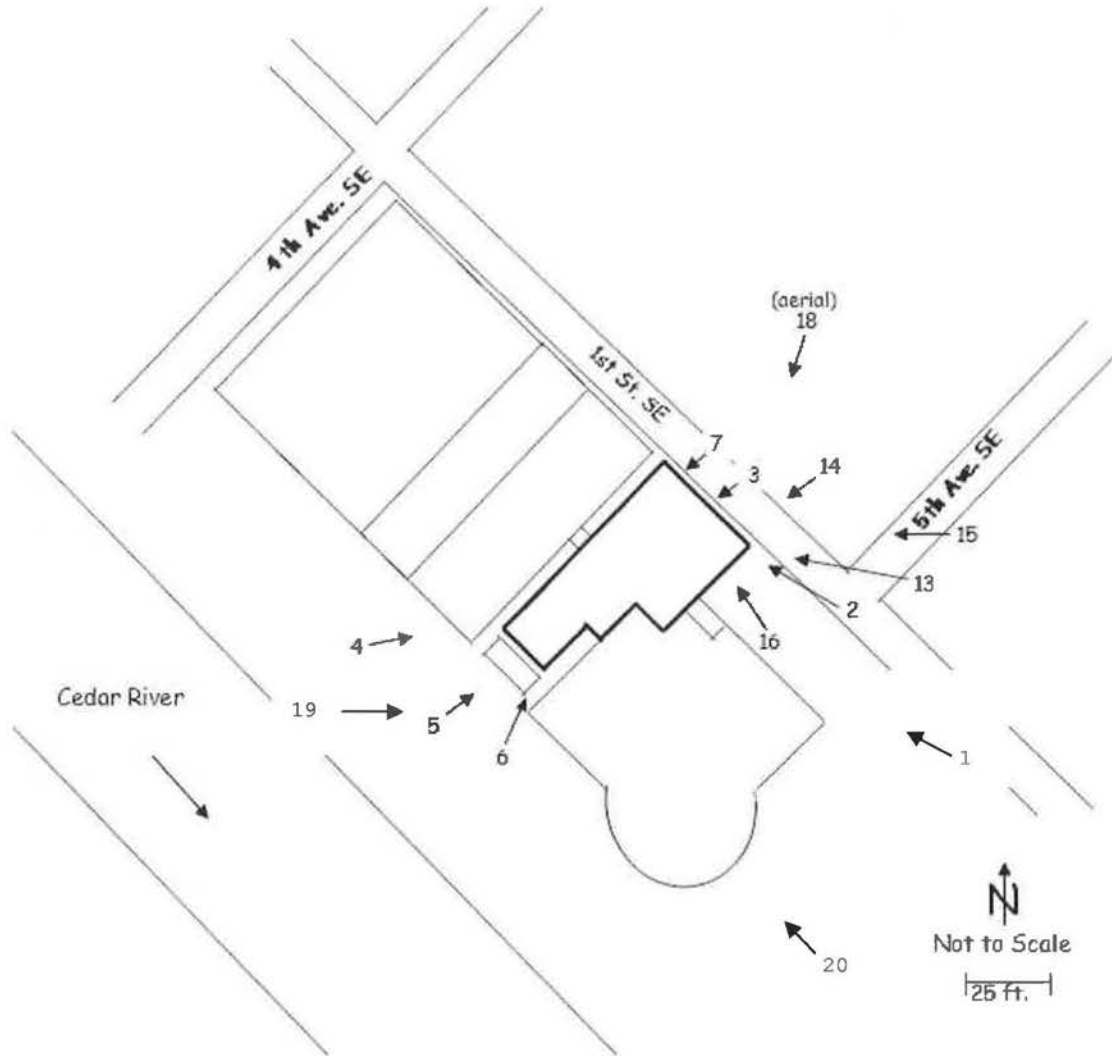
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**Site Plan Photo Key** (sketch map by Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2013)





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National Park Service

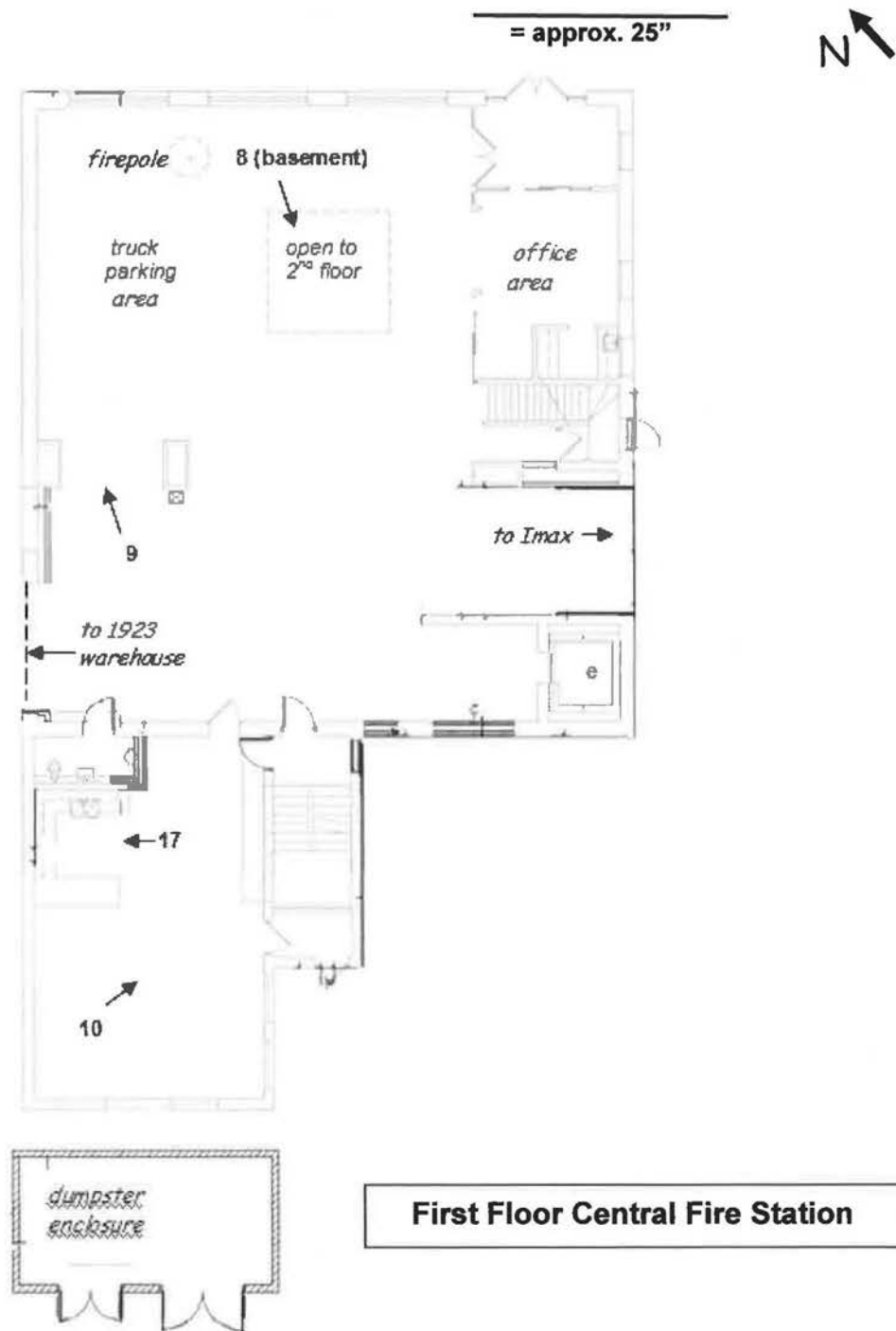
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**Floor Plans & Photo Keys** (sketches based on plans by Ryan Companies US, Inc., modified by Tallgrass Historians LC, 2013)



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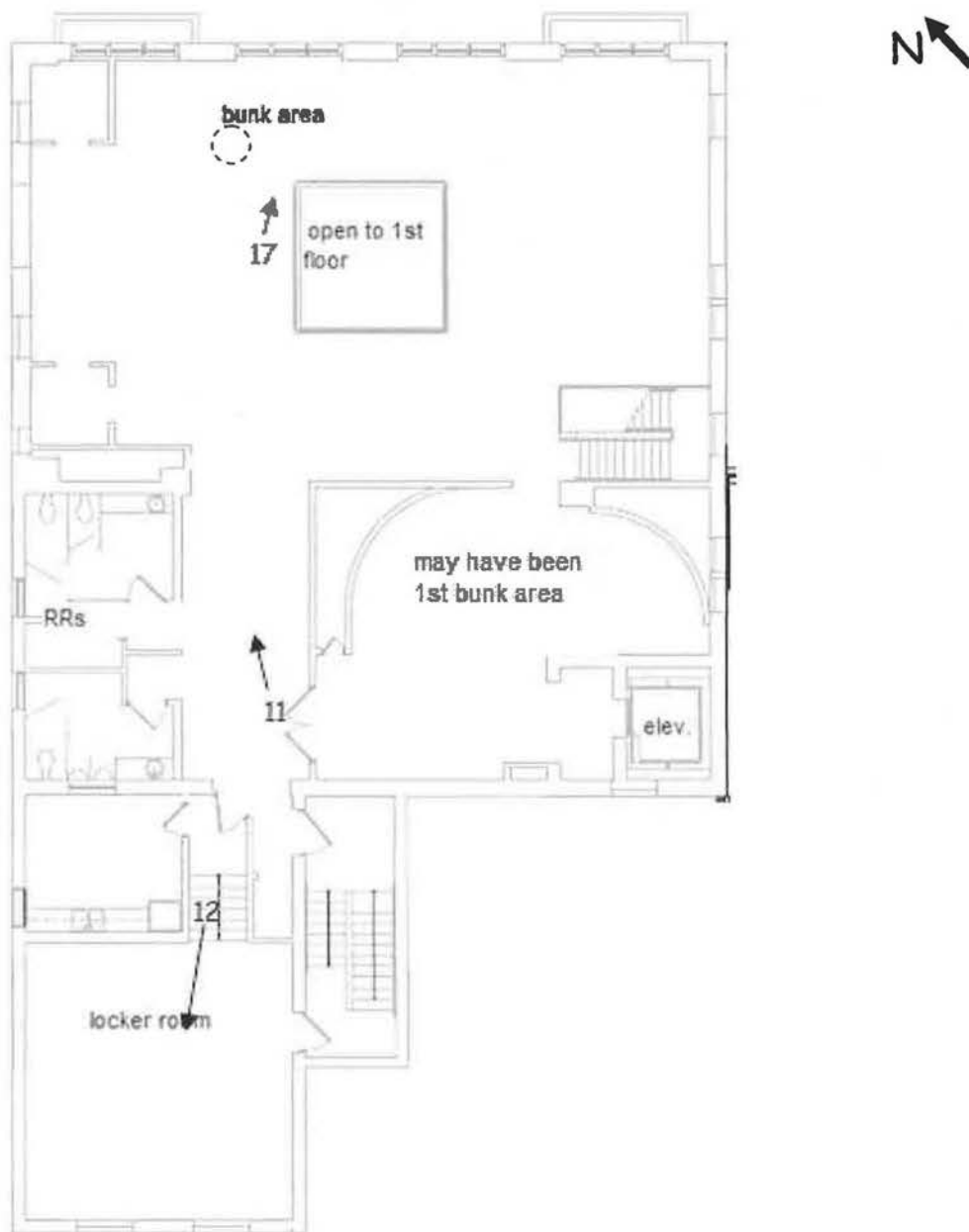
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**Floor Plans & Photo Keys** *sketches based on plans by Ryan Companies US, Inc., modified by Tallgrass Historians LC, 2013)*

**= approx. 25"**



**Second Floor Central Fire Station**

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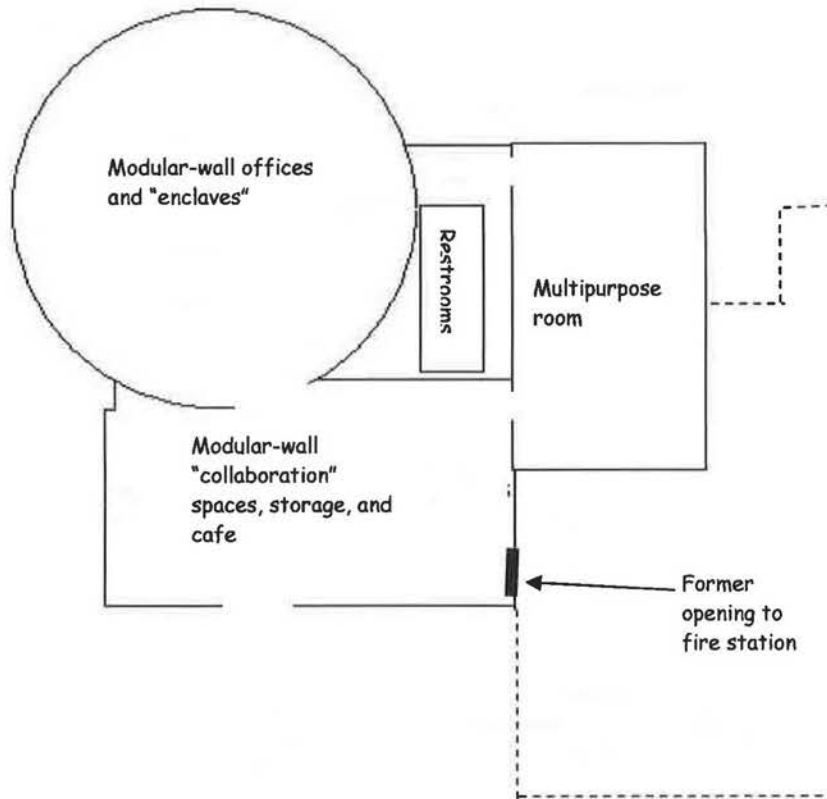
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**IMAX theater floor plan (one story with high ceilings)**

Source: Base Cedar Rapids Assessor, 2013



Not to scale



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National Park Service

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### Photograph Label Information

**## 1, 2, 3, & 5, may share the same information as follows:**

1. Cedar Rapids Central Fire Station
2. Cedar Rapids, Linn County, IA
3. Tallgrass Historians L.C., Emily Meyer, Carl & Mary Koehler History Center, Science Station
4. October 2013, 2011, various historic dates
5. N/A (digital)
- 6.&7. Photograph #1: First Street SE, streetscape view, looking northwest  
Photograph #2: Northeast facade and southeast side wall, showing window openings that had windows removed and placed in storage to await repair, facing northwest  
Photograph #3: Northeast facade, facing southwest, c. 2011  
Photograph #4: Northwest side wall and southwest rear additions. The low building obscuring most of the view of Central Fire Station is a historic warehouse once used by the Science Center and accessed by a small connector  
Photograph #5: Southwest rear additions, facing northeast. Of the two taller towers, the left one is a rear staircase; to the right one is the elevator  
Photograph #6: Southwest rear additions, facing north  
Photograph #7: Detail, north window balcony (balconette) over north door, facing southwest  
Photograph #8: Basement view, facing southwest  
Photograph #9: First floor view of northwest wall, looking northeast. Note the white and black glazed wall tiles under the metal studs  
Photograph #10: First floor view, rear kitchen addition, looking east. Note glazed tile walls.  
Photograph #11: Second floor view, looking northeast toward front of building  
Photograph #12: Second floor view of rear locker room addition, looking southwest  
Photograph #13: Historic view, c. 1926, of facade and southeast side wall  
Photograph #14: Historic view, c. 1937, of facade, facing southwest  
Photograph #15: Historic view, 1956, looking west  
Photograph #16: Historic view, 1963, large new equipment in front of southeast wall, looking north  
Photograph #17: Historic views, 1983, left: second floor bunk area (toward front of building); right: first floor kitchen  
Photograph #18: Historic 2008 flood view  
Photograph #19 IMAX theater, rear view, looking east  
Photograph #20 Side view of IMAX theater from southeast, looking northwest

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

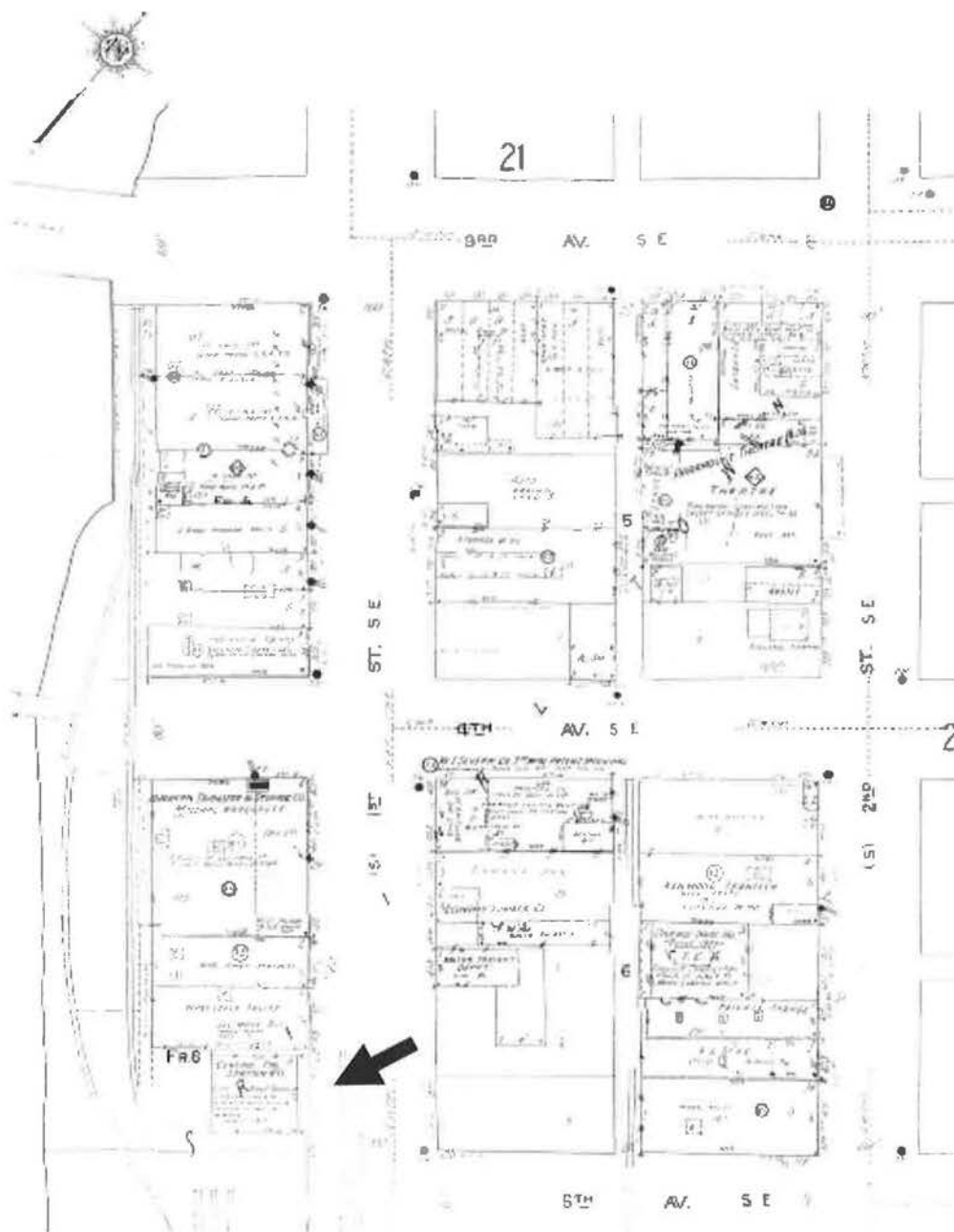
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**Sanborn Map Co. Fire Insurance Map of Cedar Rapids, 1913- Feb. 1949** (only map that shows the building)



Note: the large cylindrical gas tanks are located at the top of the page south of this sheet (but drawing is of very poor quality for reprinting here.)

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National Park Service

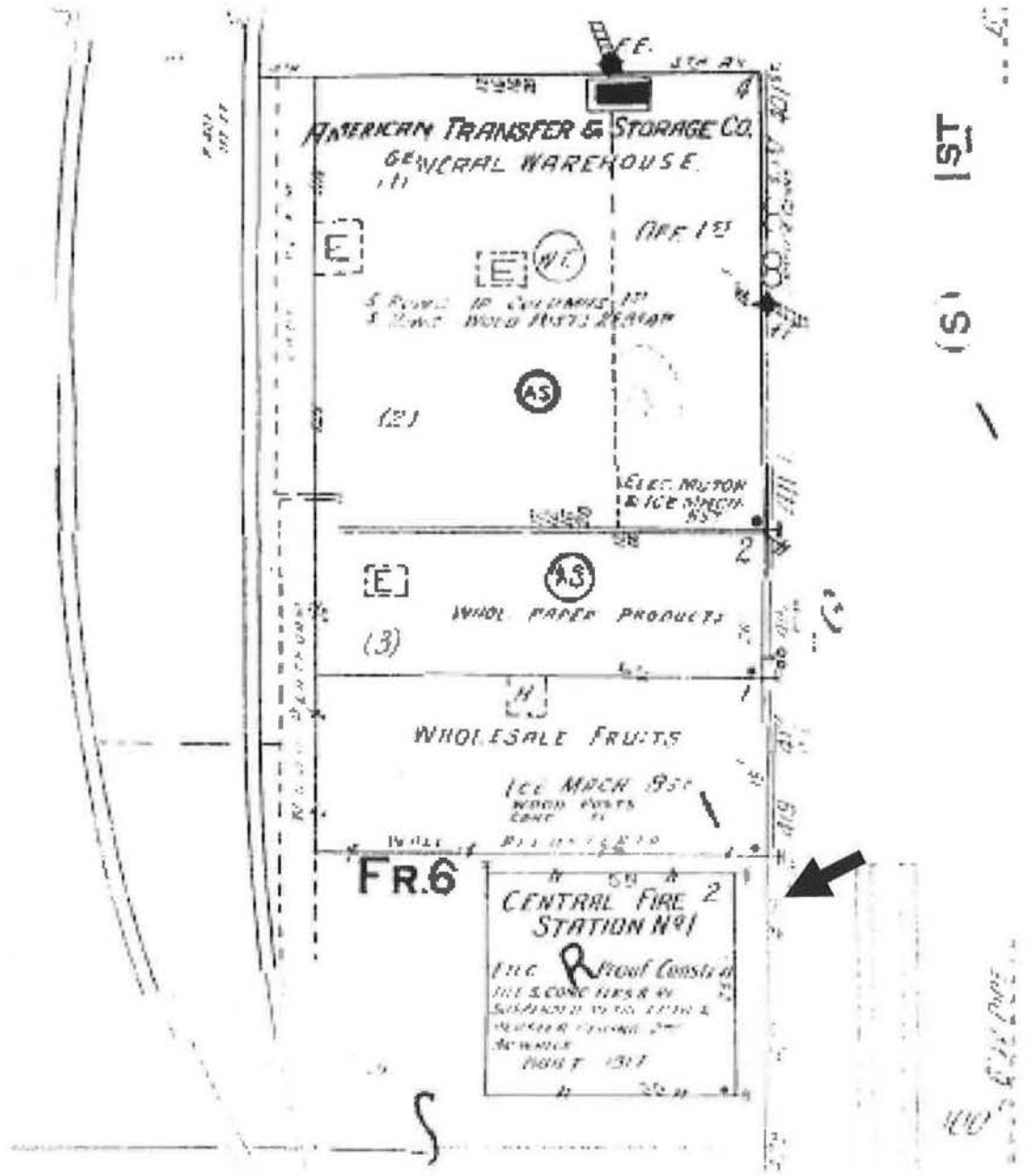
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Detail from Sanborn Map Co. Fire Insurance Map of Cedar Rapids, 1913- Feb. 1949







1917

DORRIP CITY  
PLUM



1917

SCIENCE STATION

NO PARKING  
LOADING ZONE  
City is closed due to flood damage  
Please visit the  
Science Station @ Lindale Mall  
319-363-4629  
www.sciencestation.org

RECYCLED  
PARKING  
FRONT IN  
OR BACK IN  
PARKING  
ONLY  
SPACE  
ONLY

LANE DATA





Science Station

LEFT TURN  
PARKING  
ONLY

PERMIT  
PARKING

PERMIT  
PARKING

PERMIT  
PARKING

NO  
PARKING  
EXCEPT  
AS  
INDICATED



NO PARKING

NO PARKING



NO  
PARKING











Restrooms





Program

Program

OCITY



137

CENTRAL FIRE STATION



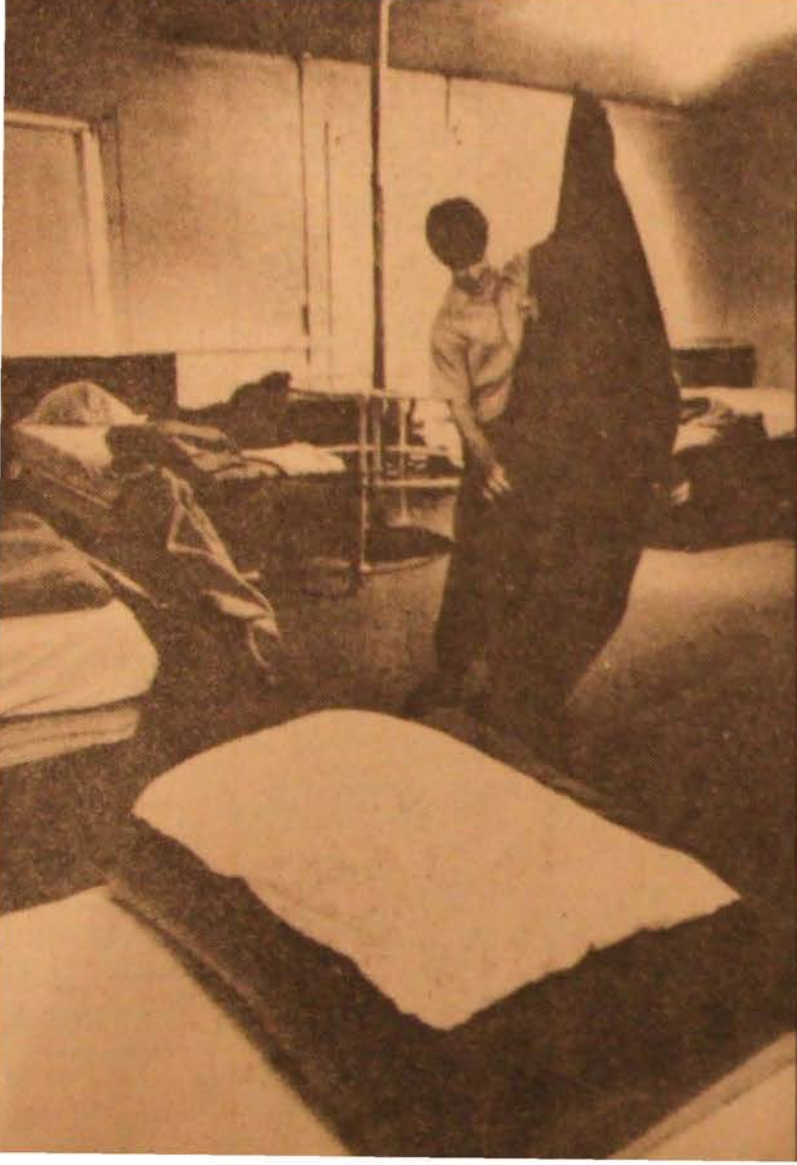


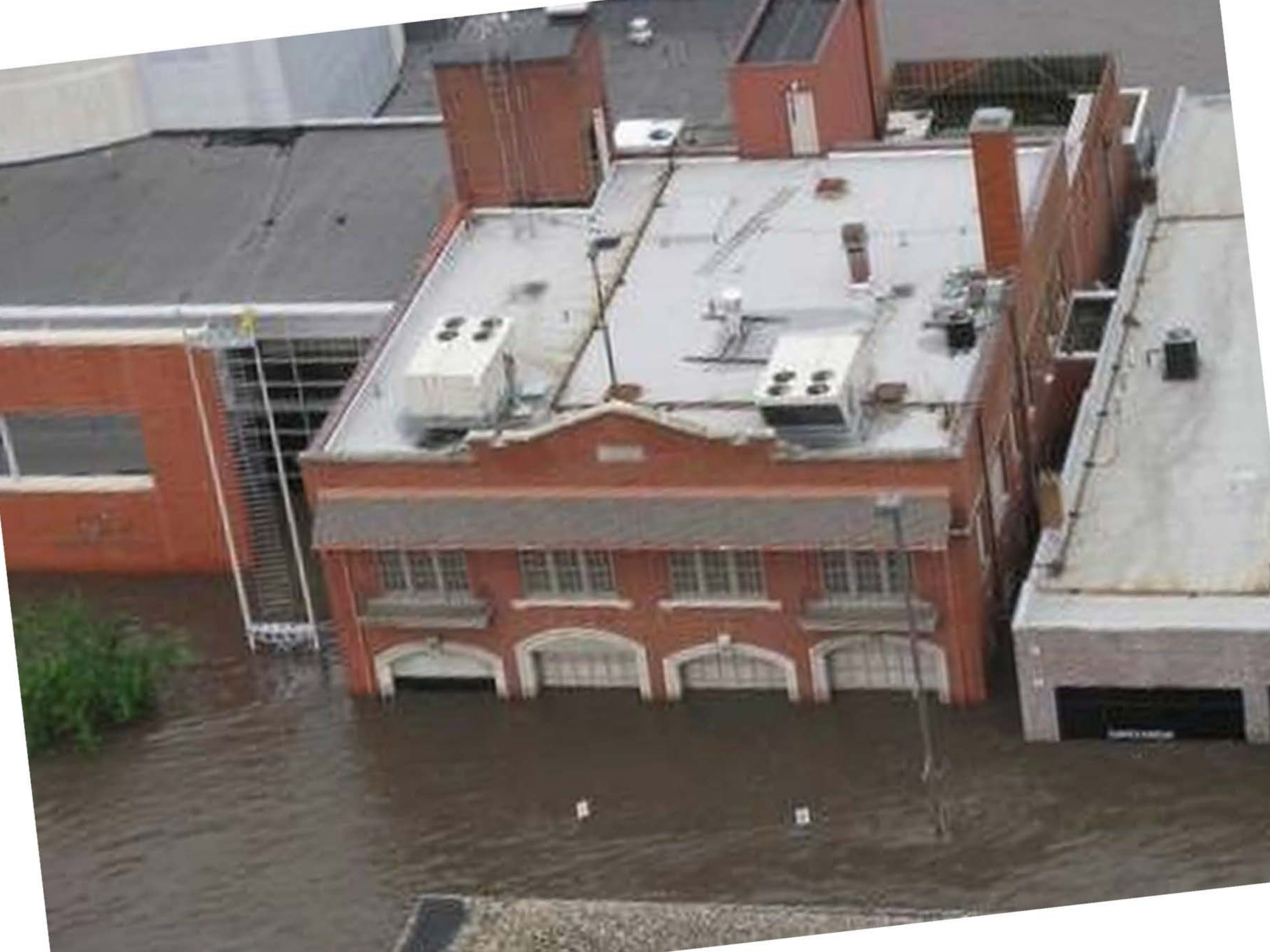


CEDAR RAPIDS FIRE DEPT.

SVORKEL I













UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Cedar Rapids Central Fire Station  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Linn

DATE RECEIVED: 3/13/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/07/14  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/22/14 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/29/14  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000175

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 4/29/2014 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Early 20th century fire station.  
Historically significant as the city's largest and most important component  
of the fire department.*

*The fire station has a large, modern addition constructed in 2000 (an IMAX  
Theater). The National Register staff and the SHPO staff had extensive  
consultation on the impact of this addition and concluded that due to its  
set-back + that it does not overwhelm the fire station which retains its identity  
and can be read as a separate building.*

RECOM./CRITERIA Patrick Anderson

REVIEWER Accept, Criterion A

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE 4/29/2014

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the  
nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF  
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

TERRY E. BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR  
KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR

MARY COWNIE, DIRECTOR  
CHRIS KRAMER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR



IOWA  
ARTS  
COUNCIL

March 12, 2014

PRODUCE  
IOWA

Carol Shull, Chief  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye Street, N.W.-- 8th Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20005

STATE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY OF IOWA

Dear Ms. Shull:

STATE HISTORICAL  
MUSEUM OF IOWA

The following National Register nomination(s) are enclosed for your review and listing if acceptable.

STATE HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

- Cedar Rapids Central Fire Station, 427 1<sup>st</sup> Street SE, Cedar Rapids, Linn County, Iowa

STATE  
HISTORIC  
SITES

- Waverly East Bremer Avenue Commercial Historic District, Roughly E Bremer Avenue, Cedar River to Rail Trail and 100 block 1<sup>st</sup> Street SE, 200 Block 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue SE, Waverly, Bremer County, Iowa

STATE HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION  
OFFICE OF IOWA

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Foster Hill".

Elizabeth Foster Hill, Manager  
National Register and Tax Incentive Programs

IOWA  
HISTORICAL  
FOUNDATION