

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 PLYMOUTH PLACE
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 4111 INGERSOLL AVENUE N/A not for publication
city or town DES MOINES N/A vicinity
state IOWA code IA county POLK code 153 zip code 50312

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.)

[Signature] 17 FEB 2015
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 :

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	Signature of Keeper <u>Patrick Andrus</u>	Date of Action <u>4/14/2015</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, (Explain)	_____	_____

Plymouth Place
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

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

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) |
| public-local | _ district |
| _ public-State | _ site |
| _ public-Federal | _ structure |
| | _ object |

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

N/A

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/MULTIPLE DWELLING

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/MULTIPLE DWELLING

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls CONCRETE

roof CONCRETE
other _____

Narrative Description

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

Plymouth Place
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)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1968

Significant Dates

1968

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

SMITH VOORHEES JENSEN ARCHITECTS ASSOCIATED
HUEHOLT, RAYMOND

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 _____

Plymouth Place
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Polk County, Iowa
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.67 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 15 | 443866E | 4604122N

Zone Easting Northing

2 | | |

Zone Easting Northing

3 | | |

Zone Easting Northing

4 | | |

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 Alexa McDowell, Architectural Historian

organization AKAY Consulting date February 3, 2015

street & number 103 W. Island Avenue telephone 515-491-5432

city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55401

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 Plymouth Place Associates, L.P.

street & number 4111 Ingersoll Avenue telephone 515-274-0438

city or town Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50312

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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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

7. Narrative Description

Site Description

Plymouth Place is sited on a 2.6-acre city lot (1/2 of a full city block) in the Greenwood Park Addition of the city of Des Moines, some three miles west of the downtown commercial area. The property is located on Ingersoll Avenue, a secondary, east-west roadway running between the west edge of the downtown (20th Street) and the residential neighborhood of Ingersoll Park (48th Street). The parcel is further bounded by 42nd Street on the west and 41st Street on the east; the north half of the block is developed as single family residential.

Figure 1. USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Map – Des Moines SW Quad (1976)



(SOURCE: <http://www.trails.com>. Accessed 08/08/2012)

The location of Plymouth Place is indicated.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Plymouth Place is located on the north side of Ingersoll Avenue with its façade facing southeast. The lot upon which the property is sited is densely vegetated, the building being set back from Ingersoll Avenue within the embrace of the site's numerous mature trees (Figure 2). A circular driveway in the southeast corner of the parcel is entered from 41st Street on the east, with exit onto Ingersoll Avenue. A second driveway enters on the northeast corner from 41st Street, providing access to the ground level parking that encircles the building and to a pedestrian entrance on the northeast (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Photograph (Image 0001) – Site View



(AKAY Consulting – May 21, 2012)

Site view looking northwest across Ingersoll Avenue.

Plymouth Place is located within the boundaries of, but not counted as a contributing resource to, the Greenwood Park Plat Historic District (listed 2013). The building was counted as a non-contributing resource to the district because it post-dates the district's period of significance.¹

¹ James Jacobsen, "Greenwood Park Plats Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, April 24, 2013.

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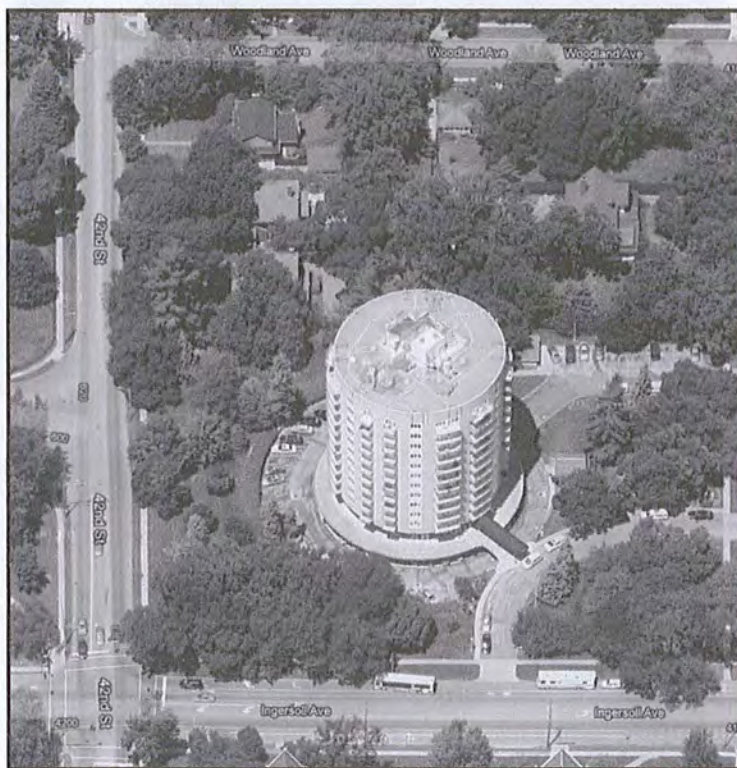
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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 3. Aerial View - 2014



(SOURCE: <http://www.maps.google.com>. Accessed 05/21/2013.)

Aerial view looking north with Ingersoll Avenue seen at the bottom of the image. The green awning marks the building's main entrance, with the circular driveway providing access to the entrance. A second driveway at the northeast corner of the site provides vehicular access to the ground level parking area.

Property Description

Inside and out, the visual character of Plymouth Place rests firmly on its cylindrical shape, made possible through the use of reinforced concrete. On the exterior, where windowed balconies punctuate the concrete structure, the cylinder is simultaneously about mass and light. On the interior, the form creates an ease of circulation and an economy of space. The property, with its concrete, cylindrical structure, flat roof, raised first floor, clean lines and spare use of decorative embellishment, is clearly a product of the Modern movement.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Plymouth Place is a 12-story residential building with a full walkout basement. The concrete, cylindrical form with its flat roof and vertical banks of windows and cantilevered balconies defines the exterior (Figure 4). The first level of the building, with its alternating use of canted piers and large expanses of glazing, is recessed from the wall plane of the upper 11 floors, heightening the sense of lightness inherent in the original design. That sense of floating is heightened by the use of a deep, concrete terrace encircling the building.

The visual impact of the terrace varies by perspective. From Ingersoll Avenue on the south, the terrace grounds the building's first floor. From 41st Street on the east, the terrace likewise defines the separation between the first and ground levels, but perhaps more importantly, it underscores the sense of weightlessness established by the recessed main level. As a practical matter, the recessed first floor creates a sheltered overhang for the outside terrace (Figure 10).

Figure 4. Photograph (Image 0002) – Exterior



(AKAY Consulting – May 21, 2012)

View of Plymouth Place looking northwest across Ingersoll Avenue.

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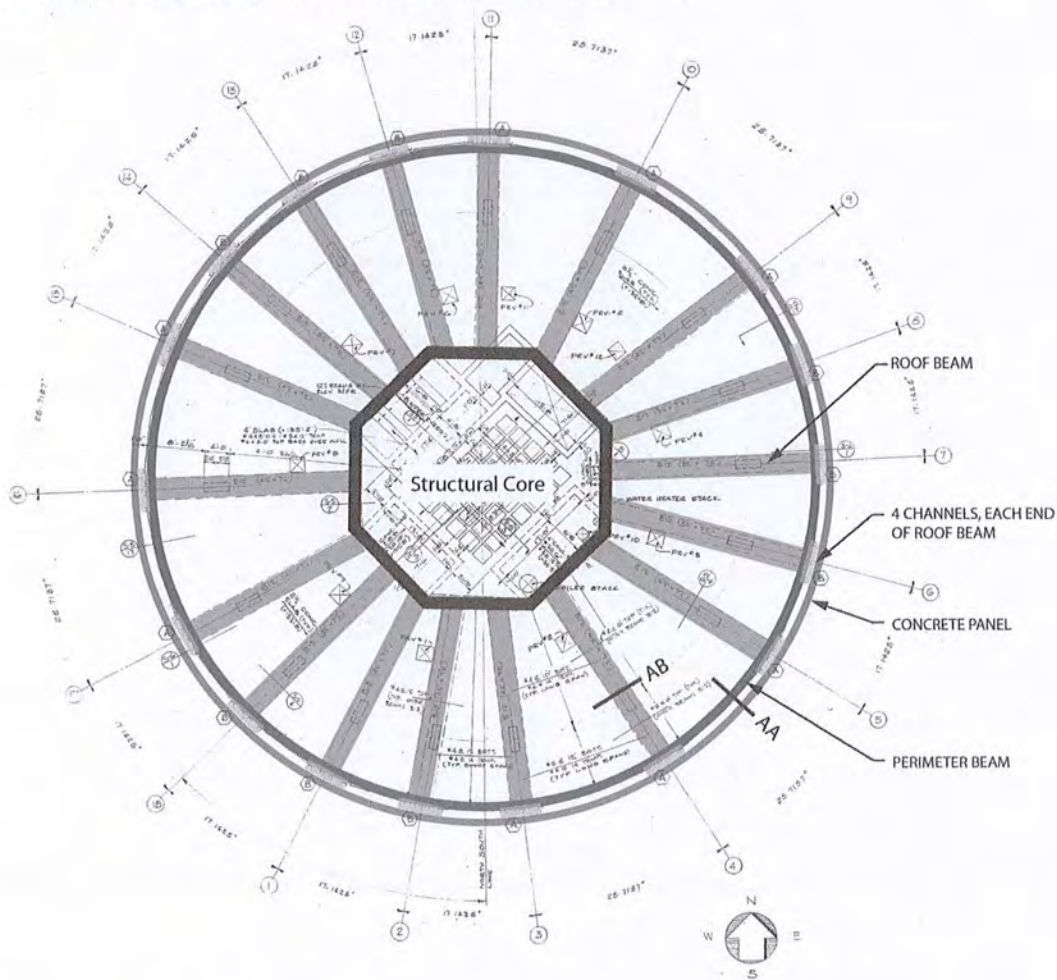
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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

As the following detail drawings and series of historic construction photos indicate, the engineering required to erect the twelve-story, poured concrete, cylindrical building further ties Plymouth Place to the modern era. Like the vertical limbs of a Banyan tree the project engineer suspended steel members from the cantilevered roof deck, tying them to the concrete decks of each floor through to the ground level. With that system in place, the concrete panels of the building's exterior were then attached to enclose the structure.

Figure 5. Structural Detail Drawing: Roof Framing Plan – 2015



(SOURCE: Drawings courtesy of ASK Studio Architects, Des Moines, Iowa – 2015)

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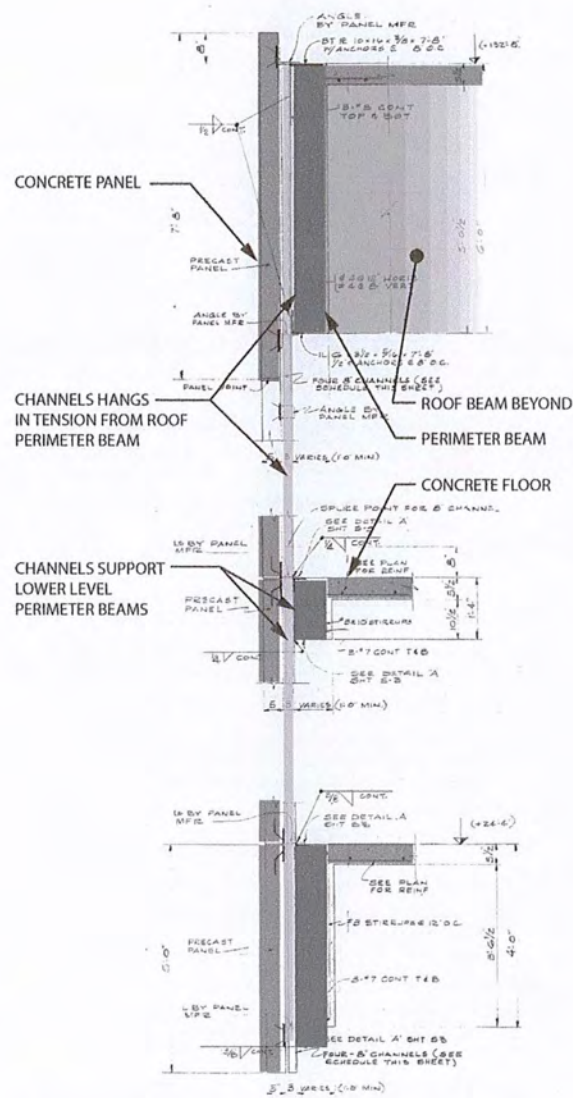
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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 6. Structural Detail Drawing: Section at Perimeter Beams – 2015



(SOURCE: Drawings courtesy of ASK Studio Architects, Des Moines, Iowa – 2015)

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 7. Construction Photos (Autumn 1966 – December 1966)



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 8. Construction Photo (May 1967)



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 9. Construction Photo (May 1967)



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

In this image we see the board form for a balcony deck being hoisted into place. Once attached to the building, the deck was poured. The process of constructing the balcony decks continued with temporary steel (see lower floors) posts introduced while the concrete cured.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Although out of view from Ingersoll Avenue on the south, tenant parking encircles the building at ground level. Parking is sheltered by the deep concrete terrace of the first floor and a bridged walkway to the first floor entrance separates foot traffic from the ground level parking that encircles the building.

Figure 10. Photograph (Image 0003) – View of Concrete Terrace and Ground Level Parking



(AKAY Consulting – May 21, 2012)

View of the concrete terrace and ground level parking looking to the southwest from the east driveway.

Interior

Like the exterior, the interior character of Plymouth Place is driven by the cylindrical form, which results in circular hallways, wedge-shaped living spaces, and a central core that is square in shape (Figure 11).

The 12 floors of Plymouth Place are dominated by living spaces, with areas for community activities and various support services provided. The building's plan is comprised of a square, central core from which the interior spaces radiate outward. On every level of the building the square core accommodates a common space, the elevators, two sets of stairs, and the mechanical systems. On the first floor, public restrooms are also housed in the core, while on the upper levels, the laundry and service closet utilize those spaces.

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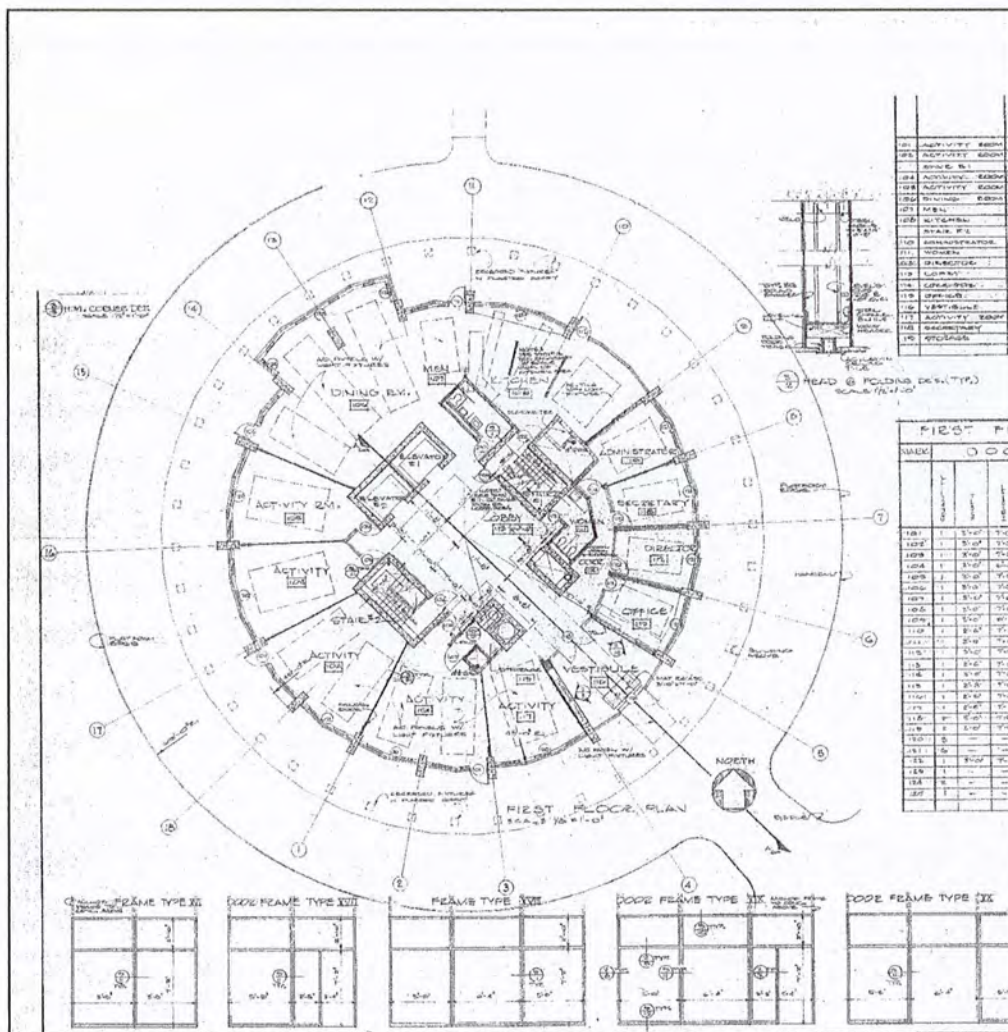
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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 11. Floor Plan (1966) – First Floor



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

The first floor plan is typical of each of the floors – all with a square, central core and wedge-shaped, radiating spaces.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

The Plymouth Place first floor features an exterior vestibule that retains the 1968 wood dado and tile floor. The vestibule entrances, both exterior and interior, are steel framed with large glazed panels surrounding them (Figure 12). Inside the building, the ring around the central, square core accommodates community space for dining and socializing, as well as a kitchen and offices. The community space encircles approximately one-half of the first floor and is open in plan with moveable accordion dividers mounted on the structural piers for use as needed, an option that increases the flexibility of the space. The offices, although separated from one another by permanent walls, have floor to ceiling windows on the hallway side, keeping them light and accessible. Except for the kitchen and the public restrooms, the first floor is carpeted and, with the exception of the first floor lobby, lacks decorative embellishment. Rather, the first floor spaces rely on the simple beauty of the structure's canted piers, the open floor plan, and the floor to ceiling windows for its visual character.

Figure 12. Photograph (Image 0007) – Main Entrance Vestibule



(AKAY Consulting – May 21, 2012)

View looking through the vestibule from the exterior doors of the main entrance toward the first floor lobby.

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Figure 13. Photograph (Image 0010) – First Floor Dining/Community Space



(AKAY Consulting – May 21, 2012)

View of the first floor dining and community spaces, looking west from main entrance. Note the accordion partitions that are used to sub-divide the space.

As noted, decorative embellishment is reserved for the first floor central lobby (Figure 14). Here wood panels mounted on the walls, a wood-trimmed, coffered ceiling, and small, square-set tile on the wall housing the elevators, mark the importance of the space. The existing hanging fixture is a non-historic replacement.

At ground level, the central core is surrounded by spaces that house a library/exercise room, laundry, recycling, and tenants' storage space.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 14. Photograph (Image 0009) – First Floor Lobby with Elevators



(AKAY Consulting – May 21, 2012)

The first floor lobby retains the tile surround of the elevator bays, wood panels on the walls, and a coffered ceiling with wood trim. The existing light fixture is not original to the building.

The building's upper 11 floors are dedicated to apartments. There are currently a total of 145 units, 37 of which are efficiency units, 56 being one-bedroom units, and the remaining 52 units classified as mergers of various units. The mergers, motivated by the need to accommodate potential residents, have been completed over the course of a number of years. Many of the alterations involve the merging of two efficiency units to create a one-bedroom or double unit. Merging units requires creating a cased opening in an existing wall, removing the kitchen cabinets from one efficiency unit and building a closet in place of the kitchen. Per requirements of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the plumbing and electricity from the eliminated kitchen must remain in place so as to allow reversal if necessary. The bathrooms remain unaltered. Thus, the merger of two efficiency units results in a living space with kitchen and bathroom in one half of the new unit and a bedroom with closet and bathroom in the other. As noted, each of the residential floors has a central

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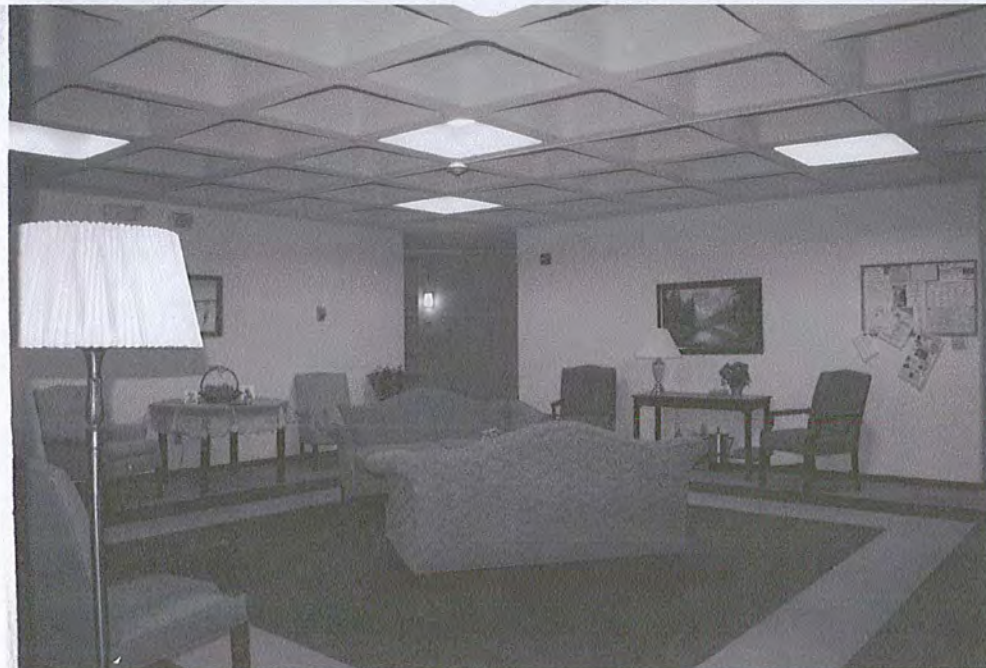
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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

common lobby, shared laundry room, and a service closet. Like the first floor lobby, that of the upper floors features a deeply coffered, cast concrete ceiling; the depth of the coffers and weight of the material combine in a bold visual statement. In contrast to the first floor lobby, the upper lobbies have no additional decorative embellishment (Figure 15). The lobbies and circular hallway are carpeted.

The wedge-shaped apartments (Figure 16), whether efficiencies, one-bedrooms or mergers, all have a kitchen and a private bath. Each has a bank of windows on the outside wall, with most featuring a balcony. The apartments are carpeted, with linoleum in the kitchen and bathroom. Although those materials are not historic, the original design plans called for each. Many of the kitchens have been updated with new cabinets and appliances, but the bathrooms remain intact, the original vanities, toilets, tubs and tile tub surrounds all appear original to the building (Figure 17-18).

Figure 15. Photograph (Image 0012) – Typical Lobby on Floors 2-12



(AKAY Consulting – May 21, 2012)

Each of the upper floors features a lobby (the one seen here is typical) in the central core. Note the coffered ceiling.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 16. Photograph (Image 0013) – Typical One Bedroom Unit



(AKAY Consulting – May 21, 2012)

Taken while undergoing historic rehabilitation, this view of a one-bedroom unit shows the typical layout of the unit type. The unit is wedge-shaped, its two halves split by a narrow wall with the interior lit by a large expanse of glazing on the outer wall. The balcony railing is visible in this view.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 17. Photograph (Image 0015) – Typical Kitchen on Floors 2-12



(AKAY Consulting – May 21, 2012)

Although little historic fabric remains in the majority of the unit kitchens, they retain their integral place in each unit floor plan.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 18. Photograph (Image 0014) – Typical Bathroom on Floors 2-12



(AKAY Consulting – May 21, 2012)

The unit bathrooms retain their historic bathtubs, toilets and shower surround tile.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Integrity Considerations

Plymouth Place retains a high level of historic integrity as it relates to all seven aspects of integrity: location, setting, association, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling.

Because Plymouth Place remains on its original site, the level of integrity as it relates to location is very high. The building is sited on a half-block lot, in a neighborhood that was and is comprised of a mix of property types, including residential, retail, religious, and cultural.

The integrity of setting and association are also very high. The parcel upon which Plymouth Place was constructed was occupied by a large, single family residence dating to 1902 and the grounds held many mature trees. Retention of the site, complete with vegetation, was a major factor in the decision to use a cylindrical form as a means of minimizing the building footprint and limiting the number of trees lost by the new construction, thereby retaining a site that was conducive to the property's function as a "living community center." The commitment to maintaining the natural setting has not diminished during the intervening years, the long-term result being a high level of historic integrity as it relates to setting. Further, Plymouth Place remains across Ingersoll Avenue from Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, the body that sponsored its construction and within close proximity to the retail businesses, cultural and educational resources, and community services that were central to the basic concept of the independent-living residence, the promotional materials for which touted the facility as a "new adventure in active retirement living."

As a resource being nominated for registration under Criterion C, integrity of design, workmanship, and materials are of paramount concern and the integrity of each of those is high. The visual character of Plymouth Place rests squarely on its use of reiterated, circular forms and the utilization of reinforced concrete; it is these elements that mark it as a building grounded in the mid-twentieth century. In addition to the cylindrical form and use of concrete, the utilization of sub-grade parking positioned beneath the first floor concrete terrace encircling the building elevates the quality of design and suggests the direct influence of Chicago's Marina City. That complex is a 1963 design by Bertrand Goldberg, which garnered international attention at the time of its construction and which remains a Chicago landmark.

The 2nd-12th floor windows at Plymouth Place were replaced in 1984 and that alteration stands as the sole significant breach to the exterior's integrity of design and materials. The alteration involved diminishing window openings, which impacts the visual balance between the concrete walls and the voids of the glazed openings. However, current plans call for the historic rehabilitation of the windows, returning them to a form more sympathetic to the original in size and configuration.

It should also be noted that approximately 16 cellular telecommunications antennae have been mounted around the perimeter of the building at the roofline. While a non-historic intrusion, the antennae are

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

relatively small in scale and their color matches that of the concrete wall. As a result, the antennae do not present an adverse effect (either direct or visual) on the property's historic integrity.

Integrity of workmanship, which relates to the evidence of the "artisans' labor and skill," is manifested in the building in the methods utilized to construct it. The building's cylindrical form and construction material required a specialized set of skills and the level of workmanship necessary to construct a concrete, cylindrical building is a reflection of the technological practices of the construction period. As a result, Plymouth Place retains a high level of integrity as it relates to workmanship and, given the building's ability to contribute to our understanding of the role of the application of concrete in modern architecture, retention of integrity of workmanship is particularly significant.

As it relates to integrity of design and materials of the building's interior, the floor plan, with its wedge-shaped living spaces, square inner core, and flexibility of common spaces, remains largely intact with only the merging of some living spaces as a significant alteration. It is important to note that the merging of living spaces was done in a manner that minimizes the impact to the floor plan and materials and simplifies the reverse of those changes should that be desired. Further, most of the interior finishes remain intact, including those of the first floor lobby which represent the most elaborate use of applied finishes. The wood-trimmed, coffered ceiling, paneled walls, and tile surrounding the elevators remain fully intact and stylistically representative of a mid-twentieth century aesthetic.

The building also retains a high level of integrity as it relates to feeling. Because Plymouth Place retains a high level of integrity as it relates to the previous qualities, visitors from the Period of Significance would readily recognize the building today and experience it much as they would have historically.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

8. Statement of Significance

Architect/Builder, cont'd.

Ringland-Johnson-Crowley

Statement of Significance

Plymouth Place Residence is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The property is locally significant as an exceptional example of mid-twentieth century Modern architecture, a movement that was born of the desire to separate from the practice of designing from historical models and the maturation of the industrial machine age. The movement is often dated to the period from about 1900 through the 1970s, placing the 1968 Plymouth Place near the period's closing years and marking it as an expression of the era's fully formed ideologies.

The visual character of Plymouth Place rests squarely on its use of reiterated, circular forms and the utilization of concrete in a high-rise apartment building. It is these elements that mark it as a building grounded in the mid-twentieth century. In addition to the cylindrical form and use of reinforced concrete, the utilization of sub-grade parking positioned beneath the first floor concrete terrace encircling the building elevate the quality of design and suggests the influence of both LeCorbusier and the 1963 Marina City design by Bertrand Goldberg, which garnered international attention at the time of its construction and which remains a Chicago landmark. Further, the Plymouth Place design is informed by the early work of I.M. Pei (either directly or through Marina City) who, in 1949, designed an apartment building that utilized a tower form with an interior plan arranged in concentric circles.

Like all major historical movements and shifts in aesthetics, the Modern movement owes its greatest achievements to a first generation of masters – those that rise above the norm to create something greater than typical. Those of the Modern era include, among others, Mies van der Rohe, LeCorbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, and I.M. Pei. These men created new ideological constructs and pushed new technologies to their limits. In the 1950s and 1960s some of these masters designed buildings in Des Moines including van der Rohe, who is responsible for the Home Federal Savings Bank (1962) and Meredith Hall at Drake University (1965). Both buildings are expressions of his steel frame and glass aesthetic. I.M. Pei designed the 1968 addition for the Des Moines Art Center, which utilizes the Brutalist tendency of mass and use of board-formed concrete.

This first generation of Modern architects paved the way for others who studied the new rules, ideas, and designs, and then, like Bertrand Goldberg, infused their own brand of genius into the mix to create a marvel like Marina City in Chicago. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill likewise seized upon the concepts of the masters to develop their own seminal designs: the 1957 Warren Petroleum Executive Headquarters in Tulsa, OK,

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which drew on LeCorbusier's concept of the "neutralizing wall" or double-skinned curtain wall; the 1958 Inland Steel Building in Chicago - the first high-rise built in that city since the Depression; and, in Des Moines, the American Republic Insurance Company building (1965), which is documented in the Iowa AIA's *A Century of Iowa Architecture* naming the state's 50 most significant buildings of the 20th century.

The work of Iowa architects like Crites & McConnell also reference the first generation of Modern architecture while reflecting the developing Modern aesthetic. C.Y. Stephens at Iowa State University is an obvious, and stunning, reference to LeCorbusier's Chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Haut, Ronchamp (1950-1954) in its utilization of a poured concrete building "beton brut" (bare concrete) with a deeply overhanging organic roof, which vividly demonstrates the plasticity and possibilities of concrete (1969).

The 1972 Iowa Society of Christian Churches building in Des Moines, the design work of Smith, Voorhees, Jensen, references the Miesian cross in its modern structural expression.

The majority of the Iowa buildings constructed in the wake of such masters and their gifted "students" during the period between about 1950 and 1980 resulted in simply serviceable buildings, but a few, like the American Republic Insurance Company building, C.Y. Stephens, and the Iowa Society of Christian Churches building, stand out as exceptional examples of local buildings which reflect the ideas and abilities of a specific time – in this case, the Modern era – providing their communities with a sense of past and place. Plymouth Place stands with the small group of buildings built in the modern era that, in its presentation of Modern principles informed by the work of first generation innovators LeCorbusier and I.M. Pei and the later Bertrand Goldberg, provide its community with a sense of past and place.

As a property less than 50 years of age, Plymouth Place meets Criterion Consideration G as an example of exceptional importance. As noted in the National Register Bulletin "Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years," the National Register Criteria for Evaluation were created to provide general guidance for evaluating resources. The Criteria "specifically encourages the recognition of locally significant resources that, by appearance or association with a person or events, provide communities with a sense of past and place." The general rule that properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years are not Register eligible was established to allow for a reasonable passage of time within which a sense of objectivity may be gained for the professional evaluation of a resource. However, the 50-year guideline is simply that – "an arbitrary span of time, designed as a filter to ensure that enough time has passed to evaluate the property in its historic context." The nomination of resources of the recent past are encouraged if the property is "exceptional" – a term which the National Park Service acknowledges has many variables.

Plymouth Place stands within the contextual evolution of Modern architecture as a resource with structure, form, and plan fully informed by the tenets of the movement and the work of those that preceded it. In that role Plymouth Place is an example of exceptional importance in Des Moines, Iowa.

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Historical Background

Plymouth Place is an example of Modern architecture, a movement conceived from a contemporaneous desire to separate from the practice of designing based on historical models and the maturation of the industrial machine age, the benefits of which permeated society and set the stage for architects to transform the very way people thought of the buildings they utilized.¹ The Modern movement is often dated to the period from about 1900 through the 1970s, placing the 1968 Plymouth Place near the period's closing years and marking it as an expression of the era's most fully formed ideologies.²

The nineteenth century Industrial Revolution and the emergence of new building materials – cast iron, wrought iron, steel, and reinforced concrete - resulted in considerable experimentation in buildings in that century's closing years. However, architects remained tied to the practice of referencing the past, of infusing the principles and devices of previous eras on contemporary design, thereby limiting the impact of the new materials. It took the coming together of the new technologies with the maturation of the ideas of Evolutionism, which supported novelty and the notion of adaptation as vital to the ever-changing environment, to liberate architects from historicism, an exhilarating freedom that infused a new energy and creativity into design, resulting in many avant-garde developments.³ The timing was perfect.

Although concrete itself was in use for centuries, the development of reinforced concrete was central to the rise of the Modern. Reinforced concrete is composed of sand, aggregate, and (most always) Portland cement, which bond as they dry. Concrete, while possessing great compressive strength, lacks tensile strength – a weakness overcome by the introduction of steel rods prior to setting. The combination, commonly referred to as reinforced concrete, is able to withstand tensile and shearing stresses.⁴ With the plasticity of the material, concrete has a wide range of applications and that adaptability was the ideal quality for the Modern, which relied on experimentation. Along with reinforced concrete, steel and glass became the structural materials for the Modern era and signaled the rise of the American skyscraper.

As is true of all paradigm shifts, the signature innovations of the Modern movement and the buildings designed as a result of those innovations are the achievements of a relatively few. Historians universally count Mies van der Rohe, LeCorbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, and I.M. Pei among that group.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (nee Ludwig Mies) was born in Aachen, Germany in 1886. His 1927 design of the German Pavillion at the International Exposition in Barcelona featured a flat roof supported by columns

¹ Marvin Trachtenberg and Isabelle Hyman, *Architecture From Prehistory to Post-Modernism, The Western Tradition* [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1986], 487.

² William J.R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900* [London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1996], 12.

³ Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design* [London: Thames and Hudson, 1968], 18 and Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* [London: Thames and Hudson, 1992], 12 and Trachtenberg, 487.

⁴ Thomas C. Jester, *Twentieth Century Building Materials: History and Conservation* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995], 94.

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with moveable internal walls of glass and marble. The design melded the de Stijl open form aesthetic with LeCorbusier's Domino principle, making for a fluidity of space previously unknown.⁵ Van der Rohe moved to the U.S. in 1937 where he headed the architecture department at the Armour Institute (later known as the Illinois Institute of Technology) in Chicago through 1958. A number of his designs were constructed on that campus.⁶ Mies van der Rohe died in 1969, his work having clear manifestations in the work of Philip Johnson (Glass House, 1950)⁷, Charles Eames (Eames House, 1946)⁸, and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (Lever House, 1952).⁹

Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (LeCorbusier) was born in Switzerland in 1887. LeCorbusier's 1926 "Five Points of New Architecture," which called for: 1) the elimination of the ground floor with the elevation of the house (building) on pilotis (essentially structural stilts) above; 2) a flat roof, used as a garden terrace; 3) an open interior plan with partitions slotted between structural posts; 4) free composition of the external curtain walls; and 5) a preference for ribbon windows, came to life in the Villa Savoye (1931) constructed just outside Paris. The use of pilotis lifted the building off the ground thereby freeing the walls from the structural system and thus providing complete design freedom. Used with an open floor plan, a building designed using the Five Points, was wildly versatile.¹⁰ The influence of LeCorbusier is evident in the work of I.M. Pei, Cabrini-Green public housing in Chicago, and Crites-McConnell/Brooks, Borg, Skiles (C.Y. Stephens, 1969)¹¹.

Frank Lloyd Wright was born in Spring Green, Wisconsin in 1867 and was in active practice until the time of his death in 1959. His lifelong professional philosophy embraced the idea that buildings should be in harmony with nature - the epitome of this philosophy being the 1935 design of Fallingwater in rural Pennsylvania.¹² Wright is widely regarded for his innovative and bold use of reinforced concrete. His use of deeply cantilevered forms is a hallmark of the Prairie Style; the elongated horizontal forms meant to harmonize with the building's site. Wright's fascination and experimentation with reinforced concrete spanned his career and was applied to all building types including the Johnson Wax building where lily pad-topped columns defied existing engineering logic, the California textile-block houses (e.g. Ennis House), the cantilevered roofs of his Usonian houses, and the spiral form of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1959) in New York City.

⁵ Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* [London: Tames and Hudson, 1992], 165 and Trachtenberg, 532-533.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁷ Frampton, 241.

⁸ Alan Colquhoun. *Modern Architecture* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002], 236.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 238-239.

¹⁰ Frampton, 157-158.

¹¹ Campbell, 78-79.

¹² Frampton, 189.

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I.M. Pei was born in Canton, China in 1917. Pei studied in the U.S. at MIT and Harvard University where he was influenced by the work of LeCorbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright.¹³ Pei's earliest project was an apartment building funded under the Housing Act of 1949, a circular building with the interior based on concentric rings. The building's center ring housed the utilities and circulation with the apartments located in the outer ring. Due to cost, the building was never constructed, but the circular form was reborn in the re-design of the Web and Knapp office building in New York City. Pei's design for the 1949 cylindrical apartment building defied the prevailing rectilinear form that dominated architectural design. Although denied by architect Bertrand Goldberg, Pei's building, of which Goldberg was aware, undoubtedly informed Goldberg's own designs, including that of Marina City in Chicago.¹⁴

While the work of this first generation of architects is found worldwide, Mies van der Rohe, Wright, and Pei each designed buildings in the state of Iowa during the 1950s and 1960s. For Wright, the City National Bank/Park Inn and the Stockman House in Mason City were the seeds for the Prairie School residential development known as Rock Crest-Rock Glen, the largest and most intact development of Prairie School residences in the country.¹⁵ Further, a number of Wright's Usonian houses (e.g. Cedar Rock-Walter Lowell House, 1950 – named an Iowa "Building of the Decade") were built in the state.¹⁶ Mies van der Rohe and I.M. Pei both designed buildings in Des Moines.

Mies van der Rohe designed the Home Federal Savings Bank in 1962 and Meredith Hall at Drake University in 1965. Both buildings utilize the exposed steel-and-glass design and meticulous sense of detail so universally associated with the architect. The design of the Home Federal Savings Bank, which was named by the Iowa Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) as one of the state's 50 most significant buildings of the 20th century, allowed for the building to be increased either horizontally or vertically.¹⁷

In 1968, I.M. Pei designed the first addition for the Des Moines Art Center (original building by Eliel Saarinen). The 18,000 square-foot Pei addition utilizes the Brutalist tendency of mass and use of board-formed concrete. And, typical of the architect, was designed with intentional regard for the existing environment (including the Saarinen building). The Art Center addition was named by the Iowa AIA as one of the state's 50 most significant buildings of the 20th century.¹⁸

This first generation of Modern architects paved the way for others who studied the new rules, ideas, and designs, and then infused their own brand of genius into the mix. Architects like Bertrand Goldberg drew on

¹³ Laszlo Taschen, ed., *Modern Architecture M-Z*, Volume 2 [Los Angeles: Taschen, 2010], 398.

¹⁴ Igor Marjanovi, Katerina Ruedi Ray. *Marina City. Bertrand Goldberg's Urban Vision* [New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010], 37.

¹⁵ "Rock Crest-Rock Glen Historic District," National Register of Historic Places nomination, Dec. 28, 1979.

¹⁶ Campbell, 62-63.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

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the innovations of predecessors and contemporaries alike to create a marvel that is Marina City in Chicago, which references Pei's circular 1949 apartment building.¹⁹ Skidmore, Owings & Merrill likewise seized upon the concepts of the masters to develop their own seminal designs: the 1957 Warren Petroleum Executive Headquarters in Tulsa, OK drew on LeCorbusier's concept of the "neutralizing wall" or double-skinned curtain wall; the 1958 Inland Steel Building in Chicago - the first high-rise built in that city since the Depression²⁰; and, in Des Moines, the American Republic Insurance Company building (1965), which is documented in the Iowa AIA's *A Century of Iowa Architecture* as one of the state's 50 most significant buildings of the 20th century.²¹

The work of Iowa architects like Crites & McConnell also reflects the developing Modern aesthetic. C.Y. Stephens (1969) at Iowa State University clearly references LeCorbusier's Chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Haut, Ronchamp (1950-1954) in its utilization of a poured concrete building "beton brut" (meaning bare concrete) with a deeply overhanging organic roof, which vividly demonstrates the plasticity and possibilities of concrete.²² C.Y. Stephens was named by the Iowa AIA as Iowa's most important building of the 20th century.²³ The Des Moines firm of Smith, Voorhees, Jensen (design firm of Plymouth Place) is responsible for the 1972 design of the Iowa Society of Christian Churches building in Des Moines, which references both Mies van der Rohe and the mass and form aesthetic of I.M. Pei. That building is also counted among the state's top 50 buildings of the 20th century.²⁴

The majority of the Iowa buildings constructed in the wake of such masters and their gifted "students" resulted in simply serviceable buildings, but a few, like the American Republic Insurance Company building, C.Y. Stephens, and the Iowa Society of Christian Churches building, stand out as exceptional examples of local buildings which reflect the ideas and abilities of a specific time - in this case, the Modern era - providing their communities with a sense of past and place.

Plymouth Place also stands with the small group of exceptional buildings built in the Modern era. In its presentation of Modern principles, Plymouth Place is obviously influenced by the work of LeCorbusier, I.M. Pei, Mies van der Rohe, and Bertrand Goldberg. Like other architects of the Modern era, Plymouth Place architect Raymond Hueholt was informed by the work of both the earliest innovators and those that built upon the work of that early group. Hueholt's design of Plymouth Place quickly calls to mind references to LeCorbusier's "Five Points of New Architecture." The use of a flat roof, the diminished impact of the ground level (including parking) through the use of pilotis, and the open, adaptable interior plan on the

¹⁹ Marjanovic, 37.

²⁰ <http://www.som.com>. Accessed 01/24/2012.

²¹ Campbell, 74-75.

²² Trachtenberg, 543-544.

²³ Campbell, 78-79.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

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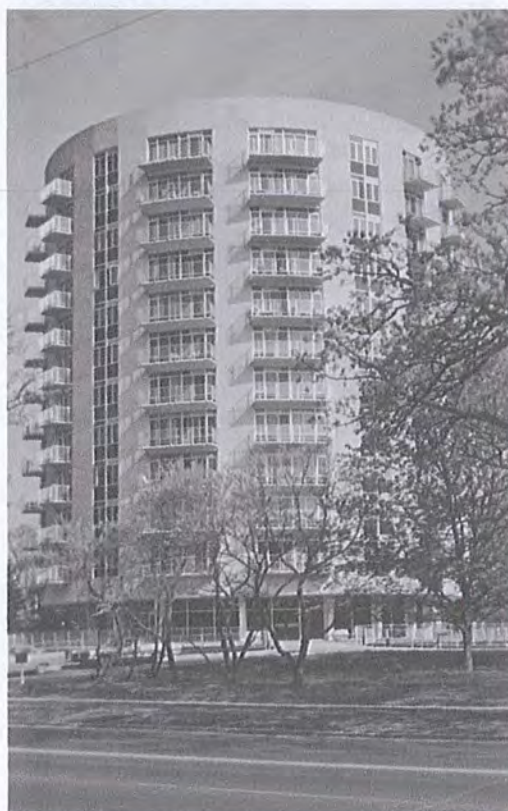
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ground and main levels are each elements of LeCorbusier's treatise. Hueholt's use of a circular form with the interior plan comprised of concentric circles housing utilities, then circulation, and finally apartments in the outer ring references I.M. Pei's 1949 apartment building design and Bertrand Goldberg's 1963 Marina City. The utilization of large expanses of glazing is informed by the aesthetic of both Mies van der Rohe (structural) and Frank Lloyd Wright (environmental).

Figure 19. Historic Image (c.1968) – Plymouth Place



(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting Postcard Collection)

Within the context of Modern architecture in Des Moines, Iowa, Plymouth Place is widely recognized by the very qualities that define it as such: its use of reinforced concrete to create a cylindrical form, the flat roof, the elevated building with ground level parking encircling it, and the open, flexible plan of its interior. Relative to other Des Moines buildings of a similar construction period, the combination of those design

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elements, with their clear precedents, stand it alone. Two, mid-twentieth century, high-rise apartments located in the vicinity of Plymouth Place provide context for understanding the significance of that resource.

In 1963 West Grand apartments were constructed at 3663 Grand Avenue.²⁵ Located five blocks southeast of Plymouth Place, West Grand is an 11-story brick building, the visual character of which rests firmly on the play between the horizontal bands of its cantilevered, concrete balconies and the vertical thrust of the large brick piers that frame them (Figure 20). In contrast to the Miesian glass box that informed the design of 3660 Grand, the West Grand apartments reference the work of Frank Lloyd Wright at Fallingwater, where cantilevered balconies are anchored by the visual weight of a dynamic structure.

Figure 20. “West Grand” – 3663 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa



(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting – 01/16/2012)

“West Grand” was constructed in 1963 on a site five blocks southeast of that upon which Plymouth Place was built in 1968. The wide and deeply overhanging balconies are recall of the work of Frank Lloyd Wright at Fallingwater.

²⁵ “Gardens in the Sky,” *Des Moines Sunday Register*, August 16, 1964, S6, p1.

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Figure 21. “3660 Grand” – 3660 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa



(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting 01/16/2012)

The building, known simply as “3660 Grand,” was constructed in 1965 just five blocks southeast of current location of Plymouth Place. The building references Mies van der Rohe in its use of a steel structure with a glazed exterior. The use of ribbon windows and the round columns supporting the deeply cantilevered entrance canopy are reminiscent of LeCorbusier.

3660 Grand (as it has been known since its opening in 1956) is a 10-story apartment building (Figure 21) constructed by Arthur Sanford & Company. Sanford, a resident of Sioux City, was a developer responsible for the construction of numerous apartment buildings and hotels in Iowa, including the 1940 apartment complex known as Windsor Terrace, which was notably the first, multiple unit project building with financing from the Federal Housing Agency (FHA) in Iowa. Sanborn was also behind construction of the Oaks and Birches Apartments – all on Grand Avenue in Des Moines – and, in Sioux City, the Orpheum Theatre, the Warrior Hotel, the Sioux Apartments, and the Bellevue Apartments.²⁶

²⁶ “Sanford Started Early ... And Never Quit,” *Des Moines Sunday Register*, December 19, 1965, p9-L and “After 40 Years, Art Sanford still has liking for Mason City,” *Globe-Gazette, Mason City*, July 14, 1960, p3.

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With its two and three-bedroom apartments renting for \$465/month, 3660 Grand catered to those inhabitants of large houses that were desirous of the comforts and ease of apartment living. At the time of its construction, area newspapers described the building and its 36 deluxe apartments as "ultra-modern." Completed at a cost of \$1.4 million, the steel frame structure was sheathed in glass and green marble with a ground floor faced in stone.²⁷ The building's design elements, specifically the regularity of form, the steel form with glazed exterior, marble finish and meticulous detail, reference the work of Mies van der Rohe. The use of round, featureless columns on the façade and supporting the deeply cantelivered entrance canopy is reminiscent of LeCorbusier's pilotis, although at 3660 Grand the "structural stilts" elevate the front section of the building only. Like the pilotis, the ribbon windows are elements of LeCorbusier's "Five Points." An interesting foil to these devices is the stone-faced ground floor, which integrates building with the environment and recalls the work of Eliel Saarinen at the nearby Des Moines Art Center.

As buildings of the Modern era, Plymouth Place, 3660 Grand, and the West Grand apartments are each informed by the work of one or more of the early innovators (Mies, LeCorbusier, Wright, Pei, etc.) with adaptations made relevant to the community in which they were constructed. Each building contributes to our understanding of both Modern architecture and of the period in which that architecture came to life. Plymouth Place, specifically, is significant in its expression of the influence of the early masters, LeCorbusier and I.M. Pei, and the second-generation innovator, Bertrand Goldberg.

Plymouth Place - A Community Living Center for the Well Elderly

Plymouth Place is a residential living facility for the well-elderly, the construction of which was sponsored by the Plymouth Congregational Church (now Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ) for the purpose of providing an independent living center for retired members of its congregation and the community at large. The property has functioned in that capacity since the official opening in March of 1968.

In November of 1963, Plymouth Congregational Church, located at 4126 Ingersoll Avenue, purchased the 4111 Ingersoll Avenue property from the estate of Dr. and Mrs. William W. Pearson. At the time, a large residence and a carriage house were on the site (Figure 22). The house was constructed in 1902 by George E. King, father of Mary Louise Pearson; Pearson herself having drawn the plans for the large Colonial style home that stood on the site for more than 60 years.²⁸ King was a prominent bridge builder in the 1890s.²⁹ In the months following the acquisition, the church began to plan for a retirement facility to be constructed on the property. The church engaged the services of the National Housing Consultants and Management, Inc., of Cleveland, Ohio. Chartered in the state of Ohio in 1963, the company was a for-profit agency specializing in

²⁷ Sanford Started Early ... And Never Quit," *Des Moines Sunday Register*, December 19, 1965, p9-L.

²⁸ Linda Banger, "42nd and Ingersoll," *Des Moines Register*, October 15, 1995.

²⁹ "Plymouth Buys Pearson Home," *Plymouth Herald*, December 13, 1963.

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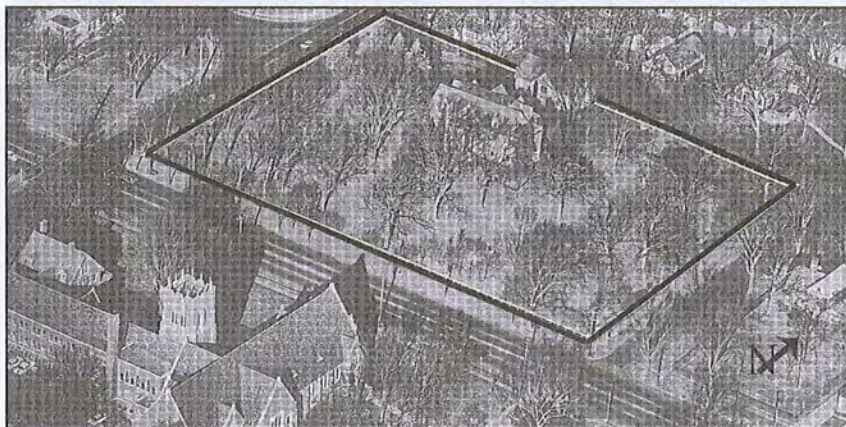
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housing development. Other projects attributed to the company include plans for the conversion of the 1917 Hotel Shawnee in Springfield, Ohio to apartments for residents over the age of 55 and in good health.³⁰ The firm appears to have had a specific interest in working with religious institutions, their president Frank Celeste being strongly associated with Ohio religious organizations including the Ohio Council of Churches and the Cleveland Church Federation. National Housing Consultants remained registered (charter #323453) in Ohio through 2010.³¹ Plymouth Congregational Church also engaged the design services of Smith, Voorhees and Jensen of Des Moines, with project architect, Raymond Hueholt.³²

Figure 22. George E. King Estate – 4111 Ingersoll Avenue - 1963



(SOURCE: *Des Moines Tribune*, 1963.)

This image appeared in the *Des Moines Tribune* at the time Plymouth Congregational Church acquired the property in 1963. A dark outline has been added to indicate the property line. At the time the property was purchased, the large Colonial residence (1902) and carriage house were located on the site. Note the mature vegetation.

Preliminary design plans called for an “apartment type building of ten or twelve stories in height with 200-220 units.” The preservation of a large percentage of the site itself, including the mature trees, was a goal established in the early stages of planning. As plans were refined, congregational meeting notes state

³⁰ “Springfield Has History.” www.springfieldhashistory.com/hotel-shawnee/-Hotel-Shawnee/. Accessed 04/04/2014.

³¹ “Lakewood Man Heads State Church Council,” *Findlay Republican Courier*, November 17, 1965, p14 and Ohio Secretary of State, www2.sos.state.oh.us.

³² “Progress Report on Plymouth Place,” Report of the Building Committee, J.C. Archibald, Committee Chairman, undated.

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specifically that, "The structure will be placed on the site so that most of the beautiful trees can be saved." It was that determination to protect the site drove the choice of a cylindrical tower for the building design.³³ Specifics of the interior plan were also refined, calling for 132,250-square-feet of efficiency apartments (aka singles), each with a full bath, kitchenette, storage space and carpeting (Figure 23). An additional 66,435-square-feet would be comprised of one-bedroom apartments (aka doubles) that would have the amenities of the efficiency apartments, plus a separate bedroom. Dictated by the building's cylindrical form, each unit would be wedge-shaped, with the narrow end of the wedge toward the building's core. That plan created a sense of expansion when entering an apartment, a feeling emphasized by the large bank of windows on the outer wall. The windows and, in most cases balconies, created a visual connection between the interior and the exterior, providing a wonderful view of the grounds and the capital city beyond. The building core on each of the upper levels would house a lobby or sitting room, a janitorial closet, laundry facilities, and the necessary mechanical systems. The circular hallway ringing the building core simplified access to the apartments. The new building's first floor plan (Figure 11) accommodated a large dining room and a kitchen, with other communal rooms on the first and ground floor for various activities and recreation. Tenant parking was planned for the lower level.³⁴

In the early planning phases, the church investigated and then debated the viability of various Federal funding sources (Section 202 and Section 231 of the Federal Housing Authority were both under consideration), which offered long-term, low-interest loans, with varied requirements specific to each program. To make the appropriate choice, the church evaluated their goals for the project, specifically the demographics of the population they wished to serve, by distributing a questionnaire. As stated by the church pastor, Dr. Lenhart, the church's goals for the project were to provide a community living center for the well-elderly, enabling them "to live an active and productive life as an integral part of the community." Further, the church did not want admission to the residence to require a large down payment, as was commonly the case in retirement housing. From the information obtained from the questionnaire the church was able to determine the appropriate funding source and a \$2.8 million loan from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under Section 202 of the Housing Act, repayable over 50 years was arranged.³⁵

After the required plans had been completed and regulatory issues resolved (including a special permit from the Des Moines City Council allowing for the building's design, which exceeded height restrictions and limits on the number of units) construction of Plymouth Place was underway by the summer of 1966 (Figure 24 and Figure 25).³⁶

³³ "Plymouth Place Plans," Report of the Building Committee, undated.

³⁴ "Progress Report on Plymouth Place," Report of the Building Committee, J.C. Archibald, Committee Chairman, undated.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

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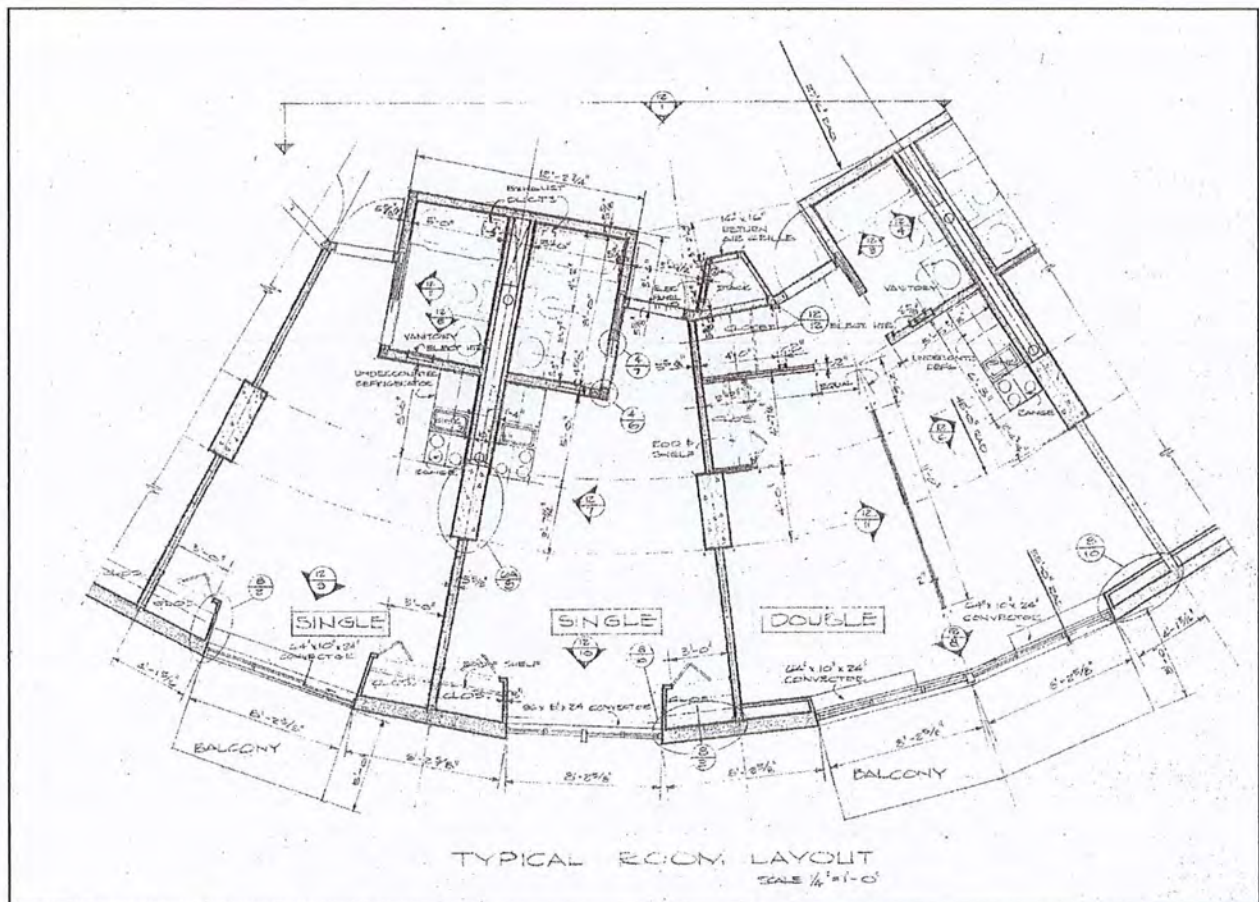
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Figure 23. Floor Plan (1966) – Representative Living Space



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

The wedge-shaped units were arranged into efficiency or 1-bedroom types.

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Figure 24. Historic Image – Ceremonial Groundbreaking – June 12, 1966



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

When completed, Plymouth Place rented to persons 62 or older, with preference given to Plymouth Church members when possible. For married couples, only one of the two had to meet the minimum age requirement. Residents were required to be in reasonably good health and able to maintain their apartment. For entrance, the prospective tenant was required to pay a non-refundable deposit of \$100, plus first and last months' rent. Rental rates for the efficiency units ran \$85 to \$100 per month with the one-bedroom drawing \$120 to \$135; variation in the rate depended on the unit's location. The monthly rent included all utilities except telephone. Promotional materials touted the new property's amenities, with considerable emphasis on the beautiful site that could be enjoyed from inside and out, making it a central element of their desire to create a sense of neighborhood.³⁷

³⁷ *Plymouth Place: A Community Living Center for the Well Elderly*, Promotional brochure, 1968.

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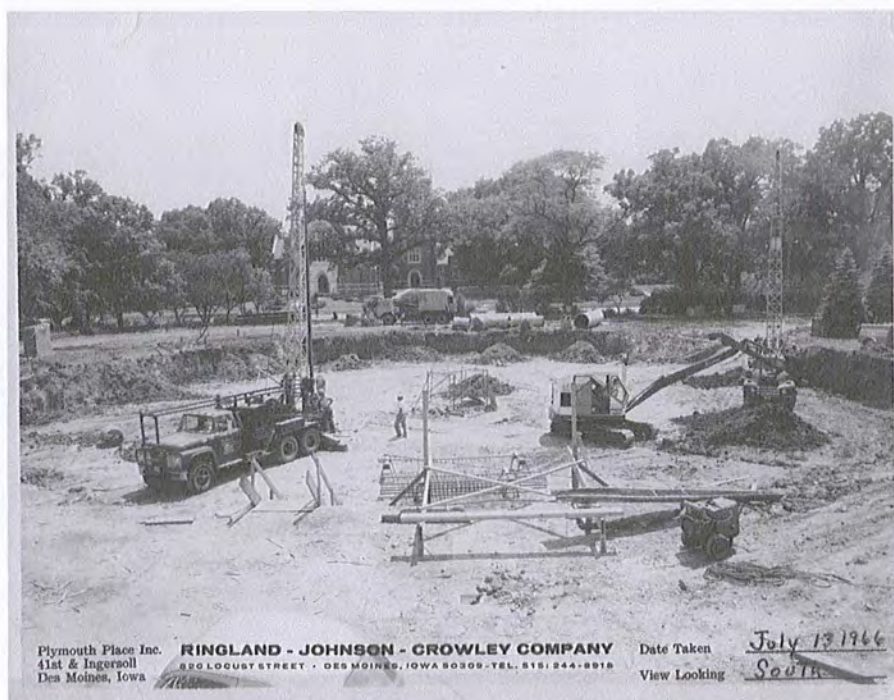
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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 25. Historic Image – Site Work – July 13, 1966



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

By July of 1966, site work was well underway. The project developer, Plymouth Church, can be seen in this view looking south across the property.

In February of 1968, an advertisement for the new residence touted, “A new adventure in active retirement. The emphasis is on dignity and independence – in a most personal atmosphere. Here you will find privacy and participation, leisure and learning, convenience and comfort ... all at an economical price. Efficiency suites are available from \$78 to \$96. One-bedroom suites from \$112 to \$120. Plymouth Place ... where you will find life in its full measure.”³⁸

³⁸ Advertisement, *Des Moines Register*, February 20, 1968.

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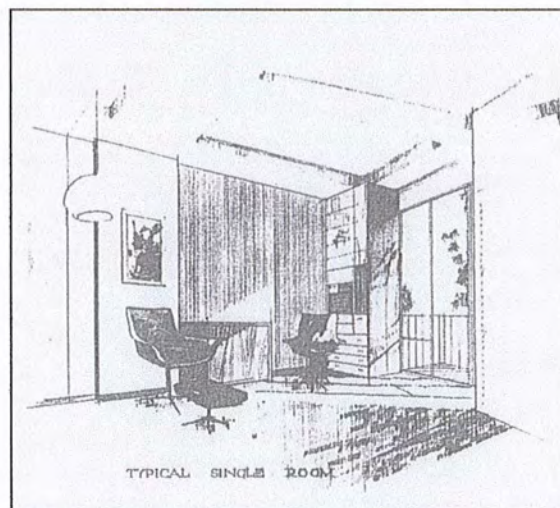
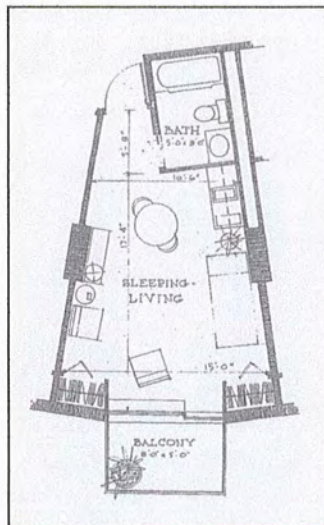
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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 26. Architect's Rendering – Single Unit



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

These architect's renderings show a typical efficiency (single) unit. The interior view provides a good sense of the Modern aesthetic the architect sought, complete with furnishings.

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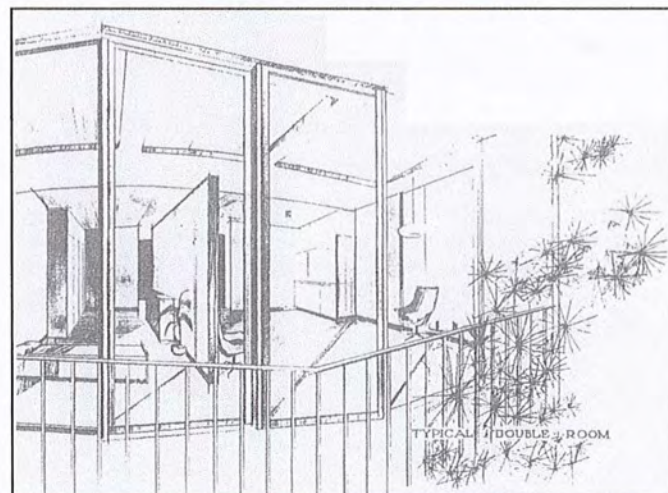
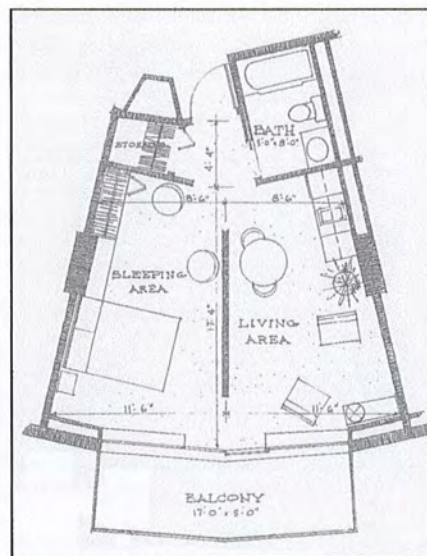
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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 27. Architect's Rendering – Double Unit



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

These architect's renderings show a typical one-bedroom (double) unit. The interior view provides a good sense of how the partial wall separates the public from the private space while maintaining a sense of openness.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

The previous architect's renderings of the interior spaces reveal the mid-twentieth century tendency toward crisp, controlled space and spare design elements (Figure 26 and Figure 27). The design aesthetic relied on the juxtaposition of the cylindrical form against the angles created by the wedge-shaped units and the square form of the building's core. Together with the view, these basic geometric forms created a comfortable and beautiful living space. The following series of images document how the architect's vision manifested itself in the newly constructed building.

Figure 28. Historic Image – First Floor Lobby – 1968



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

View of the first floor lobby, looking north from near the primary entrance with the elevators in view.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 29. Historic Image – First Floor Common Area – 1968



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

View of one section of the first floor community space, looking south toward Ingersoll Avenue (note, Plymouth Church is visible through the windows).

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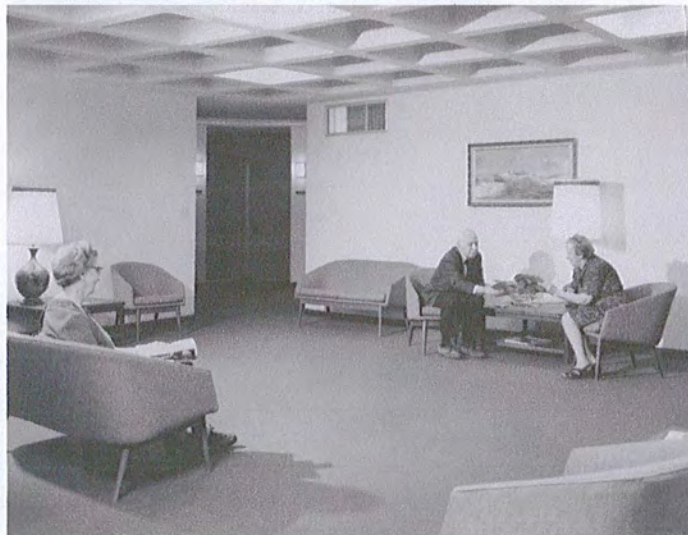
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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 30. Historic Image – Typical Lobby on Floors 2-12 – 1968



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

Figure 31. Historic Image – Double Unit – 1968



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 32. Historic Image – Single Unit – 1968



(SOURCE: Plymouth Place – Construction files.)

This image provides an excellent understanding of the compact space of a typical single (aka efficiency) unit. The plastic screens seen in this image as well as the previous were removed over time.

Plymouth Place functions today as it did when conceived and constructed more than 45 years ago. The property remains associated with Plymouth Church but is owned and managed by the non-profit group Plymouth Place, Inc., which was created by the church for that purpose.

The Architects: Smith-Voorhees-Jensen, Architects Associated

The firm of Smith, Voorhees & Jensen was established in 1948 when Grant Voorhees and Dighton Smith went into partnership and acquired the long-lived firm of Kraetsch & Kraetsch. The body of the firm's work reflects the historical period in which the firm was formed and grew to some prominence in Iowa. The firm's legacy remains today in the many buildings that rose on the Iowa landscape between 1948 and the 1970s from the designs by the architects of Smith-Voorhees-Jensen.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Kraetsch & Kraetsch was a Des Moines firm founded in 1908 by brothers, George A. and Carl Kraetsch. The firm's best-known work is the 1930 Butler House. A modern wonder of sorts, the house was the epitome of the Streamlined Moderne, featuring every available technological marvel designed to create the greatest of domestic comfort. The home remains a Des Moines resource of considerable import.³⁹

During the years of the firm's existence, a third brother, William J. Kraetsch, spent some years in practice with his brothers. From 1919 to 1933, Norman T. Vorse was also part of the practice and, during that period, the firm was known as Vorse, Kraetsch & Kraetsch. Interestingly, of the four principal architects associated with the firm, all but William gained some of their early experience working in the prominent Iowa firm of Proudfoot & Bird.

In 1948 Grant Voorhees and Dighton H. Smith entered into partnership as Voorhees & Smith. In that same year, upon the death of Carl Kraetsch, the pair bought the firm of Kraetsch & Kraetsch. From that time through the present, the firm has operated under various names including Smith, Voorhees & Jensen, Smith, Voorhees, Jensen & Siletto, and Voorhees Design Alliance, Inc.⁴⁰ Today, the firm is known simply as Design Alliance, Inc., with its office in Waukee.⁴¹

Throughout its history, the continuity of quality, ingenuity, and skill is apparent in the designs of Smith-Voorhees-Jensen. The firm's mid-20th century work exemplifies the tenants of Modern architectural design, with the imprint of the era's architecture masters apparent in many of the designs. As Pei's 1949 apartment building design and Marina City influenced Ray Hueholt's design for Plymouth Place, Pei's other work (Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University or, closer to home, the first addition to the Des Moines Art Center) may well have served as the inspiration for the Des Moines National Bank on East Euclid. The 1972 Iowa Society of Christian Churches building (named by the Iowa AIA as one of the state's top 50 buildings of the 20th century) is informed by the work of both I.M. Pei and Mies van der Rohe, both of which designed buildings in Des Moines. The firm's 1970s Botanical Center in Des Moines owes much to the genius of Buckminster Fuller, inventor of the geodesic dome.

³⁹ Campbell, 50-51.

⁴⁰ Wesley I. Skank, *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* [Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999], 99-101, 168-169.

⁴¹ Shank, 100-101, 168-169.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Table 1. Iowa Buildings Designed by the Firm of Smith-Voorhees-Jensen (Partial List)

Property	Location	Construction Date	Character Defining Feature(s)	Project Architect
Churdan High School	Churdan, IA	1957	Glass walls U-shaped plan	
Trinity Methodist Church	Keokuk, IA	1962	Diamond-shaped, 240-ton, concrete roof	
Mahanay Memorial Tower	Jefferson, IA	1966	Modern profile against historic Greene County courthouse.	Ray Hueholt
Grimes State Office Building	Des Moines, IA	1968	Alternating masonry and glass panels Modular interior plan	Grant Voorhees
Geneva Tower (Figure 24)	Cedar Rapids, IA	1968	Low-rise skyscraper Alternating concrete wall and grouped windows underscore verticality	Ray Hueholt
Rienow Towers (I & II)	University of Iowa Iowa City, IA	1966 & 1968	Low-rise skyscraper Alternating brick wall and grouped windows underscore verticality	Allen B. Salisbury
Eventide Lutheran Home	Denison, Iowa	ca.1970	Circular addition to existing facility Wedge-shaped units	
Marshalltown High School Gymnasium (Figure 23)	Marshalltown, Iowa	ca.1970	Circular addition to existing building	
Iowa Society of Christian Churches	Des Moines, IA	1972	Cast concrete utilizing Miesian cross Named by AIA as one of 50 Iowa buildings of the 20 th Century	
Suburban Iowa-DesMoines National Bank (Figure 25)	Des Moines, IA	1974	Cast concrete building with Brutalist influence	
Des Moines Botanical Center	Des Moines, IA	1979	Geodesic Dome	

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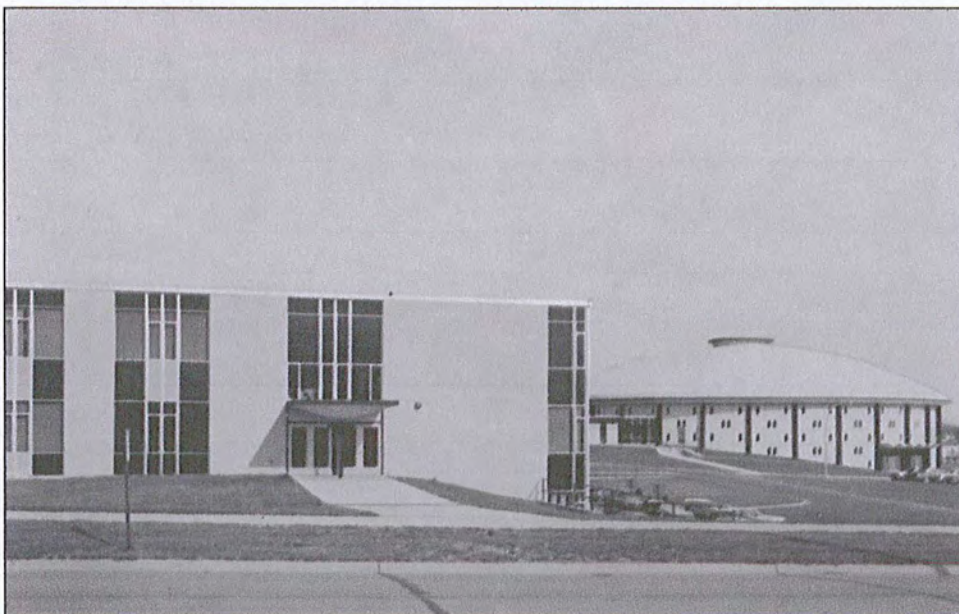
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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 33. Smith Voorhees Jensen – Marshalltown High School Gymnasium – ca.1970



(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting Postcard Collection)

Working in concrete and with circular forms is a familiar thread in the firm's design portfolio.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 34. Smith Voorhees Jensen Geneva Towers – Cedar Rapids, Iowa - 1965



(SOURCE: Smith-Voorhees-Jensen Promotional Booklet, Raymond Hueholt)

Hueholt is also responsible for the design of Geneva Towers, a senior housing building in Cedar Rapids.

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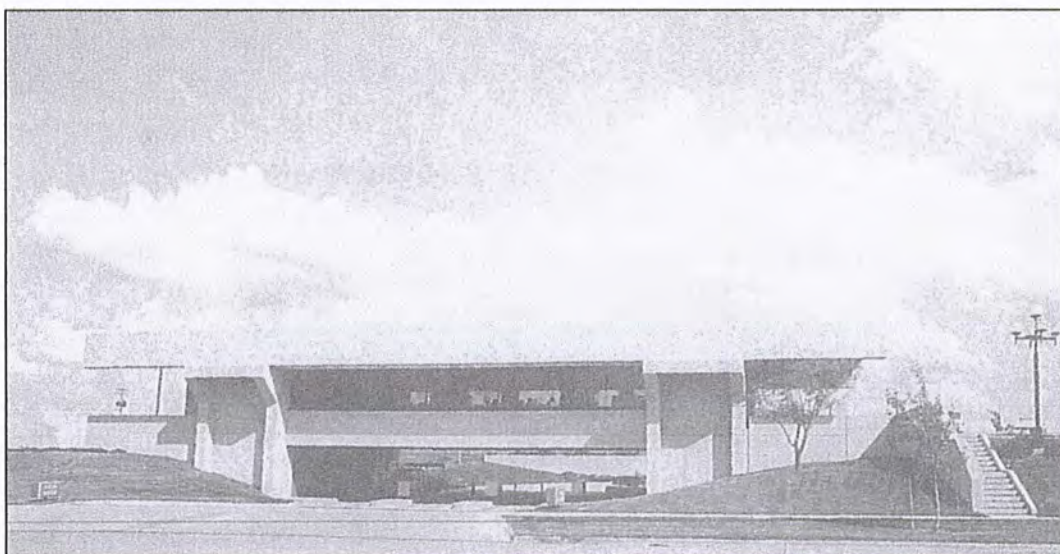
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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 35. Smith Voorhees Jensen – Suburban Iowa-Des Moines National Bank - 1974



(SOURCE: Smith-Voorhees-Jensen Promotional Booklet, Raymond Hueholt)

Like Plymouth Place, the design for the Des Moines National Bank on East Euclid separated automobile from pedestrian traffic.

Raymond Hueholt

Ray Hueholt was the project architect for Plymouth Place and, as such, is credited with its design. However, Hueholt himself states that no project is the work of one person.

Raymond Hueholt was born in 1921 in Burlington, Iowa, the son of Raymond Johann and Lila Huebolt. From the time he was five years old, Ray knew he wanted to be an architect. As a young man he took an after school job. His new employer hired him under the condition that, when the time came, the young man attend his employer's alma mater; it was that condition that sent Ray Hueholt to school at the University of Illinois in Champaign. After a three-year break during which he served in World War II, Hueholt graduated from the university in 1947. Following a short stint at a Des Moines architectural design firm, Hueholt went to work for Grant Voorhees & Dighton Smith in about 1951, leaving in the early 1970s because the firm was

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

experiencing financial difficulties. Hueholt then joined the firm of Woodburn & O'Neil where he stayed until his retirement at the age of 72.⁴² Now 93, Hueholt, lives in a retirement community in Urbandale, Iowa.

As the project architect, Hueholt was influenced by three major issues as he developed the building design. The first was the desire to impose as little as possible on the site and to retain as many of the trees as possible. The second was the numerous Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirements attached to the loan taken for the project, which controlled the number and type of units as well as the apartments' amenities. The third influence was existing architecture from which he drew inspiration. Hueholt recalls that he made a trip to Chicago to confer with his contact at the HUD offices. While in Chicago, Hueholt visited Marina City.⁴³

Marina City (Figure 26) is a residential-commercial complex located on the north bank of the Chicago River in downtown Chicago, Illinois. The complex is comprised of two high-rise, cylindrical (corn cob-shaped), 65-story towers, a saddle-shaped auditorium building (now the House of Blues), a 16-story office block that included a 13-story hotel, all sited on a two-story, 300,000 square foot platform adjacent to the river.⁴⁴ Except for the auditorium, the various elements of the complex are constructed of concrete. Beneath the raised platform, is a small, riverside marina, from which the property derives its name.

Marina City was placed in service in 1964 after a 1959 design by architect Bertand Goldberg. At the time of its completion, the complex's two towers were the tallest residential buildings and the tallest reinforced concrete structures in the world. The residential towers were designed with a circular hallway surrounding the elevator core of each floor, wedge-shaped apartments radiating out from the core, with bathrooms and kitchens located in the narrow end of the wedge. Living areas of each unit occupy the outermost areas of each wedge terminating in a floor-to-ceiling glass wall.⁴⁵ Throughout its development, construction and opening, Marina City was widely reviewed and architects across the country were aware of the significance of its design.⁴⁶

While working on the design for Plymouth Place in Des Moines, Ray Hueholt indicates that he was specifically interested in understanding how the Marina City architect, Bertrand Goldberg, handled the building's windows.⁴⁷ Although Hueholt never spoke directly to Goldberg he was able to gain important guidance for his own work on Plymouth Place through consideration of Marina City.

⁴² Hueholt interview. Dec. 9, 2011.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Marjanovic, 50.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 53.

⁴⁶ http://www.marinacityonline.com/history/planning_begins.htm. Accessed 11/29/2011.

⁴⁷ Hueholt interview.

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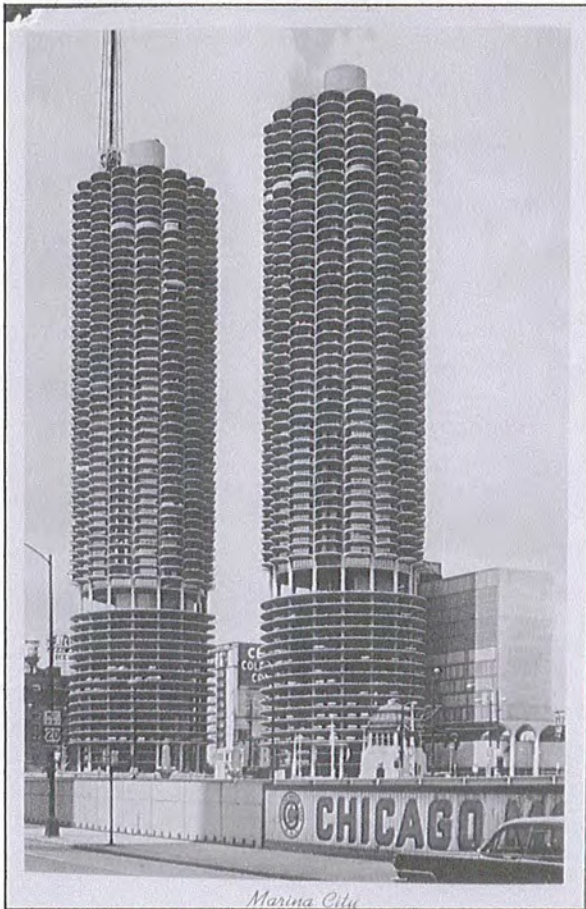
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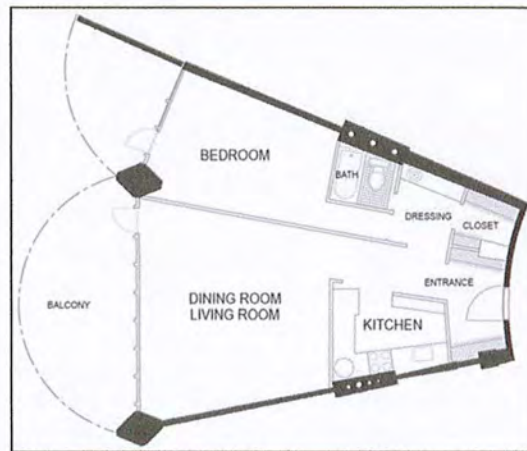
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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

Figure 36. Marina City – Chicago, Illinois



(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting Postcard Collection)



(SOURCE: <http://www.marinacityonline.com>. 12/22/11)

Chicago's Marina City, designed by Bertrand Goldberg and placed in service in 1963, was clearly a precedent for the design of Plymouth Place. As the floor indicates, the unit layouts are also similar.

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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

FUTURE PLANS

The historic rehabilitation of Plymouth Place was completed in late November 2014, with the project developer utilizing State and Federal historic tax credits. The project involved sensitive modifications of the building's living spaces to accommodate the housing requirements of today's market. The building remains low to modest income housing for seniors.

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RELEVANT CULTURAL RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

Although many historical and architectural surveys have been completed in the city of Des Moines, Iowa, no previous evaluation of Plymouth Place had been conducted due to the resource's "recent past" construction. A "Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 1 – Evaluation of Significance" was submitted to the Department of the Interior/National Park Service and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office in May of 2012 with certification of eligibility issued by the Park Service on July 9, 2012.¹

POTENTIAL FOR HISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY

The potential for historical archaeology was not assessed as part of the present National Register nomination. The presence of large expanses of yard historically associated with the site have been documented as relatively undisturbed at the time Plymouth Place was constructed in 1968. As a result, any significant excavation and/or grading should take into consideration the possibility that historic archaeological resources may remain.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This National Register nomination draws on the previous work of the "Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 1 – Evaluation of Significance," which utilized an array of reference resources in the development of a case for eligibility. Historical accounts of the site and the construction of Plymouth Place were important to understanding the motivation for its existence. However, it was the examination of precedents that revealed the significance of its architecture. The opportunity to interview Ray Hueholt, the project architect, added a rare and important perspective to the case for significance.

¹ Project number IA-2012-047/27500.

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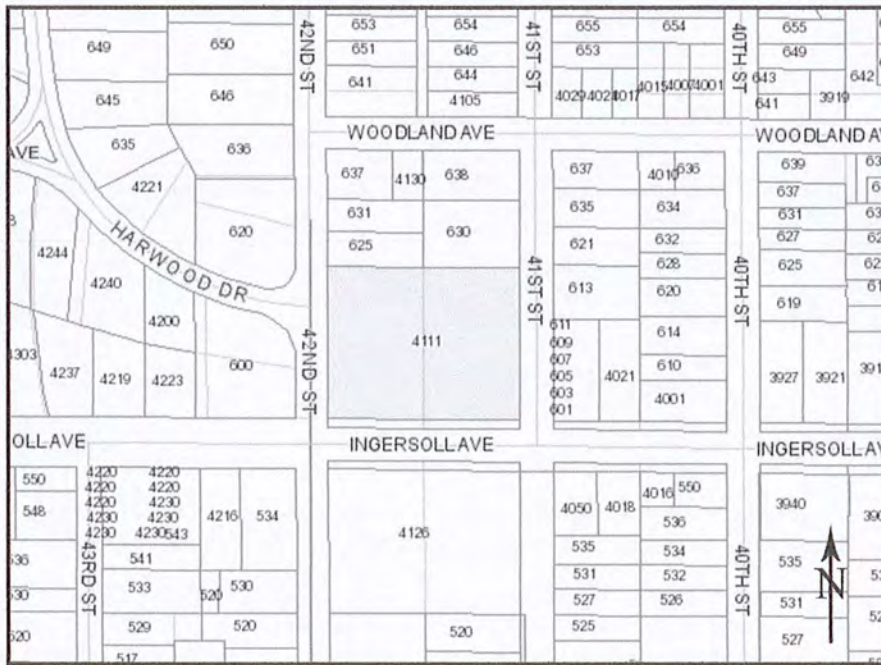
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Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The historic boundaries of Plymouth Place at 4111 Ingersoll Avenue are designated as "N 300 F S 317.5 F Lots 6 & 3" of Greenwood Park, Des Moines, Iowa in Polk County and are indicated as such on the map below.



(MAP SOURCE: <http://www.iowaassessors.com>. Accessed 12/20/2011)

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the existing resources of Plymouth and the portion of the site to which the building is historically associated.

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- Figure 16. Photograph (Image 0013) – Typical One Bedroom Unit
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4111 Ingersoll Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa
Polk County, Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Boone, IA
June 24, 2012

4 x 6" images printed on Canon Premium Photo Paper using Canon Chromalife 100+ ink
CD-ROM on file with property owner and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

0001. Site: View looking northwest across Ingersoll Avenue.
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0001.tif
0002. Exterior: View looking northwest from near the 41st Street and Ingersoll Ave. driveway.
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0002.tif
0003. Exterior: View of the terrace and lower level parking that encircle the building.
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0003.tif
0004. Exterior: View of the terrace that encircles the building and provides the overhead shelter for the parking area at ground level.
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0004.tif
0005. Exterior: View of the building's upper story windows and balconies.
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0005.tif
0006. Detail: Upper story windows and balconies.
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0006.tif
0007. Interior: Main entrance vestibule, looking northeast toward the first floor lobby.
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0007.tif
0008. Interior: View of the main floor circulation hallway, looking east from just inside the main entrance toward the administrative offices.
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0008.tif

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number _____ Photographs _____ Page 57

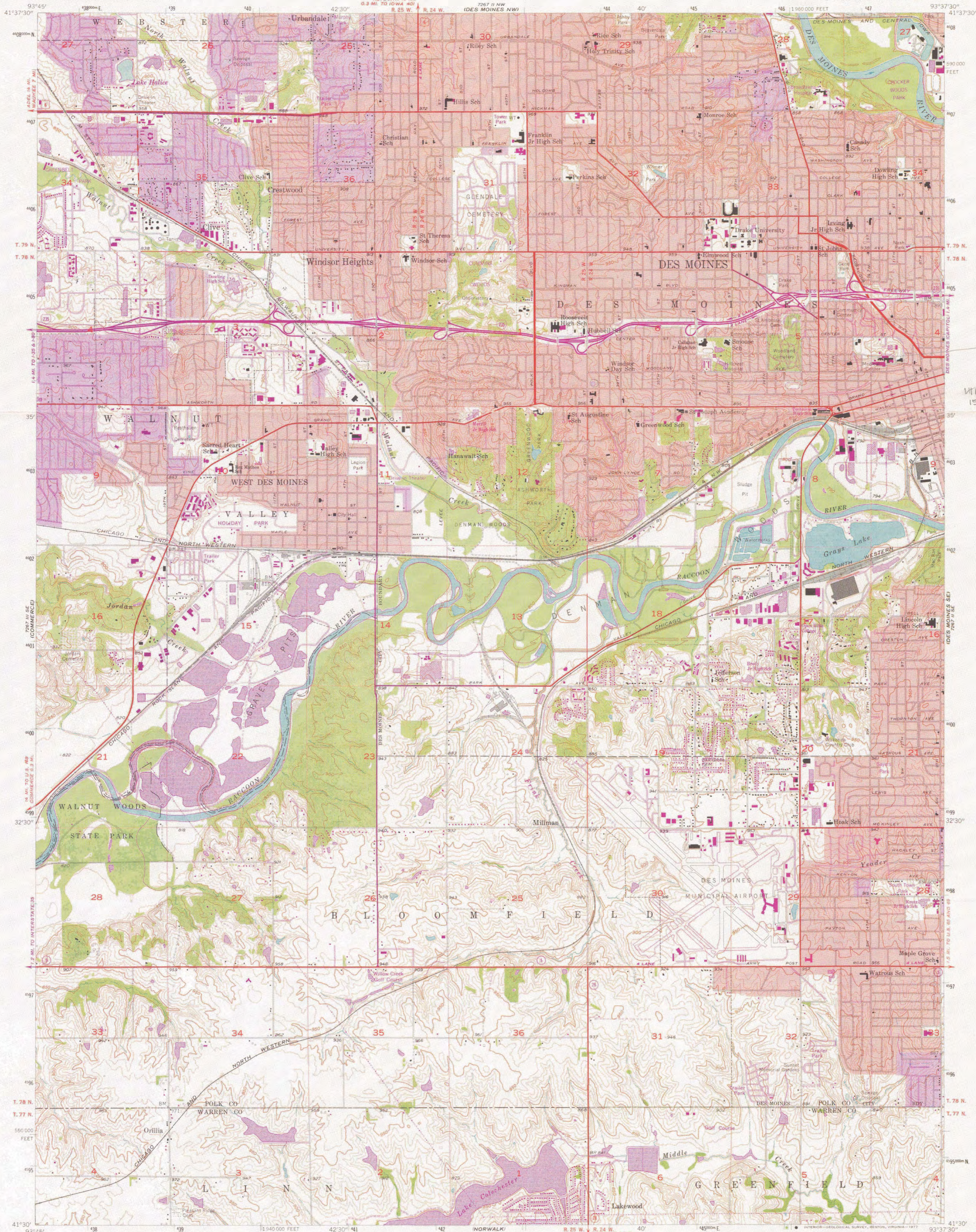
CFN-259-1116

Plymouth Place, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

- 0009. Interior: View of the first floor lobby, looking northwest from the main entrance.
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0010.tif
- 0010. Interior: View of the first floor common area, looking west from the main entrance.
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0009.tif
- 0011. Interior: View of the ground floor common space, which is now used as a library and exercise room.
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0011.tif
- 0012. Interior: View of a typical lobby space on the upper, residential floors.
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0012.tif
- 0013. Interior: View of a typical double unit (this one on the 9th floor).
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0013.tif
- 0014. Interior: View of a typical, occupied double unit (this one on the 11th floor).
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0014.tif
- 0015. Interior: View of a typical kitchen (this one on the 11th floor).
IA_PolkCounty_PlymouthPlace_0015.tif

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

DES MOINES SW QUADRANGLE
IOWA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
SW 4 DES MOINES 15' QUADRANGLE



Plymouth Place
Des Moines, Polk County
Iowa
NM Reference:
15 443806E 460122N

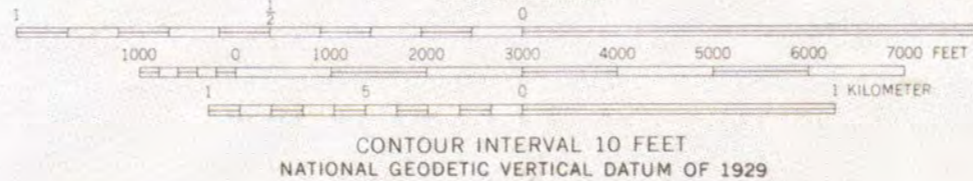
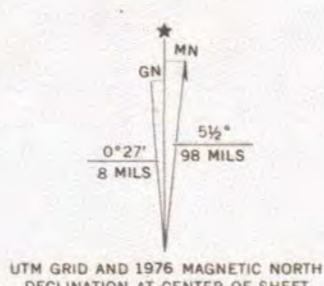
Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey in cooperation with Polk County and City of Des Moines

Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Iowa Geodetic Survey
Topography from aerial photographs by Kelch plotter
Aerial photographs taken 1956. Field check 1956

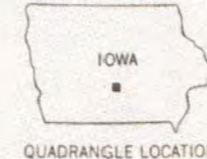
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Iowa coordinate system, south zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
City boundaries of Des Moines, West Des Moines, Clive,
Urbandale, and Windsor Heights are in litigation

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1967, 1971, and 1976. This information not field checked
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
AND BY THE IOWA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route

APR 04 1978

DES MOINES SW, IOWA
SW 4 DES MOINES 15' QUADRANGLE
N4130—W9337.5/7.5
1956

PHOTOREVISED 1967, 1971, AND 1976
AMS 7267 II SW—SERIES V876

3250







NO TRUCKS
PRIVATE PARKING















THIS WAY TO THE
BUSY TABLE
←















A black wall-mounted emergency telephone handset, featuring a handset and a display screen.

A small grey wall-mounted device, possibly a fire alarm or intercom, with a red emergency button.

Emergency Telephone Handsets
This handset is for use in an emergency only.
Do not use this handset for personal or business calls.
If you have a problem with this handset, please contact the building manager.

EMERGENCY
TELEPHONE
HANDSETS

Office Supplies

Office Supplies















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Plymouth Place
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Polk

DATE RECEIVED: 2/27/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/30/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/14/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/14/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000140

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4/14/2015 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept C

REVIEWER Patrick Andrews

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 4/14/2015

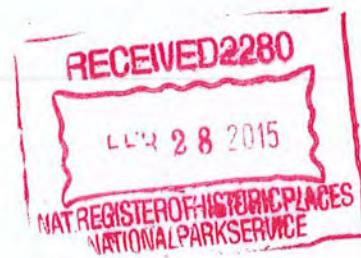
DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

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

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

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

MARY COWNIE, DIRECTOR
CHRIS KRAMER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR



IOWA
ARTS
COUNCIL

February 24, 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

- Plymouth Place, 4111 Ingersoll Avenue, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa

Thank you for your consideration.

STATE HISTORICAL
LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Foster Hill

STATE
HISTORIC
SITES

Elizabeth Foster Hill
National Register

STATE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
OFFICE OF IOWA

IOWA
HISTORICAL
FOUNDATION