

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received MAR 11 1986

date entered APR 10 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Paul-Helen Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 207-15 East Washington _____ not for publication

city, town Iowa City _____ vicinity of

state Iowa code 019 county Johnson code 103

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Philip Mears and Arthur Small

street & number #6, Paul-Helen Building, 207-15 East Washington Street

city, town Iowa City _____ vicinity of state Iowa 52240

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Recorder's Office

street & number Johnson County Courthouse, South Clinton

city, town Iowa City _____ vicinity of state Iowa 52240

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Urban Revitalization Area Survey has this property been determined eligible? N/A yes no

date 1980 _____ federal _____ state _____ county xxxlocal

depository for survey records Planning & Program Development, City of Iowa City

city, town Iowa City _____ vicinity of state Iowa 52240

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Paul-Helen Building is a three-story brick commercial structure in Iowa City's central business district. It is one of the taller buildings in the downtown area, and exceeds the height of its immediate neighbors. The Paul-Helen building is one of two buildings on its block built during the second decade of the twentieth century. The adjacent Englert Theatre was constructed in 1913. To the west is the Jefferson Hotel, also built in 1913. Further west on Washington Street is the Iowa State Bank and Trust Building (built in 1912). These four buildings are the major survivors of a substantial commercial building boom that occurred in Iowa City before World War I.

The building occupies an entire lot, and is 80' x 150' with a 20' x 74' projection on the west side. The upper portion of the facade is divided into five bays by flat brick pilasters. A narrow concrete string course extends above the shop fronts, and a second string course acts as an architrave molding below a plain concrete corner. Corbeled panels separate the second and third floor windows, and the third floor windows from the corner. The windows themselves consist of groups of four metal sash surmounted by blind transom panels.

Cast iron columns flank each of the recessed shop entries, and one entry (Frohwein's) has a coffered metal ceiling. Two of the shop fronts are surmounted by wide horizontal panels of small glass blocks set in metal frames.

The only exterior alterations consist of new signage for Frohwein's Office Supply and Ragstock. Both are accomplished in the late 1970s. The signs for Leno and Cilek Hardware and the Iowa City Gas and Electric Company (the building's original tenants) are hidden under the present signs.

The first floor is divided into three retail spaces, which extend the entire depth of the building. Ragstock now occupies the western-most section, Frohwein Office Supply the center, and F-Stop, the eastern portion. Frohwein's retail space still has a deeply coffered pressed metal ceiling.

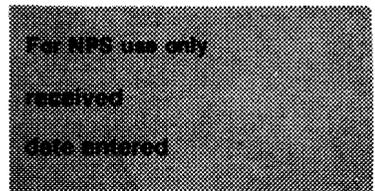
The second floor has a central corridor which runs the width of the building at the top of the stairs. Office spaces, which have seen frequent rearrangement, open off the corridor.

The stair to the second floor retains its original marble treads and rod-like brass railing, affixed to the wall on each side. The landing (approximately half-way to the second floor) features a mosaic of white hexagonal tiles edged with a Greek fret motif in black and blue-gray tile. This original flooring is repeated in the second floor hall.

Most office doorways have large glazed transom panels and plain architraves with narrow molded cornices. Several are set in very deep paneled reveals and retain doors with horizontal panels below large translucent windows.

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The third floor originally was occupied with a large, open dance floor with an orchestra pit in one corner. Current renovation plans include use of part of the third floor space for commercial offices.

The building's foundation is reinforced concrete, and the exterior structural system is a combination of steel and masonry bearing wall. The interior structural system is similar. At the first level the floor is reinforced concrete, and the second and third levels have wood and tile floors over wood joists. Support for the major portion of the roof is provided by steel trusses, with wood rafters and a composition roof surface.¹

In construction technique, the building was the first modern commercial/office building in Iowa City. Although the building is not of fireproof construction, having floors that are wooden rather than tile or concrete, it was the first building in the city to use steel frame and reinforced concrete construction techniques.²

Exterior treatment complements the innovative structural construction, with elements of the Prairie style to distinguish the building from contemporaneous Iowa City commercial structures, which were all more traditional in facade treatment.

¹ The structural information is based on an inspection of the building by Hans Muessig and by William Nowysz, AIA. See also Urban Renewal Assessment Report for Parcel 5-65 completed in the mid-1960s.

² A detailed examination of the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps confirms that the Paul-Helen Building was the first structure in the city (exclusive of the University buildings on the Pentacrest) to employ steel frame construction.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1910 **Builder/Architect** Unknown. F. X. Freyder presumed.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Paul Helen Building has a two-fold significance in Iowa City's development. This three story, five bay-wide edifice was the first "Modern" commercial building in downtown Iowa City. It illustrates the wide ranging impact of Chicago's architects, builders, and architectural periodicals on building practices and techniques in Iowa and the Midwest in general. In designing the building, the presumed architect Frank X. Freyder not only followed the stylistic models of the Chicago Commercial and Prairie Schools but followed the lead of Chicago's architectural and building professions as well in utilizing steel frame and reinforced concrete construction techniques. The construction of this building in 1910 sparked a downtown building boom that marked the last major phase in the development of Iowa City's central business district until the onset of urban renewal in the late 1960's.

The stylistic elements of the Chicago Commercial school are apparent in the very clear expression of the steel framing and the rational organization of the building's five bays. The architect took advantage of the framing to provide the buildings with large windows on all three floors that were particularly suited to the needs of the original tenants. Freyder was also influenced by the Prairie School and choose, in what was the tallest building in the downtown, to emphasize the horizontal aspects of his building rather than the vertical. The windows are banded together rather than being set apart by columns or pilasters. The cornice is also a series of horizontal bands. The final result is a pleasant and attractive commercial building that belies its true size.

Following the turn of the century the economy of the Midwest began to improve significantly. Iowa City shared in this general improvement. By 1910 the city had grown by several new subdivisions and street car lines were under construction. The construction of the Paul Helen Building in 1910 marked the first significant new commercial construction in the central business district since the 1880's. As part of the boom, three other major commercial buildings were built following the Paul Helen; Iowa State Bank and Trust Company (1912), Jefferson Hotel (1913), and the Englert Theater (1913). A number of smaller and less ambitious buildings were also built including the Dey Building (ca. 1915) and the remodeling of the First National Bank (1911).

The building's architect is unknown but presumed to be Frank X. Freyder. Freyder also was the contractor. He was the proprietor of the Iowa City Planing and Molding Mill, which was the successor firm to J. M. Sheets and Company. Freyder had joined Sheets and Company in 1885 as their architect, and became the sole owner of the firm in 1905 following the death of Sheets. Sheets and Company are known to

¹Linda Wescott Magnusson, "Sheets and Company: An Iowa City Builder/Architect Firm 1870 - 1905," unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Iowa, 1980. Page 46.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Iowa City West

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	6	2	2	1	9	0	4	6	1	2	8	2	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H

Zone			Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

All of Lot Three and the east 20' of the north 74' of Lot 4, Block 65, Original Town of Iowa City. Contains only subject building.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

Form by James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator
name/title Text by Dennett, Muessig, Ryan & Associates, Ltd., Iowa City.

Office of Historic Preservation
organization Iowa State Historical Department date February 26, 1986

street & number E. 12th St. and Grand Ave. telephone 515-281-4137

city or town Des Moines state IA 50319

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Dorell G. White*

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date February 28, 1986

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

James M. McCherson
Keeper of the National Register date 4/10/86

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

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have built the following structures in Iowa City: Boal-Maine House (806 East College; not extant); T. C. Carson House (906 East College); Iowa City Public Library (SE corner College and Linn Streets); the Close Mansion (Gilbert and Bowery Streets); Calvin Hall, University of Iowa campus; Iowa City City Hall (NW corner of Washington and Linn Streets, not extant);² the First United Methodist Church (NE corner of Jefferson and Dubuque Streets); the Summit Street Apartments (NE corner of Summit and Burlington Streets); the Coldren Opera House (SE corner of College and Clinton Streets, substantially altered).³ Freyder died at the age of 82 on June 7, 1944 in Iowa City.⁴

At the time of its construction the building was owned by the Schmidt-Kurz Improvement Company. The principal officers of the company were G. W. Schmidt, C. A. Schmidt, and William Kurz. G. W. and C. A. Schmidt were the sons of German immigrants; both were born in Iowa City. G. W. was the owner of the Iowa City Iron Works (a supplier of structural and decorative iron and steel), and was active in local politics, serving as an alderman. The Schmidt brothers' sister was married to William Kurz.⁵ William Kurz was the proprietor of a saloon and billiard hall on College Street. After the Paul-Helen Building was completed, Kurz moved his business to one of the storefronts in the building.

No new major commercial buildings had been built in Iowa City since the 1880s, and by 1910⁶ the time was appropriate. G. W. Schmidt, C. A. Schmidt, and G. W. Kurz formed the Schmidt-Kurz Improvement Company in 1910 with the express purpose of

² Ibid, passim.

³ Irving Weber, Historical Stories about Iowa City, volume 2. Iowa City: Iowa City Lion's Club, 1979. Pp. 261-264.

⁴ Iowa City Press-Citizen, June 7, 1944, page 9.

⁵ Charles Ray Aurner, Leading Events in Johnson County History. Two Volumes. Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Western Historical Press, 1912, 1913. Vol. 2., pp. 219.

⁶ This is supported by a detailed examination of Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1874-1912.

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building a new commercial building in downtown Iowa City. In large part the Paul-Helen Building was built at the urging of T. C. Carson, owner of the Iowa City Gas and Electric Company. Carson felt that his company needed larger offices to serve an increasing number of customers. Carson, whose house is on the National Register (906 East College), organized the Iowa City Gas Company in 1857 and the Electric Company in 1886. The Gas and Electric Company remained one of the major tenants of the Paul-Helen Building until the late 1970s.

Construction of the Paul-Helen Building (named after the children of the brothers Schmidt and Kurz) began in April 1910 and the building was ready for occupancy in late December.

⁷ Irving Weber, Historical Stories about Iowa City. Volume 1. Iowa City, Iowa: Iowa City Lion's Club, 1976. Pp. 65 - 66. Weber, Volume 2, pp. 213 - 214.

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Ellis, Edwin Charles. "Certain Stylistic Trends in Architecture in Iowa City." unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Iowa, 1947.

Iowa City Press Citizen. 1908 - 1912, 1944.

Magnusson, Linda Wescott. "Sheets and Company: An Iowa City Builder/Architect Firm 1870 - 1905," unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Iowa, 1980.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company. Iowa City Fire Insurance Maps for 1874, 1879, 1883, 1888, 1892, 1899, 1906, and 1912.

Weber, Irving. Historical Stories about Iowa City, Volume 1. Iowa City, Iowa: Iowa City Lion's Club, 1976.

Weber, Irving. Historical Stories about Iowa City, Volume 2. Iowa City, Iowa: Iowa City Lion's Club, 1979.