

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

154

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

RECEIVED 2280
MAR - 6 2015
NAT REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
FEB 17 2015
by SHPO

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa Building

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 604 Locust Street and 316 Sixth Avenue

City or town: Des Moines State: IA County: Polk

Not For Publication: n/a Vicinity: n/a

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national X statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C ___ D

Steve King 25 FEB 2015
Signature of certifying official/Title: _____ Date
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting official: _____ Date
Title : _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain: _____)

Patrick Andrews

4/21/2015

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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> </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE:

Business

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE:

Business
DOMESTIC: Multiple
Dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19th and Early 20th

Century Revival: LATE

GOTHIC REVIVAL

Late 19th and Early 20th

Century American

Movement: SKYSCRAPER

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: TERRA COTTA, BRICK, GRANITE

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa Building ("Equitable Building" from here on out) is located on a topographically level site in the heart of downtown Des Moines on the southwest corner of Locust Street and Sixth Avenue. Both streets are principle thoroughfares in the city of Des Moines. Sixth Avenue developed during the 19th century as a major north-south corridor with prestigious properties, including the Fleming Building (NRHP), Equitable Life Insurance Company of New York (non extant), and St. Ambrose Roman Catholic Cathedral (NRHP). The Home Federal Savings and Loan Association, a building designed by Mies van der Rohe, built in the 1960s, and located at 601 Grand Avenue, is situated one block to the north. The building's property measures approximately 132 feet x 132 feet, with alleys to the south and west of the building.

The Equitable Building, a 19 story skyscraper surmounted by a 4-story tower, decorates the Des Moines skyline. For nearly 50 years, the Equitable Building stood as the tallest building in Iowa (ca. 1924-1973), and is now the eighth tallest in Des Moines and in the state of Iowa. The structure is built on concrete piles, and constructed on a reinforced concrete and steel frame with walls of orangish-red colored brick trimmed in white and cream-colored terra cotta detailing and Vermont granite at the base. Completed and first occupied in 1924, the exterior of the building remains very much as originally built except for replacement windows and balconies installed in 2005-2007, storefront modifications and a skywalk installed in the 1980s, when the City of Des Moines developed the skywalk system throughout the downtown. These elevated corridors, located above the west alley adjacent to the Equitable Building and through the mall directly

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south of the building, link the downtown buildings together through enclosed corridors situated above alleys and across streets at the second floor level of buildings.

The Equitable Building remained very much as built into the 1960s. A few changes occurred in 1967, a major remodeling followed in 1985, and another major remodeling occurred in 2005-2007. These alterations are detailed below.

Narrative Description

Exterior

The Equitable Building possesses a square footprint measuring 132 feet x 132 feet on its first, second, and thirds floors. Sub-sidewalk voids are situated on the north and east elevations and measure 132 feet x 15 feet. The footprint of floors four through 19 is L-shaped with the void from the lower floors measuring 75 feet x 65 feet. The bottom three floors are covered with a flat rubber membrane roof, surmounted by mechanical equipment, and hidden from the street by surrounding buildings. A 4-story tower surmounts the 19th floor. This tower is octagonal in plan and is set back from all elevations. A small room on the top floor provides access to an outside walkway, which encircles the tower. A ladder mounted on the exterior of the tower provides access to the conical roof.

A skywalk – one among many of these elevated corridors in downtown Des Moines – is built up directly adjacent to the building, running along the west elevation of the Equitable Building. Several I-beams, attached to the building's second floor, support it. The skywalk is located about 14 ft above grade and situated above the alley next to the building. The skywalk is constructed of metal and glass, with an entrance to the Equitable Building at the second floor on its west elevation. The addition of this skywalk does not impact the building's historic integrity on a local level due to its location on the west (secondary) façade, as well as its relationship to the surrounding buildings. Skywalks have been added city-wide and exhibit the growth of the downtown of Des Moines as a whole.

Facades

The Equitable Building features two primary facades – its north and east elevations. The north façade has seven bays and bears the address of 604 Locust Street. The east façade has eight bays and bears the address of 312-320 Sixth Avenue. Both elevations feature three principle divisions: a base consisting of the lower three stories; a shaft, consisting of the floors 4-15, and a capital, consisting of floors 16-19. The base – with storefronts on the first floor and windows with decorative cast iron surrounds on the upper two stories – is clad in white terra cotta and Vermont granite, dramatically contrasting with the building's overall red brick appearance and lending the feeling of great power to the base. Decorative pilasters of white terra cotta, embellished with Gothic Revival detailing, extend upward from the third to fourth floor and flank each bay on the north and east elevations. White terra cotta corbels fixed at the top of the third floor support these pilasters. These corbels feature a sculpted pair of gnomes holding an

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hour glass between them – the hourglass referencing the passage of time and, by extension, the utility of life insurance.

The shaft division of the building is veneered with orangish-red face brick laid in one course of Flemish bond between five courses of running bond and set in gray colored mortar. This brick is generally in good condition. Some mortar joints have been poorly repointed with white colored joint sealant, which is visible upon close inspection. At the top of the building, its capital reintroduces the white terra cotta of the base. It clads the end bays of the 16th and 17th floors and, on the 18th and 19th floors, extends all the way across the north elevation, east elevation, and portions of the south and west elevations. A brick parapet, capped with terra cotta coping, surrounds all sides of the building above the 19th floor. On the north elevation, this parapet rises in a triangle shape to assume the appearance of a pediment. Portions of the terra cotta capital on the south elevation were removed in 2005-2007 to construct balconies on the elevation.

The west and south are secondary facades and face away from the streets. There isn't any storefront on these elevations. Their upper stories are similar to the primary facades of the building, including the same terra cotta capital as on the north and east elevations. Common brick was not used on the secondary facades of the Equitable Building as is otherwise typical in Des Moines. As noted above, the 2005-2007 remodeling removed a portion of the buildings terra cotta capital on the south to allow for the construction of a series of balconies.

Storefronts

The first floor bays on the north and east elevations are outfitted with display windows fixed in black anodized aluminum frames set inside the face of the north and east elevations 1-2 feet and a sign band above that is set flush to the face of the elevations. (The building's main entrance is an exception and is described below.) Originally, these storefronts featured show windows slightly recessed into the body of the building canting slightly as they recess. They featured stone bulkheads surmounted by plate glass windows set in cast iron frames. These storefronts and show windows were held in place by heavily detailed cast iron frames. This metalwork extended upwards to surround the windows on the second floor above the storefronts. The area in each bay between the storefronts and the second floor windows featured decorative cast iron panels, visually linking the storefront and the second floor windows.

The original storefronts remained intact for an undetermined number of years. A 1950s photograph (figure 6, page 41) shows some of the storefront bays damaged from a small explosion, including shattered plate glass panels and assumed minor surface damage from exterior debris. In the same image, a storefront bay appears to already have undergone a minor alteration as well. In 1967, Savage & Ver Ploeg, Inc., an architectural firm in West Des Moines, Iowa, prepared plans for the renovation of the building's storefronts, main entrance, and basement mechanicals. Some of these plans were implemented, and others were not. The implemented plans included the installation of plate glass windows fixed in black anodized aluminum frames set flush to the face of the north and east elevations. The installation also removed original portions of the decorative cast iron, which flanked these storefronts and replaced them with polished Vermont granite pilasters. This remodeling left the second floor

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windows surrounds and panels between the first and second floors intact but replaced the original second floor windows.

Entrances

The main entrance to the building is centered on the north elevation of the first floor and faces Locust Street. This richly detailed entrance features a 3-story arch that leads into an unenclosed recessed area with gray granite floors and granite walls. Two brushed brass revolving doors provide access to the building from this entrance, which was likely installed in 1967 or 1985. Each door is surmounted on the second floor, by a set of tripartite aluminum framed windows set in cast iron tracery and by four tall single-pane windows, likely installed in 1967 or 1985, on the third floor. The recessed walls of the main entrance are clad with granite, and granite panels with Gothic Revival-inspired tracery and finials face the area between the second and third floor windows. A bronze light fixture, influenced by Gothic Revival styling, hangs from the ceiling. The north elevation also features pedestrian door entrances in the two bays west of the main entrance. All these pedestrian doors date to the 1967 renovation of the building and feature single glass panels set in black anodized aluminum frames.

On the east elevation, one set of revolving doors is situated in the third bay from the north and another set of revolving doors is situated in the fifth bay from the north. The former provides access to an existing commercial space. The latter provides access to a corridor, which leads to the elevator lobby on the first floor of the building. One pedestrian door is also located on the east elevation in each of its two southernmost bays. All of these doors are fixed in anodized aluminum frames and were likely installed in 1967.

Three pedestrian doors are situated on the west elevation of the building. They date from various times and are not visible from the street. There are no entrances to the building on the south elevation.

Second and Third Floor Windows

Originally, the windows on floor 2 of the north elevation featured Chicago-style configurations. A large fixed central window flanked on each side by a smaller hinged window. The 1967 remodeling removed these windows and replaced them with the current windows, mounted in anodized aluminum frames. The central window is single-paned but the side windows are now single hung windows with fixed transom above. Originally the windows on floor 3 of the north elevation were sets of 4 narrow single sash hinged windows. The 1967 remodeling removed these windows and replaced them with aluminum single hung windows with fixed transoms above.

The original windows on the east elevation were the same as those on the north elevation. The existing windows on the east elevation likewise mirror those on the north elevation from floor to floor.

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The south and west elevation windows contain a mixture of original steel windows and replacement aluminum framed window with lower awning surmounted by a larger, fixed in place upper light.

Upper Story Windows

From the 4th to the 19th floor, the building's windows vary from floor to floor but generally remain consistent across each floor. Floor 4 window openings originally featured a pair of steel casements swinging outward on a vertical hinge in a V-shaped configuration. Each casement featured a pair of tall lights surmounted by a pair of short lights. In 2005-2007, all the 4th floor windows were removed and replaced with thermo-pane units, with the exception to 3 original steel windows located next to the smokestack on the south portion of the west elevation. Each unit features an aluminum frame with a small awning-type lower light surmounted by a larger, fixed in place upper light. The 5th and 6th floors retain their original windows on the north and east elevations – steel casements with each casement featuring a pair of tall lights surmounted by a pair of small lights, with the exception of two at the west end of the north elevation on the sixth floor. These two windows have been replaced with the same style of aluminum-framed windows found on the upper floors. The south and west elevation windows on the 5th and 6th floors contain a mixture of original steel windows and replacement aluminum framed window with lower awning surmounted by a larger, fixed in place upper light. The original windows on the 7th through the 18th floors were removed in 2005-2007 and replaced with the same windows as on the 4th floor. The 19th floor windows vary. Except for the end bays, all of the windows on the north and east elevations were originally small steel awning windows. These were replaced in 2005-2007 with non-historic aluminum framed windows. Sandwiched between the end bays on the north portion of the west elevations, the windows openings are round. Originally, they featured glass panes set in steel frames. These were replaced in 2005-2007 with comparable aluminum framed window units. The remainder of the windows on the west elevation and those on the south elevation were sets of steel casement windows. These were replaced in 2005-2007 with aluminum framed windows.

Balconies

The 2005-2007 remodeling constructed two sets of balconies on the building's south elevation. One set of balconies is situated on the east half of the south elevation. These balconies are cantilevered to floors 10-19. The balconies feature steel beam supports, concrete decks, steel railings, glass doors, and flanking door-height windows. The installation of the balconies on the 18th and 19th floors required the removal of some terra cotta wall cladding.

The second set of balconies is situated on the west end of the south elevation to the west of the new fire escape described below. These balconies are attached to floors 7-19. They feature steel support columns, steel decks, and steel railings. A pedestrian door of glass mounted in an anodized aluminum frame provides access to the balconies from each of the residential units.

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Fire Escapes

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The building includes two steel fire escapes original to its construction. One is mounted on the south half of the west elevation near the smokestack. It runs from floor 19 to floor 3. A hinged extension of this fire escape swings down to grade. The second fire escape is mounted on the west half of the south elevation to the east of the balconies and runs from the 19th floor to the roof of the second floor. There, it exits to grade by a staircase inside the building. In 2005-2007, an enclosed fire escape, clad in galvanized steel, was constructed on the south elevation near the building's el. This exit stair runs from the 19th to floor 3 and connects to a new stair enclosure-like fire escape with staircases within the building providing emergency exit to the 1st floor.

Smokestack

A steel, cylindrically shaped smokestack is situated on the south half of the west elevation of the building within its el. This smokestack remains in good condition.

Roof

The roof above the third floor (the lower roof of the building) is covered with a synthetic membrane, installed in 1985. A large chiller was installed on this roof at the same time and serves the entire building. The skyscraper roof is of composition and rock. Mechanical equipment of various sorts is installed on this roof but not visible from the street. Both of these roofs are in fair condition. The roof of the tower is conical in shape and clad with white-colored terra cotta blending to creamy-colored terra cotta towards its peak. From the Equitable's earliest years, flood lighting has illuminated the tower roof so that it stands as a beacon against the city's skyline.

Tower

A 4-story tower is situated on top of the 19th floor, rising 319 feet above the street. Elevator equipment and two large water tanks occupy most of this tower. One tank supplied running water to the building. The other tank was required by the municipal building code to supply water to the 19th floor's sprinkler system at the time when the city's waterworks produced insufficient pressure to reach this floor. A set of steel stairs leads up to a small room and a washroom on the top floor of the tower. A door provides access to a narrow walkway, which surrounds the outside of the tower, with a steel ladder accessing its very top. All of the tower's interior appears to date from the original construction of the building, except for elevator equipment purchased for the 2005-2007 renovation, which is now stored in it.

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BUILDING INTERIOR

Foundation

Excavation for the building's construction in 1924 discovered sandy soil on the site. To establish a solid base for the skyscraper, 1492 concrete piles were sunk to bed rock rather than using a "spread foundation." This use of concrete piles was believed to be a "superior" design and the only one of its kind in Des Moines at the time.

Structure

The structure is steel framing consisting of steel I-beam columns with steel I-beam girders, almost entirely encased with concrete. Steel lacing bars are found at the third floor to aid in horizontal wind bracing. The concrete was added to the structural elements to add substantially more fireproofing to the structure.

Basement

The basement remains generally as originally built. The Equitable of Iowa operated its printing department from this area. The sub-basement of the Equitable Building features remarkable steam heating equipment, mostly original to the building. The heating equipment Hubbell installed in the Equitable Building was of behemoth capacity. Much of this equipment remains in service, although in 1954 the system was converted to oil from coal. (Paul Wilson, Sr.)

The basement is currently used for mechanical, electrical, and storage areas with some interior walls realigned in the 1980s. As already mentioned, there is a sub-sidewalk void below the north and east sidewalks next to the building.

First Floor

The main entrance on Locust Street features a vestibule, lobby, and a bank of six passenger elevators and one freight elevator. The lobby's marble walls and partial flooring and plaster ceilings are original to the building. The walls are a creamy-colored marble (original) with a black-colored marble with white veins (1967 renovation) for the wall base. The flooring is a mixture of the black-colored marble with white veins (1967 renovation) and cream-colored marble with diamond patterns (original). A side corridor is situated at the south end of this lobby. This corridor leads, to the east, to the east entrance of the building. To the west, this corridor leads to the offices on the first floor. On the east end of this corridor, it features a newspaper and cigar kiosk, dating to the 1980s renovation of the building but no longer in use. The finishes of this corridor match those of the lobby. A straight flight of marble stairs is situated at the south end of the lobby and provides access to the second floor. Elaborate bronze wall sconces and overhead light fixtures, influenced by Gothic Revival styling, illuminate the lobby. The side corridor contains non-historic overhead light fixtures. All these interior finishes and fixtures are in good condition.

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The spaces off of the main corridors were originally constructed for commercial space use. The original finishes are unknown and they were remodeled in 1967 and later with dropped ceilings and remodeled surface finishes. It is thought that the original flooring remains, but original demising walls and wall finishes have been altered since the original construction. The space in the northeast corner of the building was occupied by the same jewelry store since the building's opening in 1924. It relocated to another site in downtown Des Moines a few years ago. A mezzanine is situated above the space, although it is not visible from the first floor. The spaces in the northwest corner are currently constructed and used for retail and commercial purposes, housing a bookstore and law office. The space to the south has been demolished to the structure, some original plaster walls and some new wall construction. The room is used for storage now and has a layer of dirt on the floor. Some original tile and possibly terrazzo flooring remain.

Elevator Lobbies

Elevators run from the basement to the 19th floor of the building. Each floor reflects the footprint of the elevator lobby on the first floor. Each elevator lobby from the 2nd to the 19th floors was remodeled in 1985 with new surface finishes and dropped ceilings. As part of the 2005-2007 renovation of the building, two windows on the south wall of all the elevator lobbies were bricked in – one so that a utility chase could be built in the area and one so that a new enclosed fire escape could be built. This has left the elevator lobbies without natural light and rather dark. The original elevator doors only remain in the basement. The remaining elevator doors were replaced with brass doors during the 1967 renovation.

Elevators

Eight elevators originally served this building, however only four elevators currently serve the building. Originally, elevator operators ran them. Part of the 1967 remodeling of the building included the installation of high-speed, automatic elevators (Pease: 221) with brass sliding double doors and new surface finishes in the cabs. The 2005-2007 remodeling of the building proposed to convert the southwest elevator into a freight elevator to facilitate moving furniture into the condo units. New hoist equipment for this elevator was purchased, and stored in the tower of the building. It was never installed, and the elevator cab remains unchanged.

Second Floor

A 1980s skywalk corridor is attached to the west end of the 2nd floor, which leads into an east-west corridor. The elevator lobby corridor runs perpendicular to the corridor to the north. Another corridor north of the elevator lobby runs east-west perpendicular to it. This network of corridors accesses the office space on the second floor. These corridors were remodeled in 1985 with new tiling, carpet, light fixtures, wood trim and build outs. The elevator lobby and south corridor feature marble floors and faux marble painted walls.

The second floor corridors lead to commercial space. The space to the north is an existing business and will remain as is. The space to the south of the central east-west corridor is

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primarily unused commercial space. Restrooms are located directly south of the central marble staircase.

Upper Floors

The original floor plan for the building repeated the same plan on virtually all floors from 4 -18. (The Equitable's boardroom and corporate offices configured the 19th floor somewhat differently.) The standard floor plan featured an elevator lobby and bank of eight elevators abutting another corridor running perpendicular to the lobby on the north. This corridor was partially single-loaded and partially double-loaded. Offices led off of this corridor. East of the bank of elevators, the plan included an enclosed exit stairwell and stairs, and restrooms. Over the years, many changes have taken place in the office spaces on each floor. As an extreme, one law firm cut an opening in the ceiling of its 10th floor office and built a staircase to the 11th floor to use space there for offices.

In 1985, the Equitable of Iowa firm remodeled the interior of floors 9 – 19. Ceilings were dropped in the office spaces and in the corridors accessing them. This work included new surface finishes in many of the public and office spaces and elevator lobbies on floors 3 – 19. Coffered ceilings were painted in contemporary colors in the elevator lobby on the first floor. An opening was cut in the west wall of the second floor to provide access to the new skywalk. The surface finishes in the elevator lobby on the second floor were remodeled, as described above.

In 2005, Equitable, L.P., a holding company of B.J. Knapp of Des Moines, purchased the Equitable Building with the intention of converting certain upper floors into 54 luxury condominium units and leaving commercial usage on other floors generally as is. As part of this project in 2005-2007, this developer removed the building's original windows and installed replacements as described above. When this project's financial backing failed, this renovation ceased, leaving the upper floors of the building as a work-in-progress. This condition remains to the present day.

To summarize this 2005-2007 work: many floors were entirely gutted except for the stairwells, staircases, elevator lobbies, and some electrical closets. Total demolition occurred on floors 7, 9, 11-19. The demolition on floors 4-6 varied. Floor 4 contains 50% of vacant office space and 50% demolished space. Floor 5 contains about 90% finished office space, of which only about 50% is still occupied, and 10% completely demolished space. The vacant spaces appear to have been vacant for several years. Floor 6 contains about 30% of occupied office space, 40% of vacant office space and 30% of completely demolished space with new metal stud walls installed ca. 2005-2007. Floors 8 and 10 remain commercial space, but only floor 8 remains occupied. On some floors, metal studs were installed for new partition walls. These studs were never drywalled. On other floors, these spaces remain entirely open without metal studs. Demolition included the removal of dropped ceilings, exposing original plaster ceilings, removal of carpeting, and exposing original terrazzo floors. A model condominium unit was built and furnished on a portion of the 17th floor. On portions of the 15th floor, two condo units were built but never occupied because of the building's financial problems. Partial demolition and partial

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renovation has taken place on some of the other floors. Some office spaces on the upper floors remain tenant-occupied. The surfaces of all these spaces vary. Many ceilings are pockmarked as a result of the installation and removal of dropped ceilings from their original plaster. Many of the original plaster walls in these spaces also exhibit a variety of conditions as a result of different surface treatments to them over the years.

The following schedule provides a thumbnail sketch of the Equitable Building's current physical status:

Floor 1:	Retail; 50% Vacant, 50% Occupied
Floor 2:	Offices as before Knapp; 40% Vacant, 60% Occupied
Floor 3:	Offices as before Knapp; 50% Vacant, 50% Occupied
Floor 4:	50% Offices as before Knapp (Vacant) & 50% Complete Demo
Floor 5:	90% Professional offices as before Knapp (50% Vacant) & 10% Complete Demo
Floor 6:	70% Building management offices and professional offices as before Knapp (40% Vacant) and 30% Complete Demo with some new metal studs and framework for unit walls in place
Floor 7:	Complete Demo, as described below
Floor 8:	1 Commercial Space occupying the entire floor
Floor 9:	Complete Demo, as described below
Floor 10:	Professional offices as before Knapp (100% Vacant)
Floor 11-14:	Complete Demo; Some new metal studs & framework for unit walls in place
Floor 15:	Complete Demo; (50%) 2 condo units sold but unoccupied and 50% some new metal studs and framework for unit walls in place
Floor 16:	Similar to floors 11-14
Floor 17:	Complete Demo; 40% occupied condo unit, 30% model condo unit, 30% some new metal studs and framework for unit walls in place
Floor 18:	Similar to floors 11-14
Floor 19:	Originally site of Equitable executive offices & Board room, now similar to floors 11-14
Floors 20-24:	Original elevator equipment, water tanks, & unoccupied tower room
Basement and Boiler:	Generally as built with MEP upgrades

*Please Note: "complete demo" indicates that the 1985 dropped ceilings were removed and original plaster ceilings exposed, demising walls removed, some plaster stripped from perimeter walls and concrete cased steel columns, and carpeting removed to expose original terrazzo floors. About 85% of the original marble wall base around the perimeter walls has been removed or destroyed. The original elevator lobbies and adjacent stairwells remain on all floors, bathrooms adjacent to the stairwells remain on floors 3-11 and the electrical closets adjacent to the bathrooms remain on floors 3-19.

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Restrooms

Men and women's restrooms remain as built in 1924 from the 2nd to the 11th floor. They feature marble wall cladding and marble stall partitions, whose grain is carefully matched from panel to panel. When removing some of those panels, the building superintendent discovered that they were numbered on the back to facilitate matching during installation. All of these restrooms have replacement toilet fixtures. All of these restrooms from the 12th to the 19th floors were gutted during the 2005-2007 renovation of the building and the marble removed.

Flooring

The floors material from the third through the 19th floors is terrazzo. On the floors still occupied, these floors are generally covered with carpeting. During the 2005-2007 renovation, this carpeting was removed from the gutted floors, and the terrazzo left exposed. The terrazzo is in fair – good condition, although some cracks have appeared throughout the building.

Stairwell

An internal stairwell with a steel staircase and terrazzo treads, located adjacent to the elevator lobby, runs from the 1st floor to the 19th floor. The doors to this stairwell are replacements dating from 1985 and later.

Condition

The condition of the Equitable Building is excellent, having been well maintained since its original construction. This excellent condition of the exterior includes its foundation, storefronts, original and replacement windows, tower, and roofs. Although noticeable poor re-pointing has taken place in spots throughout all four elevations of the building, these repairs seem to have stabilized water penetration of the building. Although windows have been replaced, as noted above, the original window openings remain intact. The interior alterations to the building are expected changes of any office building of its age.

Statement of Integrity

The Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa Building communicates high evaluations of all seven aspects of historic and architectural integrity.

Location – The building remains in the original location, set in the heart of downtown Des Moines.

Design – The building's design remains intact and readily visible with original massing, building configuration, original pattern of door and window openings, and original ornamentation and detailing.

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Setting – The surrounding buildings and main thoroughfares, Sixth Street and Locust Avenue, remain largely as they did when the Equitable Building was built. Aside from the downtown city growth, new surrounding buildings and the installation of the skywalk system, the setting and powerful feeling of prominence and stature remains as when it was originally constructed.

Materials – The Equitable Building retains most of the original exterior building materials, aside from the replacement of a majority of the exterior windows, first floor storefront systems and doors. Interior alterations were mostly minor and strictly cosmetic. The main interior public spaces retain a majority of the historic finishes and are largely in good condition. A more elaborate explanation of existing conditions can be found above in the Narrative Description section.

Workmanship – The remaining integrity of workmanship is apparent through the retention and preservation of the elaborate detailing and materiality throughout the building.

Feeling – The Equitable Building's feeling remains apparent, even with the minor changes that occurred since originally constructed. The building still exhibits a feeling of prominence and power with the materiality of the interior and exterior, height and location. As the location, design, setting, materials and workmanship remain intact and apparent, the building's feeling remains as well.

Association – Like feeling, workmanship and setting, association is retained because of the building's existence as a successful and recognizable commercial/retail building throughout the building's history.

Architectural style and the building's importance in architectural and business growth history are key features that qualify the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa Building. This property meets all registration requirements for the property type and exhibits defining characteristics that make it important in the history of business in the state of Iowa. The massing, ornamentation, materiality and design done by prominent architecture firm Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson are all significant elements that make the building a significant example of architectural history as well.

Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa
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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 features high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa
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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1924-1964

Significant Dates

1924

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson

A. H. Neumann Company

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

Completed and first occupied in 1924, the Equitable Life Insurance of Iowa building (hereinafter "Equitable Building") is locally significant under Criterion A for the area of COMMERCE and Criterion C for the area of ARCHITECTURE. The Equitable Building calls attention to Des Moines as a center of the nation's insurance industry. In 1924, the Equitable occupied floors 14-18 in the building, leasing the lower floors to other businesses. Beginning in 1948, the company gradually occupied more space in the building, expanding to the 13th floor. By 1967, the firm occupied floors 9-18. Today, this firm has become ING, a Dutch firm and one of the ten largest mutual life insurance companies in America. During its occupancy of the Equitable Building, the company flourished under a succession of carefully trained and handpicked leaders, several of whom belonged to the extended family of the company's founder, Fredrick M. Hubbell.

The Equitable Building is architecturally significant because of its design and the associated architectural firm, Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson. This 19-story building and 4-story tower calls attention the early 20th century American skyscraper construction in Des Moines, designed in a Late Gothic Revival style. The building immediately became a dominant new commercial building in downtown Des Moines, and an architectural statement for the Equitable Life Insurance of Iowa. Furthermore, the structure's general contractor, A. H. Neumann Company, was one of Des Moines' premiere construction companies for many years.

The period of significance is 1924 through 1964, the years the Equitable occupied the building within the National Register's 50-year cut-off date. An archeological investigation was not part of this nomination; additional research may identify archeological sites that could contribute to the overall historical significance of the property.

Narrative Statement of Significance

History of the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa

Introduction

The Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa was founded on January 21, 1867 as the first life insurance company west of the Mississippi River (Friedricks 2007, 1-2). Frederick M. Hubbell, his law firm partner Jefferson S. Polk, and 11 other investors were all part of the original establishing group. Frederick originally served as the secretary, but was named president in 1888 and held the position until 1907. By the 1920s, he bought out his associates' shares and owned the firm outright (Hudson 2008, 259-260). The company would remain associated with the Hubbell name until 1998, when the company, the oldest life insurance company west of the Mississippi, was sold to ING, a Dutch financial services company (Friedricks 2007, 170-171). The company grew throughout the years to become the premiere life insurance company in Iowa, and one of the top insurance company across the nation. Innovative principles and policies attributed to the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa's long-standing success and fortune.

Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa

Name of Property

Nineteenth Century

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The idea for the company originated with Frederick M. Hubbell. With his early success and acknowledged respect, Hubbell quickly found support from a number of his older, influential friends, especially Hoyt Sherman. The other founders included some of Des Moines' most influential leaders; Judge Phineas McCray, Benjamin Franklin Allen (the Midwest's then wealthiest and best known financier and first president of the company), among others. The founding men had two principal, unified objectives; stop the flow of life insurance money out of the western states to east coast companies and use the funds to invest in Iowa farms and farm land (Pease 1967, 8-14). These two objectives continued to guide company policy until the outbreak of World War I, causing the firm to broaden its focus more nationally.

The innovation began in 1868, when the Equitable invented and introduced the idea of mortgage insurance (Pease 1967, 41). This revolutionary idea would make the company's fortune. As a requirement for receiving a loan from the company, a borrower was required to take out a life insurance policy as well. Quickly, mortgage insurance accounted for one-quarter of the firm's life insurance policies. Additionally, an idea used by other insurance providers, Equitable policyholders were allowed to borrow money on their policies beginning in 1872. These two innovations particularly helped the company's core group of investors – Midwest farmers – by providing them the cash required to buy new land, equipment or supplies (Pease 1967, 41-43).

The Panic of 1873, however, caused income to fall, as the nation plunged into a serious depression. It also led to a consolidation of the Equitable's shareholders, as more and more of the original investors sold out for much needed cash. Benjamin Franklin Allen declared bankruptcy in 1873, and his shares were bought by Hubbell and his partner, Jefferson S. Polk. Hubbell, Sherman, and Polk remained the only principal shareholders. In 1874, Hoyt Sherman was named president (Pease 1967, 28, 59-60). Hubbell continued his determined effort to buy up stock in the Equitable, and he eventually acquired the overwhelming majority of shares in the company (Friedricks 2007, 58-59).

The years following the Panic of 1873 included steady growth. Hubbell took over president of the company in 1888, and began a period of the prosperity for the company and local insurance growth and significance. As Barbara Beving Long writes:

By 1888, 11 insurance companies with combined assets of \$2,643,974 had their home offices in Des Moines. By 1910, the number had grown to 44, and Des Moines was clearly the leading insurance center in the country after Hartford, Connecticut. Des Moines-based companies insured against tornado and hail damage as well as the more common disasters of fire and death (Long, Des Moines and Polk County, Flag on the Prairie 1988, 48).

This prosperity brought about company growth as well. In 1891, the company moved to a new, 7-story leased building on Youngerman Block in Courthouse Square.

The year 1893 brought with it the Panic of 1893. This period of depression did not affect the company as much as the earlier downturn, although it did result in fewer new policy sales. The Equitable continued expanding slowly into more states, particularly in the Midwest. Cyrus Kirk,

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Hubbell's successor as president, surveyed the annual reports of all insurance companies doing business in the State of Iowa during the 1890s, while he served as company Secretary. He found the Equitable's "splendid financial reputation" due to its leading all competitors in "interest on invested assets, in mortality gains, and in interest earned to taxes, expenses, and losses incurred (Pease 1967, 68)." In other words, the company's investments were safer and thus more profitable, than its competitors.

Early 20th Century

During the early 20th century, the fortunes of the Equitable reflected those of the nation. Wars and depressions were national in scope, however Equitable's conservative leaders maintained and innovated solid, need-based business policies to enable the company to survive. In 1907, the year Cyrus Kirk became president of the company, two innovations were introduced. For the first time the company issued policies to women, who were actuarially likely to outlive their spouses. Also for the first time, trusts were introduced to preserve assets for beneficiaries. The same year Kirk became president, the company moved once again. This time they purchased an 8-story building at Sixth and Locust Streets, which the Equitable Life Insurance Company of New York had erected this building in the 1890s as an investment. Although the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa added four floors to the top, this still did not fulfill the company's desire for a temple of commerce (Pease 1967, 84-86). By 1915, the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa ranked fifteenth in rate of gain among all US life insurance companies and twenty-first in annual volume (Pease 1967, 96).

Equitable's innovative procedures continued to evolve and provide more and more insurance options and policies. "On July 1, 1916, Equitable of Iowa became one of the first three legal reserve life insurance companies in the United States to offer Waiver of Premium plus a Disability Income of \$8.33 per month per thousand with no reduction in the death benefit (Pease 1967, 107). August 1917 marked the company's 50 year anniversary. Soon, however, the country would enter World War I. Under Frederick Cooper Hubbell, the son of Frederick Marion Hubbell, the company led the way in investing heavily in U.S. government war bonds.

'The war brought a shift in the fifty-year policy of ploughing the great bulk of the Company's income back into Iowa and Midwestern agriculture. From a total of \$200,000 invested in bonds in 1916, war financing brought the Company's bond account up to an impressive \$2.5 million by 1918. The bulk of the bond account, of course, represented cash lent to a government at war.' (Pease 1967, 115)

The company also adopted an employee-friendly policy designed to hold jobs for employees who served in the military, the Y.M.C.A, or the Red Cross. The Influenza outbreak of 1918, which struck the Midwest particularly hard, coupled with the deaths resulting from World War I, proved to be a great strain on the company's finances. The dual strain did not affect the Equitable alone. In fact, the war and the epidemic caused severe losses for all insurance companies. However, the loss of life from the two catastrophes also caused more people to want the protection that life insurance offered. During the prosperity of the 1920s that followed the war, the number of policies sold by the surviving insurance companies increased dramatically (Pease 1967, 110-113, 115).

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In 1920, the company led the way once again when it established an Equitable Savings Fund for employees, who were allowed to invest up to five percent of their wages in the fund. The company added one-half that sum, as well. Upon retirement, the onset of ill health, or after twenty years of service, the employees could withdraw the money plus interest. This plan was widely copied. However, it soon became apparent that those who needed the money most would be the least likely to be able to voluntarily save. Thus in 1937 the voluntary fund was closed and replaced by the Pension Plan for Home Office Personnel, a modern pension system (Pease 1967, 133-134).

Post- World War I also allowed for the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa to start planning for the long-contemplated erection of the company's own building. The company's dream's of a 'lofty, monumental type of structure that would add to Equitable of Iowa's prestige' was finally a reality (Pease 1967, 120). on April 16, 1919:

The Company acquired a site for a future home office building, the quarter-block at the southwest corner of the intersection of Sixth and Locust Streets on which, fifty years before, had stood the first home of Hoyt Sherman. The plot, occupied by a number of two-story buildings, was owned by Bankers Trust Company, and cost the Company \$485,000, plus another \$152,883.65 required to buy up existing leases. The cost, however, was a bookkeeping record, for the transaction was an even exchange of properties. The home office building was conveyed to Bankers Trust for the same amount. The figure represented the book value of the building after the addition of four floors in 1911 and extensive modernization in 1914 and 1918. It was the biggest real estate deal consummated in Des Moines up to that time. It was a profitable transaction for the company (Pease 1967, 117)

In 1921, a building committee formed, which included Nollen Hubbell, FC Hubbell and FW Hubbell, with FW named the Chairman. FW was instructed to 'devote [his] whole time and energy' to the project, and that is exactly what he did. Together with Des Moines architects Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson, they designed a 19-story gothic edifice, cathedral-esque in design, with a lofty seven-story spire atop the 19th story (Pease 1967, 120-121).

"FW's lofty spire became a landmark which, illuminated by powerful floodlights, serves to this day as a beacon for travelers approaching town after dark." (Pease 1967, 121)

In 1921, Henry S. Nollen began a twenty-five year run as the company president. His vision for the company differed from his predecessors. He saw life insurance as "a service rather than a commodity; an income rather than a single sum; a great social force for the preservation of the family rather than merely the means to pay the undertakers (Pease 1967, 96)." The results of this shift in focus were not long in coming. Between 1912 and 1938, the company expanded from doing business in twelve states to a presence in twenty-nine, and life insurance in force grew during the same period from \$67 million to \$577 million (Pease 1967, 96).

The prosperity of the 1920s collapsed dramatically in October 1929 with the New York Stock Exchange plunge that led to the Great Depression. Fortunes were lost as companies closed. The demand for cash loans on life insurance policies hit the Equitable hard. However, because of the strong reserves, the continuing inflow of premium payments, and the prudent policies the company had in place, the Equitable "not once was forced to borrow in order to keep up with

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these abnormal demands (Pease 1967, 146-147).” The volume was incredible. By 1935, the Equitable had paid out \$50 million to its policyholders.

To achieve this feat, Henry Nollen faced the Great Depression head-on and adopted five new strategies to see the company through. These included (1) halting all investment of income, (2) selling no securities, (3) reducing all salaries, including company officers’, by ten percent, (4) borrowing no money, and (5) meeting all demands for money. Many companies discontinued issuing disability policies or reduced dividends during the depression, but the Equitable continued as in the past. The company managed to maintain most staff during these tough years, and it also gave temporary loans to its agencies and agents from its revolving fund. In 1929, the company disbursed \$10.3 million on its policies; in 1932, it paid out \$19.2 million. At the same time, income from premiums and investments dropped from \$29.4 million in 1931 to \$26.5 million just two years later. Despite the hardship, the Equitable would benefit in future years by attracting many new and returning customers. Grateful for loans when they were desperate, policyholders and employees repaid the company with increased loyalty (Pease 1967, 146-155).

In addition to Nollen, Frederick W. (F.W.) Hubbell played a large role in maintaining the solvency and reputation of the Equitable during the Great Depression. At the time, F.W. served as vice president and chief financial officer. As the Great Depression began, more and more farmers were in danger of losing their farms. The Equitable policy had long been to grant first mortgages to policyholders of up to less than half the value of the land. Many farmers took out second, third, or fourth mortgages with other firms. When crop and livestock prices hit bottom, F.W. devised an unprecedented plan to help. Company personnel met with officers of companies holding secondary mortgages and pointed out that in case of foreclosures and a reversion of the property to the first creditor, the Equitable, secondary liens would be erased. Then the Equitable offered cash payments of \$250 to the junior lien holders. This represented the cost of foreclosure proceedings. In many cases, the payments were accepted and foreclosure was averted. In other cases, the Equitable bought the crop at a pegged price, but applied the money to the mortgage. This enabled many more farmers to hold on. These crops were held in storage, and the next year, when a drought hit and prices soared, the Equitable sold the crop and applied the money received on the mortgage. These policies resulted in the creation of many more loyal customers, even extending to the children and grandchildren of the original farmers. The farm crisis, however, also convinced F.W. Hubbell that the company needed more diversification. After the Great Depression ended, he began switching investments to government bonds and to urban residential property (Pease 1967, 158-170).

When World War II followed the Great Depression, the company adopted many of the same policies that had served it well in World War I, especially regarding employees who served in the military. However, it soon became clear that war casualties would not be restricted to those serving as combatants. Modern warfare presented risk to large portions of the civilian population. In November 1939, two years before Pearl Harbor, the Equitable became the first life insurance company to announce a “revolutionary war clause.” All new policies, regardless of the age or sex of the insured, specified the “return of premiums plus three percent interest in lieu of the payment of face amount in the event of death from war or war-related causes.” Many in the company were unhappy with the new policy, but other insurance companies quickly

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followed suit. The significantly greater number of casualties in World War II soon justified inclusion of the clause and showed the foresightedness of Equitable's personnel. As of September 15, 1946, the Equitable paid a total of 699 insurance claims related to the war, totaling \$1,378,093 (Pease 1967, 186-190).

The Equitable continued its slow, steady growth. For the 1942-1946 period, it ranked 21st in the nation among U.S. life insurance companies in amount of life insurance in force, its highest ranking to that point in time. At the same time, it ranked 22nd in assets recorded. The types of assets held had changed radically, however. In 1928, 57 percent of all company assets were in farm mortgage loans; by 1941, the corresponding number was 17 percent. Fully 64 percent of assets at the later date were split almost evenly among US Government bonds, state, county, and municipal bonds, public utility bonds, policy loans, and farms owned and being sold under contract (Pease 1967, 192-195). In 1949, the \$1 billion mark was achieved (Pease 1967, 218-219).

Late 20th Century

The second half of the 20th century saw numerous changes for the Equitable and the family most closely associated with its success – the Hubbell's. The prosperous post-war period saw the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa increase its presence in Des Moines. In 1948, the company expanded to include the thirteenth floor of the Equitable Building. Then, in 1967, to celebrate its centennial anniversary, the firm undertook the remodeling of the Equitable Building, as described in section 7 of this nomination and found in the attached documentation. The firm subsequently occupied floors nine through eighteen in the building.

In the 1950s, the decision again was made to go with branch offices. A few years earlier, Nollen and F.W. Hubbell planned to reorganize the entire company, with more divisions dedicated to fewer tasks. At the same time, a number of women were promoted to leadership roles. Although not the first company to give important posts to women, the Equitable was among the earliest in the U.S. and in Des Moines to do so. This time, Equitable followed the lead of other successful firms going through these internal changes, while incorporating the ideas formulated in the 1920's (Pease 1967, 131-132).

Technologically, the firm continued on the forefront of life insurance as well. As it had introduced the first telephone in Des Moines, the company furthermore introduced the electromechanical calculator in 1949, the first in Des Moines. This machine was a precursor to the modern computer (Pease 1967, 201-203). In 1961, the internationally famous design firm, Raymond Loewy/William Snaith Inc., was hired to review the company's image. In 1962, the company's new look was introduced, which included building renovations, symbol improvements and a name change, shortening it to the "Equitable of Iowa" (Pease 1967, 220-221).

In 1977, the Equitable of Iowa Company was reorganized, creating a new holding company, the Equitable of Iowa Companies. James Windsor Hubbell, Jr., nephew of F.W. and grandson of F.C., who had been chairman of the board of the life insurance company, became chairman of

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the holding company as well. He led the Equitable into further downtown Des Moines real estate purchases and more civic involvement, including the purchase of the Des Moines-based Younkers department store chain. In, 1987, James Jr.'s second son, Frederick (Fred) Shelton Hubbell, became president of the firm, and in 1993, Fred succeeded James as chairman and CEO of the company (Friedricks 2007, 168-170).

Under Fred's leadership, the firm concentrated on annuity products. He also began divesting the firm of some of its ancillary businesses. As a result, the company's earnings per share nearly tripled from 1989 to 1992. At the time, the Equitable's 500 employees were spread out in four Des Moines buildings. Fred saw clear advantages in consolidating the offices, but he ruled out the Equitable Building as the site.

As the fourth Fred Hubbell to head the company and the second fifth-generation Hubbell to play a prominent role in Des Moines, Fred acknowledged the building's significance: "It's been a meaningful part of this company and this city and this industry." Nevertheless, he explained, "it just doesn't meet our needs." (Quoted in Friedricks, 170)

Fred sold the Equitable Building and oversaw the construction of a new, seven story building three blocks to the west. Before the firm could complete the construction and move into the new facility, however, Hubbell sold the insurance company to ING Groep NV, a Dutch financial services company. The sale, Iowa's largest to that time, was closed at \$2.2 billion. The extended Hubbell family, still under the terms of the F.M. Hubbell Trust, held 49 percent of the life insurance company's shares. The family netted about \$1 billion for sale (Friedricks 2007, 170-171). ING subsequently would move the business into the new building and maintain operations there to the present day.

The termination of the F.M. Hubbell Trust in 1983 resulted in the distribution of between \$160 to \$210 million dollars among 13 heirs. Chief among the estate's holdings were the shares of the Equitable stock and the shares of F.M. Hubbell, son & Company, primarily a real estate firm (Friedricks 2007, 166).

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The Building's Attractive Power

The Equitable Building stands today as a monument, not only to the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa, but the city of Des Moines. Situated on the main axis and thoroughfare in Des Moines in line with the capitol building, the structure stood as the tallest building in Iowa for nearly 50 years (ca. 1924-1973). The structure's height proclaimed its position physically and symbolically as a center of commerce in the city, as well as an advertising tool for the company. The building's elaborate Gothic Revival design and detailing done by the prominent architectural firm Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson, along with the structure's height and prominence, spoke to this power the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa wanted to represent. Additionally, the location of the building is of supreme importance, located on the same axis (Locust Street) as the capitol building. At the time of construction (1924), both buildings' domes soared above the rest and complimented each other from across the river.

'If ever a building mirrored the image of a corporation the new home of the Company was and is a steel and stone reflection of Equitable of Iowa: sound, solid, conservative. Above a base of polished granite, pointed piers of brick soar skyward to support cornice and tower of cream-white terra cotta, fashioning a massive monument to moral and financial integrity. The message of FW's building comes through clear and strong, shaping the very character of the city whose skyline it dominates.' (Pease 1967, 121)

The imposing skyscraper design of the Equitable Building was intended to be a chief advertisement for the firm, and the firm pressed this advantage in a variety of ways. One marvel of this building is the exterior illumination of its tower at night. "At night the tower is lighted by forty spot-lights, making the building visible for many miles in all directions (*Des Moines Capitol*, June 24, 1924)." The 19th story roof was opened as an observation deck and the walkway around the outside of the tower as an "observation balcony" so that visitors could view the city and surroundings from these lofty vantage points. Visitors to the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines were invited to tour the building and experience the view (*Des Moines Register*, August 23, 1925).

The Equitable's tower reinforced the attractive power of the building's height and compliments the soaring dome of the Iowa State Capitol Building across the Des Moines River on the city's east side. Together, these edifices call attention to twin pillars of the American body politic – the public sector and the private sector, a conscious aim likely intended by the Equitable's builders. Both the capitol and the Equitable are situated on Locust Street – the former on a hill to the east of downtown and the latter centered on the flood plain in the central business district. This juxtaposition creates an axis, which bisects the city's civic district of government buildings clustered along the banks of the Des Moines. Taken all together, these streetscape elements give Des Moines its distinctive sense of place. Finally, the Equitable Building fostered a great sense of pride among Iowans. Every city in the US has an iconic skyscraper dating from the early 20th century – the Woolworth Building in New York City or the Wrigley Building in Chicago. They are to those cities what the Equitable Building is to Des Moines – a symbol of commercial pride and civic dignity.

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The Equitable Building is a masterpiece of art and architecture. It is of architectural interest because of its skyscraper design, Late Gothic Revival styling, and associations with the Des Moines architectural firm of Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson. The Equitable Building calls attention to the second era of skyscraper construction in downtown Des Moines during the 1920s (Page 2004: 26-27) and to Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson's manipulation of Gothic Revival styling and detailing in a contemporary vein. The massive size and towering height of the building achieved its intended purpose to awe onlookers, to install confidence in the Equitable of Iowa, and to promote the firm's growth and stature.

Imaginative Gothic Revival detailing was a popular design approach for Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson, Architects during the early 1900's, particularly in commercial, multi-family residential and educational property types. Several of their featured projects exhibit this style, most notably the Equitable Building, Roosevelt High School and Lincoln High School (Long and Christian, 8-15). The Roosevelt High School and Lincoln High School, whose forms are nearly identical, were constructed the same year as the Equitable Building and exhibit similar entry and decorative detailing and use of terra cotta, granite and red brick.

The wonders of the Equitable Building are not confined to its exterior. Most notably, the grand entrance and elevator lobby with its grand height and decoration. The warm, creamy-colored marble floor and marble walls with elaborately decorated marble elevator surrounds lead the eyes up to the coffered plaster ceiling where the original gothic-inspired brass light fixtures hang. Marble arches, gothic-inspired brass wall sconces and gothic-inspired cast iron grilles and arched door-transom openings decorate the remainder of the L-shaped corridor. A grand, marble staircase and railing leads from the first to second floor with a marble railing system with marble balusters, end pedestals and railing surrounding the floor opening on the second floor. Original terrazzo flooring is found throughout the building and the main staircase adjacent to the elevators running from the second floor to roof contains the original terrazzo stair treads and cast iron newel posts and railing system.

Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson, Architects, Des Moines, Iowa

The Equitable Building was designed by the prominent architectural firm Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson, Architects, whose associated partners, William Thomas Proudfoot, George Washington Bird and Harry Dustan Rawson, became one of the most, if not the most, respectable firms in the state of Iowa during the early 1900's. The firm's prominence was very extensive in the state of Iowa, designing over 100 office buildings, 200 single family homes, over 30 apartment buildings, several public libraries, over 50 public school buildings, around 100 collegiate buildings, 5 county courthouses, and a number of hotels, theatres, churches, hospitals, and fire stations. They also did a substantial amount of work outside of Iowa, which included 88 commissions in 11 states (Long and Christian, 1).

The firm's association with educational facilities and established relationship with the Iowa State Board of Education was what elevated the firm to prominence. In 1898, Proudfoot and Bird won a design competition for Schaeffer Hall at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, and from that

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commission began the long-lasting history in educational facility design. The history of Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson experienced several transformations since the original formation of Proudfoot and Bird in 1882. Proudfoot and Bird began a majority of their work in Kansas, primarily Wichita, Kansas, and Salt Lake City, Utah before moving to Des Moines in 1896 (Long and Christian, 2 - 5).

Proudfoot and Bird would remain in Des Moines for some time, designing numerous public and private buildings. In 1910, both were aging and Bird was getting increasingly disinterested in design. The arrival of Harry Rawson that same year put the architectural firm Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson in an excellent position to succeed. Only a couple years later in 1912, Bird retired and the firm hired Herbert B. Rich to carry Bird's drafting responsibility. During the early 1900's, Iowa would experience a construction boom in both urban and rural areas. The increased need for architects during this time, combined with Rawson's political and social connections elevated Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson as the foremost architectural firm in the state (Long and Christian, 5-6).

The early to mid-1920's in Iowa was a time of increasing financial depression. In 1925, to bring in some needed resources, Proudfoot and Rawson hired a new partner, Clark Souers. The varied projects continued through the 1920's, but at a much lower number. In 1930 another partner, Oren Thomas, was hired to form Proudfoot, Rawson, Souers and Thomas. Thomas' stay was brief, leaving the firm in 1933, mainly due to the depressed economy. A combination of the continued depression and deaths of Proudfoot in 1928 and Rawson in 1934 caused the firm to change partnerships. J. Woolson Brooks and Elmer H. Borg joined the firm as partners in 1912 and 1913, respectively. In 1933, the firm of Proudfoot, Rawson, Brooks and Borg was formed and lasted, barely, until the start of World War II in 1941 when they all entered the armed forces. After the war, the firm was reactivated and was renamed Brooks-Borg, Architects-Engineers and would eventually become the present firm in 1966, Brooks, Borg, and Skiles (Long and Christian, 7-8).

The previously mentioned history of firms associated with William T. Proudfoot will here on be referred to as Proudfoot, et al. The following will briefly describe the firm's prominence in Iowa. Proudfoot, et al.'s commissions totaled approximately 658 commissions in Iowa between 1885-1940, with nearly half (approx. 374) found in Des Moines. Commissions appeared to be balanced regarding property type, with about one-third residential, one-third commercial/industrial and one-third public/semi-public. In a review of the 50 most significant works of architecture, six buildings are associated with Proudfoot, et al, including St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Polk County Courthouse in Des Moines, the Masonic Temple in Des Moines, Roosevelt High School in Des Moines, the Equitable Building in Des Moines (the building being nominated in this application) and the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank Building in Des Moines (Iowa Public Television). The embodied work throughout Iowa included houses, apartment buildings, commercial/industrial buildings, publishing houses, banks, hotels, courthouses, schools, and many others (Long and Christian, 8-14).

Proudfoot, et al.'s commercial building architectural prominence is broad. Seven examples still exist in Des Moines alone. Examples of work include office buildings, retail stores, hotels,

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County and State

warehouses, factory/warehouse complexes, office/factory units, banks, publishing and printing houses and automobile-related buildings (Long and Christian, 10). The Equitable Building is an excellent example of the firm's notable architecture, importance to architecture in the state of Iowa and the importance the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa had in the commerce of Iowa.

"The most notable example in the city and in the state is the nineteen-story Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa office building (604 Locust Street). Built in 1923, the building displays features found on the firm's commercial buildings, especially office buildings and hotels. The form is the base-shaft-capital configuration; light trim (here terra cotta and stone) contrasts with brick; and architectural details are an arresting display of the Gothic Revival. A wealth of detail includes gargoyles, quatrefoil patterns, tracery motifs, a deeply recessed pointed arch entry, and Gothic arches (Long and Christian, 11)."

Future Plans

The building will become commercial space on floors 1-2 and apartments on floors 3-19. The buildings first floor detailing, elevator lobbies and materiality will be retained and celebrated with the building's new use.

Conclusion

The Equitable Building retains many of the character defining features that call attention to the building's local architectural and commercial significance. The building's Late Gothic Revival style, elaborate interior and exterior detailing and association with architectural firm Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson are characteristics that represent the building's importance in the history of Des Moines and Iowa architecture. The building's commercial significance is defined by the association to the oldest, largest and most successful insurance company in Iowa, the Equitable Life Insurance of Iowa. The architectural significance directly relates to the commercial significance through the company's continued and prosperous success and the want to create an iconic symbol through architecture. The building retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and clearly communicates its historic importance.

Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State

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Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

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Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _____ less than one acre _____

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 41.586778 Longitude: -93.625195

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Equitable Building is situated on lots 7 and 8 in the Town of Fort Des Moines with the City of Des Moines. This parcel measures about 132 x 132 ft.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated boundary includes the entire property purchased by the Equitable Insurance Company of Iowa in 1919.

11. Form Prepared By

Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State

Name/title: Jonathan Klocke/Preservation Coordinator
Organization: Foutch Brothers, LLC
Street & number: 8201 NW 97th Terrace
City or town: Kansas City state: MO zip code: 64153
E-mail: jonathan@foutchbrothers.com
Telephone: 816-746-9100 x213
Date: 04/8/2014

Owners List

Name/title: Steve Foutch
Organization: Equitable Lofts, LLC Taxpayer ID: 45-4048423
Street & number: 8201 NW 97th Terrace
City or town: Kansas City state: MO zip code: 64153
E-mail: steve@foutchbrothers.com
Telephone: 816-746-9100

Name/title: Charles S. Johnson
Organization: Trustee for the Charles S. Johnson Residence
Street & number: 604 Locust Street, Unit 17A
City or town: Des Moines state: IA zip code: 50309

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Name of Property: Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa

Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa

Polk, Iowa
County and State

Name of Property

City or Vicinity: Des Moines

County: Polk

State: Iowa

Photographer: Jonathan Klocke

Date Photographed: June 2013

Photo No. 1: North and east façades of building from Locust Street. Photographer facing southwest

Photo No. 2: South and east facades of building from Sixth Avenue. Photographer facing north.

Photo No. 3: North and west facades of building from Locust Street. Photographer facing southeast.

Photo No. 4: Base of east façade of the building. Granite base, terra cotta detailing, and cast iron window surround detailing shown on the building's base. Photographer facing west.

Photo No. 5: Base of north and east façade of the building. Granite base, terra cotta detailing, cast iron window surround detailing shown on the building's base. Photographer facing southwest.

Photo No. 6: One bay of the building's base showing the non-historic storefront infill, granite pilasters (ca. 1967), and decorative cast iron surrounds. Photographer facing west.

Photo No. 7: Main building entrance on north side of the building. Decorative granite surrounds and gothic-inspired detailing, historic gothic-inspired bronze light fixture and brushed brass revolving doors (ca. 1967) shown. Photographer facing south.

Photo No. 8: South alley showing window infills and new building intersection. Photographer facing west.

Photo No. 9: Building tower with terra cotta gothic-inspired detailing. The building's smokestack is shown as well. Photographer facing northeast.

Photo No. 10: Third floor roof with mechanical equipment, fire stairs and smokestack. Photographer facing east.

Photo No. 11: First floor entrance into elevator lobby. Photographer facing north.

Photo No. 12: First floor elevator lobby. Photographer facing south.

Photo No. 13: First floor elevator lobby. Photographer facing south.

Photo No. 14: Decorative gothic-inspired doorway assembly off of the main east-west corridor on the first floor. Photographer facing south.

Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
County and State

Photo No. 15: First floor east-west corridor, public space. Photographer facing east.

Photo No. 16: First floor east-west corridor, private corridor. Photograph facing west.

Photo No. 17: Marble arch and public stairwell leading to the second floor. Photographer facing south.

Photo No. 18: Marble stairwell and decorative marble railing. Photographer facing west.

Photo No. 19: Second floor public corridor at the top of the marble staircase. Photographer facing east.

Photo No. 20: Access to skywalk from second floor. Photographer facing west.

Photo No. 21: non-historic office build-out from second floor public corridor. Photographer facing south.

Photo No. 22: Typical elevator lobby with non-historic build-outs.

Photo No. 23: Typical demolished floor plan with terrazzo floors remaining. Photographer facing south.

Photo No. 24: Typical demolished floor plan with terrazzo floors remaining. Photographer facing north.

Photo No. 25: Typical demolished floor plan with terrazzo floors remaining. Photographer facing south.

Photo No. 26: Typical demolished floor plan with terrazzo floors remaining. Photographer facing west.

Photo No. 27: Historic mail slot, exists on 3rd – 12th floor. Photographer facing south.

Photo No. 28: Water tank in tower. Photographer facing south.

Photo No. 29: Basement elevator lobby with original elevator doors. Photographer facing north.

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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Figure 1: Arrow locates the Equitable Building (Polk County Assessor's Website, August 5, 2011)

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Section number Additional Documentation

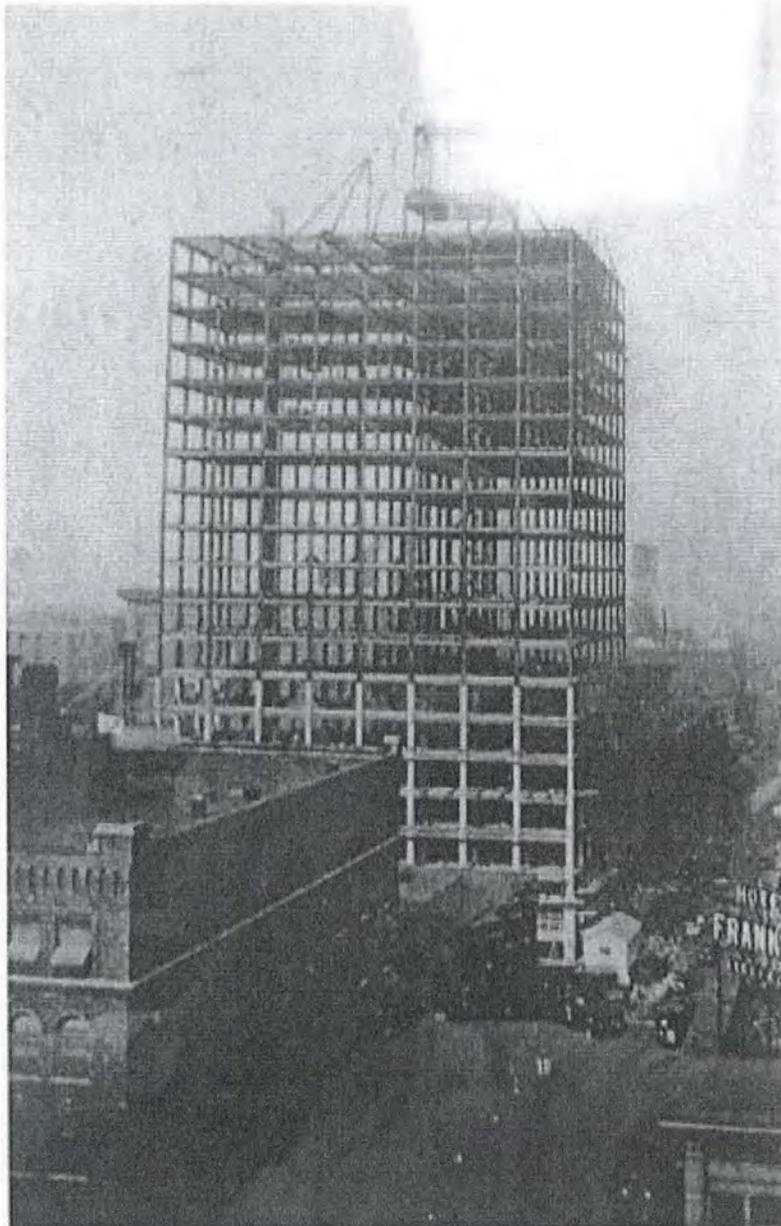


Figure 2: Equitable under construction; ca. 1922 (Photograph from office of Ruhl & Ruhl Realty Company, Des Moines, IA)

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National Park Service

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Figure 3: Equitable Building Completed; ca. 1925 (Photograph from office of Ruhl & Ruhl Realty Company, Des Moines, IA)

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Figure 4: The Equitable Building, looking southwest; ca. 1931 (Long 1988, 49)

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Section number Additional Documentation

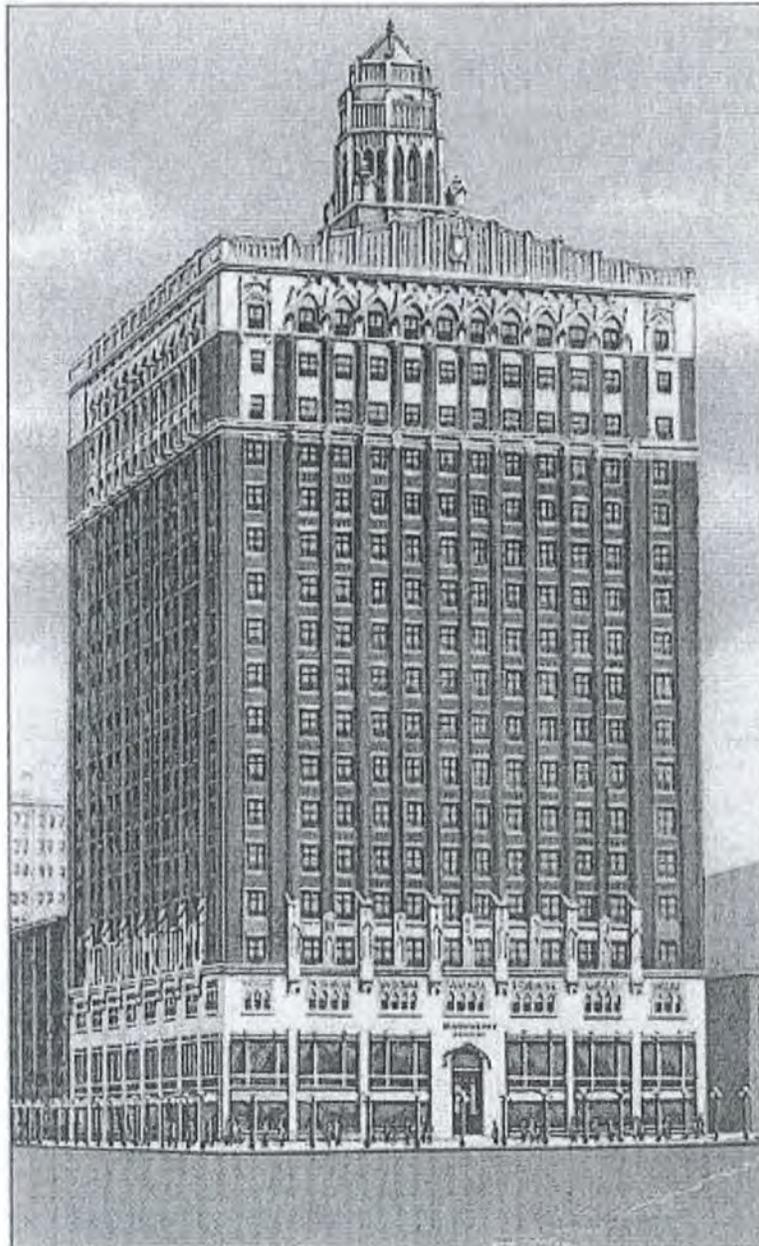


Figure 5: Equitable Building; ca. 1928 (Postcard from William Colgan Page)

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Section number Additional Documentation



Figure 6: 1950s explosion at the Equitable Building shattered several Locust Street storefront's plate glass panels. The 'Flowers' storefront shows original materials, including a bulkhead, a door transom with ogee-shaped arch, and rectangular-shaped transoms above the storefront window. The 'Wylie Opticians' storefront already had been remodeled (unidentified newspaper clipping in offices of Ruhl & Ruhl Realty Company, Des Moines, IA)

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Section number Additional Documentation

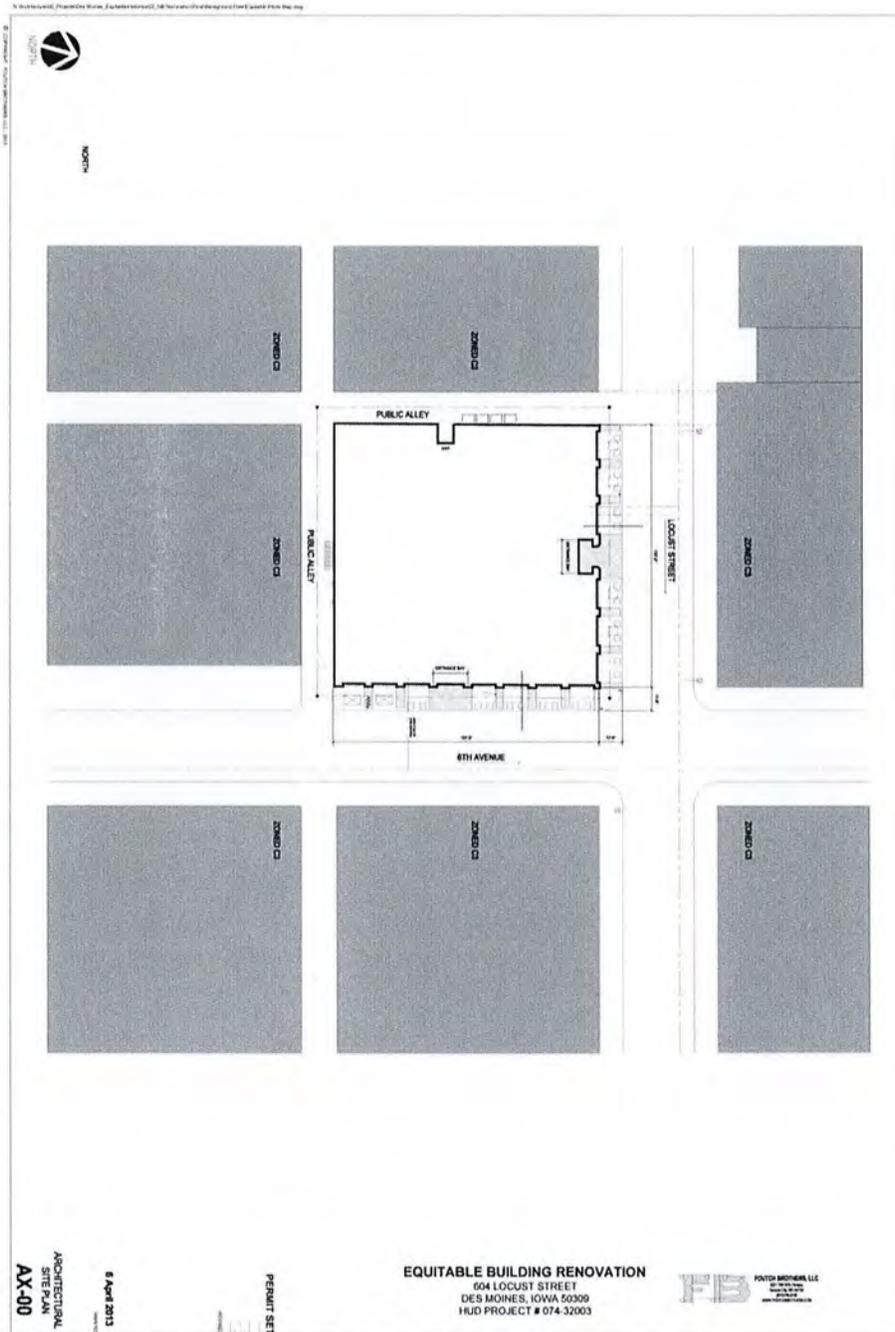


Figure 7: Existing Site Plan, drawn by Fouch Brothers, LLC from field measurements

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Section number Additional Documentation

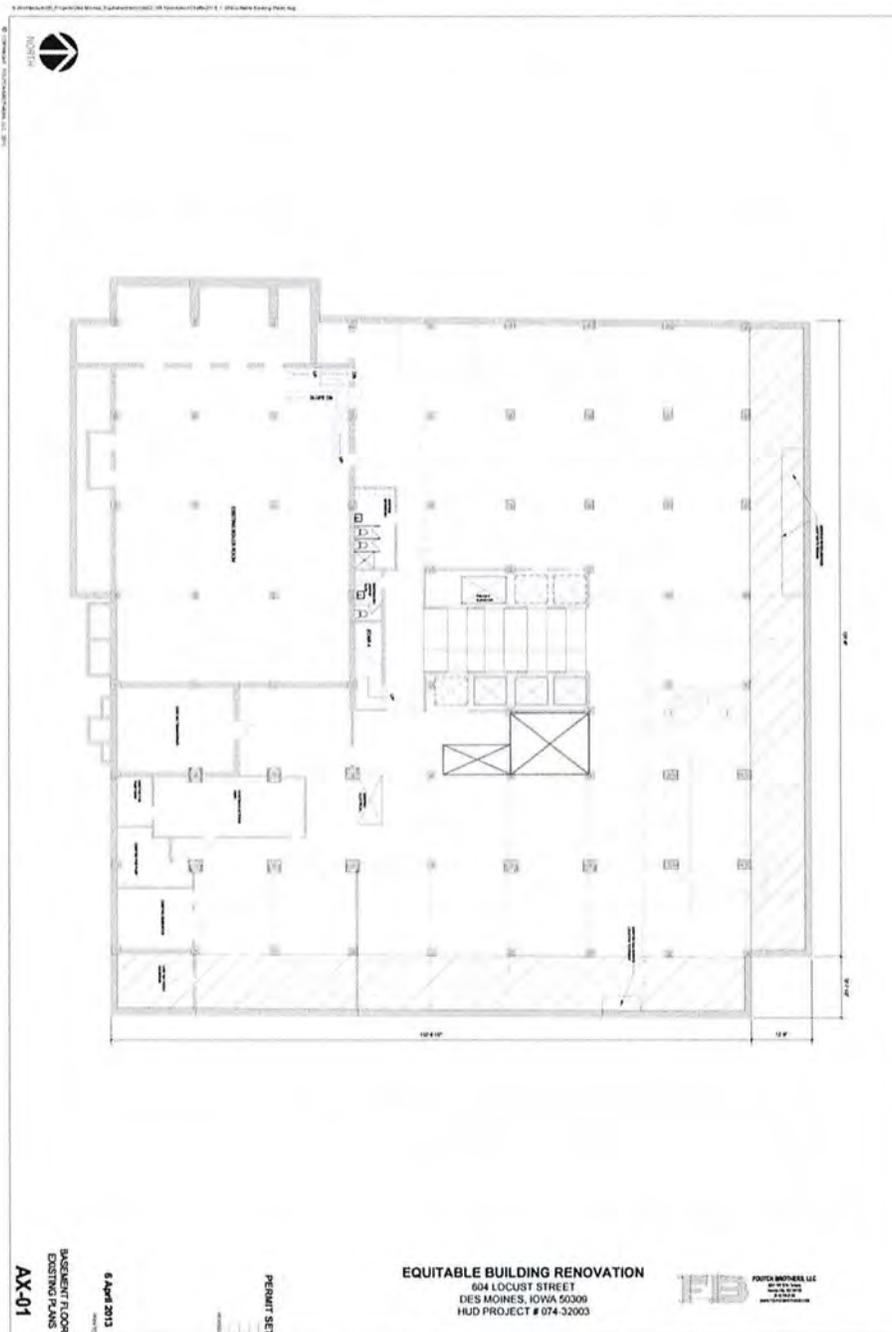


Figure 8: Basement Floor Existing Plan, drawn by Fouch Brothers, LLC from field measurements

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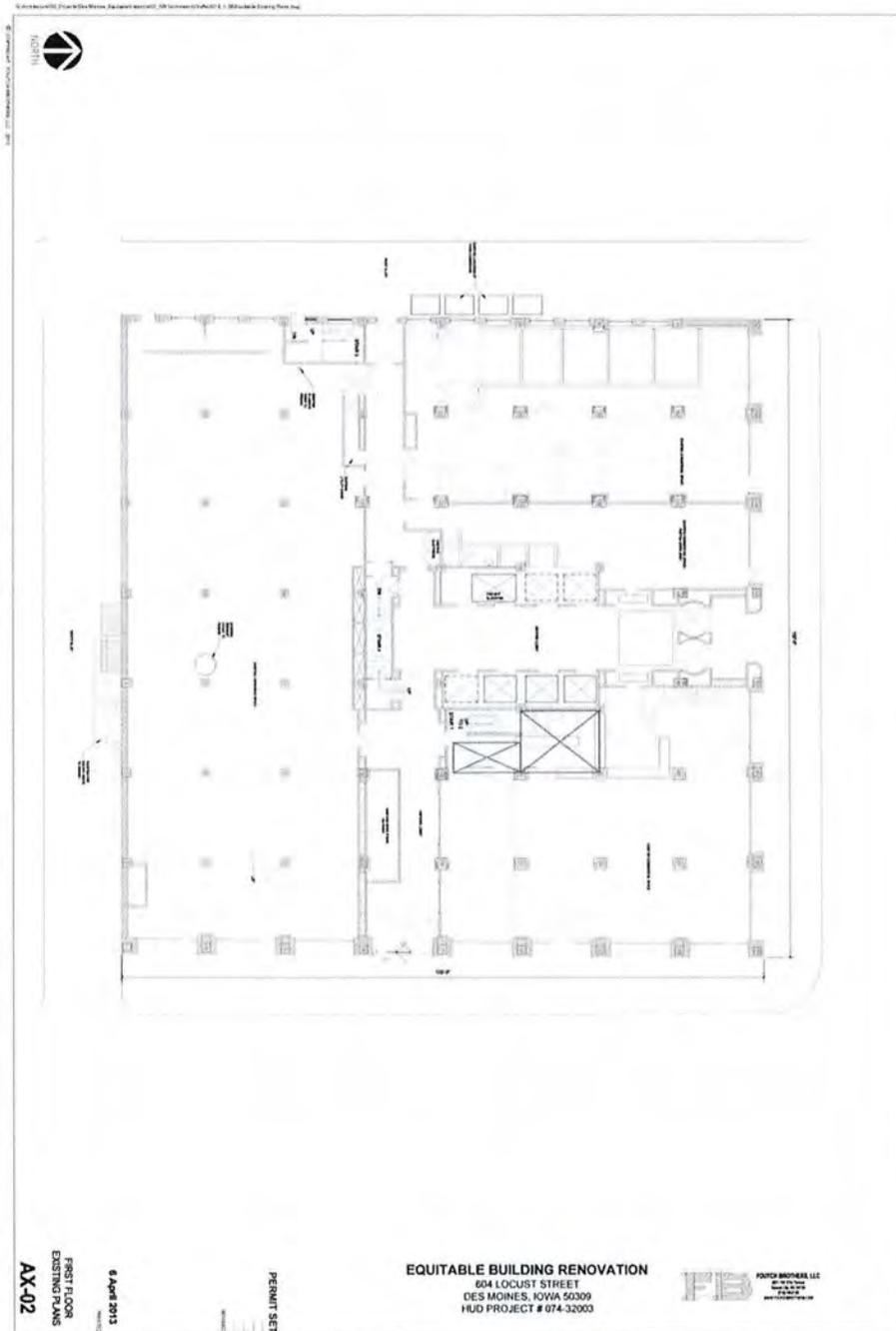


Figure 9: First Floor Existing Plan, drawn by Fouch Brothers, LLC from field measurements

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National Park Service

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Section number Additional Documentation

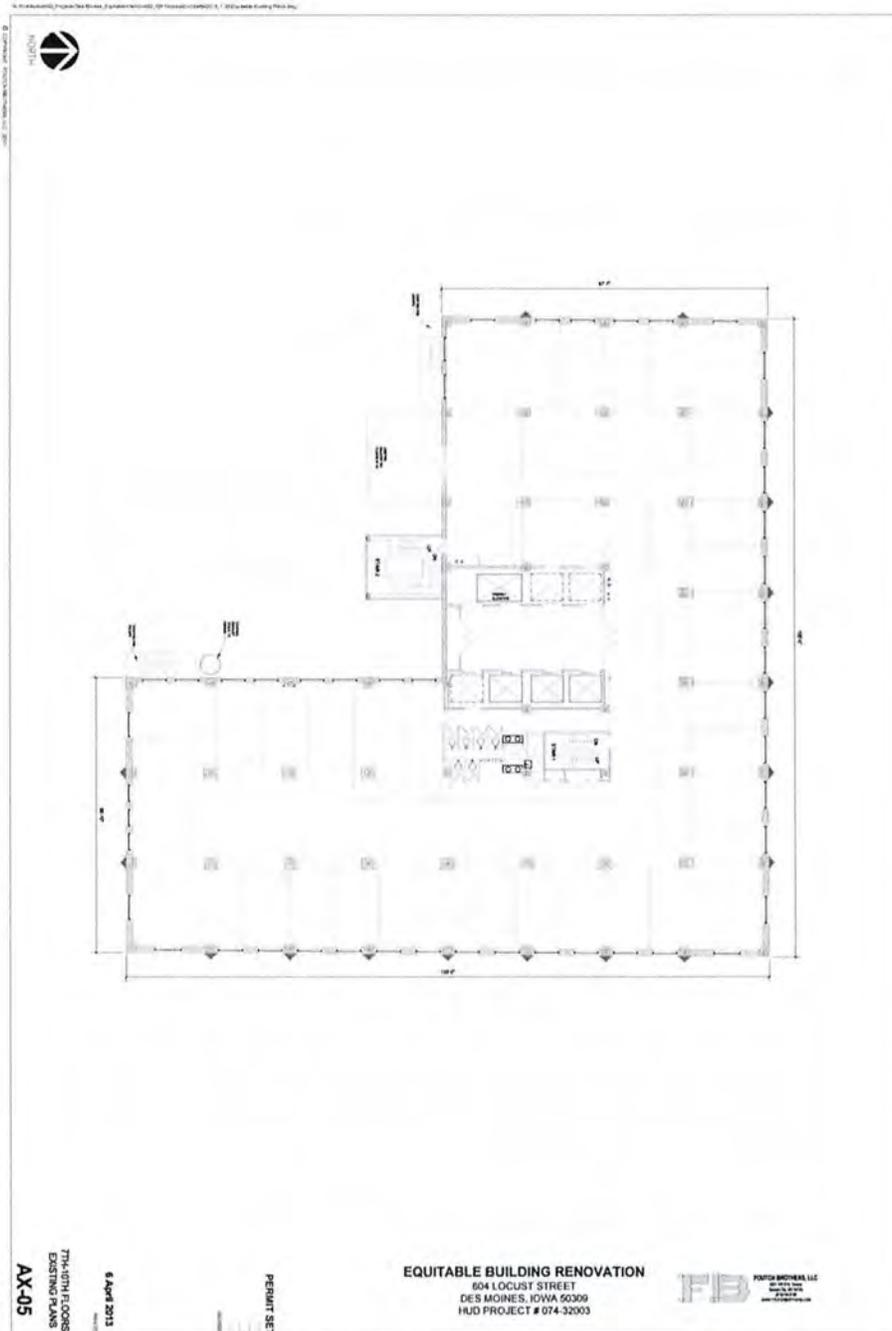


Figure 12: Typical 7th-10th Floors Existing Plans, drawn by Fouch Brothers, LLC from field measurements. Interior partition walls vary from floor to floor, refer to building description for more detail

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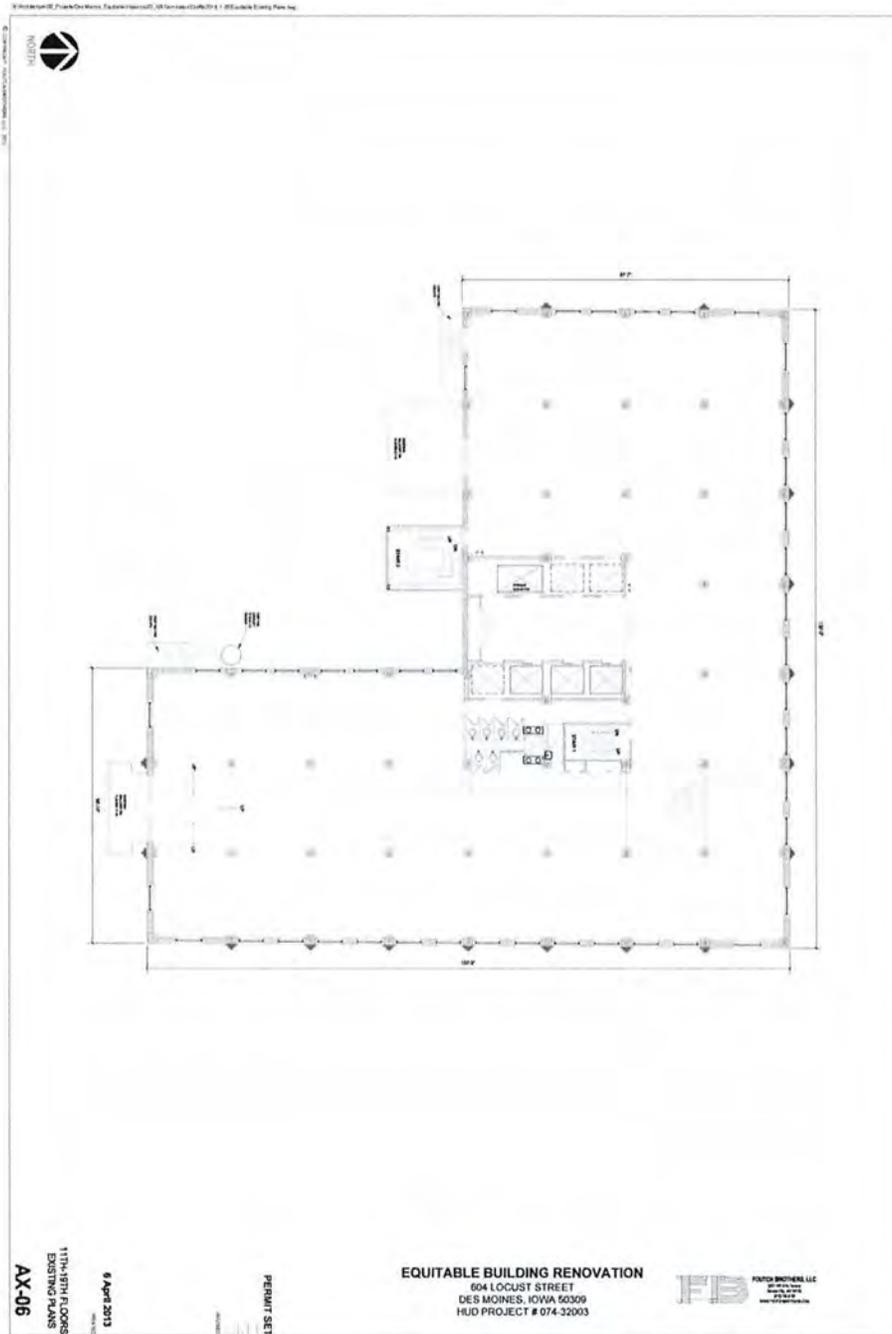


Figure 13: Typical 11th-19th Floors Existing Plans, drawn by Fouch Brothers, LLC from field measurements. Interior partition walls vary from floor to floor, refer to building description for more detail

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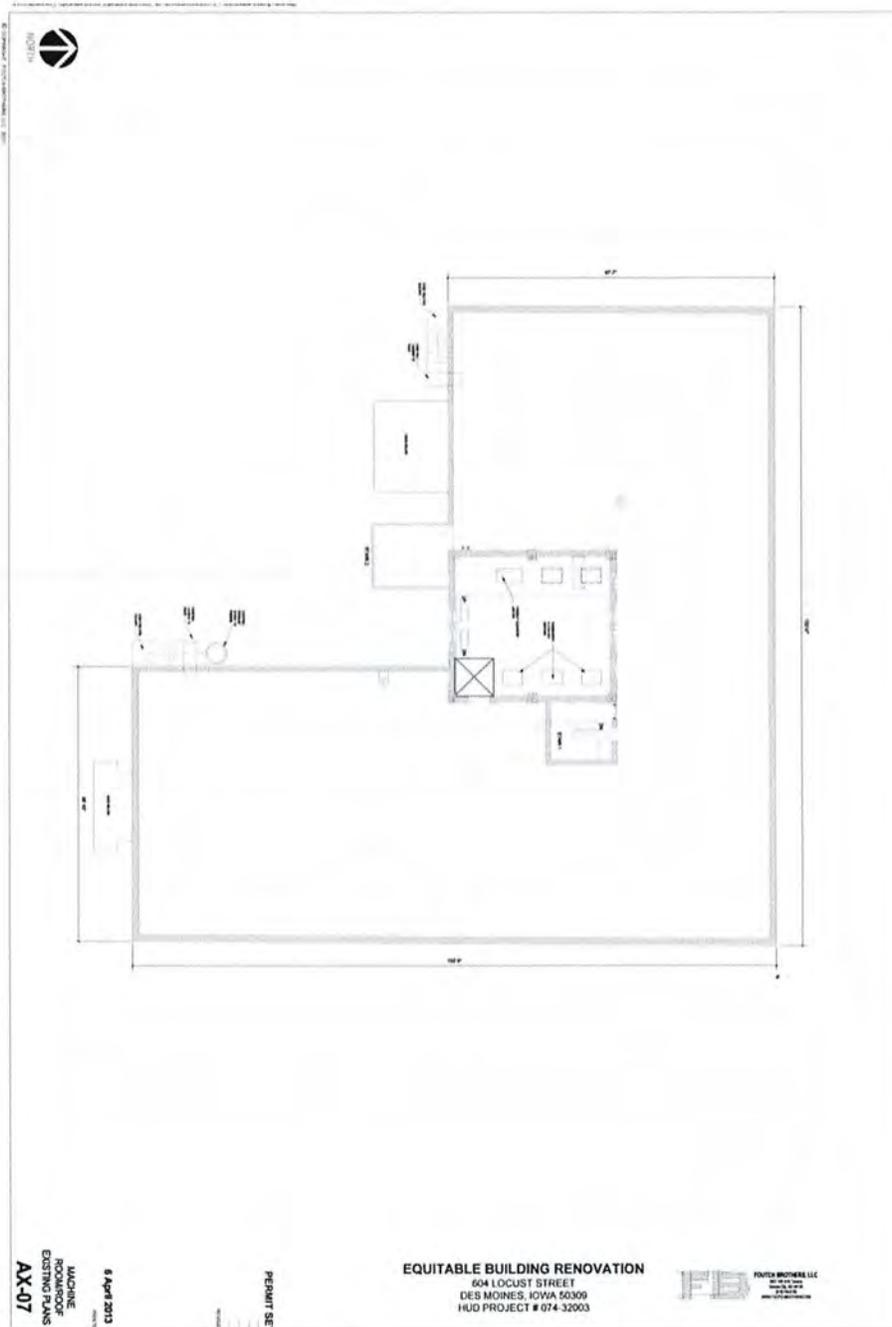


Figure 14: Roof Existing Plan, drawn by Fouch Brothers, LLC from field measurements.

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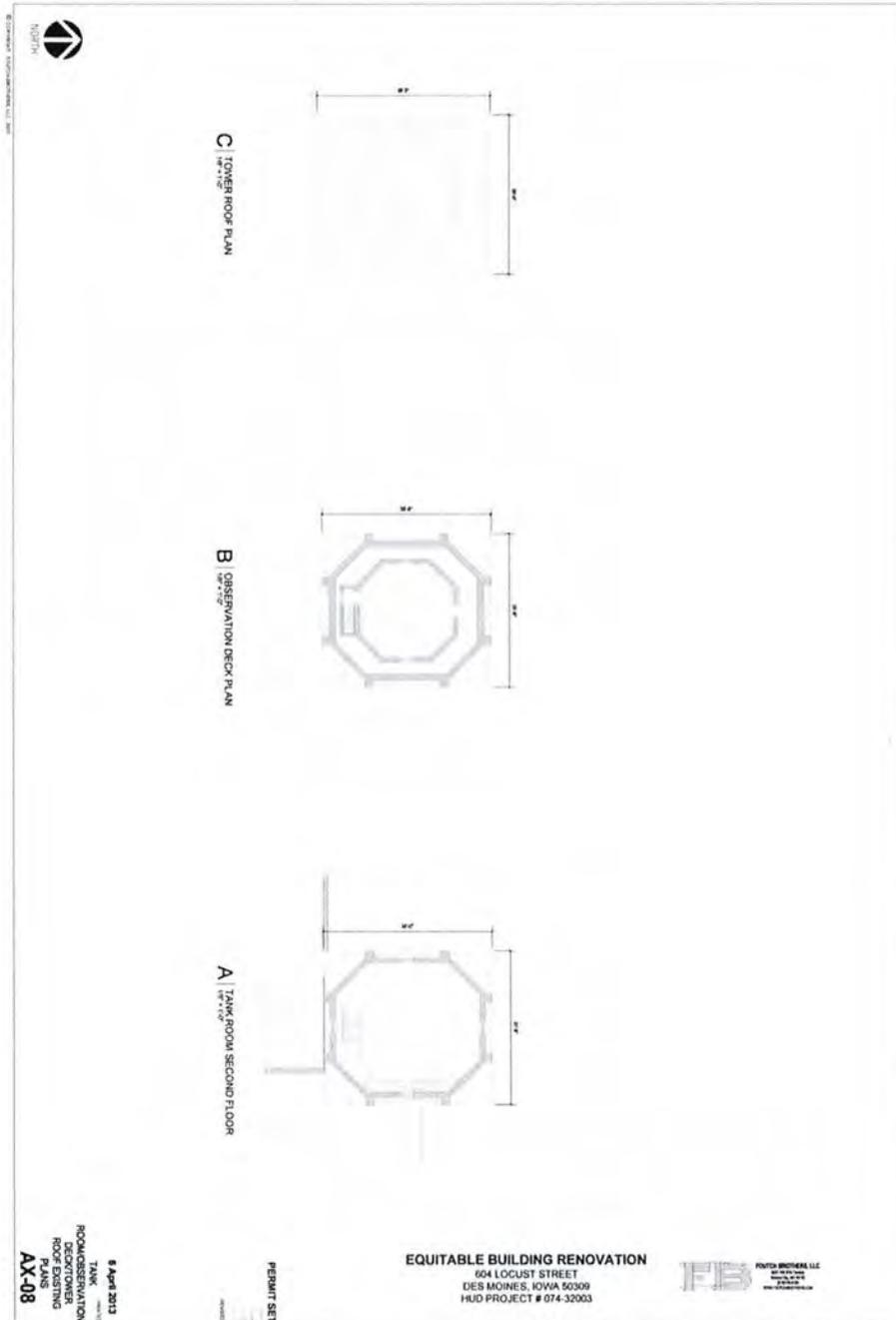


Figure 15: Tank Room, Observation Deck and Tower Roof Existing Plans, drawn by Fouch Brothers, LLC from field measurements.

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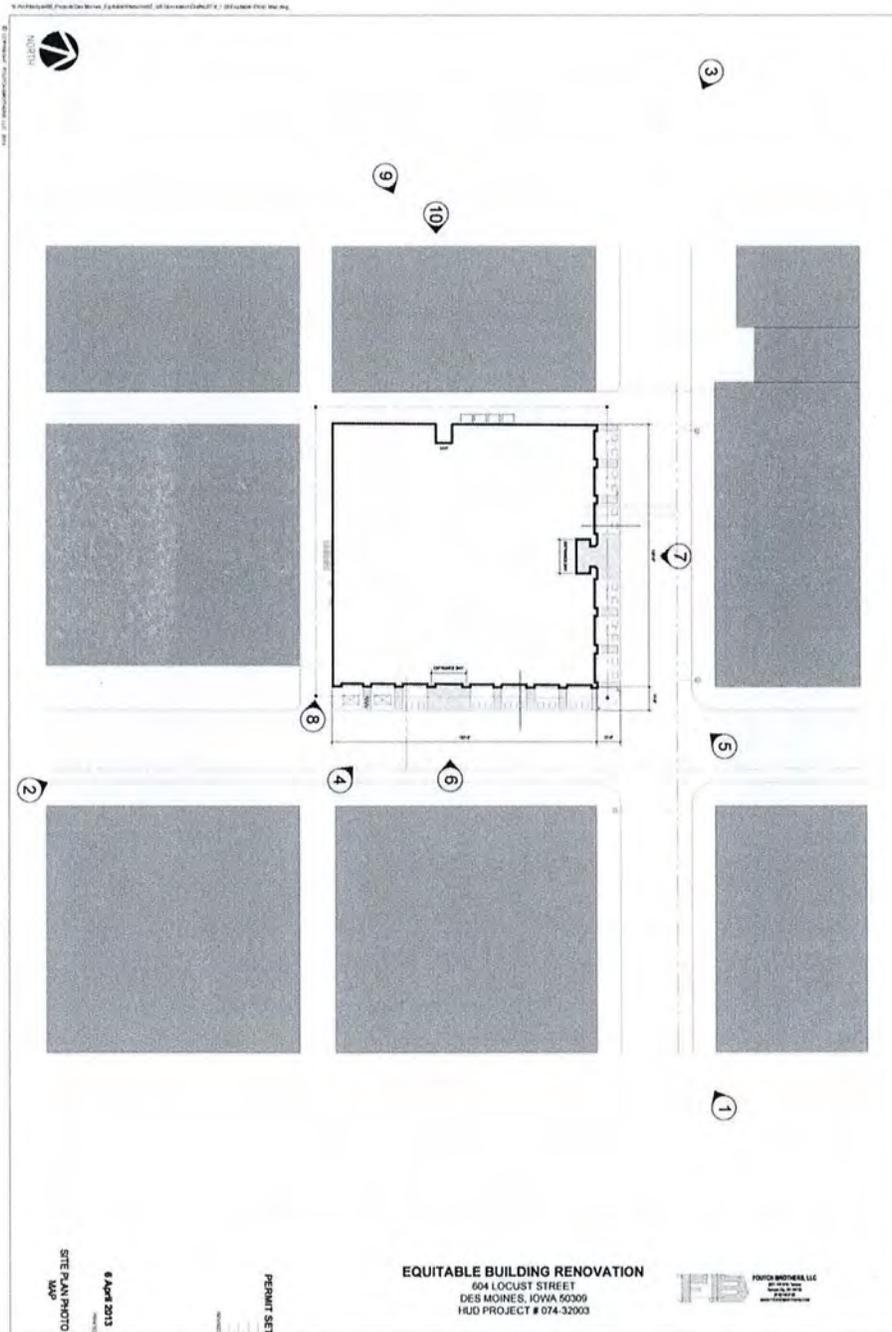


Figure 16: Photo Map - Site Plan

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Section number Additional Documentation

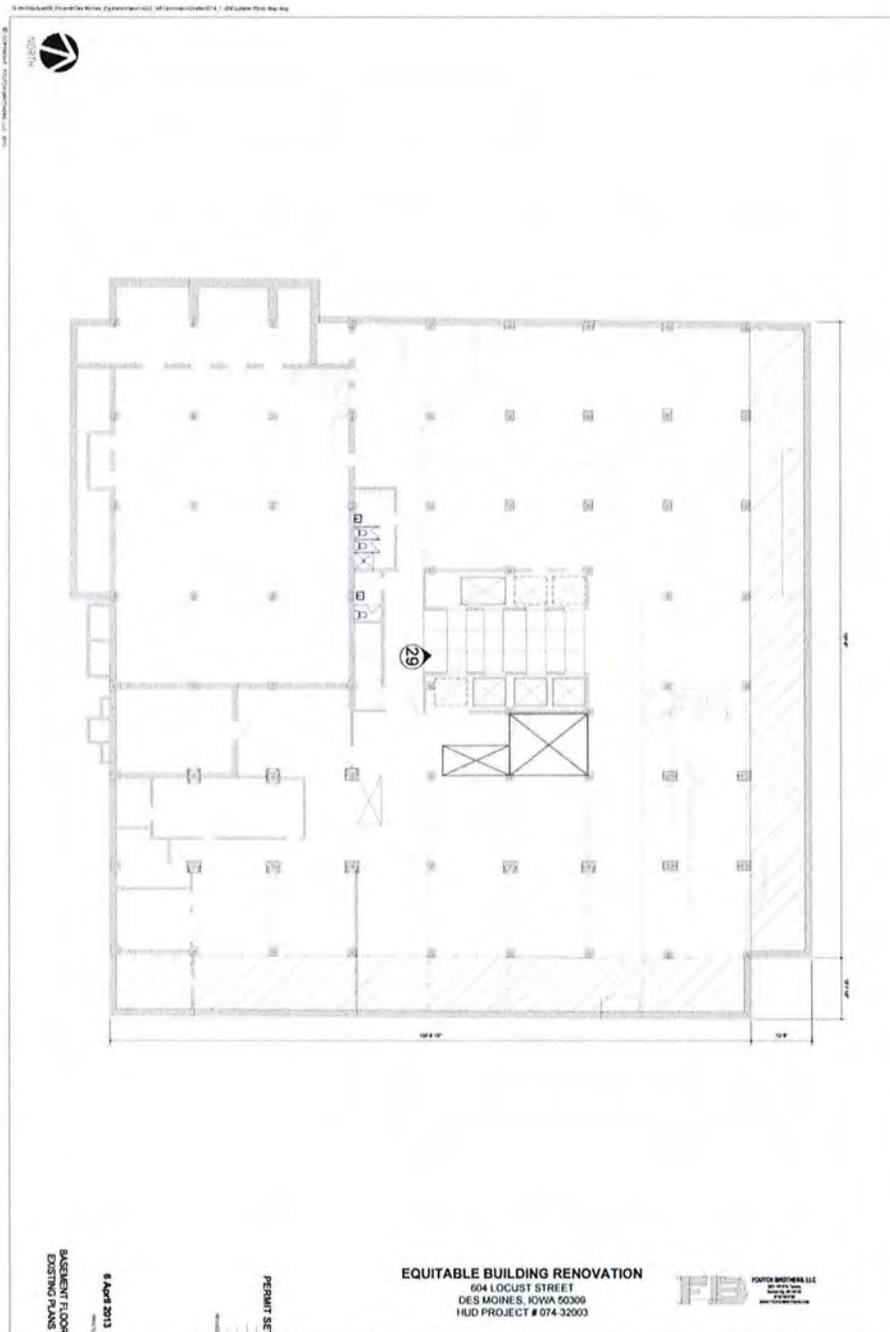


Figure 17: Photo Map - Basement

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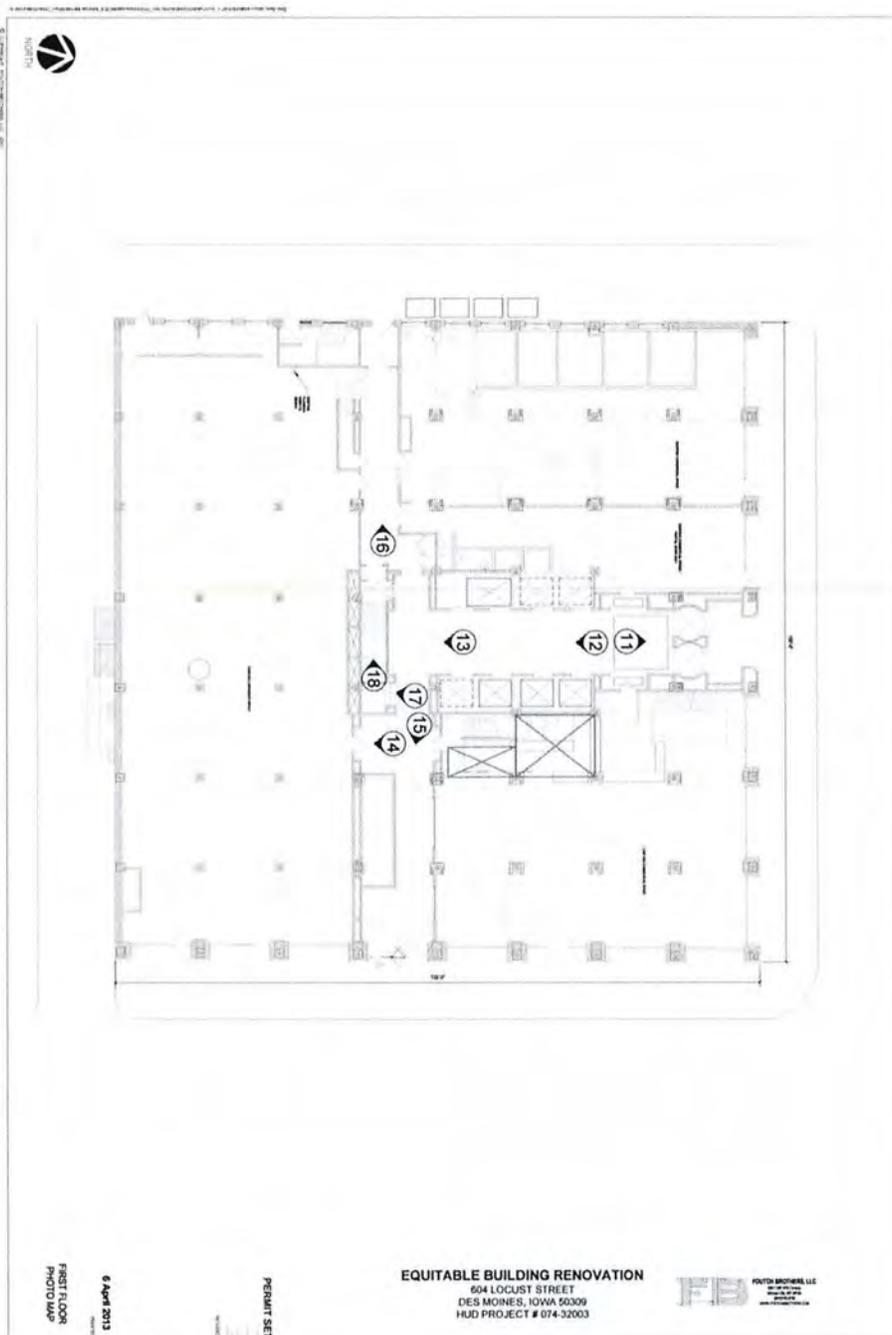


Figure 18: Photo Map - First Floor

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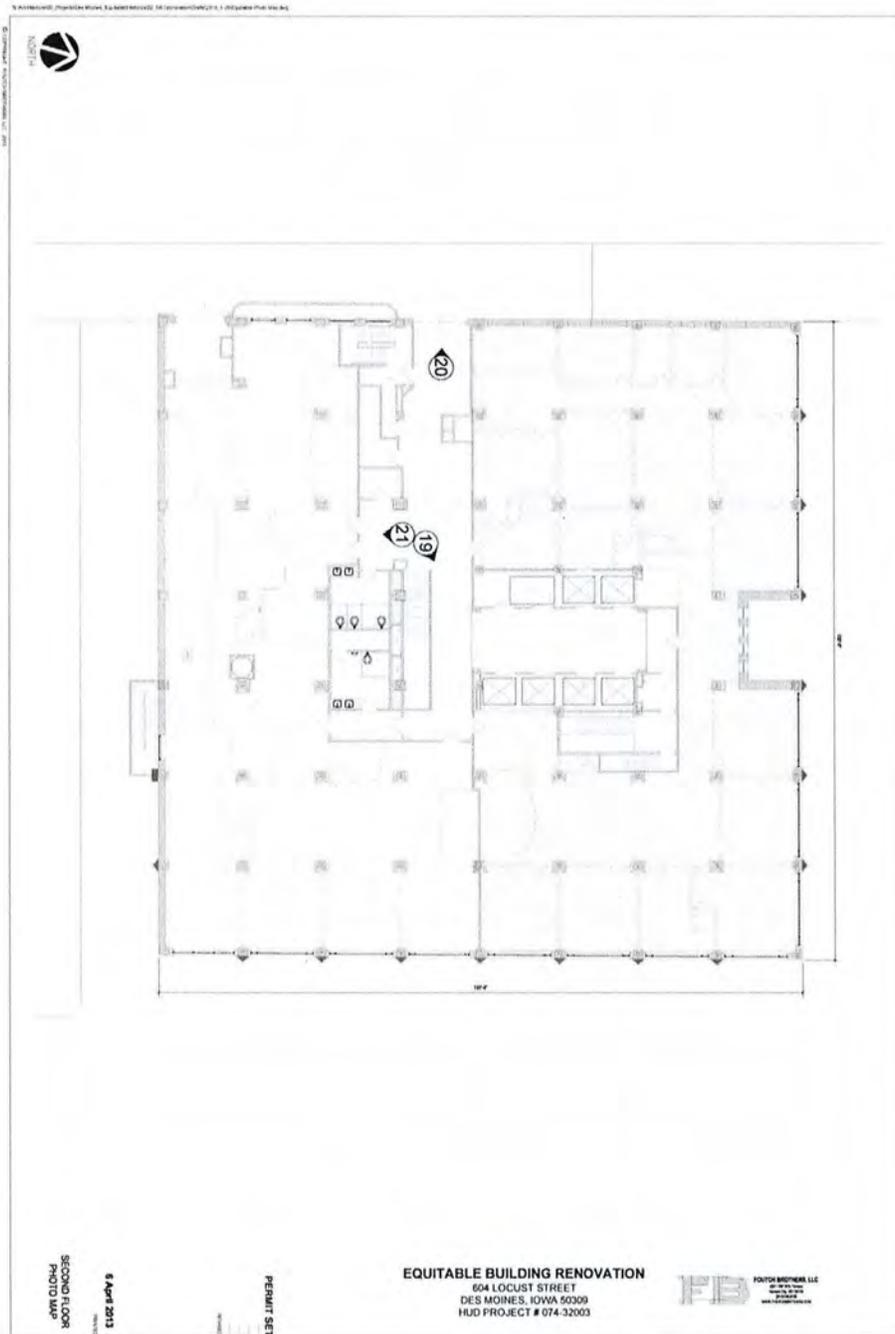


Figure 19: Photo Map - Second Floor

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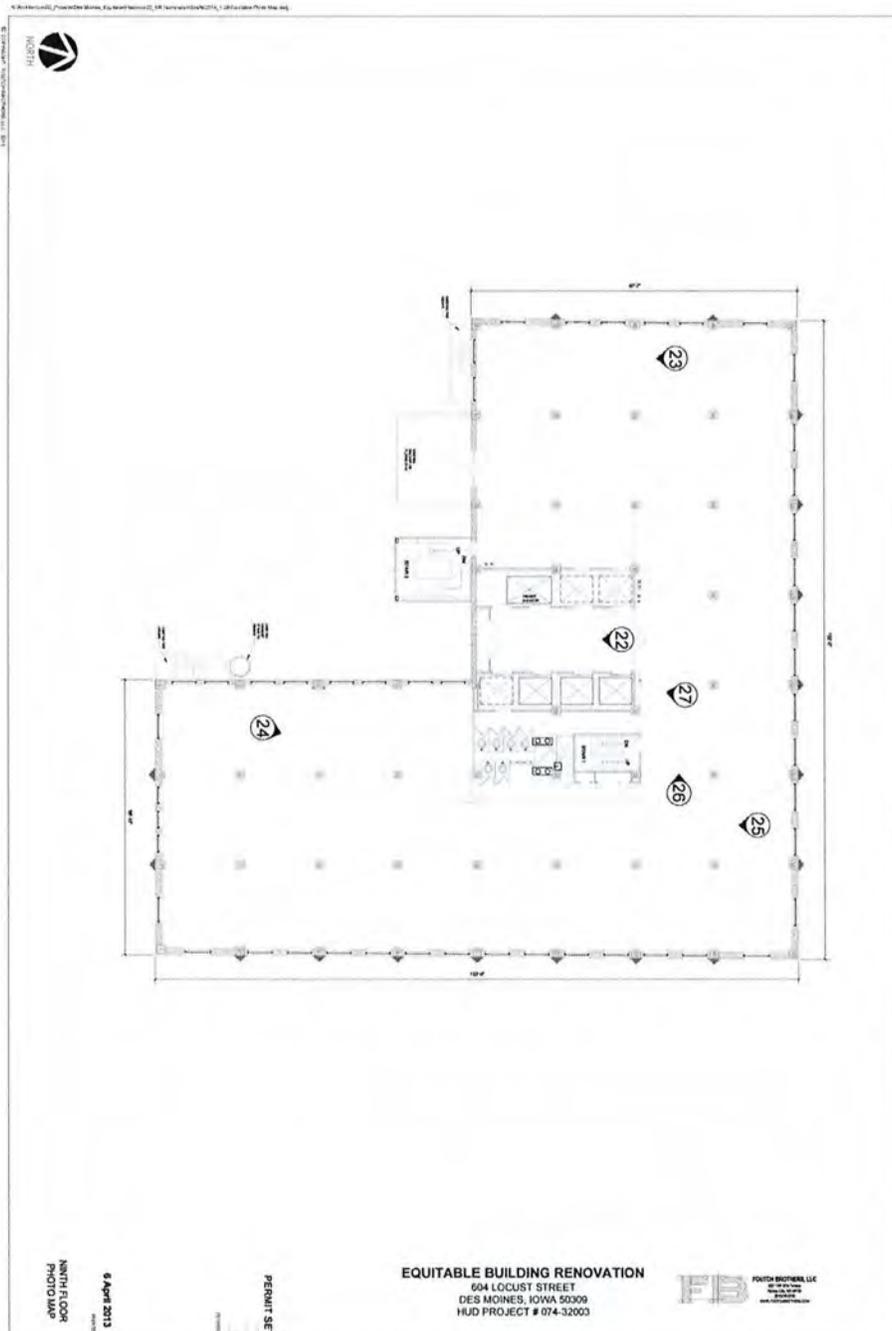


Figure 20: Photo Map - Ninth Floor

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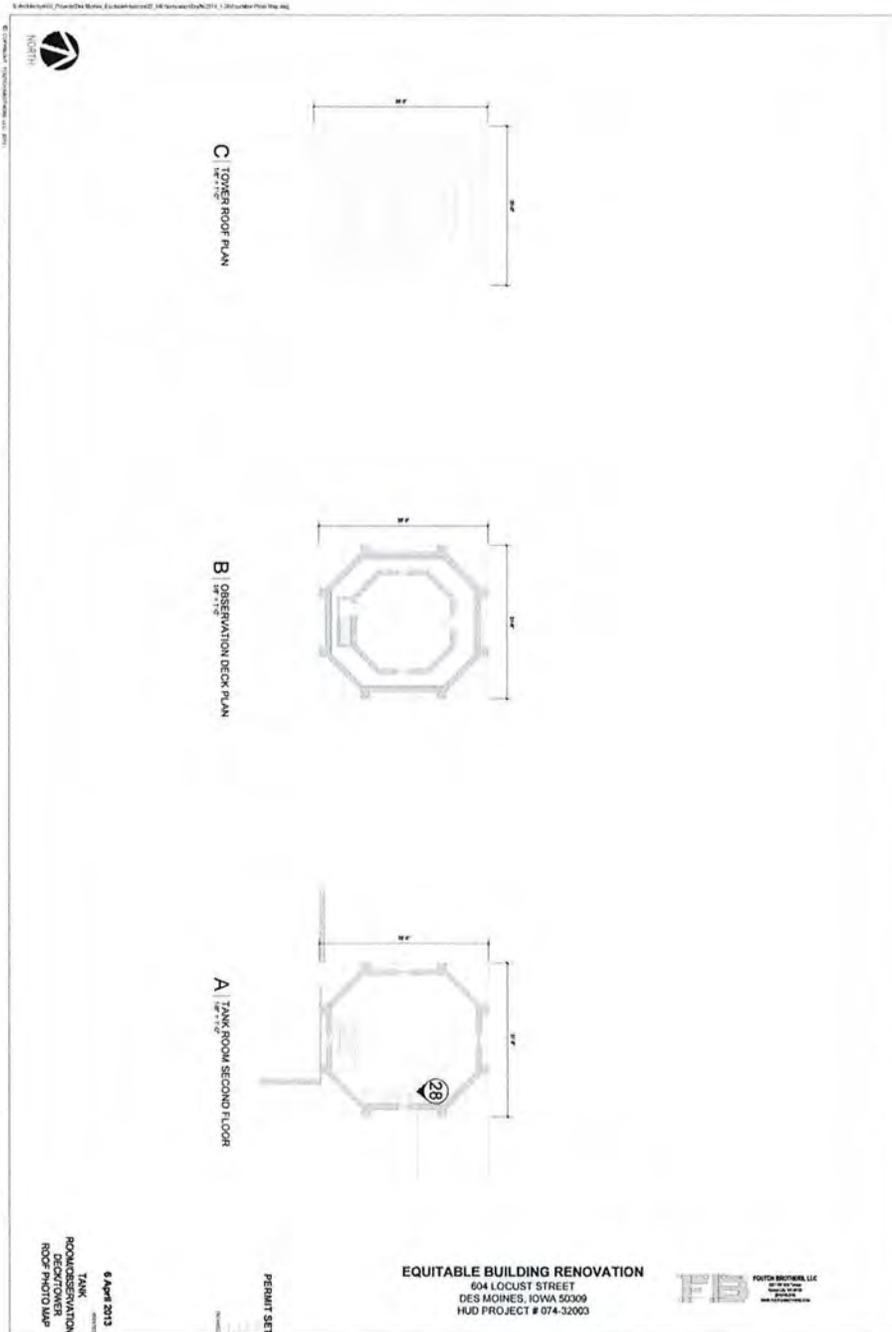
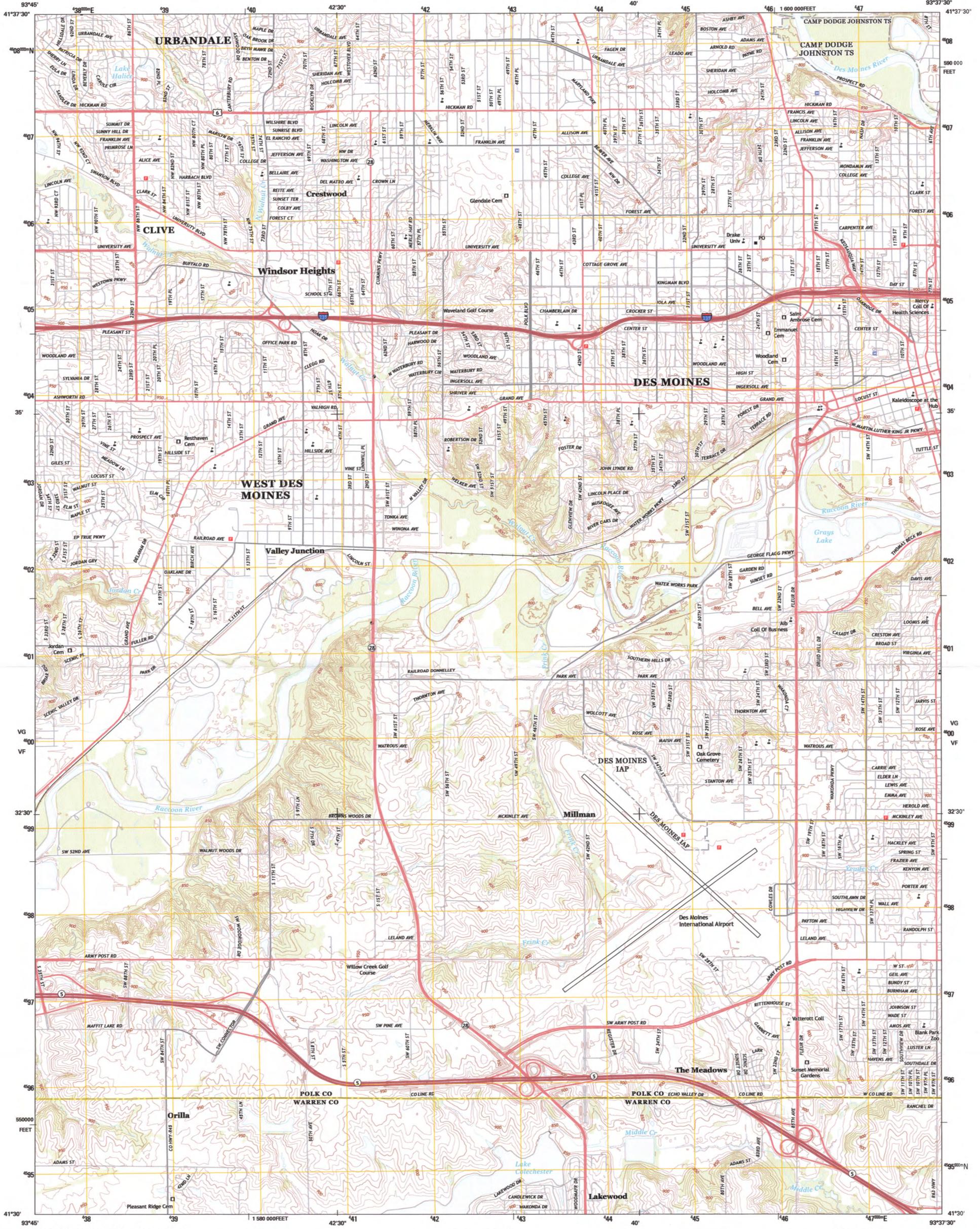
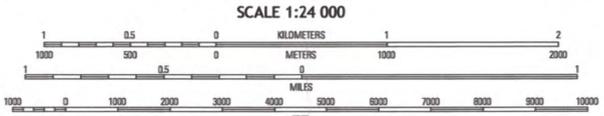


Figure 21: Photo Map - Tank Room/Observation Deck/Tower Plans



Produced by the United States Geological Survey North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83) World Geodetic System of 1984 (WGS84). Projection and 1 000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, Zone 15T 10 000-foot ticks: Iowa Coordinate System of 1983 (south zone)



Imagery: NAIP, July 2011
Roads: ©2006-2012 TomTom
Names: GNS, 2012
Hydrography: National Hydrography Dataset, 2011
Contours: National Elevation Dataset, 1999
Boundaries: Census, IBWC, USGS, 1972-2012

Grid Zone Designation 15T

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET NORTH AMERICAN DATUM OF 1983
This map was produced to conform with the National Geospatial Program US Topo Product Standard, 2011. A metadata file associated with this product is draft version 0.6.11

ADJOINING 7.5 QUADRANGLES



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Data Protection Services

Orange banner with illegible text





Bankers
Trust

ONE WAY →

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Bankers Trust



IMPACT
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OPEN
3rd & Court
OPEN
5th & Walnut
OPEN

NO PARKING
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TO
6 PM



COPY CENTER

COPY CENTER

WYLLI BARRINGTON PLACE
BARRINGTON PLACE
OF WYLLI

THE BOOK STORE





N



CAUTION
AUTOMATIC GLASS DOOR

Small white rectangular sign on the wall to the right of the entrance.



THE FOUNTAINHEAD LIFE
INSURANCE COMPANY
OF IOWA



604

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EQUITABLE BUILDING



Word of Mouth

Word of Mouth
A Book of Poetry
by
Mary L. Kelly
Published by
Word of Mouth











EXHIBIT ROOM
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TERRE'S
Real Estate Co.
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MARY HERRING AND
TJ JACOBS
FOR SALE
or
FOR LEASE

CAUTION
Sliding Glass Door

CAUTION
Sliding Glass Door



QUICK CARE

QUICK CARE
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NO SMOKING
THE AREA

FLAMMABLE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa Building

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Polk

DATE RECEIVED: 3/06/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/31/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/15/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/21/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000154

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4/21/2015 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A&C

REVIEWER Patrick Andrews DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____ DATE 4/21/2015

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

MARY COWNIE, DIRECTOR
CHRIS KRAMER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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



IOWA
ARTS
COUNCIL

February 25, 2015

PRODUCE
IOWA

J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief
National Register and National Historic Landmarks
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Fl.
Washington D.C. 20005

STATE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF IOWA

Dear Mr. Loether:

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

STATE HISTORICAL
MUSEUM OF IOWA

- Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa, 604 Locust Street and 316 Sixth Avenue, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa

STATE HISTORICAL
LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Foster Hill

STATE
HISTORIC
SITES

Elizabeth Foster Hill
National Register

STATE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
OFFICE OF IOWA

IOWA
HISTORICAL
FOUNDATION