

067

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" on the appropriate line or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name METHODIST DEACONESS INSTITUTE-ESTHER HALL
other names/site number Bible Training School, Women's Foreign Missionary Society; Women's Home Missionary Society- Bible Training School; Iowa National Bible Training School; Iowa National Esther Hall & Bidwell Deaconess Home; Hawthorn Hill; Iowa Site Inventory #77-07219; Chestnut Hills

2. Location

street & number 921 Pleasant Street N/A not for publication
city or town Des Moines N/A vicinity
state Iowa code IA county Polk code 153 zip code 50309

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Burton A. Mitchell, DSHPO January 13 2009
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register.
- Other, (Explain)

Edson H. Beall
Signature of Keeper

3-4-09
Date of Action

Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many lines as apply)
Category of Property (Check only one line)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
_____	_____	Total

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

_____ N/A _____

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

_____ 0 _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/institutional housing _____

EDUCATION/school _____

RELIGION/church school _____

RELIGION/church related residence _____

RELIGION/religious facility _____

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE _____

WORK IN PROGRESS _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS _____

Colonial Revival _____

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____ Concrete _____

walls _____ Brick _____

roof _____ Slate/Asphalt _____

other _____ Metal _____

Narrative Description

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

Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" on one or more lines for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" on all the lines that apply)

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

RELIGION

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1922 - 1958

Significant Dates

1922

1958

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson

Arthur Neumann & Sons

Narrative Statement of Significance - (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliography References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- previous determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Record
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository

Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 15 | 4 47.4 98 | 4604 12 5 |
Zone Easting Northing

2 | --- | --- --- --- --- | --- --- |
Zone Easting Northing

3 | --- | --- --- --- --- | --- --- |
Zone Easting Northing

4 | --- | --- --- --- --- | --- --- |
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William C. Page, Public Historian

organization Chestnut Hills, LP date January 30, 2008

street & number 520 East Sheridan Ave. (Page) telephone 515-243-5740

city or town Des Moines state IA zip code 50313-5017

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

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

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

Property Owner

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

name Chestnut Hills, L.P.

street & number 5354 Parkdale Drive #350 telephone 651-523-1244 (Randall Schold)

city or town St. Louis Park state MN zip code 55416-1603

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall, Polk County, Iowa.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall is a complex of three units. The original unit is a 3.5-story main block flanked by 2-story wings, constructed of structural steel with brick veneer on masonry walls, and resting on a poured concrete foundation. Two rear additions have enlarged the main block and wings. Located near the heart of downtown Des Moines, this complex possesses excellent integrity and is in very good condition. For convenience, the name Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall often is shortened to the "Hall" in this nomination.

SITE

Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall is situated on Lot 11 (except the north 170 feet) in Methodist Plat 1. This parcel measures 134.5 by 205.74 feet. Downtown Des Moines was originally platted on a grid oriented to the Des Moines River, which flows slightly northwest to southeast in this area. Consequently, the downtown is slightly skewed to the cardinal points of the compass. On the north edge of the downtown, the city's plats were aligned to those cardinal points. These two different patterns converge in the area around the Hall. Street rights-of-way bend and irregularly shaped plats occur. (See Continuation Sheet 7-9.)

Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall stands on a ridge above the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers. The Raccoon floodplain stands about 800 feet above mean sea level. The rise to the ridge begins in downtown Des Moines, crests at Pleasant Street, and runs many blocks on to the west. The ridge immediately surrounding the Hall became known historically as "Piety Hill" because of a group of churches located there and their towers and steeples figured prominently in the city's skyline. First Methodist Episcopal Church (NRHP), one of them, is situated directly west of the Hall at 1001 Pleasant Avenue. Today, Piety Hill is sometimes called "Methodist Hill." In addition to the church—now known as First United Methodist Church—Iowa Methodist Medical Center stands nearby to the west along the ridge. It is a large complex of buildings, parking ramps, and parking lots.

Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall's location on the Pleasant Street ridge provides it with a view of downtown Des Moines. The building also serves, along with First United Methodist Church (NRHP) as a terminus to the view, when approaching the property from the south along 10th Street. When seen from this approach, the Hall and the church tower above Pleasant Street and visually command the heights along the ridge. (See Continuation Sheet 7-17.)

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Set back about 60 feet from and about 10 feet above Pleasant Street, the Hall is noteworthy for its setting. The front yard, which occupies the area between the street and the building, lends further dignity to the site. Landscaped in lawn, this space adds to the residential feeling of the building and dramatically contrasts with its commercial and institutional surroundings. Today, a retaining wall of broken concrete is situated between Pleasant Street and the Hall's front yard. This has not always been the case. A circa 1935 photograph shows the yard sloping descending to the south until about eight feet from Pleasant Street, where it sharply falls off to the street. This abrupt fall indicates that Pleasant Street was cut down sometime in the past to establish grade along the irregular contour of the land. The retaining wall was likely installed for erosion control. A similar situation prevails along 10th Street. There, another retaining wall of broken concrete stands between the Hall and the street. It too was likely built to reduce erosion and at the same time as the Pleasant Street retaining wall. Tenth Street has also been cut down to establish grade where it intersects Pleasant. In the 1950s, an automobile garage was located to the north of the building. This garage was likely built soon after World War II. It is nonextant. The area to the north of the building now serves as an asphalt-covered parking lot. This area is excluded from this nomination.

The urban campus of the Principal Financial Group is situated directly to the east and south of the Hall. This complex of buildings includes the 45-story Principal building at 801 Grand Avenue, the tallest building in Iowa.

COMPLEX

Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall is a multi-story, H-shaped complex. (See Continuation Sheet 7-11.) The main block and wings of the complex were originally constructed between 1921-1922. Their walls are clad with polychrome brick of tan, reddish-brown, and dark brown shades laid in Flemish bond. The roof is covered with polychrome slate.

The Hall has been unoccupied for a number of years. Extensive water penetration has occurred throughout the building, and severe mold accumulation and plaster failure are present. This damage has been recently repaired.

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Main Block and Wings

The building features a 3.5-story main block flanked by two, 2-story wings. Both the main block and the wings are situated above an exposed basement, which presents the first floor of the building as a classical *piano nobile*.

The footprint of the main block measures 75 by 43 feet. The front façade of this rectangle faces Pleasant Street, possesses five bays, and is covered with a hipped roof and deck. Five dormer windows are situated on the south slope of this roof. The side ends of the roof feature paired, brick chimneys. Wood railings, which once surmounted the roof of the main block, are nonextant. A 2-story front porch projects from the main block. It measures 35 by 19 feet and features four plain, wooden columns of simplified classical order supporting a shed roof. The wood railing, which once surmounted the porch roof, is nonextant, as are the railings around the deck of the porch. The cornice of the porch extends across the façade of the main block and joins the cornices of the side wings. The front porch once served as the main entrance to the building with paired flights of stairs flanking it and leading from grade to the porch. A number of years ago, these stairs were removed and the main entrance placed at grade with a door to the basement.

The west wing is two stories in height and covered with a front gable roof, hipped on the south end and gabled at the north end. Its footprint measures about 27 by 123 feet. The entire west wing dates to the original construction of the building.

The east wing is two stories in height and is covered with a hipped gable roof. It measures about 27 by 43 feet. A chapel was originally located on the first and second floors of the east wing, with a large, Palladian-styled window on its south and east elevations. A later remodeling of the building converted the chapel into two floors of residential units and infilled the windows with masonry, albeit leaving a reveal.

The size of the windows in the main block and wings varies from floor to floor. Originally, they featured 6/6 double-hung sash. A number of years ago, the original sash were replaced with wooden, 1/1 double-hung sash but the window openings themselves remain intact.

Cast concrete detailing is extensively employed. This detailing includes a water table, which surrounds the east, south, and west sides of the building between the basement and the first floor; a belt course situated between the second and third floors on the south elevation of the main block; window sills throughout the original building; coping on the parapets, which flank the east

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and west sides of the main block's roof; and caps for the four chimneys, which rise above these parapets.

A contemporary newspaper article identified the name of the building's general contractor and its projected use:

Completion of the deaconess institute building which is being erected by Arthur Neumann & Sons for the Methodist denomination at Tenth and Pleasant streets is expected about Oct. 1. Social workers and women missionaries, as well as deaconesses, will be trained in the institution, which will accommodate more than 100 students. The building has dormitories, lecture, science and recreation rooms, and a chapel. It will cost approximately \$200,000. The Rev. Dr. A. E. Griffith will be dean and acting superintendent, and Miss Harriett Laney will be preceptress. (*Des Moines Register*, August 7, 1922)

First Addition

Sometime before 1941, a 2-story addition was added to the rear of the east wing. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1920-update) This addition measures about 17 by 64 feet. The maroon-colored brick of its walls blends with that of the main block and wings. A flat roof covers this addition.

Second Addition (Nonextant)

In 1959, Brooks-Borg Architects-Engineers (the successor firm of Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson) prepared plans for an addition to Women's Home Missionary Society-Esther Hall. Located between the upper arms of the complex's "H"-shape, the 1959 addition included a 1-story unit situated on grade and two units, which flanked it on the east and west. The 1-story unit served as a kitchen and dining hall. The other units were 2-story in height and served as dormitory rooms. Unlike the original building, this addition was faced with red-colored brick, but its Flemish bond repeated that of the original building. A system of flat roofs covered the 1959 addition. The current rehabilitation of the Hall demolished the 1959 addition because it had sustained considerable water and mold damage.

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Interior

The interior of the first floor is divided into three areas: front hall, east hall and west hall. The front hall, which stands as the crossbar of the "H," contains a long, central hall, which runs end-to-end of the building. Dormitory rooms are located on the north side of this hall, and public rooms and a supervisor's apartment are located on its south side hall. A short hall, located in the middle of the front hall, accesses the front porch of the building. Surviving historic features on the first floor include a fireplace in the southwest room and some wooden cabinets in the other public rooms. The west hall contains dormitory rooms on each of its two floors. The rear portion of the east hall contains dormitory rooms on each of its two floors. A dome-ceiling chapel, located at the front of the east wing, was divided, presumably in the 1970s, into two floors and its large Palladian-style window in-filled with masonry.

The floor plans of the other upper floors reflect essentially the same configuration as that of the first floor, except the upper floors feature dormitory rooms instead of public rooms on the south side of their front halls.

The basement reflects the hall configuration of the upper floors. A number of floor-to-ceiling, wooden cupboards survive in its southwest room. A kitchen and dining hall are located in the basement and situated within the upper arms of the "H." They form part of the 1959 addition to the building.

Many of the partitions between the dormitory rooms have been removed throughout the building. Many of the plaster walls and ceilings have been removed from the lower floors of the building.

When first constructed, the interior was plain and simple and generally devoid of architectural embellishment. Surviving historic features include terrazzo floors and stair treads, metal newel posts and banisters in the stairwells, and some of the dormitory doors. The building's walls and ceilings feature plaster surfaces throughout the interior. In the 1990s, water penetrated the building, causing mold and affecting the stability and utility of this plaster. The current rehabilitation project is repairing this deterioration.

Current Rehabilitation

Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall is currently undergoing an adaptive reuse rehabilitation to convert the building into low- and moderate-income housing. This project is complying with

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the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation in order to obtain federal and state historic preservation tax credits. The National Park Service has approved the project's proposed design.

HISTORIC NAME

The complicated institutional history of this building poses a challenge to select an historic name for it. The building was originally constructed under the aegis of the following programs within the Methodist Episcopal Church:

Women's Foreign Missionary Society
Women's Home Missionary Society
Bidwell Deaconess Home
Iowa Bible Training School

Many other names also have identified this property. The original architects' plans for the building identify it as "Bible Training School, Women's Home Missionary Society." (Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson) An inverted styling of this name--"Women's Home Missionary Society-Bible Training School"--is also encountered during the early years. City directories from the 1920s identify the property as the "Iowa National Bible Training School."

In 1931, the name of the building was changed to Iowa National Esther Hall & Bidwell Deaconess Home to reflect changes in the institutions it housed. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1920-update) The Bidwell Social Service Center was also housed in the building at this time. It was also known as Queen Esther Hall, Queen Esther Girls' Hall, and later, Esther Hall.

In 1974, the building's name changed again to "Hawthorn Hill" to reflect yet more institutional changes. "Chestnut Hills," the present name of the property, is the styling devised by the developer now engaged in the building's rehabilitation. The Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church was the titleholder, when the property transferred from the national church.

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This nomination has adopted "Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall" as the historic name of this property. The first name is indicative of the building's institutional origins and purpose. The latter name suggests the building's use as a residence.

CONDITION AND INTEGRITY

Condition

The condition of Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall is very good. It remained occupied and well maintained throughout much of its life. Then, in the 1990s, the building was vacated. Water and moisture penetration caused considerable damage to the interior of the basement, particularly along the west elevation, where the 10th Street hill allowed water to run into it. Still, the building's durable materials stood it in good stead; and, when the cry went out to raze the building, vocal protest arose, particularly from those, who recognized that downtown Des Moines needed low- and moderate-income housing and that the Hall was ideal. During the recent rehabilitation of the building, its developers stripped the affected plaster, abated asbestos, and repaired the basement walls.

Integrity

Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall possesses high integrity according to many of the National Register's seven qualities.

The building's integrity of *location* is excellent. It remains on its original site with its commanding presence on the crest of the Pleasant Street ridge intact. The front yard of the property remains open, free of intrusion, and an attractive stage for the building's presentation.

The integrity of the Hall's *design* is high. The south, west, and east elevations of the complex remain intact, including its brick, stone, and woodwork. The fenestration design also remains original. Although the balustrades, which surmounted the roof of the main block and the front porch, are nonextant, these architectural details are not essential for the presentation of the building as a fine example of Colonial Revival styling.

The *setting* of the Hall is good. Situated near the First Methodist Episcopal Church at 1001 Pleasant Street and Iowa Methodist Medical Center at 1200 Pleasant Street, the Hall remains closely linked

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geographically and visually with these two major Methodist institutions in Des Moines. The campus of the Principal Financial Group (formerly Bankers Life Company) remains nearby. As one of Des Moines largest employers, the Principal continues to employ hundreds of young women in its insurance operations, as it did during the Hall's period of significance.

The integrity of *materials* in the Hall is near excellent. The main block and wings—the core of the building—remain essentially unchanged since its original construction. The current rehabilitation project has preserved the polychrome slate on the frontage roofs over the main block and wings, having removed the slate from a rear portion of the roof, where repairs were needed. Although the removal of the Palladian-style window on the south elevation and the arched windows on the east elevation is regrettable, the infill materials, which replaced them, left their original openings intact. This somewhat mitigates their visual distraction. The current rehabilitation project has left this infill intact because it wishes to use the east wing's second floor, which otherwise would be visible from the exterior.

The *workmanship* evident in the building today is best seen on the exterior of the building. There, the use of quality building materials, such as polychrome slate for the roof, Flemish bond for the brick, and concrete detailing call attention to the builders' and manufacturers' skill at fashioning these materials.

The Hall retains the *feeling* of a residential facility in an urban setting. Its distinctive roof design, porch, and fenestration distinguish the building from its commercial surroundings. Its front lawn and deep setback from the street further emphasize its residential function.

The Hall retains a high quality of *association* as a residence and education facility. Former residents from the building's period of significance would readily recognize it today.

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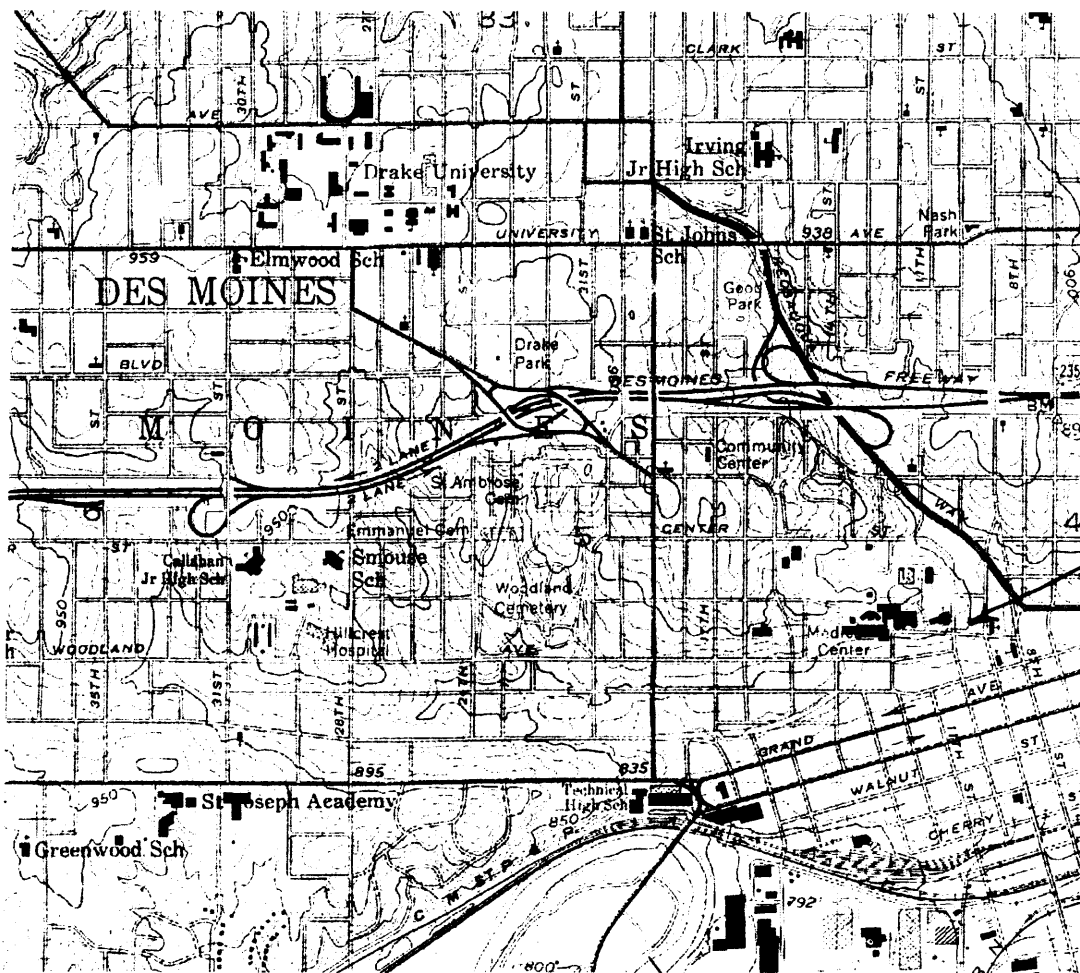
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Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall, Polk County, Iowa.

MAP

ARROW LOCATES PROPERTY



Source: U.S.G.S. Map (7.5 Minute Series), Des Moines SW Quadrangle, Photorevised 1980.

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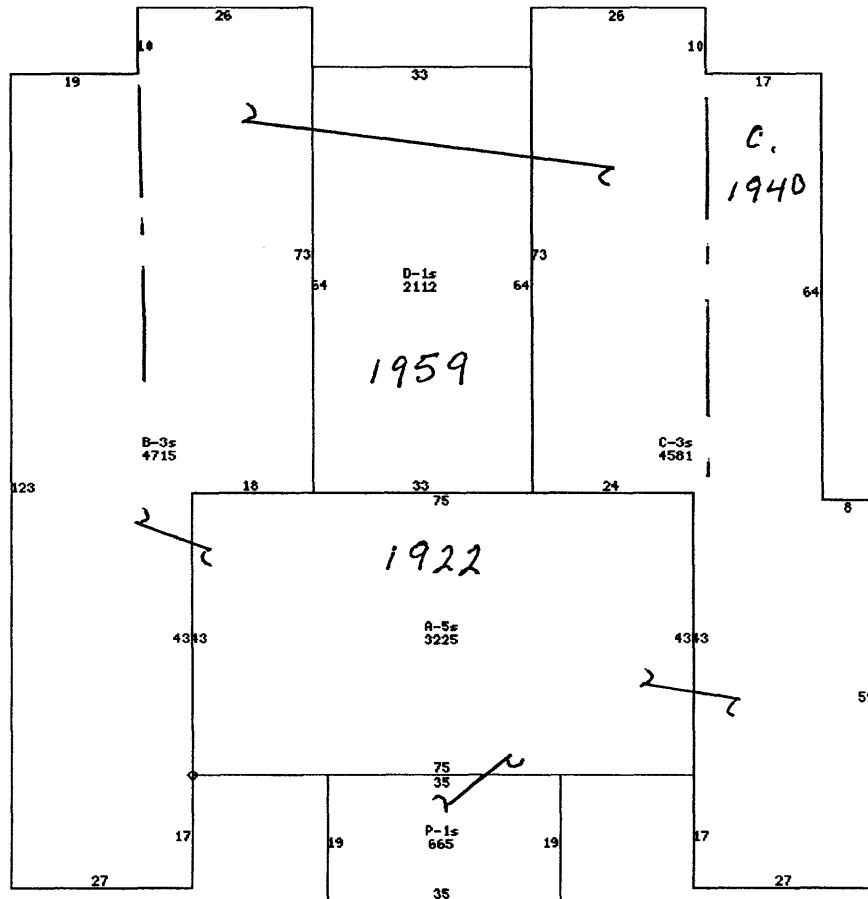
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FOOTPRINT OF BUILDING



This drawing shows the various units of this complex and the dates of their construction. The current rehabilitation of the property removed the 2,112 square foot unit within the 1959 addition.

Source: Polk County Assessor's Office, 2007.

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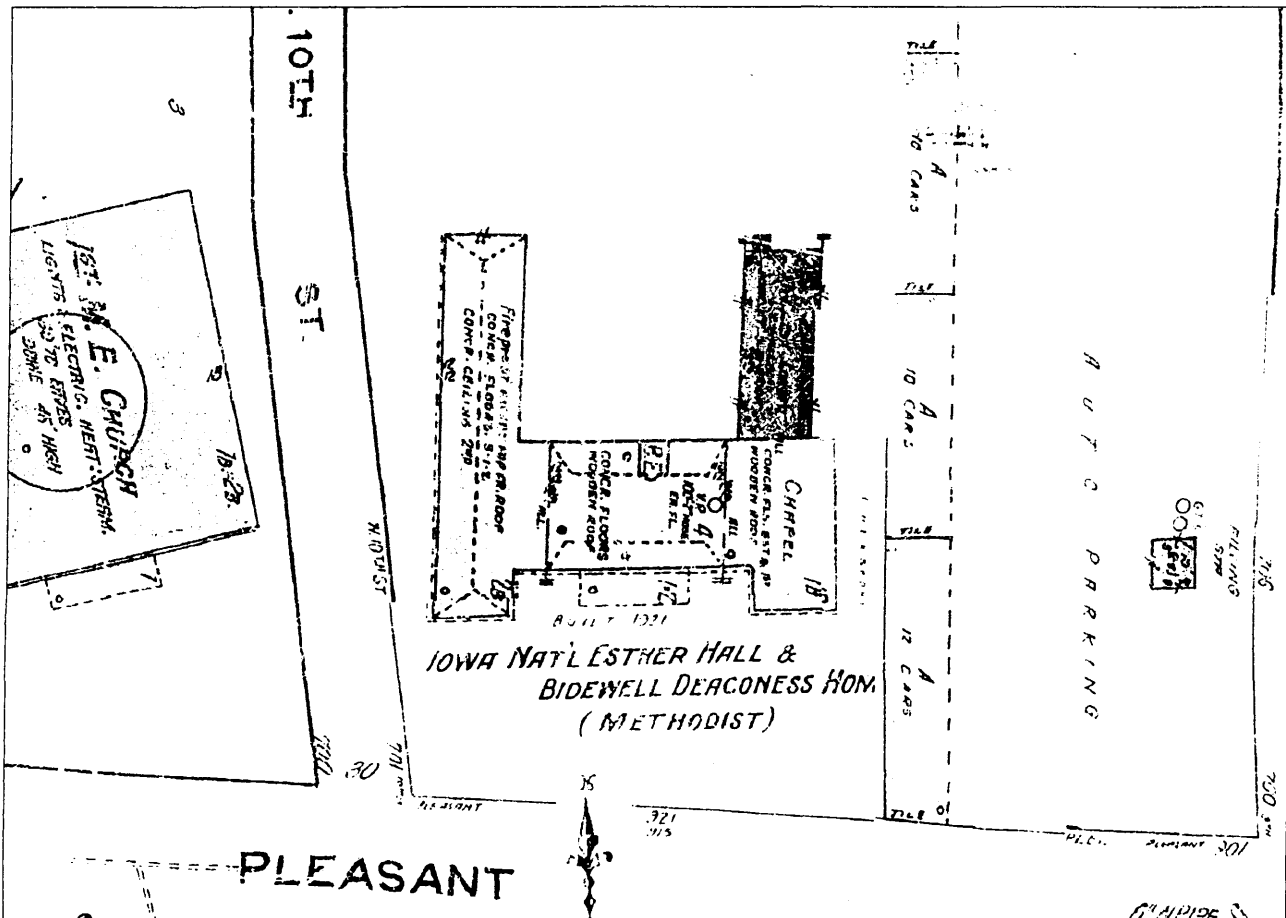
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FIRE INSURANCE MAP CIRCA 1943



This map shows the property's original footprint (light shade), its circa 1940 addition (dark shade), and the near proximity of First Methodist Episcopal Church (NRHP).

Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Co., Des Moines, Iowa, circa 1943, vol. 1, p. 48.



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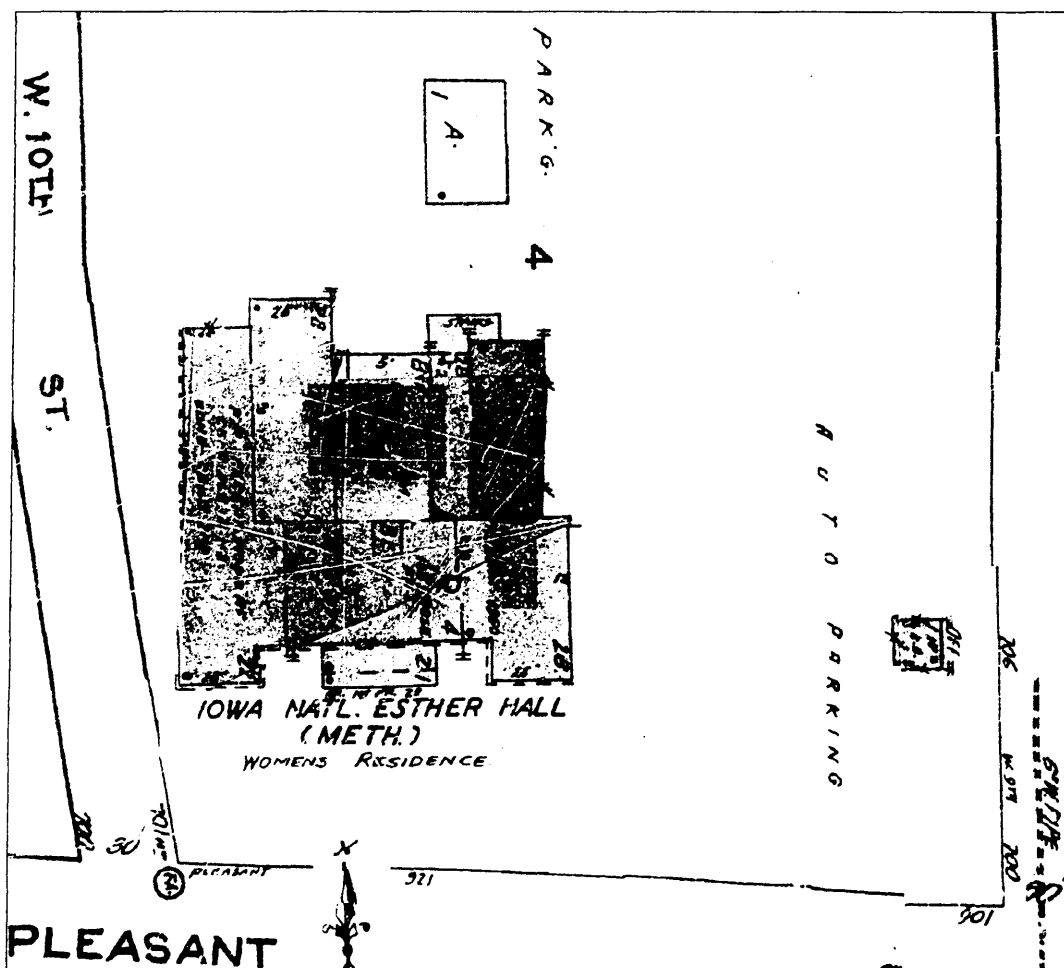
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FIRE INSURANCE MAP CIRCA 1957



This map documents the 1959 addition to the complex within the arms of its rear wings. The automobile garage, shown to the north of the building, is nonextant.

Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Co., Des Moines, Iowa, 1957 updated, vol. 1, p. 48.

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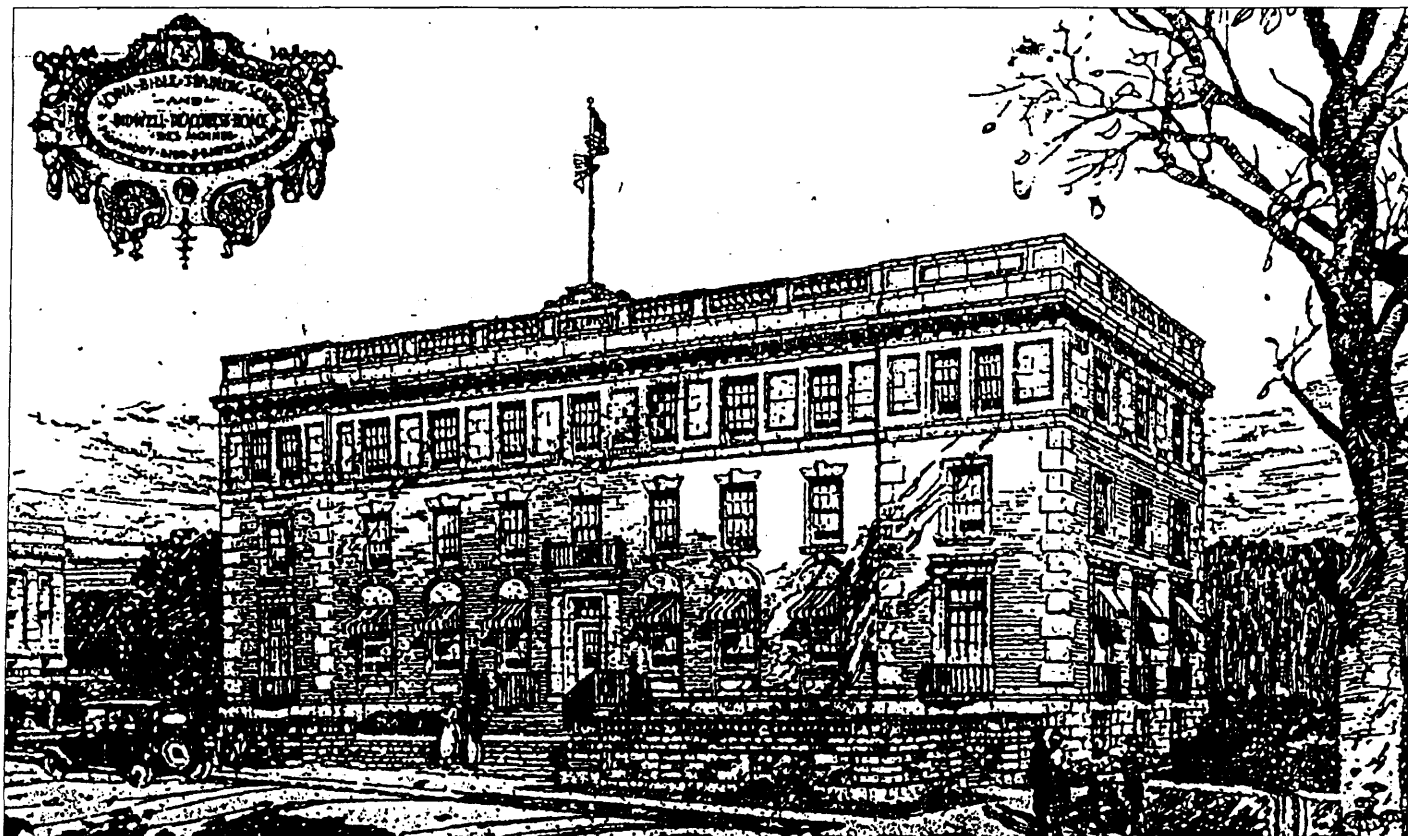
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EARLY CONCEPT DRAWING

1918



This architect drawing pictures Beaux-Arts inspired building as designed by Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson but never erected. The poor quality of this image reflects the poor quality of the newspaper microfilm from which it is taken.

Source: *Des Moines Register*, March 17, 1918.

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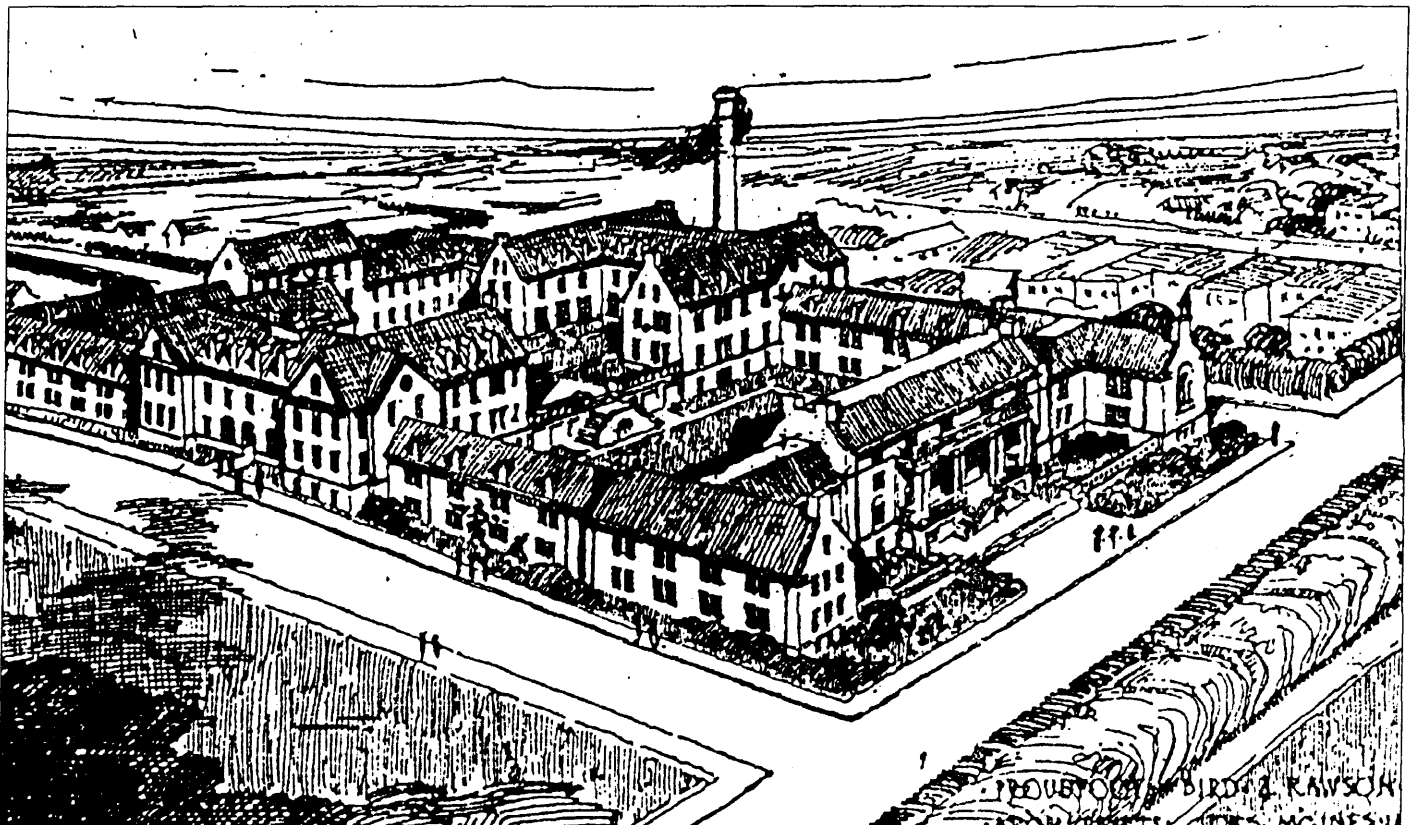
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CONCEPT PLAN FOR CAMPUS

1919



Signed Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson in the lower right-hand corner, this drawing pictures an ambitious master plan for the Bidwell Deaconess Home and Iowa Bible Training School. The design organized its many buildings around several collegiate-like quadrangles. Only the main block and flanking wings (foreground) were built. The drawing virtually ignores the topography of the site.

Source: *Des Moines Register*, July 7, 1919.

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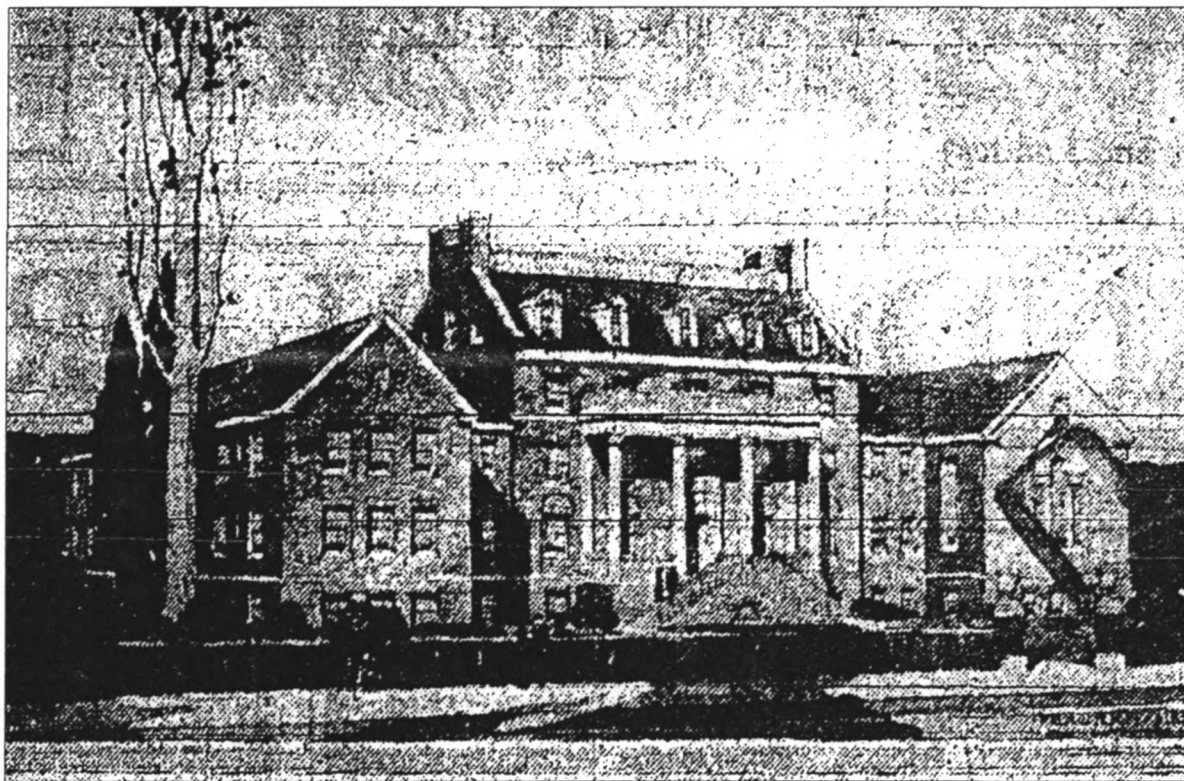
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REVISED CONCEPT

1921



Prepared by architects Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson, this revised concept for the Bidwell Deaconess Home and Bible Training School was implemented largely as depicted here. The substitution of hipped roofs over the two side wings was an exception. This change of plan lessened the visual forward thrust of these wings and lent greater balance to the design.

Source: *Des Moines Register*, May 23, 1921.

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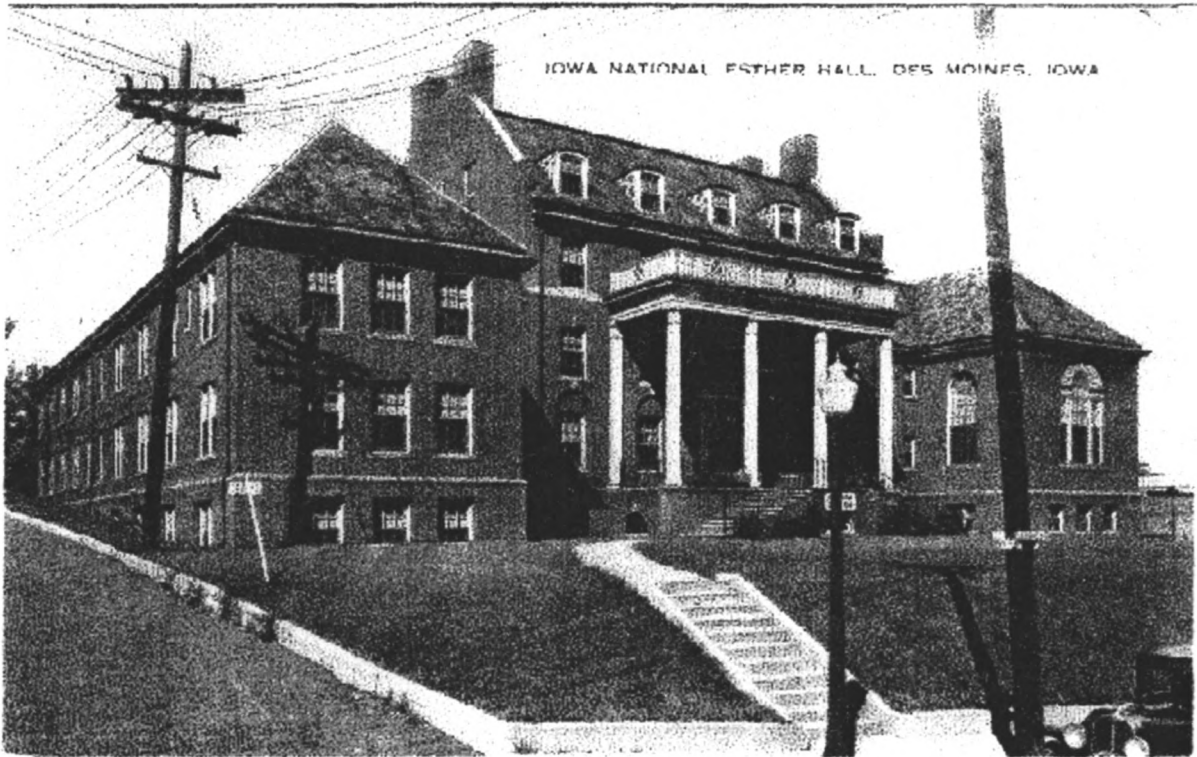
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IOWA NATIONAL ESTHER HALL CIRCA 1935



This postcard pictures Hawthorn Hill in the late 1920s or 1930s. The view captures the building's commanding position on the crest of the Pleasant Street ridge. Such a postcard from a daughter in residence lent reassurance to her rural family that she was safe and comfortable away from home. The broad sweep of the front yard and deep setback of the building stand in marked contrast to Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson's 1918 concept drawing.

Source: <<http://news.webshots.com/photo/1031078009016213932OCZUEkxovn>>.

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SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

Completed and first occupied in 1922, Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall is significant, locally under National Register Criterion A, because of its associations with women's history. The property provided an educational and residential facility for young women and contributed thereby to the emerging status of women during the first half of the 20th century.

Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall is architecturally significant, locally under National Register Criterion C, because of its design. The building calls attention to its architect, Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson, arguably Iowa's most prominent architectural firm during the early 20th century, and that firm's ability to manipulate Colonial Revival styling in the design of an institutional residence.

The period of significance for Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall under Criterion A, is 1922-1958, the historical time it served as an educational facility and residence for female students and career women. The period of significance, under Criterion C, is 1922, the year the building was completed and first occupied.

Although a religious institution constructed this building, Criteria Considerations A is satisfied because the building is significant because of its architectural design and associations with social history.

The property contains one resource for this nomination, the edifice itself, which is contributing and classified as a building.

WOMEN'S HISTORY

Background

The construction of Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall was a cooperative effort of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society and the Women's Home Missionary Society—two national organizations within the Methodist Episcopal Church—and a local Methodist institution known as the Iowa Bible Training School. Each of these organizations predated the construction of this building, and the following brief descriptions of their history provide a backdrop to Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall's construction.

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The Women's Foreign Missionary Society was founded in 1870 as an organization to "extend the Gospel to women by women." The Society established branch committees in the church's districts to attract young women to church work. A General Executive Committee administered the work of the Society, and women volunteers coordinated branch activities. The Society's missions included overseas work, education, and fund-raising for missionary work. (Archives of DePauw University Website)

The Women's Home Missionary Society shared similar goals but focused on the United States for its activities. It was founded in 1880, a little later than its counterpart for international work. At its 1895 annual meeting, this Society's secretary reviewed the organization's accomplishments in the United States up to that time and noted:

it has organized 2,500 auxiliary societies, collected and disbursed more than \$1,000,000 in the advancement of its work, and distributed more than \$500,00 worth of supplies in aid of ministers and their families on the frontiers. It has sixteen model homes and industrial schools in the South, missions for the Indians in Oklahoma, California, New-Mexico, Washington, and Alaska. It has ten missions in Utah, three industrial schools for Spanish-Americans in New-Mexico, missions in behalf of immigrants, and twenty-two important city missions, including the Deaconess's Homes. For the accommodation of these various missions the society owns property worth \$45,000.00. (*New York Times*, October 16, 1895, p. 7)

From this and other reports, it is clear that both of these societies administered a wide network of facilities and programs for the advancement of Christianity, social welfare, and education. These programs offered countless opportunities for women to volunteer, to gain experience outside of the home, and to administer programs and manage business operations associated with these missionary operations.

The Methodist Church discovered that a national cadre of laywomen stood willing to participate in this work. To encourage the services of this hitherto untapped resource, the church established a new program in 1888. According to one newspaper:

At the recent Quadrennial Conference of the Methodist Episcopal church laws were enacted providing for the authorization and church government of a semi-ecclesiastical order never before known in this church, but similar in many essential particulars to the various benevolent and religious female orders of the Roman Catholics. It was called the

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Methodist Episcopal Order of Deaconesses, and as defined in the laws of the church, the duties of the Deaconesses are "to minister to the poor, visit the sick, pray with the dying, care for the orphan, seek the wandering, comfort the sorrowing, save the sinning, and relinquishing wholly all other pursuits, devote themselves in a general way to such forms of Christian labor as may be suited to their abilities." (*New York Times*, November 11, 1888)

In the 1890s, the Deaconesses came under the administration of the Woman's Home Missionary Society. ("Women" was later used in the name.) Deaconesses within the Methodist Church remain active to the present day, administered now by the Office of the Deacon, and still operating as a laywomen's organization.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, deaconess-fostered institutions were established across the United States. They included hospitals, schools, and deaconess homes, like Hawthorn Hill. Deaconesses sponsored institutes for adults, education for children, and training schools for young women considering missionary work.

This activity exemplifies what religion historian Martin E. Marty has noted:

Mainstream Protestantism during the half-century before the First World War has to be called optimistic, progressive, and, in some respects, increasingly liberal—though a massive conservative counterforce was also forming and has to be accounted for. (Marty: 337)

For the Methodists, evangelism and missions ranked high among their priorities. Raised in Postville, Iowa, Methodist layman John R. Mott (1865-1955) exemplified this emphasis. (The John R. Mott House in Postville was listed on the National Register in 2000.) Under the popular banner of "the evangelization of the world in this generation," Mott sought during the early 20th century to bring the Gospel's message within the hearing of everyone in the world and to promote Christian unity around the globe. (Marty: 344) For his work, Mott won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946.

Reflecting this emphasis on evangelism, the Women's Foreign Missionary Society and the Women's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Church sought to promote evangelism at home and abroad. By the 1920s, they had established seven training centers across the United States to prepare women for mission work, including the property in Des Moines.

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Local Institutional History

The presence of the Women's Home Missionary Society dates to 1896 in Des Moines, when a bequest from Major A. Bidwell enabled the purchase of a single-family dwelling at 1155 West Ninth Street. Subsequently named the Bidwell Deaconess Home in his honor, this building served as a residence for deaconesses associated with the Society and for other female church workers.

Bishop Fowler of the Methodists' Iowa Conference dedicated the building in 1893. In 1899, an annex was added. The 1920 city directory documents both address, the one at 1155 West 9th ("Deaconess Home") and the annex across the street at 1160 West 9th ("Bidwell Deaconess Home Verta M Naylor supt") (City Directory 1920: 162, 1545) The latter was also likely a house. The institution's expansion with the annex in 1899 provides one indication of its success.

Local Methodists had also established a Bible training school about the same time. It operated in conjunction with Iowa Methodist Hospital's School of Nursing until 1900, when the school was renamed the Iowa Bible Training School and relocated to the Ninth Street building.

The establishment of the Bidwell Deaconess Home in Des Moines invigorated Methodist laywomen in Iowa. In the 1897 *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Woman's Home Missionary Society*, the corresponding secretary of the Iowa Conference, wrote:

We are still laying the foundation upon which we expect to see a fair structure arise. . .
There is a growing interest in the deaconess work, since the Bidwell Deaconess Home
(located in Des Moines, the capital of our State) has become affiliated with our Society,
and we are planning to aid in its support the coming year. . . . We are now well organized.
(*Ibid.*: 149)

Local churches were asked to support the efforts of the deaconesses as well as those of the Women's Home Missionary Society.

The joint meeting of the four Conferences in the State was held in our Conference in May.
At this meeting plans were laid for the support of the Bidwell Deaconess Home at Des
Moines, each Conference assuming a stated amount. Upper Iowa pledged \$200. Dr.
Ames was present, and added much to the interest of the meeting. . .

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Thirteen Auxiliaries raised twenty-five cents or more for every member of their respective Churches for the Society during the year. This is the ideal apportionment for the coming year. We hope to realize it. (*Ibid.*)

The 1897 *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Woman's Home Missionary Society* also gives an insight into deaconess recruitment in Iowa. In it, the secretary of the Upper Iowa Conference writes:

Mrs. Gould, the Conference President, gave forty-five days of faithful work during the year attending Conventions and visiting Auxiliaries. As Conference manager for the training-school, she secured three young ladies as students, Miss Rosina West, Miss Rose Cloud, and Miss Sarah Wetherbee, each of whom made a fine record in her work. They were supported by the Conference. (172)

This multi-focused institution was administered by a board of representatives from different churches in Des Moines, a board of trustees of the Des Moines Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and an advisory board of businessmen. (*Des Moines Register*, May 23, 1921) The presence of the latter group is not surprising, as business support for charitable institutions runs through the city's history to the present day.

This success continued. When the cornerstone for the present building was laid on May 24, 1921, a local newspaper reported:

The Rev. E. M. Evans will preside at the ceremony of laying the stone. The Rev. John I. Hillman, president of Simpson college, will give the invocation. The Rev. D. W. Howell, general secretary of the general deaconess board of Buffalo, N.Y., will read the ritual and Miss Jean E. Oram, national secretary of the training schools at Cleveland, O., will place the stone. (*Ibid.*)

The presence at this ceremony of two national figures in the Methodist Church indicates the important role the institution played in the church's mission.

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As the new building neared completion in 1922, a front-page story in the *Des Moines Sunday Register* announced:

Social workers and women missionaries, as well as deaconesses, will be trained in the institution, which will accommodate more than 100 students. The building has dormitories, lecture, science and recreation rooms, and a chapel. It will cost approximately \$200,000. The Rev. Dr. A. E. Griffith will be dean and acting superintendent, and Miss Harriett Laney will be preceptress. (*Des Moines Sunday Register*, August 27, 1922 [front page])

Another source noted that the new building hosted 55 students from 17 different states and one Indian reservation.

Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall's function broadened in 1925 with the establishment of a program to provide a residence for young career women. The name of the building changed to Iowa National Esther Hall in 1931 to reflect this new mission.

This residential function had already been envisioned in 1919, when plans for the property were under consideration. According to one newspaper report:

Plans have been completed and construction begun on the community center, Iowa Bible Training school, Bidwell Deaconess house, and Queen Esther girls' home building at Tenth and Pleasant streets. (*Des Moines Register*, July 7, 1919)

The same story noted that buildings individual units (or buildings) for these various functions would be built in phases and that the training school would be the first. (*Ibid.*) As it happened, the training school building came to house all of these programs. The Bidwell Social Service Center was also located in the 1922 building. During the Great Depression, the Bible training program was phased out.

Throughout these years and the institution's various programmatic changes, the core mission of Hawthorn Hill remained focused on women's education and the improvement of their social status. As Ralph J. Christian of the State Historical Society of Iowa has written:

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This building is also significant in terms of the city's social history. It is a good example of a major effort by an important women's organization to provide educational opportunities for women and assist them in establishing careers outside the domestic sphere. Also, in its role as Esther Hall, this facility made it easier, both financially and in terms of the mores of the time, for young women to move outside the family sphere, work for a time, and perhaps pursue a career. This aspect of the building's history is worthy of more research and study. In fact, it ultimately might be more significant in terms of women's history than architecture. (Christian, Letter of Correspondence)

The residence operated under a policy of *in loco parentis*.

Rules in the home were strict. Absolutely forbidden were alcohol and tobacco. In fact, in 1935, a young woman was refused a room because she worked at the Iowa Liquor Commission. Male visitors were not allowed much farther than the front door, although the home thoughtfully provided "kissing rooms" in the lobby for residents to say goodbye to their sweethearts. Girls living at Esther Hall had to sign out whenever they left the hall, and as recently as 1970, curfews were midnight during the week and 1 a. m. on Fridays and Saturdays. (Banger)

As social conventions in the United States became more informal, these rules changed.

Bowing to pressures of the time, Esther Hall started accepting young men in 1974. Smoking in certain areas also was permitted. Curfews were dropped and residents were allowed to entertain guests of the opposite sex in their rooms. It also had a new name, Hawthorn Hill.

That lasted for two years until the home was closed in 1976 as a residential facility.

It was reopened in 1978, retaining the name Hawthorn Hill. Today it is a multi-ministry human service agency. (*Ibid.*)

Soon after this article was written in 1995, Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall ceased to operate as a residential facility. For a while, it continued to serve a variety of social service needs, some sponsored by the United Methodist Church and some sponsored by other private and

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public organizations. Then, for five or six years, the building sat unoccupied and without maintenance.

Adaptive Reuse

Today, Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall has taken on new life. After some earlier unsuccessful attempts, the building is undergoing rehabilitation as a low- and moderate-income apartment building. As an employee of the City of Des Moines describes the project:

Hawthorn Hill, 921 Pleasant Street, in Des Moines is being renovated as a 43-unit apartment building by developers Metroplains Development and Gandolf Group, both of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The development will utilize Federal and State Historic Tax Credits for the renovation as well as Low Income Housing Tax Credits. Subject to City Council approval, the City of Des Moines will be providing \$250,000 of HOME Investments Partnerships Funds (HOME) provided by the Housing and Urban Development Department to a rehabilitation project at 921 Pleasant Street. (Neiderbach)

Having completed the assembly of its financial package, the developers have moved forward with their project, scheduled for completion in 2008. As noted elsewhere, the developers are applying for federal and state historic preservation tax credits, and its proposed design complies with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

ARCHITECTURE

Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall is architecturally significant because of the design by Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson. Arthur Neumann & Sons served as the general contractor for the building's construction. (*Des Moines Register*, August 27, 1922)

The Des Moines architectural firm of Proudfoot & Bird and its successor partnerships became "Iowa's Pre-Eminent Architectural Firm." (Long 1981) Their notable designs in Des Moines included the Polk County Courthouse, First Methodist Episcopal Church, Equitable Life Insurance Co. of Iowa Building, Hubbell Building, Des Moines Building, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, Masonic Temple, Liberty Building, Drake University Stadium and Fieldhouse, Des Moines Register Building, and Roosevelt and East High Schools among many others.

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Proudfoot & Bird's 1906 commission to design First Methodist Episcopal Church in Des Moines paved the way for Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson's commission to design Hawthorn Hill. Both institutions were affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, and their adjacent location to one another in downtown Des Moines provided another link.

Within the context of Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson's opus, Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall shows how the firm manipulated Colonial Revival styling. Popular during the early 20th century, this style harkened to the architectural heritage of the United States, particularly to historic buildings influenced by Georgian and Federal styling. Architectural historian Patricia Ann Lacey Eckhardt points out that Proudfoot & Bird had already introduced Colonial Revival elements into their vocabulary as early as 1898 in designs for the University of Iowa and Iowa State University but that their later manipulation of the style reflected a more authentic rendering. Alumni Hall (Association Building) at Iowa State College (1904-1907) and Hawthorn Hill (1919) reflect this closer reading. (Eckhardt 1995b: 3-4)

Evolution of Design

Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson prepared at least three designs for Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall. Published over a period of three years in local newspapers, these designs offer an insight into the relationship of the client and the architect. The drawings show a marked change in architectural style, an ambitious expansion of the project's scope, a radically scaled-back plan, and, finally, a built structure, which differed from all of them.

The first of these drawings was published in March 1918, while the nation was still engaged in World War I. The second was published about five months after the 1918 armistice. A third appeared in 1921, when the cornerstone for the new building was laid. More changes in the building's design occurred, as evidenced in the comparison of the 1921 drawing and the as-built edifice.

While the motivations behind these many changes are presently unknown, they show an evolution of thought and purpose and point to the challenges Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson faced as a design firm, when seeking to please a client.

The earliest, presently known drawing dates from 1918. (See Continuation Sheet 7-13.) It features a 3-story brick, 9-bay building influenced by Beaux Arts styling. A signature cartouche,

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elaborate with Beaux Arts motifs, identifies the project as the "Iowa Bible Training School and Bidwell Deaconess Home." The symmetrical façade of this rectangular block faces Pleasant Street. A balustraded parapet surmounts the top floor. The building sits slightly back from the public right-of-way, but there is only slight indication of the site's hilly terrain.

The property's second design, published in a local newspaper in 1919, radically reconfigured the 1918 concept. (See Continuation Sheet 7-14.) The concept for the property has now become a densely built-up, urban campus with many buildings sited on an entire city block. Several collegiate-type quadrangles give shape to this complex. A massive chimney towers above it, belches smoke, and lends an industrious note to the scene. Here again, the drawing omits any hint of any topographical variation. This drawing presents a concept based on phased expansion in the future. As the newspaper noted:

Plans have been completed and construction begun on the community center, Iowa Bible Training school, Bidwell Deaconess home and Queen Esther girls' home buildings at Tenth and Pleasant streets.

The group will be built in units. The first unit, the training school will be completed by Jan. 1 at a cost of \$75,000. The total cost for the entire group will probably exceed \$250,000.

The property is owned by the Women's Home Missionary society of the Methodist Episcopal church and the work of the institutions will be under the supervision of this society. (*Des Moines Register* 1919)

The third design, published in 1921, addressed only "the first unit." (See Continuation Sheet 7-15.) The densely built-up campus and collegiate quadrangles have vanished, deferred perhaps to the future. The depicted building features a 3-1/2 story, hipped main block set back from the street and flanked by two, forward-projecting, front-gabled wings. The design of this building largely repeats that of the 1918 concept with a few details, such as a series of five dormers across the south slope of the main roof, added.

As built, Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall deviated from this 1921 concept plan. The building is better as a result. Hipped roofs over the wings are substituted for their front gable configurations. This lessens the frontward thrust of the wings, increased the visual dominance of the main block, and strengthened the balance and unity of the composition.

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Colonial Revival Styling

Patricia Ann Lacey Eckhardt has placed Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson's use of Colonial Revival styling at Hawthorn Hill within the opus of the firm's work.

Proudfoot and Bird and later Proudfoot Bird and Rawson used this style for educational buildings and some houses. Even as early as 1898 they were incorporating "colonial" details on such American Renaissance buildings as Schaeffer Hall at the University of Iowa, and in 1902, on Beardsheer [*sic*] Hall, on the Iowa State Campus. But Hawthorn Hill follows a more authentic colonial architecture as do other works by Proudfoot Bird and Rawson such as Alumni Hall at Iowa State University, a red brick structure with Palladian windows and a colonial porch, and the University of Iowa President's house both of 1906. After Harry Rawson joined the firm, many college buildings on the three state university campuses employed this style for a time. One example is the Chemistry-Botany Building at the University of Iowa. Hawthorn Hill is one of the last of the firm's buildings in this style. They preferred to design in a more generic sense as the Liberty Building [in Des Moines, *ed.*] of about the same date as Hawthorn Hill which employs generic classical details and a classically calm outline, but which makes an approach to the abstraction of modern architecture. (Eckhardt 1995a: 3-4)

REPRESENTATION IN OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEYS

Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall was surveyed in 1979 as part of a windshield survey of Des Moines conducted by Iowa State University students under the direction of John Maves. The Maves survey identified Hawthorn Hill and photographed it. The Maves survey has subsequently proven to be of limited use, due to the fact that its criteria for evaluation did not conform to National Register standards.

In 1995, Eckhardt conducted a reconnaissance survey of downtown Des Moines, prepared an historic context for the area, and completed a series of Iowa Site Inventory Forms. Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall was included among the surveyed resources as site #77-07291. (Eckhardt 1995: 33-34) At that time, Eckhardt evaluated the building as individually eligible for the National Register under Criterion C. On the site sheet for the building, she also noted:

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There are two points of significance for the architecture of Hawthorn Hill. First the building was designed by the important Des Moines architectural firm of Proudfoot Bird and Rawson, and second, the building employs the Colonial revival architectural style, a style regularly used for educational institutions and houses during the first third of the 20th century. (Eckhardt 1995b: 3-4)

In 2003, William C. Page, Public Historian, prepared an Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 1 for Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall. Undertaken in conjunction with a redevelopment of the property, this report concluded that the building was National Register eligible under Criterion A, because of its associations with women's history, and under Criterion C, because of its architectural significance. The National Park Service subsequently concurred with these findings, along with a conditional approval of the project's Part 2 application, also in 2003. In the meantime, the City of Des Moines had designated the building as a local landmark on April 20, 1998.

POTENTIAL FOR HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Although the site's potential for archaeological research is, as yet, unevaluated, there appears to be little in this regard. Construction of this building disturbed its site, and it is unlikely that historic subsurface features remain extant.

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United States Geological Survey; Des Moines SW Quadrangle; Photorevised 1980.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall, Polk County, Iowa.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 11, except the north 170 feet, of Methodist Plat 1 in the City of Des Moines,
Polk County, Iowa.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Contains all land associated historically with the resource.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall, Polk County, Iowa.

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall
921 Pleasant Street
Des Moines, IA 50309
Looking northwest
William C. Page, Photographer
January 21, 2008
2. Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall
921 Pleasant Street
Des Moines, IA 50309
Looking northeast
William C. Page, Photographer
January 21, 2008
3. Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall
921 Pleasant Street
Des Moines, IA 50309
Looking northeast, detail of front porch pilaster and cornice at roof
William C. Page, Photographer
January 21, 2008
4. Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall
921 Pleasant Street
Des Moines, IA 50309
Looking southeast, one part of 1959 addition at center and circa 1940 addition to its left
William C. Page, Photographer
January 21, 2008
5. Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall
921 Pleasant Street
Des Moines, IA 50309
Looking northwest
William C. Page, Photographer
January 21, 2008
6. Methodist Deaconess Institute-Esther Hall
921 Pleasant Street
Des Moines, IA 50309
Remodeled chapel
Looking northeast
William C. Page, Photographer
January 21, 2008