

JAN 13 2010

NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

079



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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.

Name of Property

historic name Yunker Brothers Department Store

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 713 Walnut Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Des Moines [N/A] vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Polk code 153 zip code 50309

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Barbara A. Mitchell DSHP January 27 2010
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

- hereby certify that the property is:
- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 - determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other, (explain:)

[Signature] Edson H. Beall 3.17.10
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	0	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
3	0	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)

Commerce/Trade/Department Store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not In Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th & Early 20th Century American Movements/
Commercial Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

terra cotta

roof asphalt

other

Narrative Description

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

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 **Page** 1

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

7. Narrative Description:

The Yunker Brothers Department Store is a six-story commercial building that occupies an entire half-block in downtown Des Moines. The building is located on the north side of Walnut Street, between 7th and 8th streets in the west Des Moines downtown area. Des Moines is the capital city of Iowa and is located in Polk County. The Des Moines River, located half a mile to the east, divides the east and west downtown sections of the city.

The present building incorporates two quarter-block sized buildings and an enclosed former intervening alley linkage (the whole being counted as three contributing buildings). The original Younkens Building (1899, expanded in 1909) comprises the east half of the current building, while the Wilkins Building (1908) comprises the west half. In 1924 the two buildings were unified with the infilling of the floors above ground level over the alleyway and by the unification of the two facades into a single architectural expression. Given the present building's evolution from two separate buildings. While both buildings are six-stories high, the higher ceilings in the lowermost four stories of the original Younkens building gives the appearance of its having an additional floor. This height discrepancy required short stair adjustments between the two buildings.

The eastern component was stylistically described as Italian Renaissance when it was designed and built. When the two buildings were united, the resulting style, said to be based upon the original Younkens design, was described as "Italian Gothic." Given the changes wrought to the west half of the building, the architectural style is that of the Commercial Style.

The East Building:

The original Yunker Brothers store (1899) was a six-by-four bay five-story plan. A full floor and two bays to the north expanded it in 1909. There is some evidence that the Younkens firm utilized the heating plant of the building to the north and there were interior linkages between the buildings (Figure 19). The 1909 expansion added a full additional story to the 1899 building and presumably a new and certainly much more prominent cornice. This work also added a partial seventh floor penthouse that covered the northern three-quarters of the rooftop and encompassed, along its north and west sides, the elevator penthouses along with the new sixth floor. The ornamental cornice, removed c.1955, dated from 1909. It very likely was salvaged from the 1899 building and was augmented across the north addition (Figures 2, 7). The northward extension is marked internally by a slightly different cast iron column treatment, which is to say, the added columns lack a base, and while the 1899 columns have an eight-inch high base. The 1909 Proudfoot and Bird addition to the east building enhanced the Beaux Arts style by adding the attic lights, by better balancing the upper building component by adding a floor) and by elaborating on the cornice profile. The feat of eliminating the 1899 north wall of the original store and building the expansion while the store continued to operate is an impressive one.

The east building storefront featured prism glass transom lights and this was apparently a very early use of these lights. Construction accounts for the east building indicate that the basement storage area originally projected beneath the sidewalks and glass skylights, imbedded within the sidewalks, provided natural light into the basement (Figure 6).

This building structurally consists of a steel column and beam internal skeleton system, with flat tile arched floors and brick exterior walls with an artificial stone and terra cotta veneer. The building has a full basement and the basement area extends beneath the surrounding sidewalks. Columns are generously spaced, being set 23 feet on center, in seven rows of seven square columns each. The ground floor columns measure two-feet square and stage back on each successively higher floor level. The new sixth floor and the interior columns on the fifth floor are steel beams. The building expansion added the new floor in 1924 and apparently rebuilt the fifth floor so as to support the addition. The plan similarly extends beneath the majority of the north alleyway as well.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 2

Younker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

The Younkers building presents two principal facades to the south (Walnut Street) and the east (7th Street). Vertically the façade design is divided into the three classical sections, base (ground floor), shaft/column (first through third floors) and capital (uppermost two floors and parapet). The lowermost four stories have higher ceiling heights and their collective height is a full story higher than the comparable floor level in the west building. The storefront level (1924) presents a white veined Minnesota marble veneer, with large rectangular display windows. Bronze display window kick plates are set quite low. A marble cornice with denticulated base, caps the stone storefront. The display windows and entrances are framed with darkly stained bronze ornamentation. An 11-foot wide flat continuous marquee/canopy (1935) projects below the transom level on three sides of the entire building. A cornice line caps the ground level and defines the base of the next section. The shaft portion of the façade is almost fully glass-surfaced. The high ceiling levels result in nearly square window openings and these openings are vertically defined as three-unit bays, the uppermost bay having a segmental arch. Broad corner and thinner intervening pilasters feature a quoin patterning. Each window bay is in turn framed by an egg and dart edging and a medallions-studded inner edging. A prominent classical style keystone in each bay top is centered on a keystone arch that is formed by a redirection of the horizontal quoin lines. Each pilaster top is incorporated into the keystone arch line pattern to each side, a prominent ornamental swag being superimposed over the centerline of the diverging lines. A prominent cornice caps this section of the façade. A plain broad panel cornice base is ornamented with large closely spaced medallions. The cornice cap surmounts a row of dentils. The window bases are cut quite close to the floor level on each story and as a result the spandrels are fairly narrow and bear a simple horizontal patterning. The capital or attic section consists of two stories, reduced in ceiling height, and a broad parapet. The windows are true rectangles in form. Pilasters once again define each window bay as containing two superimposed openings. A white terracotta surround frames each set. The spandrel between the two floor levels has a centered ancon-bracketed ledge. The quoin effect in this section differs in that every other quoin is continuous, wrapping around the corner. The others are cut off at each end and do not wrap around the corner. The result is an alternating pattern of quoins and separate insets. The parapet level has a white terracotta belt course, a continuation of the same quoin pattern on the corners and pilasters, and four sealed rectangular attic lights in each window bay area. The upper parapet is plain. All of the existing windows emulate a Chicago-style window, save for the segmental arch openings. The sidelights depart from that style by virtue of their having three rectangular lights set vertically to each side below the transom level, in lieu of the expected two even-sized ones (a one over one patterning).¹

The east façade consists of six bays, reflecting the interior column support pattern. The south façade also consists of six bays. Skywalks have been connected at the second floor level in the easternmost bay of the south façade, and the left-of-center bay on the east façade. There are two entrances on the east façade storefront. A double-glass door north entrance is in the northernmost bay base, while a principal public entrance, with four glass doors, is set beneath the east skywalk. The metal work in these entrances features hexagonal attached columns with a vertical line of ornamental shield motifs on the metal columns. Transom windows are vertically set rectangular openings with shallow Gothic style caps. The south façade has a second broad (six glass doors) public entrance, placed in the left-of-center bay. Unlike the other openings, the marquee at that point continues uninterrupted across and above the entrance. The other openings have a raised ceiling section with a stacked-pediment front.

Recent construction (excluded from this property) to the north has covered the east-west running alley completely, a skywalk link being set at the extreme east end of the alleyway. The north walls of both buildings are of brick construction. A shipping door and metal dock with an original metal door is located in the west part of the west building's north wall. There is also an early metal double-door hatch and a second shipping door is found in the northeast corner. The alley infill point has a

¹ Ceiling heights in the east building are basement 12 feet 9 inches; first floor, 21 feet 2 inches; second floor, 16 feet 3 inches; third and fourth floors, 15 feet 9 inches; fifth floor, 15 feet, 3 inches; and sixth floor, 14 feet 8 inches. Elevations in the west building are basement, undetermined; first floor, 18 feet 9 inches; second floor, 13 feet 10 inches; third floor, 11 feet 10 inches; fourth floor, 11 feet 9 inches; fifth floor, 11 feet; and sixth floor, 18 feet, 9 inches (1909 and 1924 original plans).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 3

Younger Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

concrete base that is set between concrete corner buffers and there is another shipping door. The east building has a similar metal hatch but no extant shipping doors. A bricked-in shipping door is flanked by two sets of four in-filled windows. Those to the east had straight lintels, those to the west segmental arches.

The Younkers building roof top level is devoid of any mechanical components. The seventh floor, an office level with lower ceiling heights, was extended across the entire roof after 1933. This floor level subsumes the stair and elevator penthouses located along the north and west wall perimeters. There are half a dozen metal framed rectangular skylights set along the south and east perimeters of the roof. The east building was fairly fully fenestrated on its west and north frontages but all or nearly all of these openings have been filled in. To the west of this building, a massive air handler system occupies the uppermost level of the infilled alleyway. This mammoth metal box obscures the difference in roof elevations between the two buildings.

The building interior retains virtually no early and little later-date historic fabric. The lower three floors remain largely open in plan, with hallways, stairs and elevator banks being located along the northern rear wall. Short stairs, three steps in height, adjust the differing floor levels between the buildings. The basement and ground floor were completely remodeled and all of the columns were boxed in and otherwise obscured. An atrium opening was cut into the center of the second floor, linking the ground and second floor levels vertically. There is currently no separate heating system within the building, the building systems being provided by buildings to the north.

Wilkins Building:

The adjoining Wilkins building was built in 1908. The 1924 remodeling of the building produced the storefront and facades that survive today with some few but substantial other changes. That work infilled the north-south running alley above the first floor level, re-fronted the storefronts (assumed given the matching marble veneers), and added a floor and different cornice to the west building. The original cornice was a squat flat plain overhand and this was removed and the perpendicular Gothic elements were added. A very striking feature in the 1924 makeover was the addition of shallow metal-bracketed balconies along the entire sixth floor level of the west building. During the late 1940s or early 1950s the seventh floor penthouse on the east building was completed to the south roof edge, the cornice was raised some four feet, and the decorative cornice was removed as a result.

The Wilkins building, as noted, presents a lower profile despite its equal number of stories, due to the fact that just the first and second floor ceiling levels are higher than those above them. This building also presents twin designed facades, to the south (Walnut Street) and west (8th Street). Also like the eastern counterpart, this façade is tri-partite, with the ground level as base, the intervening four floors as shaft, and the sixth floor and parapet as capital. The building exterior is stucco applied to a brick or tile exterior shell. The building's support system is a reinforced-concrete floor and column one that reflects its later construction date (1908). The façade design is quite simple. Each façade consists of six-equal sized bays (a seventh bay on the east end of the south façade having been added to infill the alley gap between the two buildings). Each bay contains five rectangular window openings, those on the second floor being more squarish due to the higher ceiling level. A plain wall surface forms sidewalls and spandrels within each bay. Each window has a projecting terra cotta sill. Intervening pilasters are square-cut below the uppermost floor, at which point they are inset on both sides in a Gothic form. Angled square-cut pendants with corbelled bases (these are paired on the southwest corner), are centered on each pilaster top and continue upwards as a part of the parapet. The parapet consists of castellated panels that are set between each of the pendant tops. A row of shields comprises most of the panel frontage, each shield being surmounted by a flat cap that forms the castellation pattern. As noted, the open alleyway that long-separated the two buildings, was infilled in 1924 with a four-story bridge structure (the ground floor level was finally in-filled in 1982). The added bay front emulates those on the other and earlier facades with the exception that the window voids are narrower, and a broader white terracotta frame surrounds the four windows. The lowermost spandrel is

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 **Page** 4

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

wider and features three geometrical forms, while the two spandrels above it have a centered circle motif and flanking rounded rectangular panel recessed forms. The sixth floor is differentiated by a higher terracotta sill/belt course and three segmental arched window openings infill the bay front. The window arches are ornamented with shield spring stone motifs. The cornice level also differs, having a large centered plain medallion that is set beneath a castellated and pedimented cap, single shields flanking the medallion.

Entrances, current and former, are denoted on the west building by granite support medallions that are set into the uppermost part of the marble veneer. These are found on both buildings and are depicted in the 1924 remodeling plans (Figures 8, 37). Four to an opening, these are surmounted in turn by a matching denticulated cornice as found on the east building. Storefront and window/door treatments also match the other building. There are two current four-door public entrances, each set left-of-center on each façade base. The west building has no direct skywalk linkages, the sole connection being set within the alleyway, at the northwest corner of the building.

The Wilkins building, built just a decade after the original Younkers Building, was distinctly different in terms of its structural system. The building was completely fireproof, being of reinforced concrete construction. Its reduced ceiling heights on its upper floors originally made appear shorter in comparison to the original Younkers building, originally five stories high as well. Like the east building, the southern façade consists of six structural bays that are broader than the eight bays that comprise the west façade. The two lowermost floor levels have higher ceiling levels, and the second floor window openings are square in section, while those on the upper floors are rectangular. The Wilkins building was designed and built to house two tenant firms and the interior space was unevenly allotted, the two easternmost bays to Chapman's Furniture Company, the remaining four west bays to the Wilkins Company.

The original building construction is superbly documented by a series of construction photos (Figures 22-27). These show that the very broad original flat projecting eaves line was supported by a steel framework that was structurally integrated into the building's skeleton. An additional floor and a considerably different parapet front resulted from the 1924 remodeling, replacing the original eaves and brackets with vertical columned design, capped with lighted lanterns.

The Wilkins building has a light brown brick exterior veneer, that contrasts with the stone exterior of the east building, although both share a related color scheme. The exterior of both buildings has been painted but the renovation will restore the original colors. The exterior also lacks the heavily textured feel of its eastern counterpart. The building exterior is all about vertical flow and scrupulously uninterrupted wall planes. There is indeed very little wall plane at all, with the windows comprising the majority of the façade shell. Plain square-cut pilasters define the structural bays and the window sets are set within very plain brick spandrels. The only added element is a projecting sill line. Things change at the sixth floor, the floor added in 1924. From the base of the sixth floor and upward the pilasters are fluted and stone inserts cap the bases of each vertical unit. Angled chimney-like finials with corbelled bases surmount the pilaster fronts beginning at the transom line of the sixth floor windows and these are continued up to the top of the parapet. Finally, atop each bay is placed a stone spandrel that features three carved shields within each bay. The new sixth floor with its higher ceiling height was added to house the relocated Tea Room from the east building.

The elevators within the west building are all grouped along the north wall. There is a single set of stairs located along the west wall, toward the back of the plan.

The 1924 building remodeling employed a new and unified storefront to further unify the two formerly separate buildings. The wall portion of the storefronts was veneered with white granite and capped with a denticulated cornice line. The marble framed the large rectangular display windows and rectangular transoms. Elaborate cast iron entrances were added at

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 **Page** 5

Younker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

four points, two per building, and separate marquees, supported by chains with floral stone mounts (still in place) marked each entry. In 1935, a continuous metal canopy replaced the individual canopy arrangement.

Architects and Building Plans:

No original plans for the 1899 Younkers building have been located. The architects were Liebbe, Nourse & Rasmussen of Des Moines. Architects Proudfoot and Bird prepared the plans for the 1909 expansion of the east building and the comprehensive remodeling of both the east and west buildings in 1924.

The other architects' sheets fail to depict this cornice but photographs (Figures 7, 10) indicate that it was a key feature of the 1909 expansion. The 1924 remodeling plans also fail to show this detailing. This cornice survived until some time after c.1955 when the seventh floor was extended on the Younkers building (Figures 45, 59).

Alterations:

Department stores are particularly prone to substantial makeovers, both inside and out, so it is no surprise that the building interiors are so completely remodeled. It is perhaps wondrous that the exterior never took the next natural step in department store evolution, that being its covering with a slip cover. At least one futuristic downtown image envisioned just that change (see figure 63). The table listing known alterations reflects the tendency of this type of building to be continuously and comprehensively remodeled. Interiors of department stores are most likely to lack much original ornamentation, let alone to retain what little there was. The key surviving interior elements in the east part of the building are the cast iron columns. These are ornamented with plain base bands in the original 1899 building and have ornamental capitals. The other key interior feature is the very well preserved Tea Room with its classical design motifs and theater.

The key surviving exterior building components are the storefront (display windows and marble veneer dating from 1924), the canopy (1935, although modified extensively in the 1980s), and the building exterior itself. More pronounced on the east building, almost all of the original stone exterior survives and will be completely restored with the removal of the gray thick paint coating. Some rosettes were lost when the windows were replaced, but the window surrounds survive. On the west building, the exterior survives intact, although it too is covered with the ubiquitous gray coating. Only the lanterns have disappeared from the cornice line.

The obviously detrimental alteration was two-fold, the addition of the two skywalk links and the replacement of the windows with reflective glass set in pseudo Chigago style frames. These window units were advanced to set flush with the exterior wall plane, further exacerbating their impact. On the west building the replacement was wholesale, with the attending loss of all original window frame material. In the east building some 60 percent of the original window frame material survived because the new windows were simply set in front of the frames. Intact examples of all of the north side windows survive and these windows will be restored as a part of the restoration plans.

The building redevelopment envisions a combination of residential and retail uses. The alleyway infill that links the buildings will be reopened as a light court and the two original exterior walls will be re-fenestrated. The building exterior will be restored in terms of the original wall surfaces and coloration. The transom windows in the storefront will be reopened and restored. The storefront display windows will be retained and restored. All of the elevator shafts will be retained although most of the elevators will be decommissioned. The rooftop air handler will be removed. An effort is underway to secure the Younkers clock (see Figure 46) and to replace it within the building.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 **Page** 6

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

Activity	Date	Architect	Contractor	Work Description
Meeks Block	Pre-1898	Not determined	Not determined	Three story double storefront built north of 1899 building site
Original Yunker Bros. Building	1899	Liebbe, Nourse & Rasmussen	Charles Weitz	92 feet depth, 134 feet frontage on Walnut, five stories high, with three-story annex to north
Original Yunker Bros. Building	1907	Not determined	Not determined	Interior rearrangements and apparent alteration of south entrance
Yunker Brothers Construction Company, North extension and additional floor, new cornice	1909	Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson, undated plans	Not determined, Yunker Brothers Construction Company?	Adds 44 feet frontage on 7 th to north alley, 134 depth, six stories and adds story to original building
Wilkins Building, 8 th and Walnut streets	1908	Not determined	John C. Mardis, Omaha	Five stories, 116 feet depth by 132 feet frontage on Walnut
Former Wilkins Building/ Yunker Bros.	1923-24 permit November 14	Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson, plans dated September 1923	Not determined	Additional floor, steel supports on two floors, four new elevators, new ventilation system, new cornice/parapet and bridge over front of north/south alley, \$150,000
Yunker Bros.	1924, permit June 9	Not determined	Not determined	Lots 5-6, \$50,000, building permit, likely relates to Tea Room relocation, see below
New Tea Room, sixth floor Wilkins Building	1925	Not determined	Not determined	remodeled
Yunker Bros., 8 th & Walnut streets	1929, permit July 26	Not determined	Not determined	\$100,000, building permit
Yunker Bros.	1930	Not determined	Not determined	New basement store
Yunker Bros.	1934	Not determined	Not determined	East building stair that ended at second floor was replaced with wrought iron stair, terrazzo treads, first to third floors
Yunker Bros., canopy	1935, permit April 5	Not determined	Not determined	Lots 3-6, \$15,000, building permit
Yunker Bros.,	1936, permit May 15	Charles A. Leopold Co., Philadelphia	Carrier Engineering Co., Newark (Globe Mach. & Supply Co. local rep), Weitz Const., Potthoff-Rosene Co. (roof), Smith Automatic Sprinkler Co. (revised existing system), Thorpe Well Co.	Lots 3-6, \$10,000, building permit, "retail store," air conditioning system (<i>Register</i> , February 26, 1936)
Yunker Bros.	1939, permit April	Not determined	Not determined	Lots 6-7, \$1,500, building permit

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 **Page** 7

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

	20			
Yunker Bros.	1939, permit, May 15	Not determined	Not determined	Lots 6-7, , \$18,000, building permit, electric stairways
Yunker Bros.	1941	Not determined	Not determined	Cremona Room enlarged, first floor balcony remodeled
Yunker Bros., 318 7 th Street	1944, permit June 25	Not determined	Not determined	Lots 7-8, \$4,000, building permit (building north of alley, two ramps over alley)
Yunker Bros.	1945, permit Jan. 17	Not determined	Not determined	\$11,000, building permit
Yunker Bros.	1947, permits Feb. 13, 24	Not determined	Not determined	Lots 5-6, \$20,000 and \$10,000 respectively, building permits [this might represent the east penthouse enlargement for offices and the cornice removal on the east building]
Yunker Bros.	1961, permit Jan. 17	Not determined	Not determined	Lots 5-6, \$20,000, building permit
Yunker Bros., 301 7 th Street	1971	Not determined	Not determined	Lots 5-6, \$35,000, building permit, main floor remodeling
Yunker Bros.	1971, permit May 14	Not determined	Not determined	Lots 3-4, \$3,000, building permit, commercial alteration
Yunker Bros., 309 8 th Street	1973, permit Feb. 2	Not determined	Not determined	Lots 3-6, \$35,000, building permit, commercial alteration
Yunker Bros.	1977, permit Nov. 9	Not determined	Not determined	Lots 3-6, \$7,000, building permit, 5 th floor commercial alteration
Yunker Bros.	1981, permit Aug. 21	Charles Herbert & Asso., plans April 24, 1981	Not determined	Lots 3-6, window replacement, north and south skywalks on east building, \$575,000, building permit, escalators replaced
Yunker Bros.	1982, Jan. 25	Not determined	Not determined	Lots 3-6, \$70,000, building permit (entry crossed out)
Yunker Bros.	1982, permit Nov. 15	Schaffer & Asso., Oak Brook, Ill.	Not determined	Lots 3-5, \$221,061, building permit, commercial alteration, basement remodeling "Metropolis," first floor remodeling, alleyway infilled, 5 th and 6 th floors to offices, second floor rotunda east end, new 4 th floor French Room, elevator shaft removed to open center of 2 nd floor, basement reopens early 1983
Yunker Bros.	1984, permit Sept. 13	Not determined	Not determined	\$255,235, building permit, commercial alteration, upper floor remodeling
Yunker Bros.	1993, permit July	Not determined	Not determined	Remodel restrooms, assessors record of building permits

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 **Page** 8

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

	I, 1992			
Yunker Bros.	1995, permit Feb. 16, 1994	Not determined	Not determined	alterations, assessors record of building permits
Yunker Bros.	1995, permit March 1, 1994	Not determined	Not determined	alterations, assessors record of building permits
Yunker Bros.	1995, permit Oct. 13, 1994	Not determined	Not determined	Remodel third floor area, assessors record of building permits
Yunker Bros.	1996, permit Jan. 9, 1995	Not determined	Not determined	Remodel 11,014 square feet, \$134,156, assessors record of building permits

The Yunker Brothers Department Store maintains a minimally sufficient degree of all seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to warrant a Criterion A nomination. The window replacement was unfortunate in most every possible way (use of reflective glass, unusual muntin design, setting flush with the exterior wall plane) but the saving grace is that all of the structural window components (cast iron plates and columns) in the east building survive as does a large proportion of the original window frame materials. This survival was due to the placement of the windows in advance of the original windows. This surviving material serves to document a future set of more appropriate replacements and it means that the newer windows are more akin to a reversible slip screen treatment. The commercial setting of the building remains and this building continues to represent a once commonplace historical department store presence in the central downtown. Setting is marred by the second-story linkage of two skywalk connections in the southeast corner, but the overall impairment remains minimal in terms of the larger scale of the building itself relative to the loss of shell and the visual interference. The original design, reflected in its massing, materials and window openings, survives, the major distraction being the use of reflective glass window replacements and a window frame format that confuses the form of the original Chicago window form. Workmanship remains reflected in the building exterior. The overall form of the building has remained unchanged once it assumed its intended scale in 1924. The strength of the integrity argument is borne by the human-scale or ground floor (c.1920s storefronts and marble veneer, 1935 canopy). The window alteration and loss of cornice, while regrettable are not unusual, and the parapet base does survive. The west building has lost only its ornamental lanterns, also an expected casualty of the passage of time. The changes are substantial enough to disqualify a claim for architectural significance, given that it is felt that sufficient integrity is retained to support the much stronger historical claims for significance. The building form itself, that of a major department store, is represented by this sole example in Des Moines.

Criterion C associated significance was not claimed primarily due to the use of reflective glass in the replaced windows and the skylight connections to the building. The building retains sufficient historical integrity (location, context, intact 1924 storefront) to allow for a Criterion A based nomination.

A Part I Federal Investment Tax Credit application for this building was approved and the building was therefore determined to possess sufficient historical integrity to merit National Register of Historic Places listing. Given the negative visual impact of the replacement windows, a Criterion C claim for significance for the buildings is not made. The planned building restoration will greatly enhance the building's appearance. The restoration of the original building material colors alone will be a tremendous visual improvement. At some future point in time it will become feasible to once again replace the windows and it is hoped that a replica cornice can be placed atop the Yunkers building as well.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Period of Significance

1899-1959

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates

1899
1908
1909
1924

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Liebe, Nourse & Rasmussen
Weitz, Charles and Fred

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****Section number** 8 **Page** 9**Yunker Brothers Department Store****Polk County, Iowa****8. Significance Statement:**

Architect/Builder Continued:

Rush, Edwin A.

Herbert, Charles, and Associates

Leopold, Charles A., Company

Mardis, John C., Construction Company

Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson

Schaffer and Associates

The Yunker Brothers Department Store is significant on the local level under Criteria A for its historical association with the context of commerce, and particularly with Des Moines' premier historic downtown department store. The Wilkins Building, that comprises the west half of the Younkens building, built in 1908, is significant under Criterion A, as Des Moines first commercial reinforced concrete building. The greater Younkens store building was also Iowa's first block-long department store. The period of significance is 1899-1958, beginning with the construction of most of the east half of the building and ending with the 50-year cutoff date. The successful operation of the store continued until 2006. The company built Des Moines' most notable department store and its commercial success doubled the size of the original store building. The firm successively bought out or merged with all of Des Moines other major family-owned competing department stores. Individually significant dates are: 1899, the construction of the original Yunker store; 1908, the construction of the Wilkins-Chapman block; 1909, the northward expansion of the original Yunker store, and 1924, the unification of the two buildings. The period of significance begins in 1899 for the entire present building because it is the broader success of the original Yunker Brothers Department Store that unifies the evolved history of the building. Initial local success resulted in the construction of the 1899 building. That building was expanded in 1909 and the Wilkins Building was then acquired and the entire building was unified by the Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson design. Using the year 1924 could be used as the beginning of the period of significance, since that is the year that the two building halves were architecturally unified, the 1899 date was selected as more fully being descriptive of the broader Yunker Brothers story. With additional research the Yunker Brothers Department Store could readily be nominated on a statewide significance as Iowa's largest and its premier department store, but this nomination considers it for local significance only. The present unified building is counted as three contributing buildings.

Previous Survey and Evaluations:

The Younkens building has been included in every Des Moines downtown historical and architectural survey since 1974. Steve Elmets included it in a windshield survey that year, which was limited to photography. John Maves conducted the first intensive city-wide historical survey in 1976 and again considered the building and gave the building a "positive" rating for architecture (although his evaluation pre-dated the changes of the early 1980s). Barbara Beving Long (Henning) performed a more intensive survey effort in 1983 and recommended that the building was eligible for the National Register on the basis of its historical associations. The window replacement and skywalk connections pre-dated this recommendation. Ms. Henning recommended "Younkers store is by far the best example to illustrate both the development of the modern department store and Des Moines' standing as Iowa's retail center, a standing achieved in no small part through the skillful management of the Yunker brothers. The store also calls attention to the dominant role the city's Jewish residents played in retailing. In 1899 this store and the intersection formed the basis for the city's retail clothing district at the turn of the century."

Company Summary History:

A company with a long and successful history such as Yunker Brothers necessarily developed and promoted its own legendary history. The earliest known historical summary dates to 1899. The Yunker family was both Polish (or from Lipno, Germany, which might be one in the same depending on Polish areas often suddenly becoming German) in point of origin and Jewish in terms of faith and community. Three of seven sons, were instrumental in starting the company, although Samuel

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 10

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

Yunker (1837-1879) was the actual founder and came over in 1852 with his brother Marcus (1839-1929). Lytton Yunker (1834-1902) was the third founder. A fourth brother Herman (1854-1920) emigrated in 1870 and was tasked with the opening of a Des Moines branch of the original Keokuk store that had opened in 1856. A fifth brother, Joseph Yunker (?-1918), was a company salesman (*Daily Iowa Capital*, February 3, 1899).²

The family genealogy is a complicated one and several siblings were not involved in the company at all. Lytton Yunker had a son Fulk Yunker, who was involved. Samuel Yunker had five children, including Aaron, Fulk Jr., and Isaac, who also served the firm. Marcus Yunker had four children, but none of them played a company role. Aaron Yunker (1864-1931, son of Samuel, came to Des Moines in 1879, managed the business there after 1893 (brother Herman's departure to New York City), and was made a vice president when the company first incorporated in 1904. He left Des Moines in 1908 for Chicago, where he had his own business. Isaac Yunker (1871-1938), also a son of Samuel, was a long-time company buyer, but left Des Moines in 1910. Albert Yunker, son of Joseph Yunker, was also a buyer and later a department manager.

Herman Yunker, as noted, founded the Des Moines branch in October 1874, and left Des Moines for New York City in 1893 to work "in the eastern market." The company always maintained a corporate headquarters in that city that was principally involved in buying goods. He continued as company president. His son Ira M. Yunker was also involved in the local company management. The Keokuk store was closed in 1879, largely due to the death of Samuel Yunker, but also because the family felt that the business had outgrown the city.

The original company was a dry goods business. Its early Des Moines business locations varied in time and place. The critical period of initial company growth occurred between 1893 and 1910, when the number of employees increased from 50 to 500, under the leadership of Aaron Yunker. The family business was committed to community involvement, with the family giving "their moral and financial support to every undertaking for the advancement or betterment of the city, to all charitable movements and to every worthy cause." A notable claim in the official company history is that Yunker Brothers were the first in the city to hire a female sales clerk in 1880 (Mrs. Mary McCann). After World War I, this advocacy was in behalf of Italian-Americans. Black employees were similarly numerous and in 1947 the first buyer was hired. Overall Black company employment accounted for four to seven percent of the total workforce and as of 1968 included three company buyers. Other company innovations included the initiation of overseas buying during the 1920s, air conditioning in 1939, an employee profit sharing retirement plan (1945), established a Store For Homes (1946), the use of corporate aircraft (1967) and the establishment of point of sales terminals (1971). The business credo of the company was legendary and innovative. The customer was always right. It was liberal in its credit policies (Johnson, pp. **; *The Buzzer*, 1926; *Register*, October 3, 1974; 1968 history).

Beginning in 1912, the company embarked on a long-term acquisition and merger program. The inventory of the Grand Department store was the first, acquired that year. The Wilkins Department Store inventory was purchased in 1924 as a part of the physical expansion of the company. J. Mandelbaum and Sons was purchased in 1928. In 1927 it merged with the Harris-Emery Company, reincorporated under Delaware law, and became Iowa's largest department store. The merger was a real one, although the Harris-Emery Company inventory was added to the Yunker one. Management from both companies headed the joint company and at least for a few years, both company names were continued in advertisements. Branch stores were acquired or established beginning in 1941. Branch store locations were at Ames, Fort Dodge, Marshalltown, Mason City and Sioux City (two stores, 1947, 1950's), Iowa City, Oskaloosa, Ottumwa, Omaha (Nebraska, two stores, 1955, 1961) and Austin (Minnesota). The company became a public stock company in 1948 so that capital could be acquired to pay off debt.

Despite the branch stores, the downtown Des Moines store carried the rest in terms of revenue, accounting for 42 percent of total sales in 1965. Company revenues declined during the years 1957-65, before rebounding. By 1970 there were

² The family founder, who never lived in Iowa (the family started out in Louisiana, Missouri, remains unnamed in the historical accounts. The accounts are unclear as to the sequence of emigration but many of the other families who became Yunker officers had familial roots in the same Missouri community.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****Section number** 8 **Page** 11**Younger Brothers Department Store****Polk County, Iowa**

16 branch stores, half of these being in shopping centers. Younkers was acquired by Equitable of Iowa in 1979 and expansion continued with 29 stores (25 of these being in Iowa) as of 1984. The first crisis came in 1984 when an effort to upscale the company's customers failed and revenues slumped. Equitable of Iowa creamed off company profits, limiting necessary expansion capability. Still Brandeis and Sons, an 11-store department store chain in Iowa and Nebraska was acquired in 1986, followed by H. C. Prange Company in 1992 (25 stores in Iowa and Wisconsin). A subsequent slump in sales and stock value made the company vulnerable to a hostile takeover effort by Carson Pirie Scott and Company during 1994-95. The Tennessee-based Profitts, Inc. finally acquired the company in late 1995. A Des Moines financial package saved the downtown store. It survived until 2006 when it was finally closed and sold off (<http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/Younkers-Inc-Company-History.html>).

Previous Site History:

Block 1, Fort Des Moines plat, was bounded on the north by Locust Street, on the south by Walnut Street, with 7th Street to the east and 8th Street to the west. The block was platted with intersecting alleyways that quartered the block evenly. Each quarter-block was divided into two lots that oriented east and west. The original subject property, the southeast quarter, comprised Lots 5 and 6, the last-named being to the north of the former. The block formed the extreme northwest corner of the Fort Des Moines plat, the subdivision that comprised the downtown proper. Immediately to the west, was the West Fort Des Moines plat. The 1891 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Figure 13) shows that by that time the block was nearly completely developed with commercial properties, all of which were just two stories in height. There was a single frame residence and a frame blacksmith shop in the west central part of the block, but the business blocks otherwise fronted north to Walnut, east to 7th and south to Walnut streets. Notably, the former St. Paul Episcopal Church, built in 1854, and vacated by that congregation in 1885, fronted east on 7th Street (Plat Book A, page 3, City of Des Moines, Polk County Auditor).

The Younkers store building was originally built on leased land. The Parry Block with six storefronts, along with the church, occupied its future site. The property owners were three minors, with Mary P. Whitcomb serving as the court-designated guardian.

The Original Younker Store:

The year 1899 witnessed three competing Des Moines department stores construct new and larger store buildings. The Frankel and Conrad Youngerman took the lead. The Younker Brothers joined in but added a twist, they took what was thought to be a "foolhardy" westward leap to locate their new store on the northwest corner of Walnut and 7th streets. The legend of the westward jump first appears in 1926 when it was stated "the Younker Brothers jarred the retail district by moving 'way up' on Seventh and Walnut. They had literally to make a clearing." By 1927 the story was a bit more developed:

In 1899 the firm jarred the retail business district of Des Moines loose from its moorings. Seventh street at that time was west of the business area, a part of the "jungle." But Younker Brothers knew that Des Moines was growing and that it was growing westward. So they made a clearing at Seventh and Walnut and constructed the biggest department store building in Iowa, with four times the old floor space.

Another dimension to the tale was that of scale. When the Younker brothers again expanded the 1899 store building in 1909, they looked back on the great leap of a decade previous. The business had gone from four floors measured 44 feet by 132 feet, to five floors and a basement, each measured 88 feet by 132 feet. They recalled "The move was a radical one—and many thought that the city had hardly grown to the possibility of that beautiful and complete institution." In other words, the brothers had exceeded their ambitions beyond the local market. The *Daily News* broke the story on January 23, 1899. The company had secured a 95-year lease with right to renew from Mary Whitcomb. Annual rent was to cost \$5,000 in addition to all taxes and assessments. The lease required the company to construct a building valued at not less than \$60,000. Control of the property

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 12

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

was to take effect on April 1, 1899. A curiosity was the lease provision that allowed the builders to "carry over" their building northward onto the Meek Block property. The Meek property was a new three-story brick business block with twin storefronts that fronted east onto 7th Street. The block was between the alleyway to the north and what became the initial Yunker store building. That building was purchased outright for \$25,000 (without the associated land) by the company, but leases prevented its demolition at the time. The *Daily News*, on February 1, 1899, noted that the proposed store location had "caused much comment in business circles." The Parry Estate also had the right to purchase the new Yunker building at the conclusion of the lease period if Yunker Brothers wanted to divest of it (*Daily News*, January 23, February 1, 1899; *Daily Iowa Capital*, January 24, 1899; *Tribune*, September 9, 1926; undated and incited newspaper clipping, State Historical Society Inventory File; *The Iowa Unionist*, November 12, 1909).

The sticking point was announced just four days later. Webb Souers, a popular druggist, was happily ensconced at 701 Walnut, and he was loathe to relocate. Souers was armed with a full year on his existing lease. In lieu of increasing Souer's rent some years earlier, the Parry Estate had allowed him to improve his store (tiled floors, plate glass windows, etc.) at a cost of \$700, which he was to be repaid at \$10 monthly (*Daily News*, January 27, 1899).

Contemporary newspaper accounts fail to discuss the risky westward move by the company. The *Daily Iowa Capital* simply congratulated them on securing "so valuable and convenient a permanent location" and otherwise welcomed the proposed improvement as a harbinger of better times. Few building details were released to the press but the Capital noted that the five-story building would be solely occupied by Yunker Brothers "who probably carry as heavy a stock as any dry goods house in the state." The promised building, according to the Yunker Brothers, was to be "the largest retail store in Iowa." Curiously they also stated that the building "is not to be a department store; it will simply be filled with the goods that this firm regards as coming within its line." Resisting being classified even with a newly-coined term, the department store, the point was that the company was large enough to capably meet its customers' needs. The Capital added "It has come to be a common saying in Des Moines, 'You will find it at Yunkers' Nowhere in Iowa nor the west is there a more complete establishment of its kind. The firm has not attempted to handle everything needed by mankind, but thousands of families in Iowa go to Yunkers' for the things that it is know are kept in that mammoth stock, for the reason that the latest styles, the best quality and the lowest prices are always to be found there. It is a great store, honestly and intelligently conducted" (*Daily Iowa Capital*, January 24, February 3, 1899).

The original building's design and scale merited national architectural attention when it was featured in *American Architect and Builder* soon after its completion (Figure 14). The final building plans were completed by mid-February 1899. The *Daily Iowa Capital* applauded the planned edifice:

...The Yunkers take the most genuine pride in giving Des Moines this grand metropolitan store, complete in every detail, as an acknowledgement of what Des Moines has done for them during the quarter-century they have been in business here. The elevators are sightly; the style is renaissance, of brick and glass, with terra cotta trimmings; there will be five stories and a magnificent basement, finished and furnished in conformity with the appointments of the entire building. Possibly a sixth story may be added before the roof is put on. The Walnut and Seventh street elevators are very similar; there will be entrances at equal distances from the corner on both streets, and a carriage entrance on Walnut, near the alley. The first story will be 19 feet high, and the two sides of almost solid plate glass will give superb lighting and ventilation. The upper stories will be 14 ½ feet high, surmounted by a nine foot cornice of copper and galvanized iron, making the entire building as planned 91 feet, an unusual height for a five-story block. Above the plate glass windows of the main floor will be arranged prismatic lights, and prisms will also aid greatly in lighting the basement. The windows of the upper stories are of French plate, 17 feet square, and are almost continuous, with small spaces between. The floor space presents a total of 90,000 square feet, which is the largest of any retail establishment in Iowa. As

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 **Page** 13

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

nearly as possible the building is to be fireproof and additional precautions will be taken by providing fire escapes and other conveniences in case of a conflagration. The maximum cost has not been determined, the minimum being estimated at a round \$100,000. The intention is to have this building ready for occupancy by the firm September 1; that is, all but the corner, which will be added as soon as the workmen can get at it.

The corner reference was to the Souers' Drugstore, a matter that remained unresolved. A brother was quoted as stating "What shall we do? ..What can we do but cut our building at a column, and build all around him? When his lease expires then we will go on and finish round out the corner. We do not intend to let him put off our building for a day" (*Des Moines Daily Iowa Capital*, February 20, 1899).

By early March demolition was the rule for the three new department stores. The Frankel Building was to go up at 6th and Walnut, a block to the east. The Youngerman Block was at Fifth and Locust, two blocks further east. The Yunker site, for what it was worth, was the westernmost of the lot. The latter new building was the last to embark on demolition. There were other important preliminary steps to be taken, in addition to druggist Souers. The company (actually Yunkers Brothers Construction Company was the contracting entity but it was a holding company rather than an actual building organization). A key one was the width of the Walnut Street sidewalk. The standard was ten feet, the brothers wanted two more feet and were convinced that the standard was to be increased inevitably so they wanted to build it just once. The additional width also translated into additional basement space. The actual City Council decision lingered until late June by which time a second related issue arose, that being the relocation of a city hydrant made necessary by the broader sidewalk. The water company wanted the Yunker firm to pay for moving it (*Des Moines Daily Iowa Capital*, March 13, June 27, 1899; *Des Moines Daily News*, June 28, 1899).

Final plans and specifications were finally in the hands of the bidding contractors who were located in the city and in Chicago. Contracts were to be let the first week of April. The Parry Block tenants (with one exception) were to have vacated their stands by that same time, and demolition work was to being a week later. Excavation work was to start in mid-April. By this time the Youngerman Block was finishing its excavation work and the Frankel Block was up to the first story with its ironwork (*Des Moines Daily News*, March 25, 1899).

Contractors Charles and Fred Weitz (Weitz Brothers) was awarded the general contract on April 7 with an \$86,000 bid that included the demolition work on the Parry Block. The *Capital* observed that the planned building would be "almost entirely constructed of iron and glass" and would be

a magnificent specimen of a modern mercantile building." A Yunker spokesman noted "We hope the people of Des Moines will appreciate our efforts towards the erection of a building that will compete favorably with anything in the country. We find, in letting the contract, that we are going to greatly exceed our first desires and expectations in regard to the building. When completed, we expect that it will have cost us between \$150,000 and \$160,000, and we are confident that it will be the most suitable edifice for the purpose in the west."

The *Daily Capital* was enthusiastic that a local contractor had been tasked to erect this most monumental building:

The people of Des Moines are to be congratulated upon having the work done by a local contractor and Mr. Weitz will have the opportunity of proving that Des Moines architects and contractors are second to none in completing the erection of such a building. In every respect it is to be finished with an elaborateness of detail for comfort and convenience that is to be found in its counterparts in New York or Chicago. Twenty-three

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 **Page** 14

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

toilet rooms will be scattered about the building and there will be waiting rooms for the rest and comfort of the patrons. A very fine little restaurant will be in innovation in the business here.

The demolition of the Parry Block, which began on April 8 with a 70-man workforce, is further documented by a workman injury. Oliver Foster was removing a boiler from the basement on April 10 when falling debris struck him on the head and rendered him temporarily unconscious (*Des Moines Daily Iowa Capital*, April 8, November 9, 1899; *Daily News*, April 10, 1899; *Leader*, November 9, 1899).

On April 10, the Yunker brothers let what was termed “the largest contract for glass ever made in the city.” John A. Garver and Company received the contract, valued at \$7,500 (*Des Moines Daily Iowa Capital*, April 11, 1899).

By mid-April the Parry Block was gone, save for its corner drugstore. The *News* noted “Webb Souers’ drug store looks like an oasis in the desert...he will not get out for a time at least.” The foundation for the new building was to be done by April 25 the same source added. In the meantime, the Frankel Block progress was slowed by delays in receiving Terra Cotta while the Youngerman Block basement was done (*Des Moines Daily News*, April 14, 1899).

The druggist had finally moved as of early May. Aaron Yunker threatened to open his own drug store on 7th Street, just behind Souers’ corner. Yunker upped the ante by adding that it would be a “cut-rate” operation. This threat sent the city’s druggists into a panic, given that they had just ridden themselves of the kin of under-selling, druggist Norman Lichty. The beleaguered druggist responded with a lengthy defense of his refusal to be bullied out of the way. Souers stated

It has been stated that I am blocking a public improvement, and that I am interfering with their plans. It is the question in the minds of many as to whether a big department store is really a public benefit. It may be to the proprietors, but how about the small dealer and shop-keeper? As to interfering with plans, have I made a holler or whine because my sidewalk was made to look like a feed stable, or because there is what I consider an unnecessary amount of blockading of the street—empty wagons backed up against my entrance, etc.?...It has been suggested to me that this intense desire to benefit the public by erecting a large building was not entirely philanthropic, and was accelerated somewhat by reason that other philanthropists set the pace...The corner of Seventh and Walnut or any other good location, is just as important to my little drug store as it possibly can be to a very large establishment, and in my opinion, more so.

By May 10, the Frankel Block was ready for its roof and the Youngerman Block was to the second floor. The Yunker Block basement was nearly finished and ironwork was being put in place. Ten days later the first story iron was in place and brickwork begun (*Des Moines Daily News*, May 9, 10, 20, 1899).

The drugstore impediment was finally resolved on July 5. Druggist Souers ended up a block to the east on 6th Street and within two days his corner store was no more. By July 28, triple-work shifts had brought the building up to the fifth floor level. On August 3 a flash flood collapsed an eastern perimeter basement wall to cave in and its repair required ten days of work (*Des Moines Leader*, November 9, 1899; *Des Moines Daily Iowa Capital*, October 25, 1899).

By mid-August the company was conducting removal sales in anticipation of occupying its new building by October 1, a month later than originally hoped for. Customers from beyond Des Moines were encouraged to see the new building as it was being finished. Advertisements encouraged “You have heard about our magnificent new store...you won’t want to go home without seeing it. Probably no store building in the west equals this new structure in all its up-to-date features. The Yunker Brothers were eager to have their opening coincide with the annual Semi-Om-Sed (Des Moines spelled backwards) carnival

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****Section number** 8 **Page** 15**Younker Brothers Department Store****Polk County, Iowa**

week, but were unsuccessful in getting its schedule moved later in the year. It was held the first week of October but the brothers weren't ready (*The Gazette*, August 10, 189; *Des Moines Daily Iowa Capital*, August 15, September 9, 1899).

Disaster in a fiery form struck the Harris-Emery Department Store on October 3. Located directly east of the new Younker building, the fire was so fierce that hundreds of glass lights in the new building were cracked. The Masonic Building cornice, located across from Younkens to the south, was melted. The victim firm, rated "one of the largest and best firms in the Capital City," and its neighbors were devastated with a total loss of \$360,000. The Younker loss, 71 ruined window panes, and a badly scorched and blistered cornice, totaled \$30,000. The firm had secured \$50,000 in insurance just days before the blaze. The Younker brothers promptly turned over the fifth floor of their new building to their crippled competitors, to be used for the storage of new replacement goods, and they even offered use of their former quarters once they had vacated them (*Des Moines Daily News*, October 3, 1899; *Des Moines Weekly Leader*, October 5, 1899).

By October 9, the company advertisements announced "Every nerve is now strained to get into our new store on the 23rd of this month." A final two-week-long removal sale was announced for the old location, on Walnut between 5th and 6th streets (*Des Moines Daily News*, October 9, 1899).

Younkers Store Nearing Completion and Soon to be Opened

Younkers' new store building approaches completion and is being much discussed in business circles, as the opening of the new store will mark an epoch in merchandising in Des Moines. The building will be by all odds the finest structure in Iowa, devoted to any kind of business. It is complete in every respect. Everything has been carefully planned. There is no waste space. The basement alone would make a great store and it is surprisingly well lighted from the glass sidewalk. There are numerous features that deserve special mention that are not in their nature showy. There are retiring rooms for both ladies and gentlemen and separate and elaborate conveniences for employees of both sexes. The female employees have lockers for their wraps and each is provided with a key to the same. The mechanical appliances such as electric powers, elevators, etc. are complete. A drive well 48 feet deep supplies the building with all the water that is required and a member of the firm says he regrets now that the well was not made 200 feet deep, as at that depth a splendid flow of mineral water would have been found. The pneumatic tubes for the carrying of cash to the cashier's desk are being put in by the Bostedo company of Chicago, who have no superiors in their line of work. A gallery around the elevators will give the spectator a complete survey of all the transactions on the main floor. There is no hatchway through the center of the building, as such a place would be considered a waste of space and in Younkens' store every foot will be needed. The present expectation is that the new Younker store will be occupied October 23. A vast amount of work remains to be done, but it is all well in hand and rapid progress can be made from this on. Several new departments, such as millinery, ladies' shoes, boys' clothing, have been added and others may follow. House furnishings will be a new department too... (*Des Moines Daily Iowa Capital*, October 14, 1899)

Figure 16 nicely depicts the Meek Block, the new building's east elevation, the decorative cornice, original windows and storefront, and rooftop signage, certainly electrified. There is a 7th Street fire escape in place. Note also the painted "YOUNKER BROS" painted signage along and below the north cornice.

The late October opening day target came and went and finally, the doors to the new shopping emporium were opened on November 9, 1899. The contractors delivered the finished building to the owners on November 1, being technically ahead of schedule when the several unexpected delays were allowed for. A full week's time was required to move the company into the

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 16

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

new building, the work being finished only on November 8. The crowds were immense. The company employees surprised the Yunker brothers by decorating one of the first company delivery wagons (Des Moines *Leader*, November 9, 1899; Des Moines *Daily News*, November 9, 1899).³

Figure 18 presents a view of the southern Walnut Street façade. By this time it would appear that a fixed canopy was on the 7th Street front, substituting for an awning. "YUNKER BROS" signage appears on both sides of the southeast corner and there is a vertical sign suspended above it. There are corner entrances on both sides of that same corner, and the break in the awning pattern at the west end of the Walnut Street front identifies a second south entrance.

YUNKERS' OPENING

...The great store covers 90x134 feet of ground and five floors and the basement are occupied by the firm, there being about 90,000 square feet of floor space. The exterior of the structure is attractive in its novelty and in the style of architecture known as the Italian Renaissance. The material used is glass, brick, terra cotta and steel, the frame of the building being composed of steel and the walls of brick of mottled granite color with terra cotta to match; 1,200,000 brick were used in the construction. The window mullions and all other facings are of modern ornamental iron. The large windows are of the finest plate glass, there being 7,400 square feet of this elegant glass in the frontage on both streets. These wonderful sheets of glass vary in size, the larger being 144x148 inches. The next size 138x148 and the smallest 120x48. A great many of these were broken during the big fire of October 3 and had to be remanufactured. Some idea of the difficulty experienced in securing glass of this size may be had by learning that frequently 20 or more plates have to be cast before one is obtained that will stand inspection. The damage price for one of these big plates is about \$400. On the first floor these plates are surmounted with Luxsfer prisms, which make the large rooms as light as day. The frontage on both streets is ornamented with arches with keystones and scroll work of neat and modern design and finish.

There are three main entrances to the store, one on the corner, a magnificent vestibuled entrance which can be approached from either street, another on Seventh street and a large canopied carriage entrance on Walnut street. In the vestibuled corner entrance is a large display case partitioned off with glass, the passageway being between the case which extends to the floor above and the doors into the store proper. This triangular case can be beautifully illuminated and above on the outside, in lovely colored and costly glass on both streets appears the name "Yunkers."

As the reporter entered the main store room today his attention was first attracted by the balcony on the north side of the room about the center, 60 feet in length encircling the elevators, provided with sofas, easy chairs, writing desks, and toilet apartments for the comfort of customers, and from this balcony a splendid view of the great store can be obtained...

The interior finish of the building is of polished oak and the doors of the main entrances are of mahogany. There are two electric elevators running from the basement to the top floor. The entire building is equipped with a perfect electric and gas lighting system and a complete pneumatic cash system is provided, while the steam heating and ventilation is modern and complete in every detail.

³ Another probable cause for delay was a severe brick "famine" which resulted from a buying up of all available brick in late August 1899. It took six weeks to replenish the local supply and bricks were still "very scarce" as of September 3 (*Leader*, August 20, September 3, 1899).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****Section number** 8 **Page** 17**Younger Brothers Department Store****Polk County, Iowa**

There are plenty of toilet, retiring, resting and waiting rooms provided for the comfort and convenience of shoppers which will be appreciated. The extensive home delivery system will require a large number of new wagons which are being constructed and to operate this store, in all of its departments outside and in doors will require 300 employees (Des Moines *Leader*, November 9, 1899).

Subsequent Youngers Building History, 1900-1922:

The youngest employees of the company were unable to continue their public school education. Beginning in the fall of 1906 a female instructor was hired to offer daily two-hour classes to about 40 young employees. The students received free books and school supplies and the classes were offered over the same timeframe as the public school calendar. The store school began its third year of successful operation in the fall of 1908 (Des Moines *Register and Leader*, August 10, 1908).

The Youngers brothers incorporated another company, titled the Commercial Realty Company in early 1907. The capital stock was \$100,000 and Herman and Aaron Younger were its officers, being president and vice president respectively. The company, along with the Younger Brothers Construction Company, managed a series of real estate holdings that were located within the downtown. A number of major buildings were acquired, improved or newly constructed between 1906 and 1922 (Des Moines *Tribune*, April 18, 1907).

A key building improvement was the northward expansion of the 1899 Younger building in 1909. It was noted by the Younger brothers that this addition alone equaled the square footage of their pre-1899 store building. Proudfoot and Bird were the architects. Younger Brothers Construction Company again directed the building effort but the contractor has not yet been identified. The construction work replaced the relatively new Meeks Block with a six-story, two-bay matching extension of the 1899 building, and added a sixth floor to that building. This building effort was simultaneous with another major company investment building effort at 6th and Mulberry. The company was using various local architects for its several building projects. The idea of expanding north was publicly announced in early 1902, when the *Iowa State Register* had reported "The Youngers are said to be contemplating purchasing the Chamberlain property on Seventh and Locust, the old Plymouth church, and erecting thereon a six-story business block" (Des Moines *Iowa State Register*, February 26, 1902; Des Moines *Tribune*, January 19, August 24, 1909; Des Moines *Capital*, November 24, 1909).⁴

The newly-enlarged building was finished just in time for Iowa's premier annual event, the Iowa State Fair. In late August 1909 the company targeted its advertisement to Iowa State Fair visitors. Advertisements promoted Youngers as "the store of greatest interest to State Fair visitors in the heart of Des Moines." The larger building was once again touted as "the largest in the state." Work continued apparently, despite the late August opening. One additional improvement was the installation of tungsten light chandeliers throughout the store building. The result was that the entire store "was as bright as if the sun was shining through a glass roof." The building was "one of the finest lighted buildings in the state" and reflected the development of a new industry and technology, that of "illuminating engineers" (Des Moines *Tribune*, August 29, 1909; Des Moines *Capital*, November 24, 1909).⁵

State Historian Brigham Johnson published his two-volume history of Des Moines and Polk County in 1911, and noted "Not only the early date of its [Youngers] establishment, and the prominent place it has attained among concerns of its kind in the state, but the progressive policies and public spirit manifested at all times by its proprietors, have been potent factors in the

⁴ Some substantial interior re-working of the 1899 building was underway as of the spring of 1908. A notice began with the words "We are building" and directed customers to use the 7th Street entrance (Des Moines *Register and Leader*, April 1, 1908).

⁵ The larger building allowed the company to close its Ten Cents Store operation at 609-11 Walnut, its former main store location (Des Moines *Tribune*, February 27, 1909).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****Section number** 8 **Page** 18**Yunker Brothers Department Store****Polk County, Iowa**

up building of the city." *The Iowa Unionist* newspaper was a strong supporter of the Younkers company. In mid-June it noted "Yunker Bros. Are again demonstrating their faith in Des Moines and in themselves, by doubling the capacity of their already mammoth trading mart. The new addition is progressing nicely and will soon be enclosed. When completed Younker Bros. will have one of the largest trade emporiums west of Chicago and one of which Des Moines may well feel proud" (Johnson, p. 1369; *The Iowa Unionist*, June 11, 1909).

By 1912, the westward department store movement had gone at least a block beyond Younkers. That year the company purchased most of the inventory of the Grand Department Store, located at 8th and Walnut. A series of "great merchandise events" likely conducted from the Younkers building itself, were held to sell off the stock (*Des Moines Tribune*, May 30, 1912).

A sixth-floor tea room and café opened in mid-July 1913. Miss Lydia Bayliss, the former dining room manager of the Chamberlain Hotel was in charge and 500 customers tried to fit into 200 available seats at the grand opening (*Des Moines Register and Leader*, July 11, 1913).

The company celebrated its 60th anniversary in business in the fall of 1916 and the *Des Moines Magazine* acknowledged the birthday celebration with a drawing. The image (Figure 32) clearly depicts the retained storefront and signage, the cornice detailing and the original window pattern (*Des Moines Magazine*, October 1916).

During the First World War the Younkers Brothers Company supported the war effort. One war project, the preparation of bandages by the Red Cross, took place in the building's "Red Cross work room" (Figure 33) (*Des Moines Tribune*, June 22, 1918).

The death of Herman Younker in 1920 occasioned a *Des Moines Tribune* editorial of praise for the role played by the family in the successful business. Norman Wilchinski was company president by this time. The *Tribune* noted "Every member of the family of Younker may take pride in the record that has been made. By honest methods, industry and large outlook the Younker brothers have put their names high up among the names of the successful business men of Iowa (*Des Moines Tribune*, September 15, 1920).

The Wilkins Building and its first tenant firms, the Wilkins Department Store and Chapman Brothers Furniture Company:

As early as late 1907, Frederick M. Hubbell was planning to build a new business block at 8th and Walnut, to replace the miscellany of buildings that were located immediately west of the Younker store building. Hubbell was the premier land owner and developer in Des Moines and was responsible for building a great many commercial and other buildings in the city. As such this building was called the "Hubbell Building" early on, but once its tenants were announced, the name "Wilkins Building," referencing the major tenant firm, was employed to distinguish it from the many other Hubbell buildings. The Chapman Brothers Furniture Company (Joseph, William I., Abraham B. and Nate Chapman) was the original tenant client for the new building, and had previously occupied the same location at 719 Walnut Street.. The planned building was one of a number of major construction projects in the city that were on hold pending the reduction of building materials prices (*Des Moines Daily News*, November 1, 1907).

By mid-January 1908 a second major tenant was announced in rumor mode, that being the Wilkins Brothers Department Store. Building plans, prepared by an unidentified architect, were finished by this time and the building was be started during the spring of 1908. The Wilkins firm signed a long-term lease for the west 88 feet of the new building with occupancy to take place by October 1, 1908. The new location represented a substantial increase in terms of space for the company and a major expansion with at least one new department, ladies' tailoring, was planned. Two new buildings were to be built simultaneously on the same corner. Counting the block as two buildings is confusing. They had separate elevator

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 19

Younger Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

systems and an internal full-height dividing wall separated the two tenant firms, but the entire block was of a unified exterior architectural design, so it could also be described as a single building. It is curious that the Wilkins Company image of its building completely ignored the adjacent Chapman bays. The Chapman Company image at least admitted of the existence of its western neighbor (*Des Moines Daily News*, January 10, February 1, March 28, 1908).

The Wilkins brothers, Vance A., Capt. J. E. and Edgar J. Wilkins, was established in East Des Moines in 1881. Captain Wilkins was the original founder and came armed with the department store lessons of the Lehmann family, the true founders of the department store concept. Wilkins "threw a galvanic shock into the merchants of Lee Township [East Des Moines]" with his low prices, cash-only sales rule, always new goods and the city's first "Fair store" business model. Wilkins partnered with C. B. Dockstatler from 1884 until 1898. Captain Wilkins died in a railroad accident in June 1901 and he was succeeded by his sons V. A. and E. J. Wilkins. The *Register and Leader* featured the city's four largest retail stores (Youngers, Wilkins, Harris-Emerly and Mandelbaum's) in a photo essay entitled "Des Moines Leads In Great Retail Stores." The article, appearing on July 26, 1908, used the drawing of Wilkins new store building for illustrative purposes (*Des Moines Daily News*, October 15, 1908; *Des Moines Register and Leader*, July 26, 1908).

The Chapman Brothers Furniture Company was founded in a single 20 feet by 60 feet storeroom in 1892. The firm had to vacate its old quarters by February 1, 1908. The new building was to be ready for occupancy by October 1. It turned out to be a close estimate. The company called for 60 workers to apply to help it move during the night of October 10 and doors were opened on October 16, with a formal grand opening being deferred. The *Register and Leader* pictured the city's six largest furniture dealers in an article entitled "Des Moines Is Foremost As a Retail Furniture Center" at the end of August 1908. The new building for Chapman Brothers was used to represent that firm (*Des Moines Daily News*, January 17, October 10, 16, 1908; *Des Moines Register and Leader*, August 30, 1908).

The architect of the Wilkins Building was Edwin Arthur Rush, of Chicago. Rush's design role is a very important component of the significance of this building. The building reflected the lessons of the great San Francisco earthquake and fire, wherein the only surviving buildings were of reinforced concrete construction. As the first floor of the new building was being built, hundreds gathered on a daily basis to "gaze with wonderment at the manner of its construction." The city was "being introduced to how a building is made of reinforced concrete construction." The building was "the first business block in Des Moines to be built of reinforced concrete." The new building technique was so unusual, the *Register and Leader* explained to its readers that as the building arose and less weight had to be supported, the number of columns would be reduced on each successive floor. The building process was slow and the same source noted that few observers realized that the wooden false work would all be removed, leaving only the concrete to serve as the building's supporting skeleton. The building would be one of the city's best-constructed, and a "monument" and one that would "not be lacking in artistic appearance." The new block "will have the distinction of being the pioneer building in the city of its class of construction" (*The American Contractor*, March 21, 1908, p. 48; *Des Moines Register and Leader*, May 30, 1908).

The general contractor was John C. Mardis, a well-established master of constructing immense buildings in Des Moines. He served as secretary and treasurer of the Des Moines Brick and Tile Company, beginning in the mid-1890s. The early buildings were all load-bearing brick buildings with timber or cast iron/steel interior frames. This one was different and the fact that the *Register and Leader* noted that the construction work was slow-going, likely attests both to the necessary learning curve and the nature of working with concrete on a massive scale in a labor intensive manner. It is also of interest that the construction photos show that the majority of the construction workers who moved the concrete were African-Americans. Mardis was building at least two large reinforced concrete buildings in Omaha, Nebraska, as early as 1905-06. These were the eight-story Carpenter Paper Building (138 feet square), and the five-story high Henshaw Block (38 feet by 138 feet in depth) (*Des Moines Daily News*, May 25 1902; *Des Moines Register and Leader*, June 14, 1908).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****Section number** 8 **Page** 20**Younger Brothers Department Store****Polk County, Iowa**

The *Register and Leader* contrasted "The New and The Old in Building" in mid-June 1908, when it compared the methods of construction on the Wilkins Building and the Federal Post Office. The latter building effort involved a steel interior frame and stone load-bearing perimeter walls. In what it termed "Twentieth Century construction, the Wilkins Building method of construction was described as follows:

Its walls are going up after a fashion never before seen in Des Moines or in Iowa. Reinforced concrete construction it is called, and it is so new that architects and engineers are still debating its merits and only a few cities anywhere can boast of big buildings built in this way. There isn't a pile of brick or stone anywhere around the premises, and there hasn't been a single brick or stone mason on the job since it was started. Cement, sand, crushed stone and thin steel netting and rods are the only materials to be used until it comes time to put on a veneer of brick and install windows and doors.

The newspaper explained that the building was in effect being built twice, first using lumber false work, and then using the reinforced concrete. The maze of false work would be kept in place until the fourth floor was poured, so as to allow sufficient curing time for the entire building. The building "will stand like a single monster rock, hollowed and shaped for a great business block." The method of construction would allow for more open store space than a steel frame building it was claimed. The thickest columns on the first floor measured 24 inches square, while in a steel building design, columns measuring 36 inches by 28 inches would have been required. Reinforced concrete was also claimed to be fireproof and strengthened with age. It was also the "local laboring man's friend" because it was so very labor-intensive. The workforce at the building site numbered 125 men at its high point (Des Moines *Register and Leader*, June 14, 1908).

Construction work was underway by early-June. Like the Younker Building, the Wilkins Building had projected basement areas beneath the surrounding sidewalks. An excavation collapse resulted in damaging paving along Walnut Street. The building's completion and eminent occupancy by its tenant firms was announced on October 4. The finished block was described as "one of the finest and most elaborate of its kind west of Chicago...The building is constructed of reinforced concrete and is one of the first of its kind. Architects unite in saying that it is one of the most substantial ever constructed. The building is furnished throughout with fire extinguishers and is made safe from fire in every place possible with a complete sprinkler system. The interior of the building is a marvel of beauty and excellence and has no equal in the city."

The reinforced concrete design of the new building served as the foundation for the additional claim that the Wilkins Building was the first fireproof dry goods block in the State of Iowa. Like the Younkers' store, the new building had over-sized windows. The building also featured ladies' rest rooms, a modern ventilation system and an internal telephone system. The alleyway windows had leaded glass with metal window sash in lieu of fire shutters, another fire protection (Des Moines *Daily News*, June 6, October 4, 1908).

The Wilkins Brothers Company move-in took place after Chapman Brothers began their move. A major sub-tenant of the Wilkins Company was Hunter and Crawford, milliners, who had leased the northwest quarter of the new building's second floor. Had the promised October 1 availability been realized, Hunter and Crawford would have been most fortunate. The delay in moving had them still in their old quarters when a fire destroyed much of their stock and goods the evening of October 19. mid-month but it was stressed that this was to be an entirely "new store" with nearly all new stock. The Wilkins move-in began the night of October 17 on a Saturday, suspended work for Sunday and resumed on Monday. Opening day came the evening of October 22. The firm occupied four floors and the basement and subleased the fifth floor. The new company quarters totaled 65,000 square feet, compared with just 17,000 square feet in their former location. Opening day for the Wilkins Store was October 20, 1908. In making the move the firm became "a department store of the first class" by adding new departments, including rugs, carpets, draperies, trunks, drug sundries, and others. The company officers expressed a hope that their annual business would double at their new location. The firm also took pains to publicize any staff captures from its Younkers

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 **Page** 21

Younger Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

competition. H. M. Branch, who had for five years worked as a buyer for Youngers' economy basement, took over the third floor bargain sales operations in the Wilkins building. At least two newspaper articles reported on his change of employer (Des Moines *Register and Leader News*, July 18, 26, October 1, 8, 15, 18, 19, 22, 1908; January 14, 1909; Des Moines *Capital*, January 15, 1909).

The following spring, the Wilkins firm amended its articles of incorporation by doubling its amount of capital stock to \$100,000. The new quarters had quadrupled the store space of the firm but by mid-1909, it had exhausted its expansion and held a rearrangement sale. The third floor was taken over for domestic stocks. One reason why the firm was crowded was that it wasn't using all of its capacious new building. City directory listings as of 1915 show that the Wilkins salesrooms were relegated ground floor. Slocum & Magin occupied the basement. The second floor was occupied by the contracted millinery of Hunter and Crawford. The third floor housed a wallpaper firm, hairdresser and a china painter. On the fourth floor were two dressmakers and the Central Café was on the uppermost floor (Des Moines *Capital*, April 24, 1909; Des Moines *Daily News*, July 6, 1909; Des Moines City Directory, 1915).

The Wilkins began a new tradition of celebrating anniversaries that were based on its occupancy of the "new Wilkins Store." The store announced plans to give its store a more "homelike air" in late 1917. The goal was to have the customer feel unhurried so as to encourage more careful selection when shopping. A reporter did a tour of the building and described its feel and operations. By this time the uppermost floor was mostly used for storage, the café being but a memory. One department produced curtains and draperies made to order, while another handled all of the window displays and trimming. On the fourth floor was the receiving room, some reserve storage, the fitting department, the china painting department, the advertising department, and the Red Cross headquarters occupied a large well-lighted room on the west end of the floor. The third floor displayed rugs and draperies and the wall paper department. The company's business offices occupied a corner on this level, as was the hair goods department. Knitting lessons for war work were offered on the second floor which also housed the millinery department and the coat and suit department. On the first floor were the men's' furnishing department, women's' and children's' shoe department while the domestic department occupied the basement. Canned goods were offered as well but there was no effort made to keep a full grocery line (Des Moines *Daily News*, October 19, 1914; October 14, 1917; Des Moines *Capital*, October 23, 1914).

Frederick Hubbell had cause for regretting the building of so large a business block. In 1923 when the City Council enacted an areaway (presumably an awning tax that was based upon the area covered by awnings within the public right-of-way). Hubbell's tax on the new Wilkins Building was the highest in the city, being \$1,476 (Des Moines *Daily News*, June 23, 1916).

The 1920 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Figure 34) depicts the two separate buildings and the three principal tenant firms. The Wilkins building lacks exterior fire escapes apparently due to its fireproof construction, while the Youngers Building has two fire escapes. The map locates the two furnace rooms and the elevator shaft locations.

Rush and Son, Architects:

Amos William Rush was a self-taught designer, having started out as a brick and stone mason. He established his own architectural design firm in Chicago c.1871 and worked until 1913, dying in 1923. His son Edwin Arthur Rush was formally trained as an architect. The firm relocated to Grand Rapids, Michigan, and briefly operated branch offices there and in Indianapolis, Indiana. E. A. Rush managed the former office. The firm returned to Chicago in 1899 where it was housed in the Monadnock Building. There, influenced by architects Burhnham and Root, their stylistic palette evolved from the Romanesque to the modern styles. The partners were notable courthouse designers throughout the upper Midwest and three Iowa courthouses were numbered in their commissions, all dating to 1899-1900. The designers were relocated to Tulsa, Oklahoma,

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 22

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

by 1910. E. A. Rush continued working until his death in 1948. The firm became Rush, [Asbury] Endacott, and Rush in 1915 and "RER" achieved notoriety in Oklahoma during the subsequent oil boom (Stuttgen, pp. 8-18/19; Henderson, p. E-3).

The Two Buildings Are Combined, 1922-24:

The fifteen-year lease for the tenant firms of the Wilkins Building expired October 1, 1923. When the owners sought a lease renewal, the Wilkins Brothers Company declined and that decision set in motion the unification of the two buildings. Yunker Brothers negotiated a 95-year lease of the Wilkins Building in late 1922. Yunkers was crowded but would the trade support a store having the equivalent of two full blocks of display windows and ground level store space? Nothing would transpire for another year until the leases expired (*Des Moines Tribune*, October 16, 1922).

The Wilkins Brothers Company was undecided as to what they would do and on August 1, 1924, they liquidated their entire stock to Yunkers. The Chapman Furniture Company relocated to the corner of 5th and Walnut streets and remained in business for many more years (*Des Moines Tribune*, July 30, 31, August 9, 1923).

In mid-1924 the two buildings were architecturally unified by the construction of a four-story bridge above the still-open intervening alleyway, the addition of a floor to the Wilkins building and by the construction of the present-day marble and bronze storefronts. The remodeling architects were Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson and their plans were dated September 1923. At that same time Yunkers announced plans to open the Cremona Café in the newly acquired building. The café was to have an Italian decorative scheme. It was finally the relocated Yunkers Tea Room, located on the new fifth floor of the west building. The Yunkers firm, having doubled its store area, could continue to claim that its "new block-long store is the largest department store in the state of Iowa and one of the finest and most modernly [sic] equipped stores in the middle west" (*Des Moines Capital*, June 1, 1924; *Des Moines Tribune*, September 9, 1926).

The physical challenge of unifying the two buildings was an audacious one. The work included the removal of the wall that had separated the Wilkins and Chapman firms, eliminating the former two exterior alley walls of both buildings, and rearranging elevators and stairwells, the Wilkins building gaining four new elevators. A massive ventilation system was installed in the basement of the Wilkins building. The work presumably began in the fall of 1923 but it wasn't until early April 1924 that the architect's façade elevation drawing was publicly released. While an "early fall" completion date was offered, it was noted that "workmen have finished steel work on two stories," implying that the original structural support systems on the west building were being, at least in part replaced. The *Des Moines Sunday Register* reported "The cornice of the addition [sic] has been taken off and the entire front has been converted into an Italian Gothic front, similar to the original building occupied by Yunker Brothers. The first floor will be of Minnesota granite and the same construction in the original store building." This account appears to greatly exaggerate the façade changes made to the Wilkins building, above the ground floor. The exterior veneer was not removed or even altered and the windows were left in place. The major change was the addition of the sixth floor with its distinctive arched windows and balconies (*Des Moines Sunday Register*, April 6, 1924).

The removal clearance sales began in mid-July and within a week it was stated that some departments would begin to relocate. The company was initially uncertain as to what the new part of the business would be called. It was first termed "the West building," and then the "new 8th Street Section." By August 3 a number of new departments had moved into the new space and two days later an all-new furniture section, replacing and absorbing the Wilkins Company inventory, was announced. By August 4 the public was challenged to "Watch This Store" and the daily changes that were being made. By August 10 it was reported "two beautiful new floors are almost ready for their annitial [sic] appearance." It is probable that the attempt to both enlarge and remodel the Wilkins building and to occupy it as soon as possible, simply delayed the remodeling work. It wasn't until the end of August that the company admitted publicly "It's a gigantic task—building a block long department store." Over 50 different building trades were at work day and night to finish the work. The public was asked "Will you bear with us? In the midst of all this rebuilding – remodeling – reconstructing marble and stone and steel into one of the most complete and modern

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 **Page** 23

Younker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

department stores of the country, inconveniences to the shopper are sometimes unavoidable..." The mammoth store would finally formally open in early September 1924 (Des Moines *Sunday Register*, July 13, 20, 27, August 3, 4, 29, 1924).

The company celebrated its 70th anniversary in 1926 and one of its display windows featured fashions of 1856, when the store was first founded in Keokuk. The tearoom, originally established in 1913, was redecorated and re-opened on the fifth floor of the west building in January 1926. It started out with a Spanish decorative theme. An alameda, with columns, tiled floors and tinted walls, led to a lounge, which in turn led to the tearoom proper. A separate banquet room could seat 200 persons. The total capacity was 700 persons (Des Moines *Tribune*, January 5, September 7, 8, 1926; September 7, 1931).⁶

In April 1926 the company purchased the inventory of the Emporium Store, a 13-year old department store that was located on the opposite side of Walnut Street. The deal was the city's second largest such transaction since the purchase of the Wilkin's stock three years earlier (Des Moines *Tribune*, April 20, 1926).

The two department store giants of the city, Younkers and the Harris-Emery Company, announced plans to merge in January 1927. John S. Harris and Henry Emery founded the latter firm in 1892 and the Frankel and Rosenfield families had subsequently assumed the management. The two companies were identical in their customer-driven values and the consolidation allowed both companies to eliminate stock duplication and to operate at a more efficient economy of scale. The two firms combined under the Younkers' corporate name and a new management team combined officers from both companies. A "large proportion" of the Harris-Emery Company employees were retained, and for some time, both company titles were used in advertisements. The collage of former company locations even included the Harris-Emery store building (Des Moines *Tribune*, January 27, 1927; Des Moines *Capital*, January 11, 1927).

A massive public education campaign was waged to reassure the customers of the Harris-Emery Company that the merger was a positive action.

The merger of Iowa's two foremost retail institutions will result in combined resources and a centralization of facilities that will make a shopping center comparable with the best in America—better than either store could ever do alone...

Merger of the two stores simply means the welding of the good will, the prestige, the resources, the organization of both. It means the blending of all the fine principles, standards and practices of merchandising for which both stores have always stood on common ground.

Harris-Emery even published a list of the 200 employees who would be moving to the new store site in an effort to reassure the public and likely the employees as well. The actual work of moving the inventory of Harris-Emery to Younkers required "more than 1,000 employees and a great fleet of motor trucks." The double-store opened for business on February 23 (Des Moines *Tribune*, February 22, 23, 25, 1927).

In the mid-1930 the heating plant was demolished and was replaced by a central heating plant in the block that was located in the building north of the alley. This allowed the company to open the basement to a degree that was previously impossible and a store area measuring 300 feet by 140 feet was created as the "Greater Basement Store." It opened for business on June 21, 1930. Some 300 light fixtures created a "daylight" effect and a massive new ventilation system washed and completely replaced the air in the room every five minute. Ten elevators serviced the new store level. The basement housed the

⁶ The Tea Room was apparently organized as a separate business within the Younkers Company. In 1937 Grace Ransom sold the business (*Tribune*, October 11, 1937).

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 **Page** 24

Younger Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

ready-to-wear and millinery departments and a west-end restaurant (The Cremona Room). In celebration of the re-opening, company officials feted the 150 basement workers in a Tea Room dinner the evening before the opening day (Des Moines *Tribune*, June 19, 1930).

The company's diamond jubilee or 75th anniversary in the fall of 1931 was celebrated in a Des Moines *Tribune* editorial. By this time the company's legacy was deeply rooted in mythology of the city's historical origins. A special commemorative stunt was a race that pitted an airplane against an wagon and ox-team, between Keokuk, the original birthplace of Younkers, and Des Moines. The wagon was allowed to get just five miles from its destination before the plane left the ground, and needless to say, still prevailed. The employees' commemorative gift to the company was a large commemorative plaque that was inscribed in part, with a phrase taken from the firm's very first October 1874 Des Moines advertisement:

We have come to live here and mean to do what is right. If you want honest goods at bottom prices call at Younkers Brothers.

The plaque was presumably mounted on the building exterior, likely at or near the southeast corner entrance (Des Moines *Tribune*, September 7, 1931; 1944 brochure).

The Younkers company continued to absorb the inventories of competing firms. The major coup was the purchase of a long-time competitor, J. Mandelbaum and Sons in 1929. By this time it was also failing chain stores that provided the wheat for the mill. Lucy Loo, a women's ready-to-wear store, opened in mid-1928 and was in the hands of creditors by late 1929. In mid-1931 Sardeson-Hovland, one of 35 stores operated by a Chicago-based department store chain, sold its stock to Younkers (Des Moines *Tribune*, November 2, 1929; June 9, September 7, 1931).

A flat projecting canopy that encircled the entire store on three sides, was built in 1935. The suspended entrance canopies were replaced. The entrances on the original Younkers Store were treated differently than those on the west half of the plan. The entire store was air conditioned in early 1936. The Charles A. Leopold Company of Philadelphia designed the massive equipment (Des Moines *Tribune*, February 22, 1936).

In 1936, the 80th anniversary of the company was observed. The company employees presented a massive exterior clock to the company and this icon was immediately adopted by the community as the preferred point of a downtown rendezvous (like the Eagle at Wanamaker's Department Store in Philadelphia) (1944 brochure).

By 1937 the company management team no longer included anyone with the Younker surname. Henry Frankel, formerly of the Harris-Emery Company, ascended to the company presidency. That year company president Norman Wilchinski retired, having occupied his position since 1921. He was credited with many accomplishments but an important one was his willingness to hire Italian-Americans into key company positions (Des Moines *Register*, September 5, 1937).

In early 1939 several major physical changes were made in the store building. A connecting enclosed ramp was built between the second floor on the north wall of the east building to link with the third floor of a three-story building on the southwest corner of 7th and Locust streets (by 1981 this system had evolved to three skywalks, third to sixth floors. The availability of these upper three floors allowed for the relocating of a range of service and non-selling departments out of the main building. The second improvement was "traveling stairs." These were "similar in type and capacity to those at Marshall Field and Co., Chicago, Ill. And will be a principal feature of a storewide improvement program." The stairs would be the only ones of their kind in the state and one of a few number in the Midwest. They would extend from the first to the third floors. The ascending stair set was centered in the east building while the descending flight was centered in the west building plan.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 **Page** 25

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

Another improvement was the installation of an interior dial telephone system that interlinked the various departments (Des Moines *American Citizen*, 1937; Des Moines Tribune, March 25, 1939; 1944 booklet).

With the advent of World War II, Yunkers Company entered upon a war footing. The company had the means to continue its programs of expansion and improvement. The eight-story former Oransky's Department Store, located just northwest of the building on 8th Street, was acquired in August 1943. It was then used as a Women's Army Corps training center so there would no immediate company use. The company challenged a \$123,370 increase in its property assessment in 1941 and took the case to the Iowa State Supreme Court, where it lost the challenge in late 1943. It was during the war that America first linked health and retirement benefits to employment, due to the labor shortage. Yunkers inaugurated a profit-sharing retirement plan in April 1945. At this time there were branch stores in Ames (1941) and Mason City (which opened in September 1944) and employees totaled 460 persons. The plan was unusual given that it required no employee contribution. Benefits were received after 20 years of company service, reaching the age of 65 years or in the event of disability. Employees were vested after ten years of service. The total assessed value for all of the company properties was then \$1,750,000. The Yunker empire now totaled 278,000 square feet of retail space, four warehouses and the two-stories in the "north annex." A c.1944 company booklet provides an inside view of the now unbelievable scale and complexity of the company operation (Des Moines *Register*, August 17, 1943; September 10, 1944; April 8, 1945; Des Moines *Tribune*, December 14, 1943).

The 40-page booklet enumerated the company's departments. Yunkers did all of its advertising and printing in-house. It published employee newsletters such as "Good Morning," "Yunker Reporter," and the "Buzzer" and sponsored regular radio programs. There was an employee's credit union and a Mutual Aid Association. The latter operated the employee's cafeteria. The Tea Room and Cremona Restaurant remained in operation. The beauty shop was the Salon Francois. There was a post office and the building contained a dozen elevators in addition to the escalator system. Yunkers was the hub of community support for the war effort. Liberty Hall was set up immediately after the Pearl Harbor attack and a massive world map was put in place where the public could track military developments. The requisite war bonds and stamps store was put in place. The 1936 air conditioning equipment was commandeered by the government but as late as mid-1944, it was tagged but still in place (1944 booklet).

As of 1970 the company had 2,500 common stock owners and these investors were receiving a four percent annual dividend (\$1.2 million paid in 1970). The Des Moines area stores accounted for 40 percent of total company revenue and the employee profit share program generated \$11.7 million over its 23-year history.

The century company anniversary was held in 1974. The Yunkers building survived into the early 1980s without any known major exterior changes, but that was to change beginning in early 1981. The driving concept was that of making the store more upscale. The developing skywalk system had made the building the downtown shopping hub and this was in some measure a response to that. The first construction phase transformed the basement into the Metropolis which formally opened on March 7, 1983 with 30,000 square feet of retail space. The north/south running alley was vacated and enclosed. There was an emphasis on retaining the surviving historical features and the storefront windows were re-glazed and the 1935 canopy was left intact, but the revolving doors were considered "too expensive to maintain" and were replaced. One other intention, that of closing off two of the side entrances, one on each street, was not carried out. Yet another planned project, the elimination of most of the display areas and the filling in of many display windows, was also not carried out. The original "Electric Stair" sign was restored (only to be sold off in 2007). Work during 1982 rebuilt the main and second floor interiors. A new rotunda opening was built on the east end of the second floor. The ground level, titled "One Better," was given a classical look, with marble floors and columns and was officially reopened on August 20, 1984 (Des Moines *Tribune*, April 27, 1981; April 7, 1982; Des Moines *Register*, October 3, 1974; November 7, 1982; March 3, 1983; August 31, 1984).

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 **Page** 26

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

The national recession of the early 1980s unfortunately coincided with all of these improvements and in the end, the complete interior remodeling of the company's flagship store failed to increase revenues and was seen as an erroneous turning away from the store's historic clientele. The company out-manuevered a take-over bid by Carson Pierre Scott and was finally purchased by a more friendly that allowed for corporate autonomy. The final demise took place in 2005-06 and the next year, a salvage sale of non-real estate items stripped away many surviving interior details. The building is now being considered for redevelopment for residential purposes (Des Moines *Register*, January 1, 1997; June 4, 24, 25, August 8, 2005; May 15, 2007; November 7, 2008).

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 **Page** 27

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

9. Major Bibliographic References:

American Architect and Building News, March 3, 1900, Vol. 67, p. 1262

Brigham, Johnson. Des Moines: The Pioneer of Municipal Progress and Reform of the Middle West; Together with a History of Polk County, Iowa. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1911

Des Moines City Directories, 1909-1925

"Experiences of Mrs. Mary McCann, Younkers' First Female Employee," *The Buzzer*, c.1936 (see State Historical Society of Iowa)

Gebhard, David, and Gerald Mansheim. Buildings of Iowa. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993

Henderson, Arn. "Resources Designed by Bruce Goff in Oklahoma, 1918-1982." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination Form, 2000

"Important Dates in Younker History," *The Younker Reporter*, n.d. (see State Historical Society of Iowa)

Stuttgen, Joanne Raetz. "Pulaski County Courthouse [Winamac, Indiana]." National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 2007

The American Contractor, March 21, 1908, p. 48; March 28, 1908, p. 45

Untitled Typed MS, five pages, 1968 (see State Historical Society of Iowa)

Architectural Plans:

Proudfoot and Bird, Additions to Store Bldg. Younker Bros. Construction Co., Des Moines, undated, sheets 9-14

State Historical Society of Iowa, Historic Preservation Office, Historical Inventory File, Younker Brothers Department Store (file includes 1968 typed MS)

Proudfoot Bird and Rawson, Additions to and Alterations In Building For Younker Bros. Inc., Des Moines, Iowa, September 1923, sheets 10-11, 14, 16

Charles Herbert & Associates Inc., Exterior Alterations 7th & Walnut Younkers Inc., Des Moines, April 21, 1981, sheets 1-10

Newspapers: (for specific citations refer to in-text endnotes)

Des Moines *Daily Iowa Capital*
Des Moines *Daily News*
Des Moines *Register*
Des Moines *Register and Leader*
Des Moines *Daily Leader*
Des Moines *Tribune*

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 **Page** 28

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

Des Moines Iowa Bystander
Des Moines Iowa Unionist
The Des Moines Downtowner

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 **Page** 29

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

10. Geographical Data:

Legal Description:

Block One, Fort Des Moines Addition, Lots 3-6 and intervening alley to north

Boundary Justification:

This property contains the original expanded department store as well as the acquired building to the west that is historically associated with the Younkens Brothers company over time.

Map:

[refer to Figure 1, page 30]

Photographs:

Name of Photographer: James E. Jacobsen

Date of Photographs: October 2008

Location of Original Negatives: Property owner

Description of views:

- Frame 1: 8th Street, west end of Wilkins building, view northwest
- Frame 2: 8th Street, west and south facades of Wilkins building, view northwest
- Frame 3: Walnut Street, south facades of Wilkins and Younkens buildings, view northeast
- Frame 4: Walnut Street, "bridge" detail between the two buildings, view northeast
- Frame 5: Walnut Street, south façade Younkens building, view northeast
- Frame 6: Walnut Street, south façade Younkens building, upper façade detail, view north
- Frame 7: Walnut Street, south and east facades of Younkens building, view northwest
- Frame 8: Walnut Street, south and east facades of Younkens building, view northwest
- Frame 9: Walnut Street, east facade of Younkens building, view northwest
- Frame 10: Walnut Street, east facades of Younkens building, view southwest

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 30

Younger Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

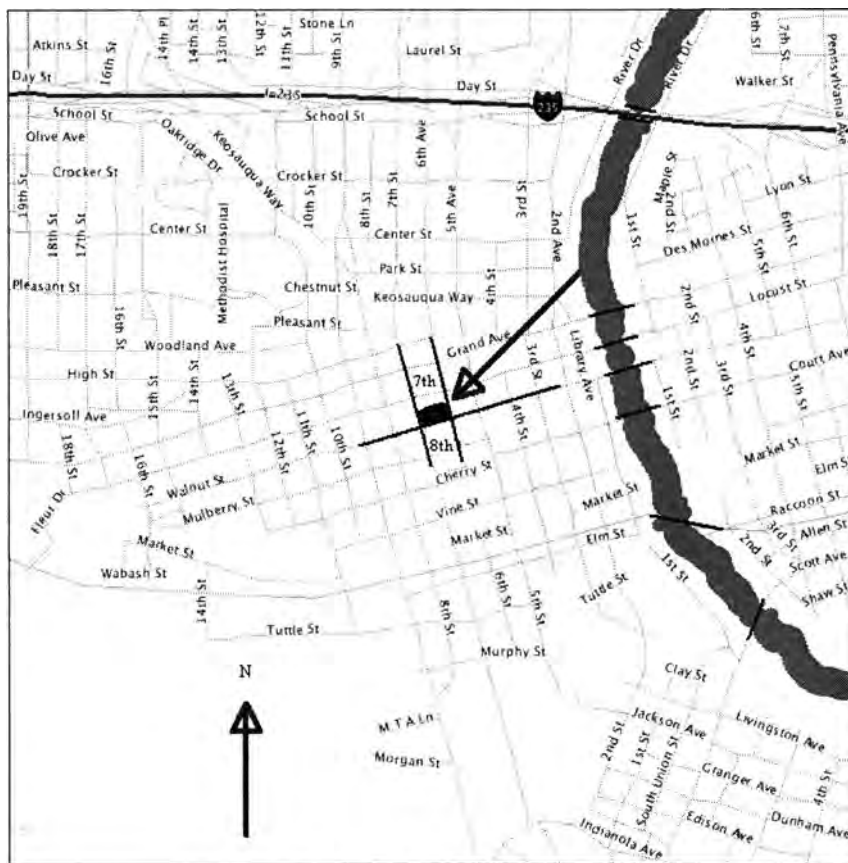


Figure 1: Locational map
(www.gis.iastate)



Figure 2: Added sixth floor, south elevation, east building
(original plans, architects Proudfoot and Bird, Sheet 10, undated)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 31

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

Figure 2 depicts the attic rectangular light sets that date from the building's 1909 expansion. This drawing does not show the new decorative cornice, however (Figure 7).

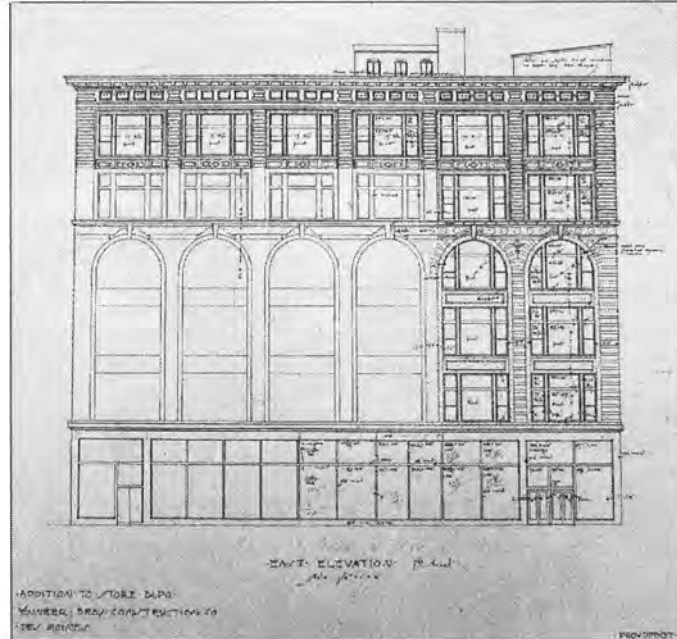


Figure 3: Added sixth floor and north extension, east elevation, east building (original plans, architects Proudfoot and Bird, Sheet 9, undated)

Figure 3 shows the rooftop penthouse profile and the two-bay-wide northward extension. This same drawing appeared in the *Des Moines Tribune* on May 3, 1909

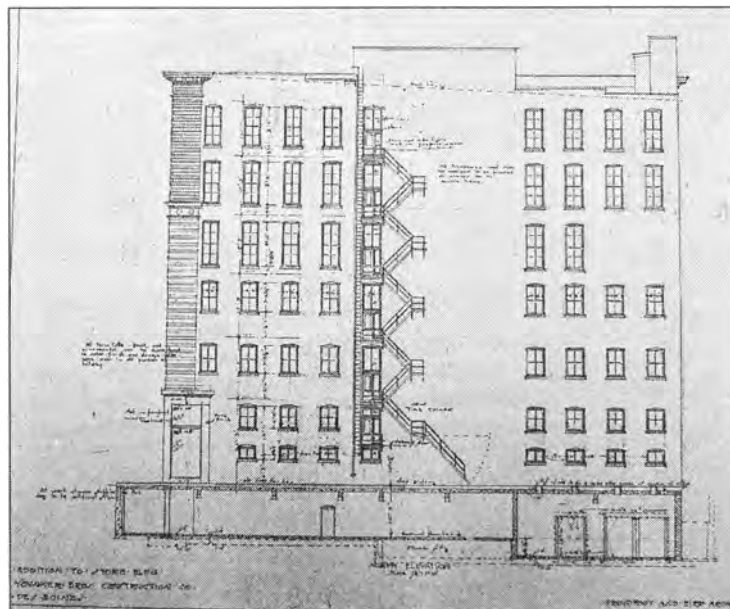


Figure 4: north elevation, east building (original plans, architects Proudfoot and Bird, Sheet 12, undated)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 32

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

Figure 4 depicts the north elevation fenestration and fire escape arrangements. Note that sub-grade doors access the furnace and coal rooms that are now located beneath the alleyway. Previously, these were located within the basement of the north annex. The basement extends eastward beneath the sidewalk.

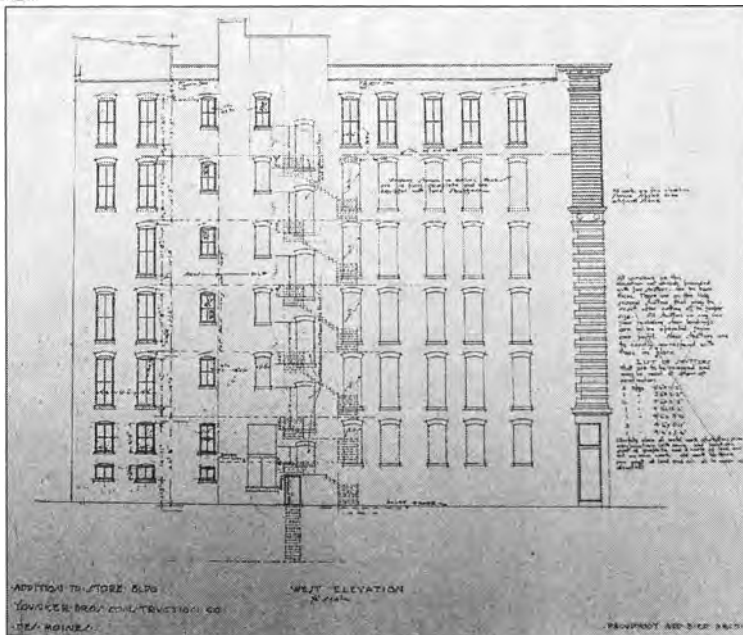


Figure 5: West elevation, east building
(original plans, architects Proudfoot and Bird, Sheet 11, undated)

Figure 5 shows the alleyway grade and the west elevation. The staircase located west of center in the plan is also depicted, as is the fenestration pattern. A single raised shipping door is shown north of center.

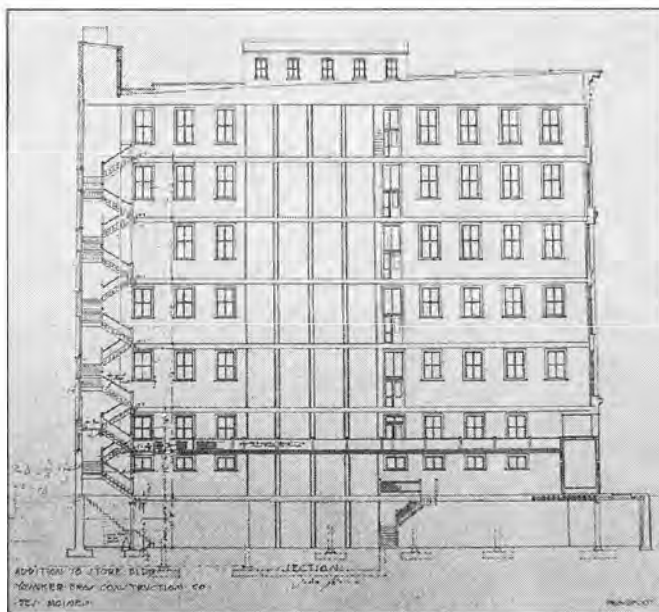


Figure 6: north-south sectional elevation, east building, view east
(original plans, architects Proudfoot and Bird, Sheet 13, undated)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 33

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

Figure 6 shows the balcony level, the north stairwell and the footings profile and basement. Here too, the basement extends south beneath the sidewalk.

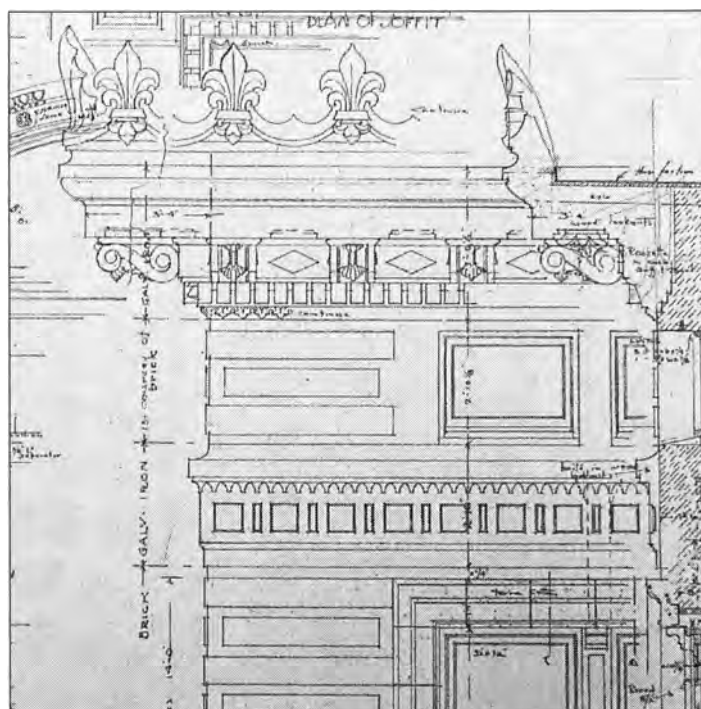
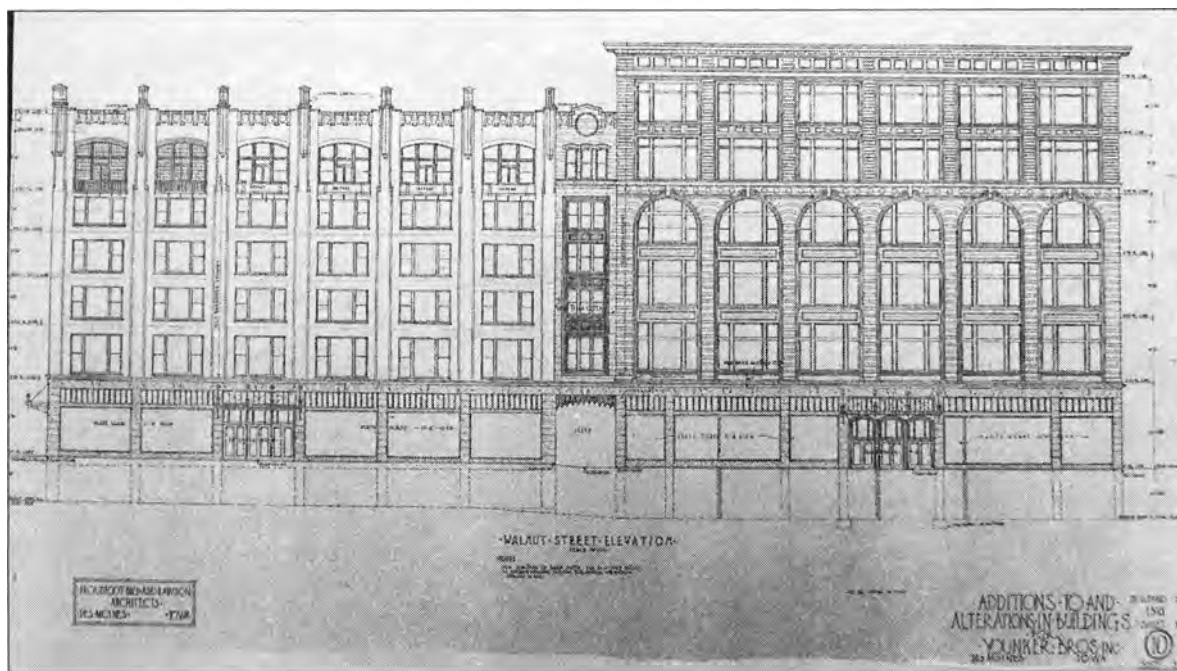


Figure 7: Cornice and soffit detail, southeast corner elevation, east building (original plans, architects Proudfoot and Bird, Sheet 14, undated)



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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 34

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

Figure 8: south façade elevation, east and west buildings
(original plans, architects Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson, Sheet 10, September 1923)

Figure 8 depicts the new marble storefront, south entrances, the bridge over the still-open north/south alleyway, and the new cornice for the west building, including decorative lantern finials.

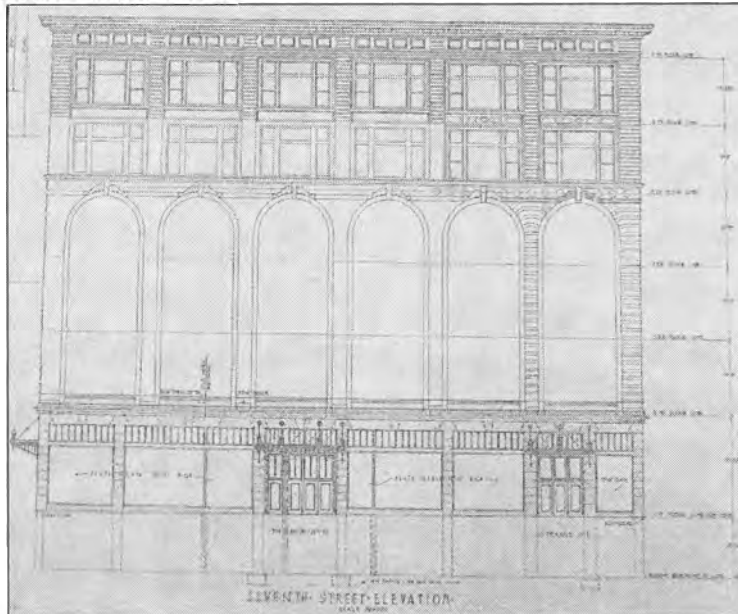


Figure 9: east façade elevation, east building, new entrances (see Figure 3)
(original plans, architects Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson, Sheet 11, September 1923)

Figure 9 is a revision of the 1909 plan, and still distinguishes that addition from the original building. This figure shows the new storefront and entrances and provides a profile for the entrance canopy on the south façade (far lower left corner).

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 35

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

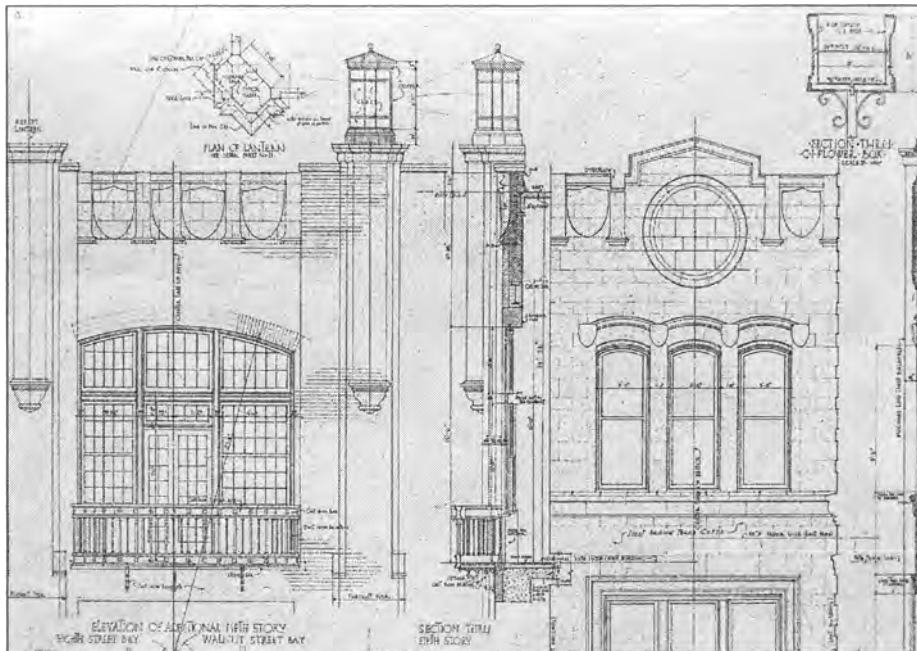


Figure 10: cornice and lantern details, east building
(original plans, architects Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson, Sheet 14, September 1923)

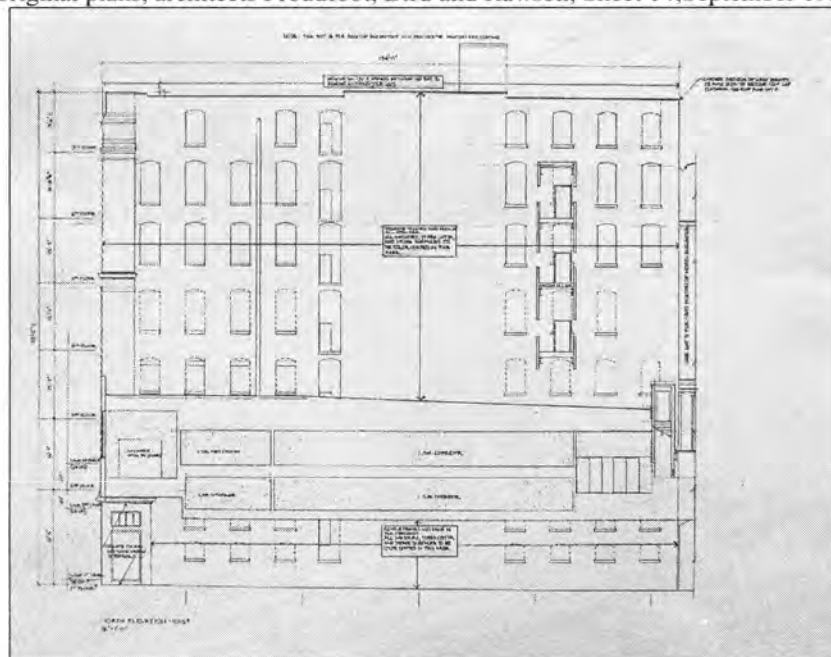


Figure 11: north elevation, east building
(original plans, architects Charles Herbert & Associates, Sheet 11, April 24, 1981)

Figure 11 depicts bridge linkages to the building to the north of the east building, the alleyway skywalk link (far left, second floor level) and notes that all north wall window openings were to be bricked in. An exterior gray thick paint coating was applied in the 1980s.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 36

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

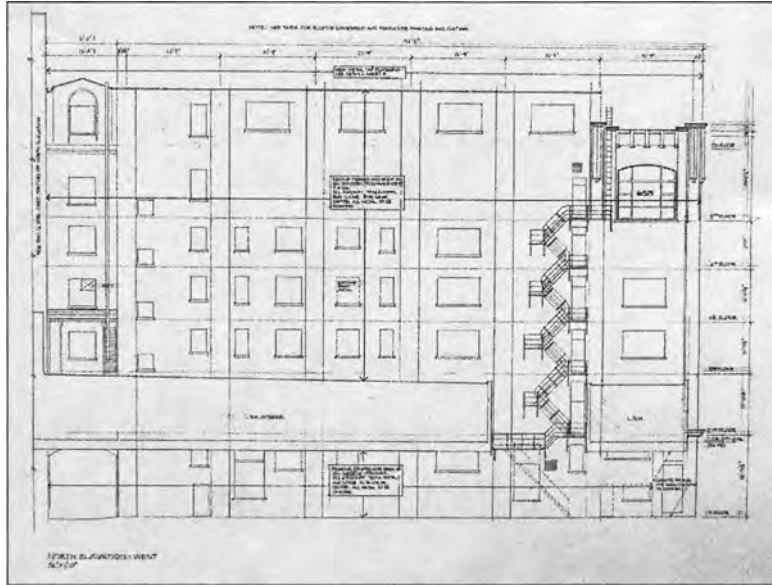


Figure 12: north elevation, west building
(original plans, architects Charles Herbert & Associates, Sheet 11, April 24, 1981)

Figure 12 shows a similar plan to brick in all north wall window and door openings, including the open alleyway (far lower left). There are two shipping doors, both of which are depicted, that currently remain open. Note the fire escape and the differential roof height (upper far left).

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 38

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa



Figure 14: Detail of Yunker Brothers Advertisement featuring the new building
(*Daily Iowa Capital*, November 9, 1899)



Figure 15: architects' perspective sketch, Liebe, Nourse and Rasmussen
(*American Architect and Builder*, March 3, 1900)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 39

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa



Figure 16, original building, 1899, view southwest on 7th from alleyway, Meek Block to the right
(*Downtown Magazine*, December 16, 1981)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 40

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

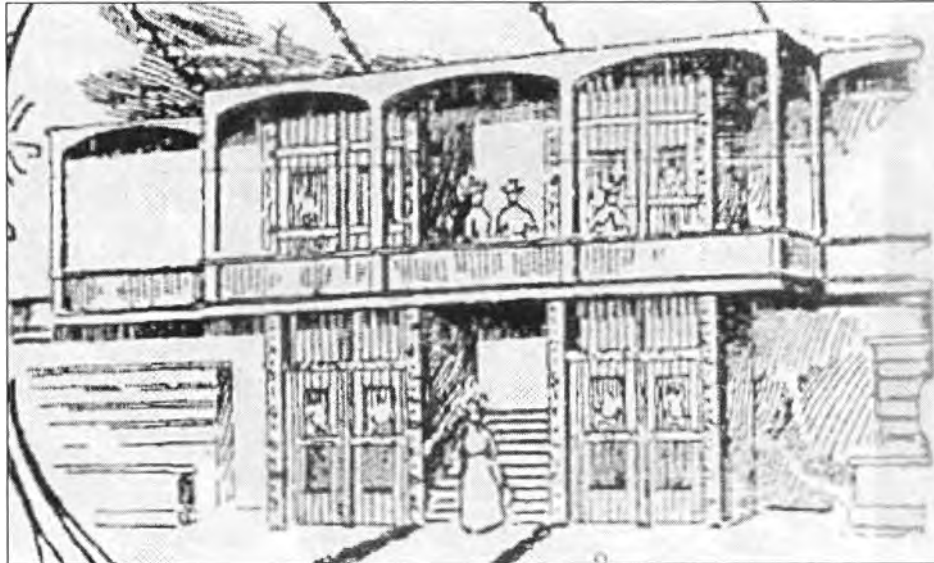


Figure 17: First floor balcony and stairs
(*Leader*, November 9, 1899)



Figure 18, original building, 1904, view northwest from the corner of Walnut and 7th streets

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 41

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

(Iowa State Atlas, 1904, Davenport: Iowa Publishing Co.)

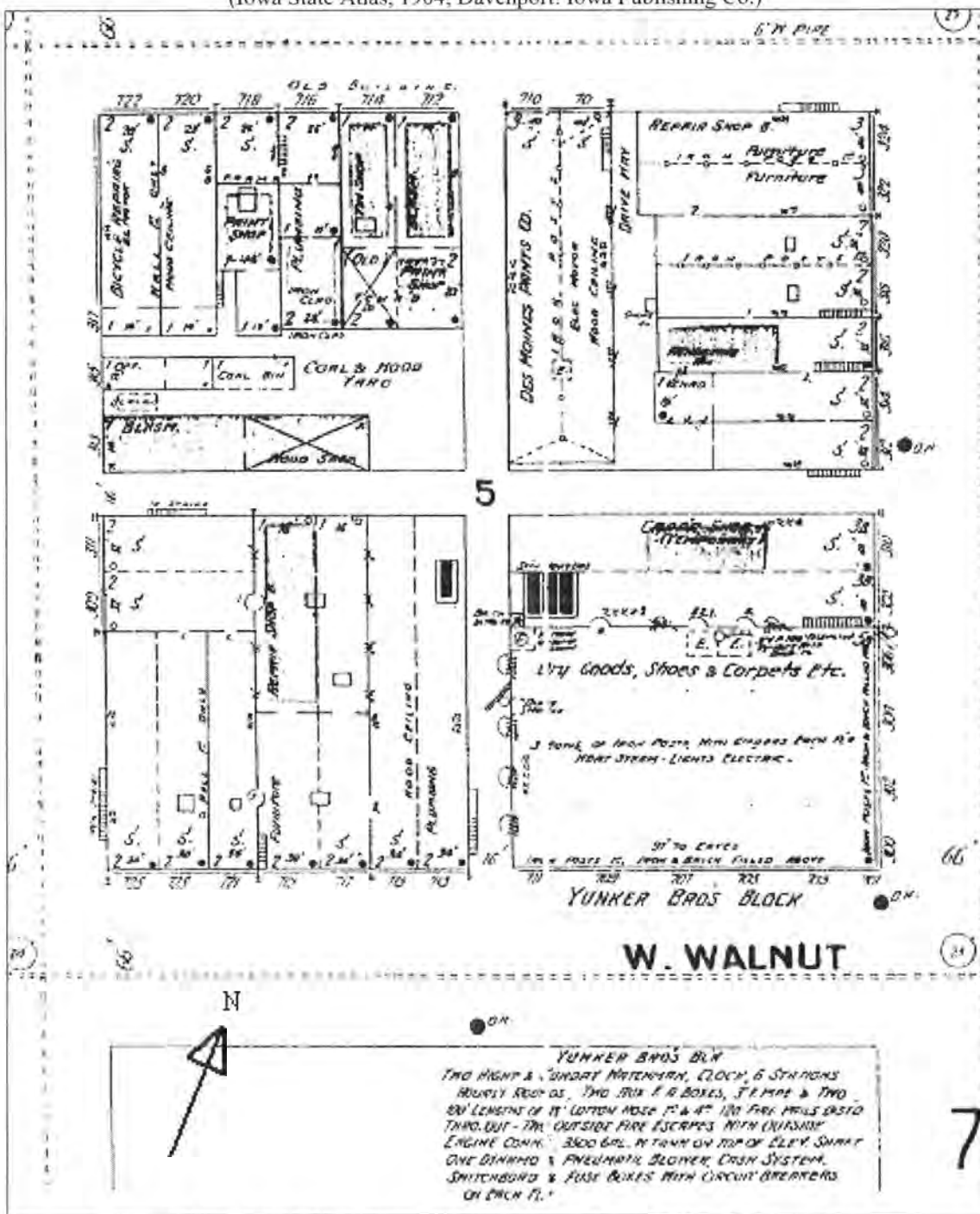


Figure 19: Detail, 1901 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, shows heating plant in north annex

Figure 19 clearly places the new building's heating plant within the Meek Block and interior doors connected with that building, prior to the 1909 extension to the north. Alleyway windows are covered with iron fire shutters.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 42

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

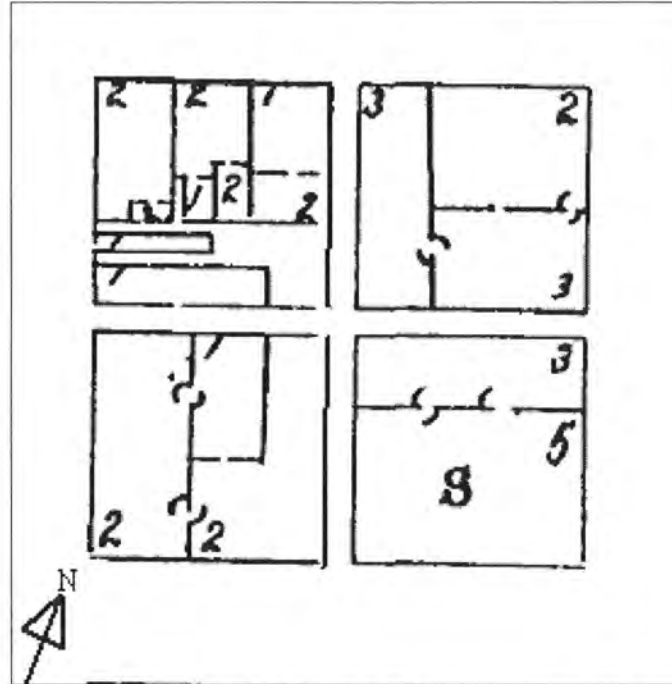


Figure 20: Detail, 1906 Sanborn Fire Insurance summary map, showing original five-story building and three-story annex to north with inter-connections



Figure 21: Postcard, pre-1908 (mailed in 1912), view to the northwest
<http://www.cardcow.com/106181/yunker-bros-store-ds-moines-us-state-town-views-iowa-other-iowa-cities/>

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 43

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

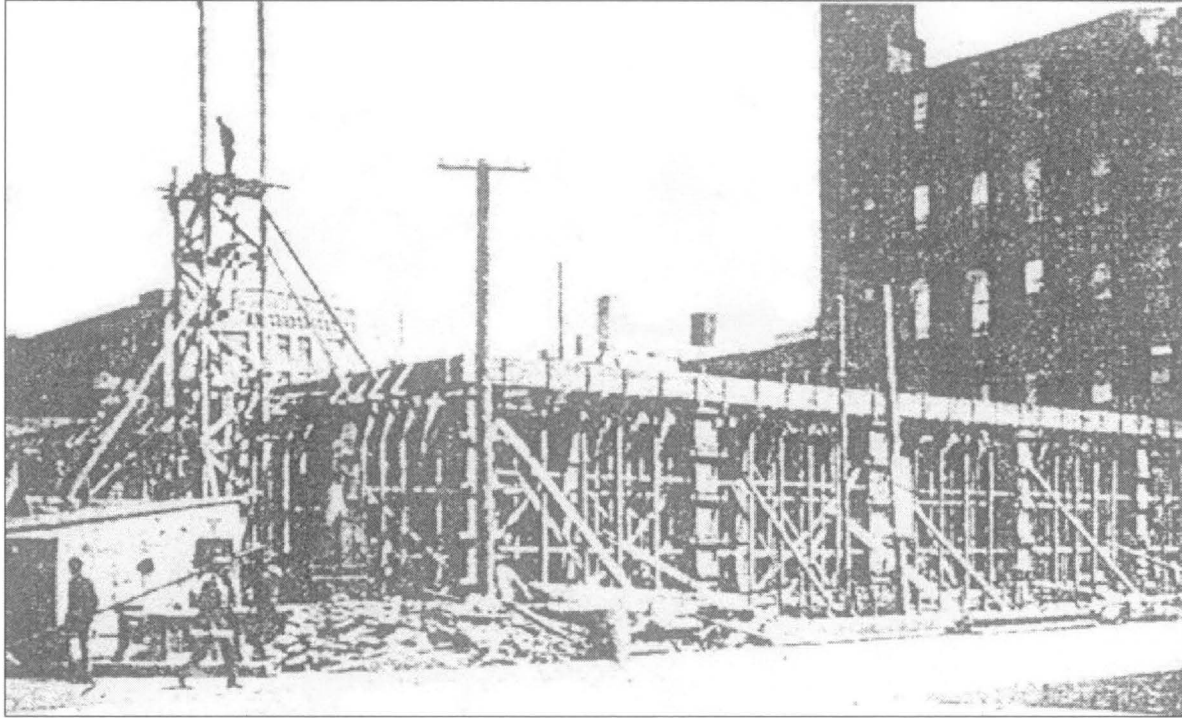


Figure 22: Completed first floor, framework for elevator and hoist, view northeast
(*Des Moines Register and Leader*, June 14, 1908)

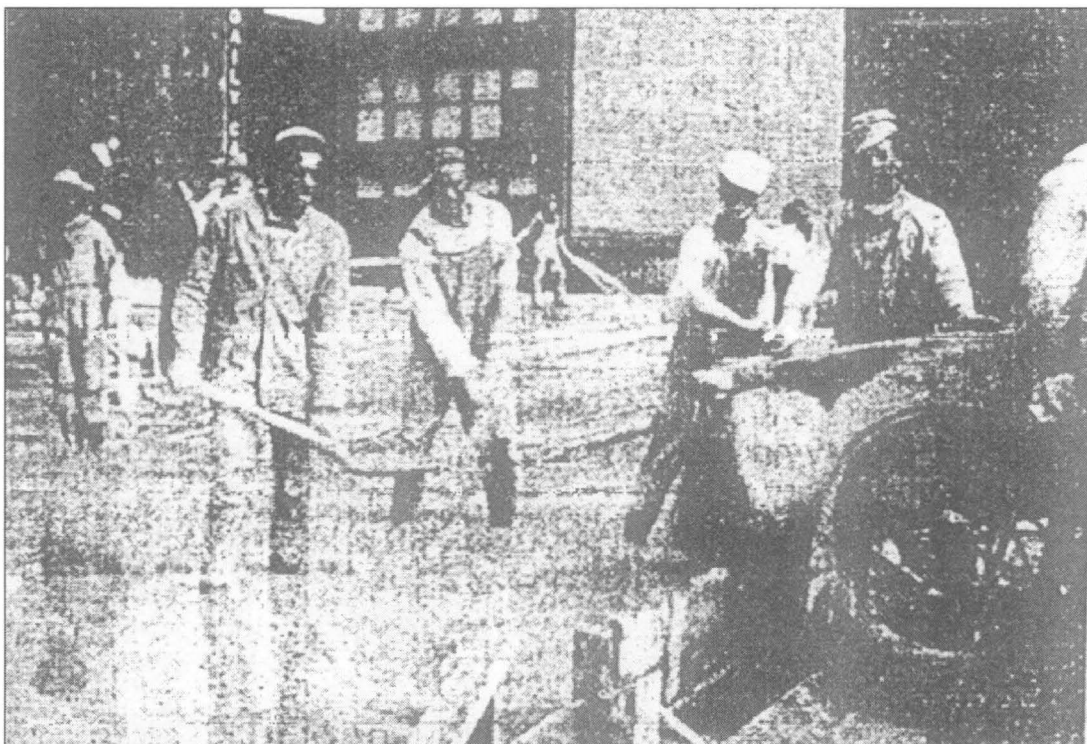


Figure 23: Wilkins building construction, African-American construction workers shovel concrete in pouring the second floor, view southeast

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 44

Younger Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

(Des Moines *Register and Leader*, June 14, 1908)

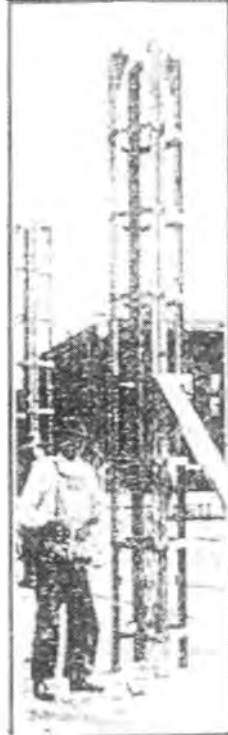


Figure 24: Reinforcement web for a column, view northwest
(Des Moines *Register and Leader*, June 14, 1908)

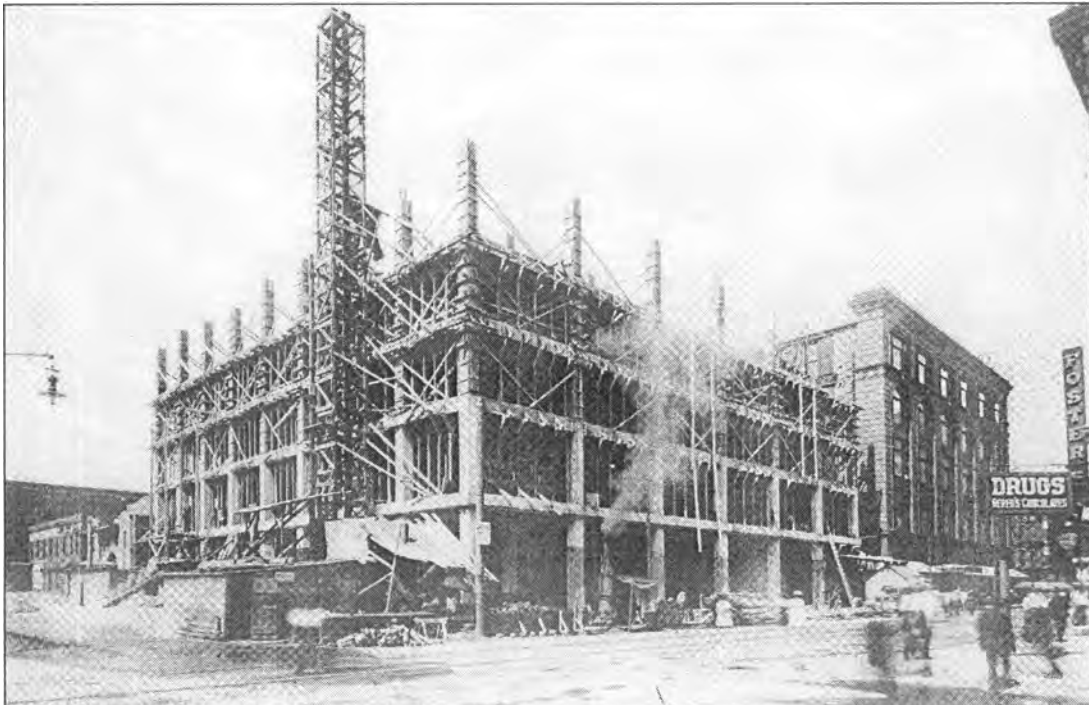


Figure 25: Wilkins Building construction, view northeast, 1908

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 45

Younger Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

(original image found in building by architects Kirk Blunk & Associates)

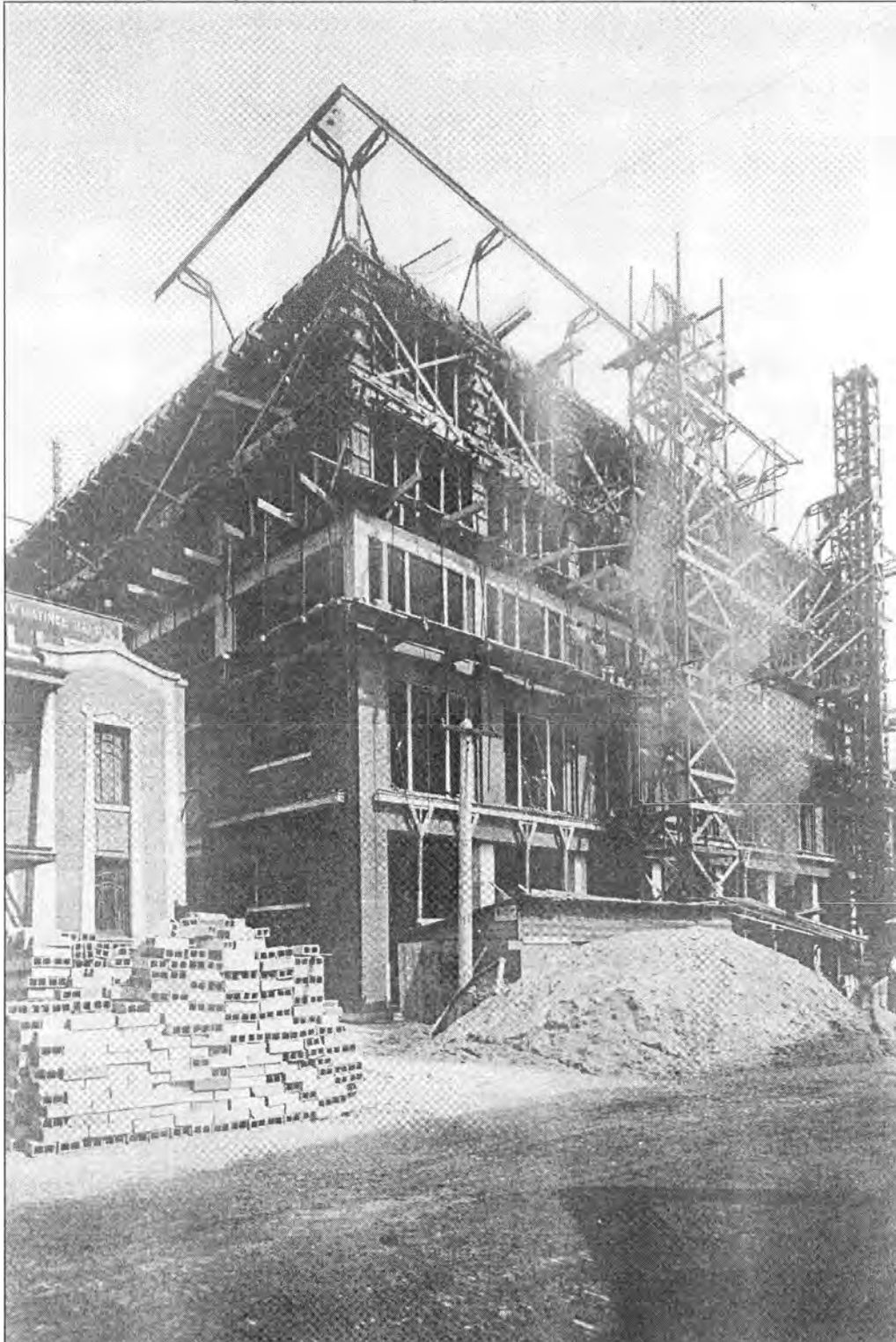


Figure 26: Wilkins Building construction, view southeast on 8th Street, 1908

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 46

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

(note how the steel for the cornice is integrated into the structural building)
(original image found in building by architects Kirk Blunk & Associates)



Figure 27: Wilkins Building construction, view northeast, 1908, note the storefront division point between the easternmost two bays and the rest of the building front (original image found in building by architects Kirk Blunk & Associates)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 47

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa



Figure 28: The finished Wilkins Building, view northeast from the corner of 8th and Walnut streets
(*News*, October 15, 1908)

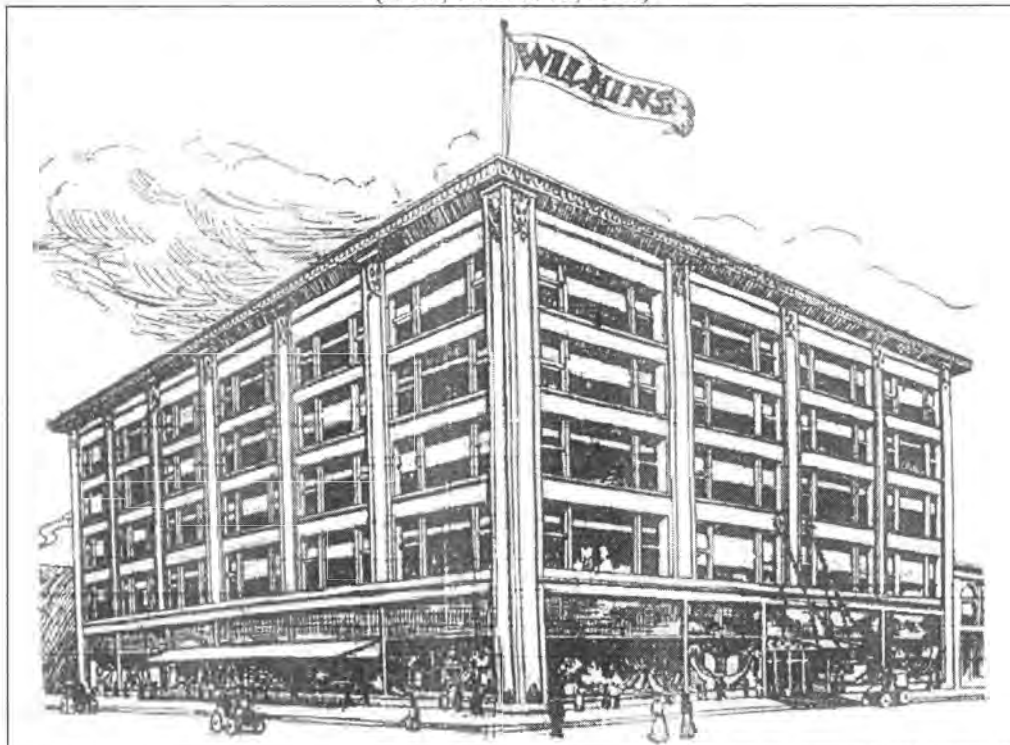


Figure 29: Completed Wilkins portion of the new building, view northeast. The image not only omits the Chapman Company portion of the new building but depicts the pre-existing two-story building that occupied that site (*Des Moines Register and Leader*, July 26, 1908)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 48

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

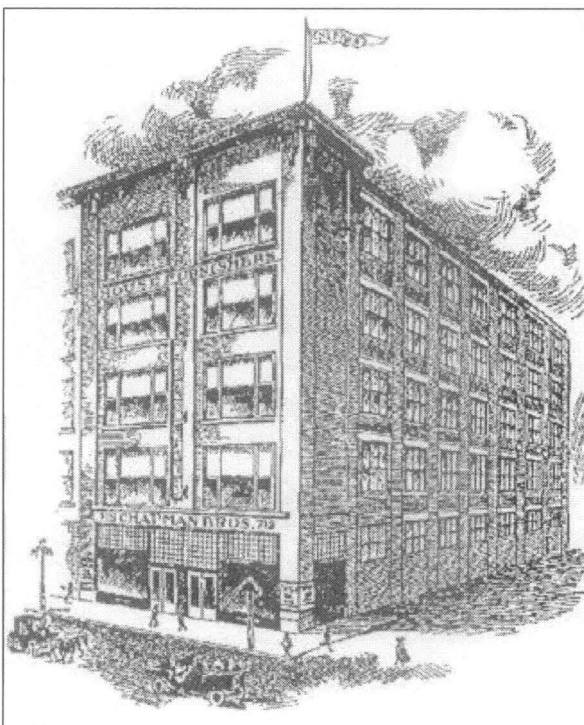


Figure 30: Chapman Furniture Company image in advertisement (note that the rest of the building to the west is at least acknowledged
(*Des Moines Register and Leader*, August 30, 1908)

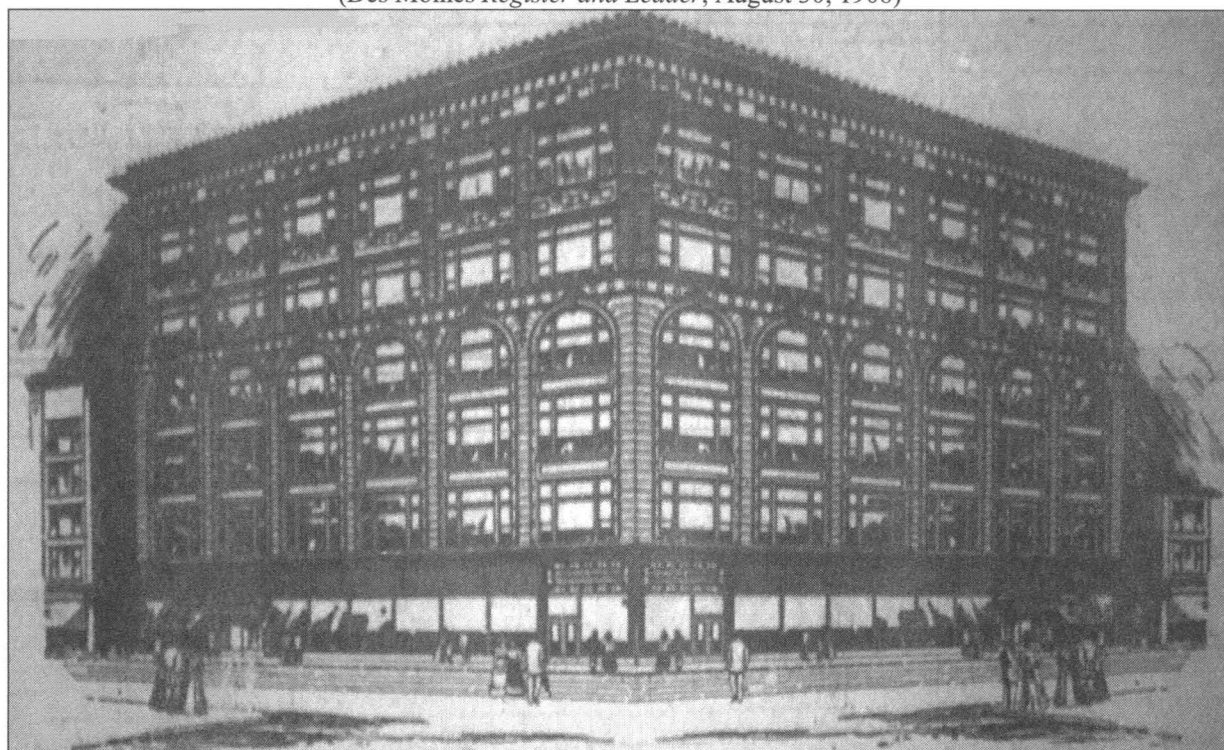


Figure 31: State Fair depiction of the expanded Yunkers building, view northwest
(*Tribune*, August 24, 1909)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 49

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa



Figure 32: 60th anniversary celebration, the expanded building to the north, view to the northwest
(*Des Moines Magazine*, October 1916, p. 2)



Figure 33: Red Cross headquarters, fourth floor, Wilkins Building
(*Tribune*, June 28, 1918)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 50

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

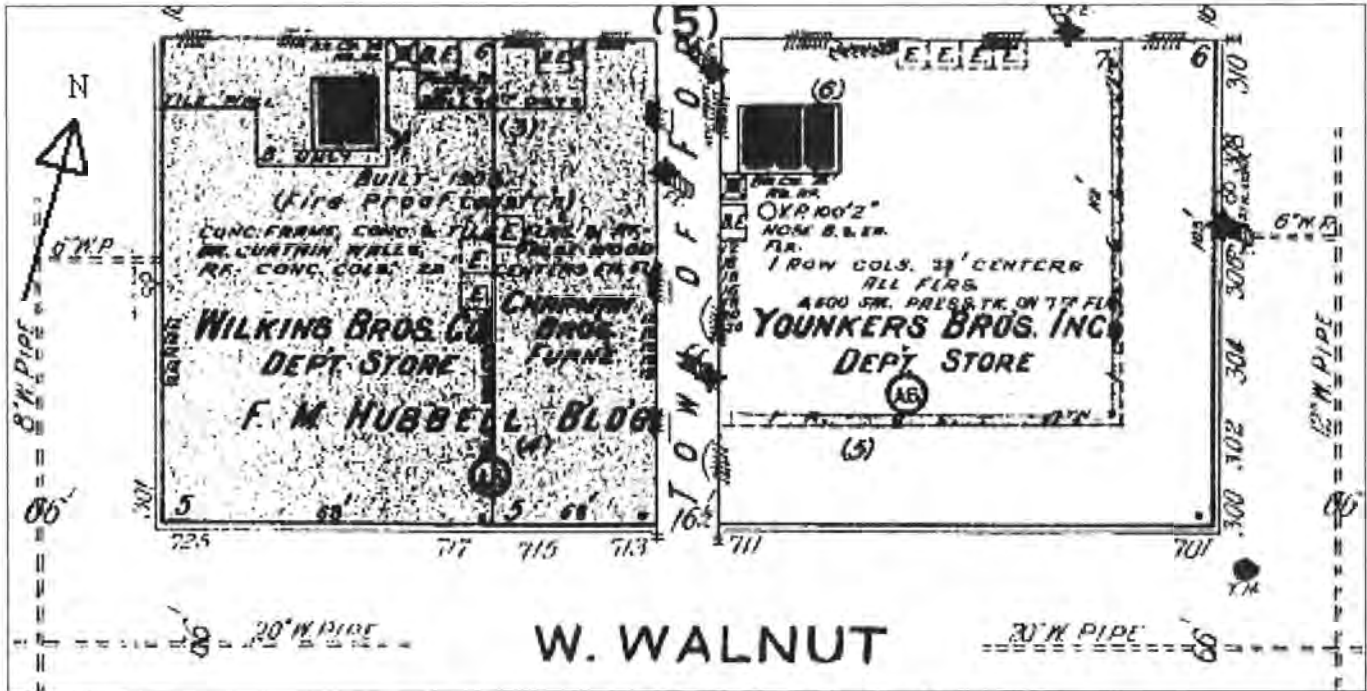


Figure 34: Detail, 1920 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map



Figure 35: The two buildings, viewing to the northwest from the corner of 7th and Walnut (note the street lights and the infamous hydrant) (*Tribune*, October 16, 1922)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 51

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

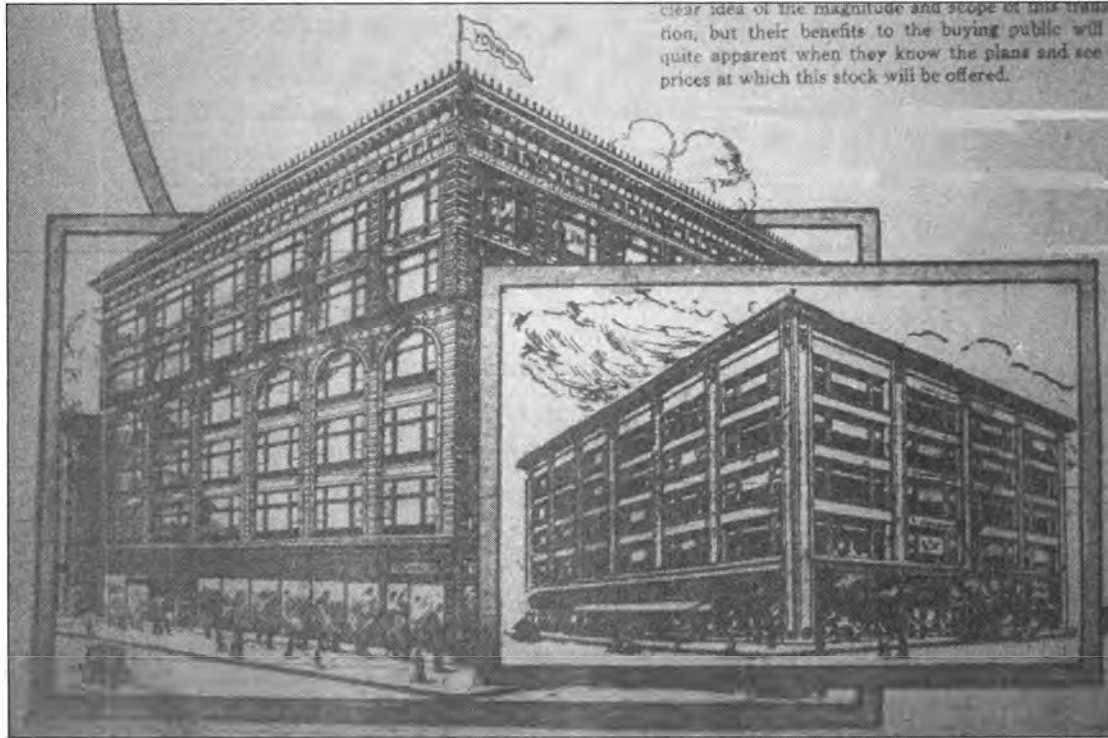


Figure 36: The two buildings to be combined
(*Tribune*, July 31, 1923)

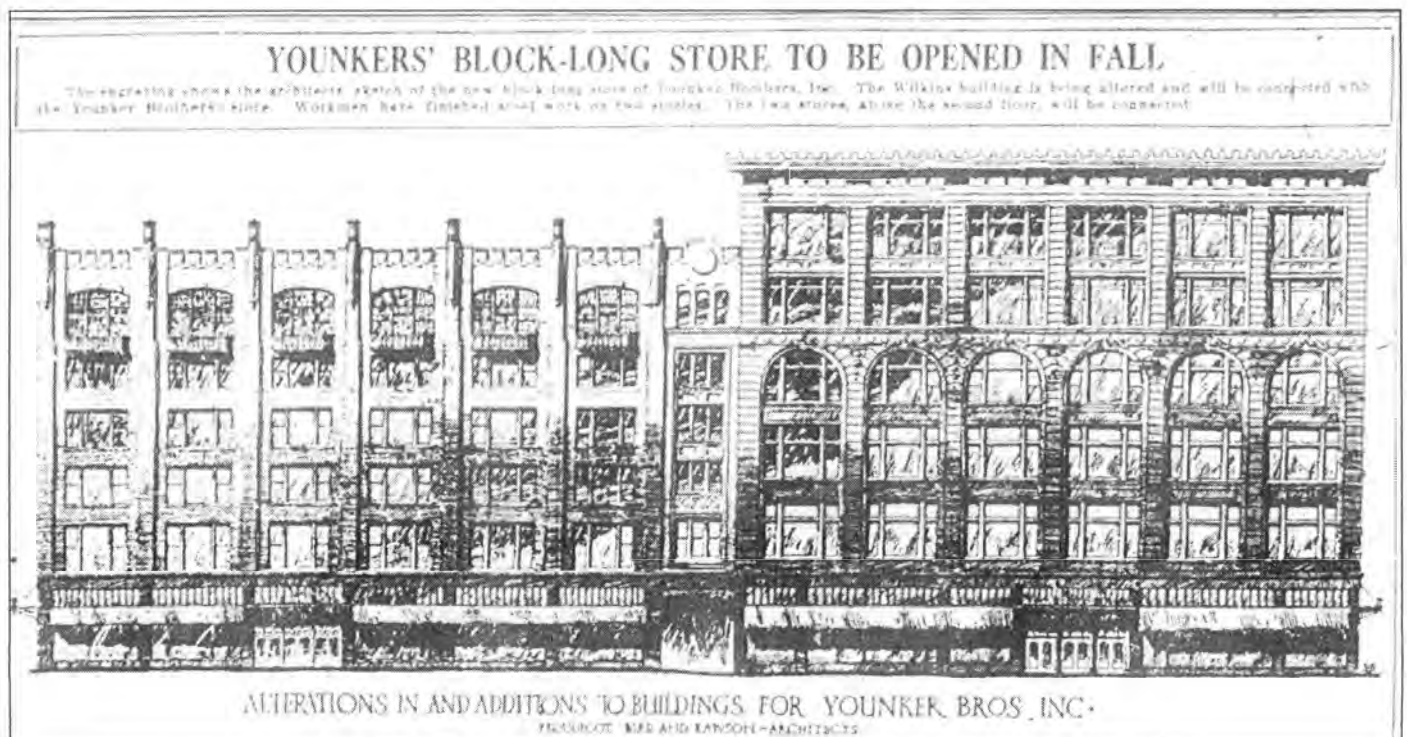


Figure 37: The first public view of the planned block-long department store, view north

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 52

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

(Des Moines Sunday Register, April 6, 1924)

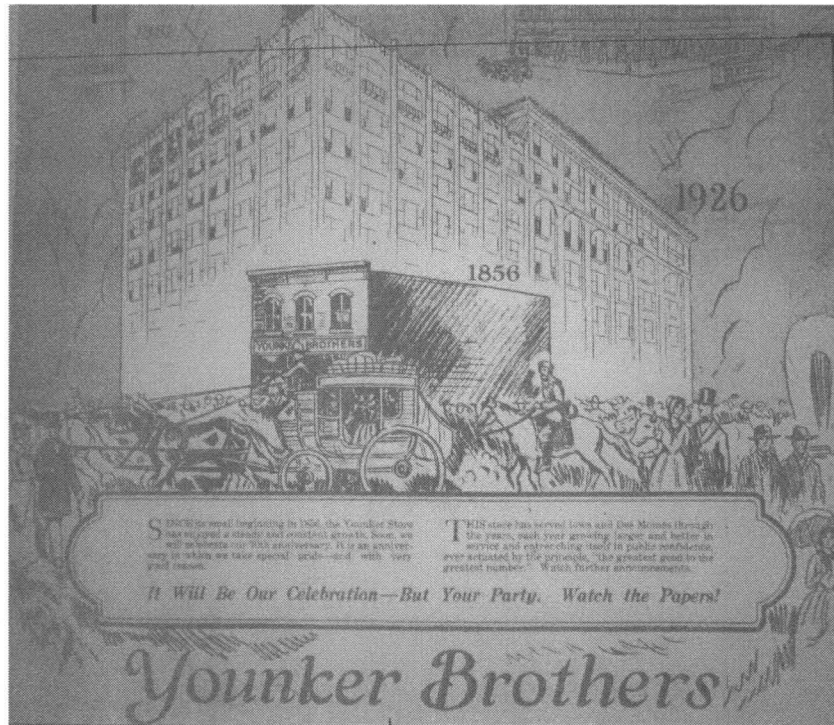


Figure 38: 70th Anniversary with stories added for visual effect
(Tribune, September 7, 1926)

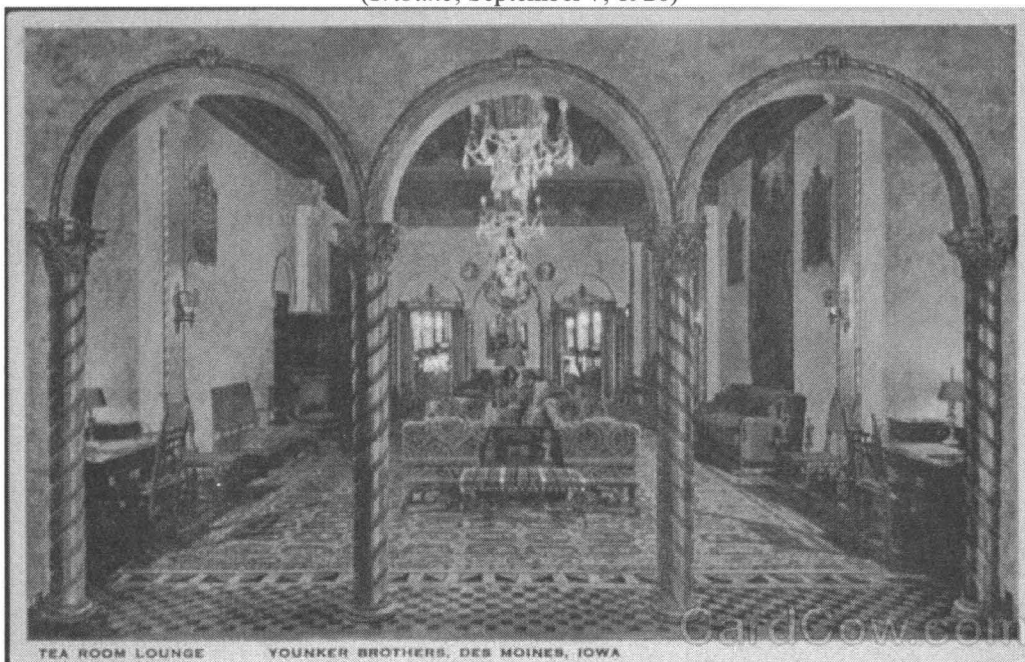


Figure 39: Tea Room lounge postcard, view north

(<http://www.cardcow.com/88221/tea-room-lounge-yunker-brothers-des-moines-us-state-town-views-iowa-des-moines/>)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 53

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa



Figure 40; Younkers Building at the time of the 1927 merger, view northwest, note cornice
(*Tribune*, January 1, 1927, left, February 26, 1927, right)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 54

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa



Figure 41: Merger of Harris-Emery and Younkers, initial retention of both company symbols
(*Tribune*, February 23, 1927)



Figure 42: Postcard view east along Walnut Street, Younkers is to the left, note vertical sign, c.1930
http://www.dshistory.com/stores/younkers_des_moines/walnut_street_des_moines.html#previous-photo

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 55

Younger Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa



Figure 43: Remodeled basement sales floor
(*Tribune*, June 19, 1930)

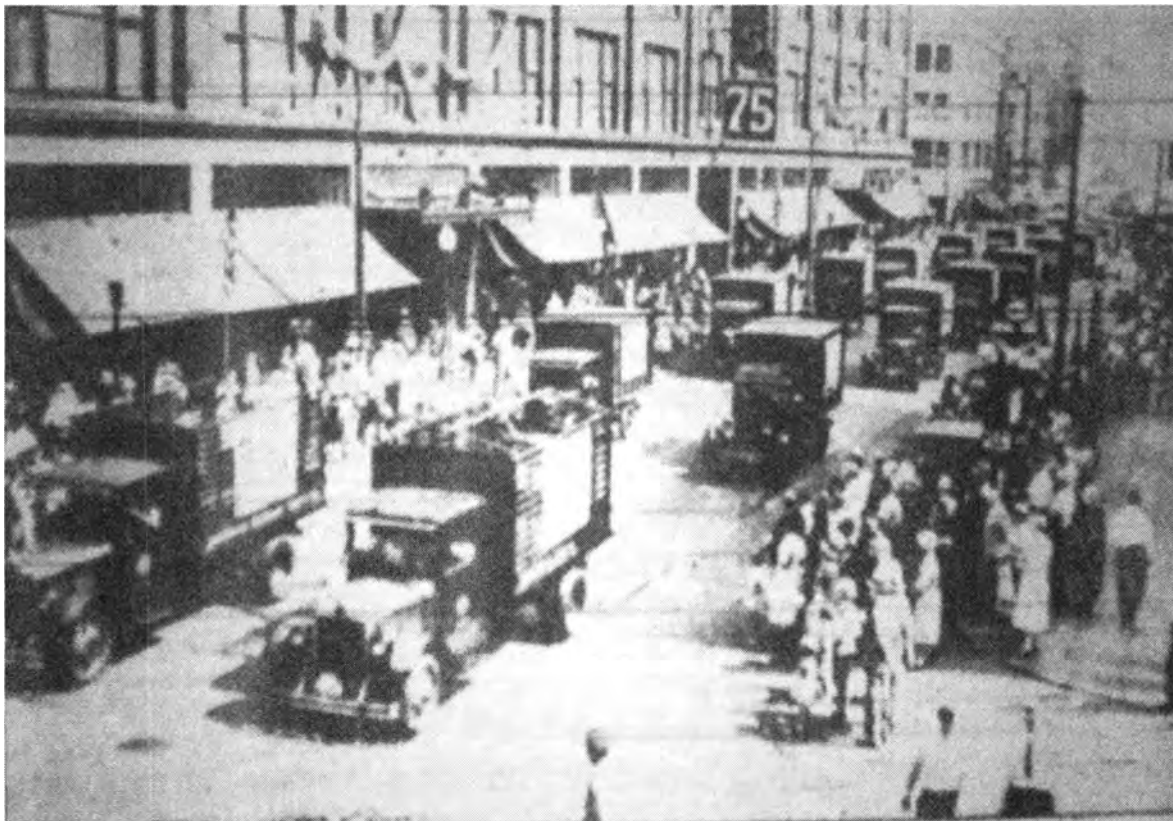


Figure 44: 1931 Labor Day parade on Walnut Street, the Younkers Store at the left celebrates its 75th Year

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 56

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

(*Tribune*, September 8, 1931)

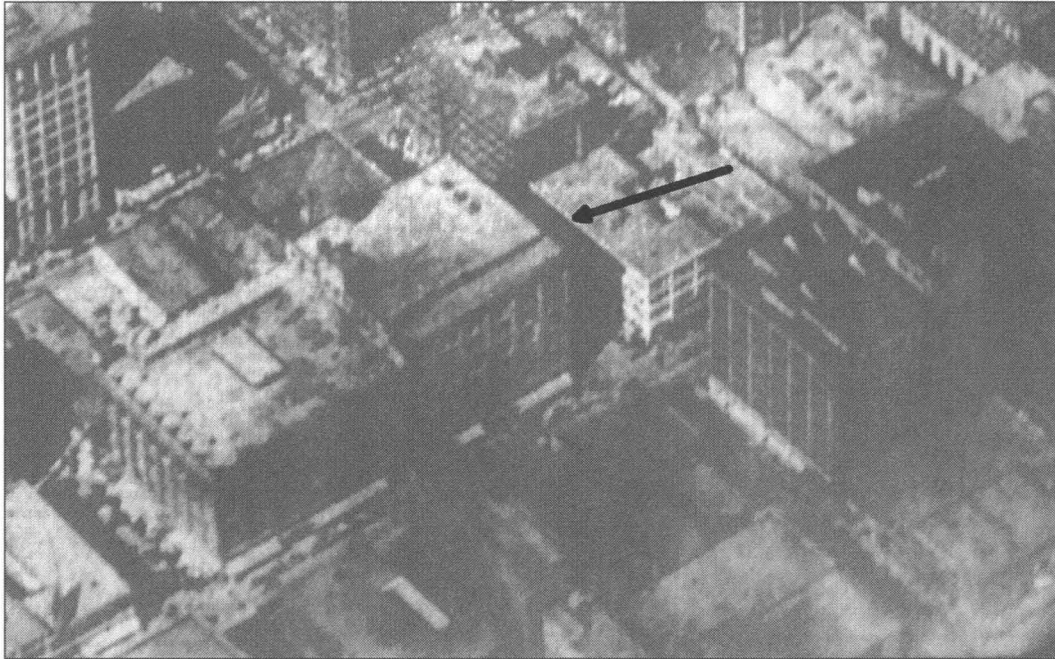
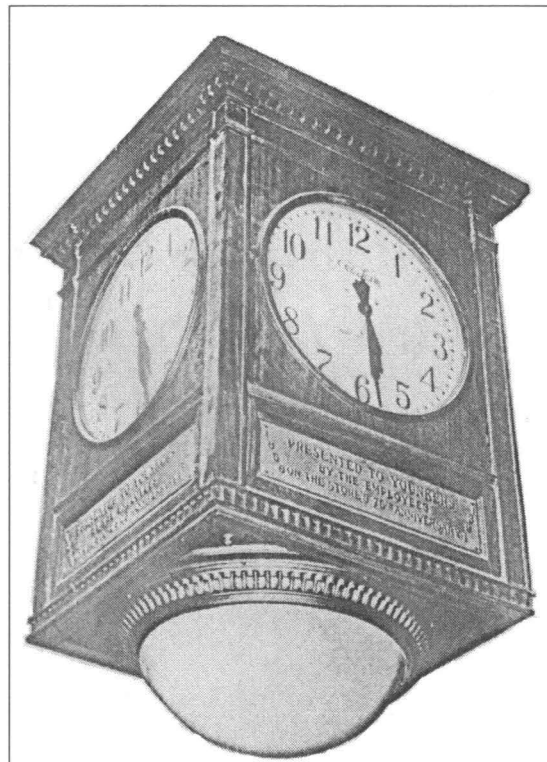


Figure 45: Aerial view to the north, showing seventh story penthouse on east building, not yet extended south
(*Des Moines Tribune*, May 11, 1933)



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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 57

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

Figure 46: The landmark 1936 Younkens clock (1944 brochure)⁷

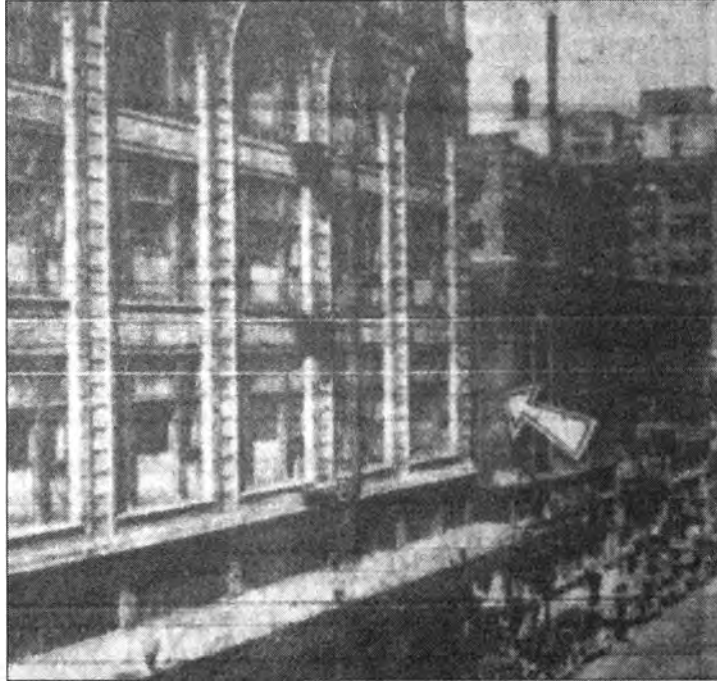


Figure 47: Construction of bridge linkages to the building to the north, view northwest, first photograph showing the 1935 canopy, note light fixtures atop same (*Tribune*, March 25, 1939)

⁷ The original clock has been located and efforts are now underway to purchase it for a return to the building.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 58

Younger Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa



Figure 48: Three escalator images, left to right, installing the frame for the new escalator (*Tribune*, June 7, 1939), middle, electric stairway opens, right, in operation 1944 (*Des Moines Register*, October 21, 1939; 1944 booklet)

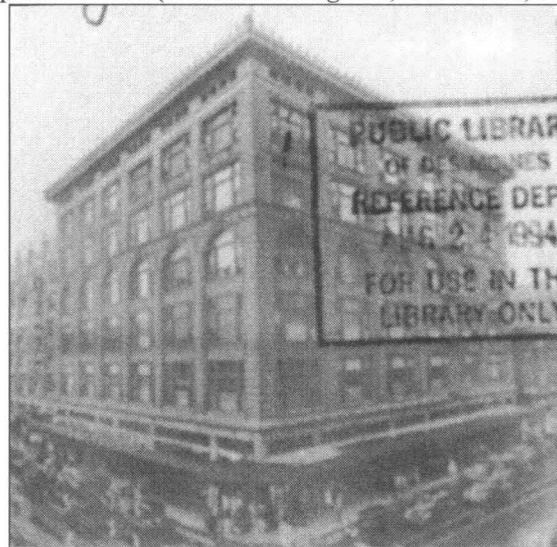


Figure 49: elevated photograph, c.1940-45, view northwest (Des Moines Public Library, Clippings File)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 59

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa



Figure 50: Elevated view east along Walnut Street (note canopy and the roof profile on Younkers Building), postcard, Jumbo Post-Card Company in Chicago, Illinois, c. 1945-50

http://cgi.ebay.com/Walnut-Street-in-Des-Moines-Iowa-Jumbo-Postcard_W0QQitemZ6140057119QQihZ015QQcategoryZ20209QQcmdZViewItem#ebayphotohosting

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 60

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

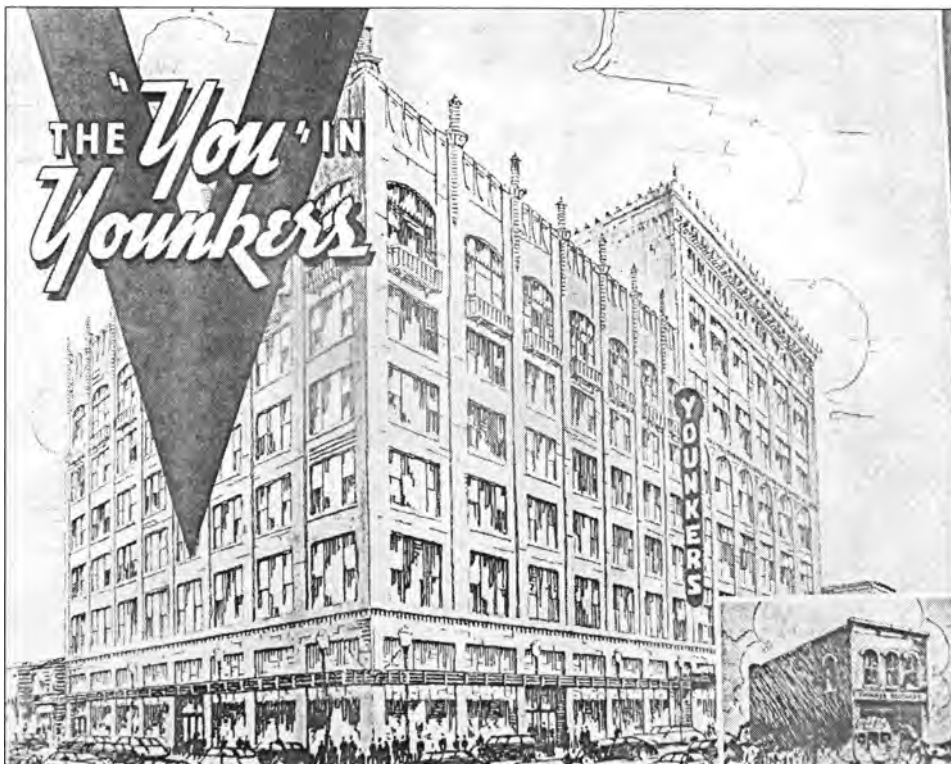


Figure 51: Cover of mid-1944 company booklet, contrasting the original store (SHSI historical inventory file)



Figure 52: Caricature of Nazi leader Herman Goering, Yunkers advertisement,

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 61

Younger Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

Pearl Harbor anniversary, 1943 (*Register*, December 7, 1943)



Figure 53: Liberty Hall war situation map, Youngers (1944 company booklet)



Figure 54: War bond and stamps booth beneath the escalator, Youngers

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 62
Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

(1944 company booklet)



Figure 55: Company Minuteman flag, drawing air raid curtains at the close of day, 127 service stars for company employees in the military service (1944 company booklet)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 63

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

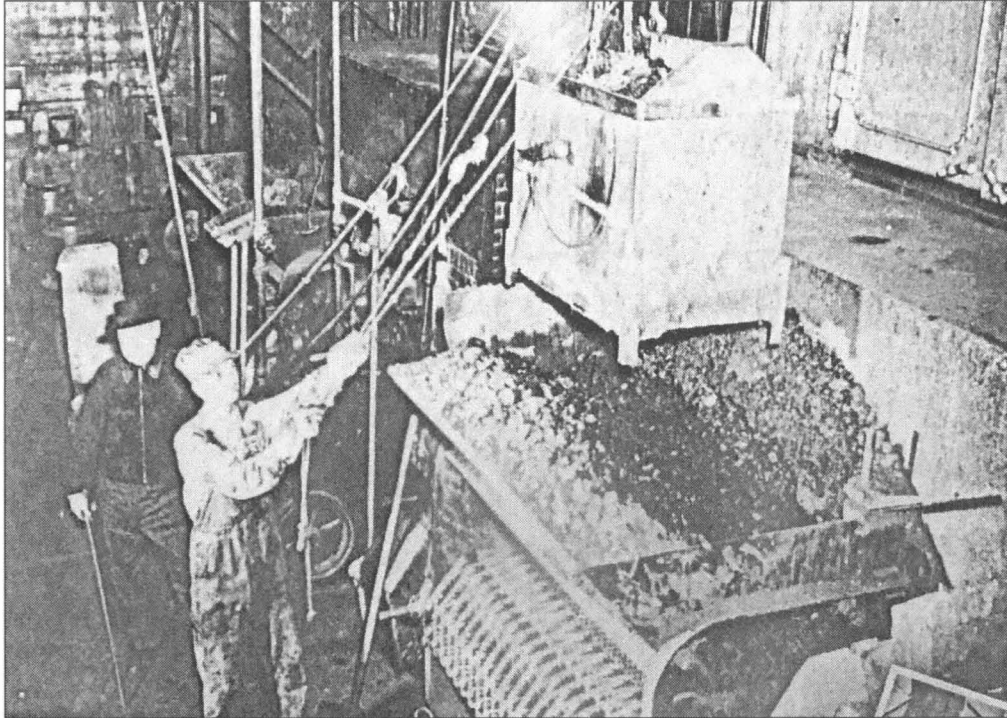


Figure 56: Furnace room (1944 company booklet)

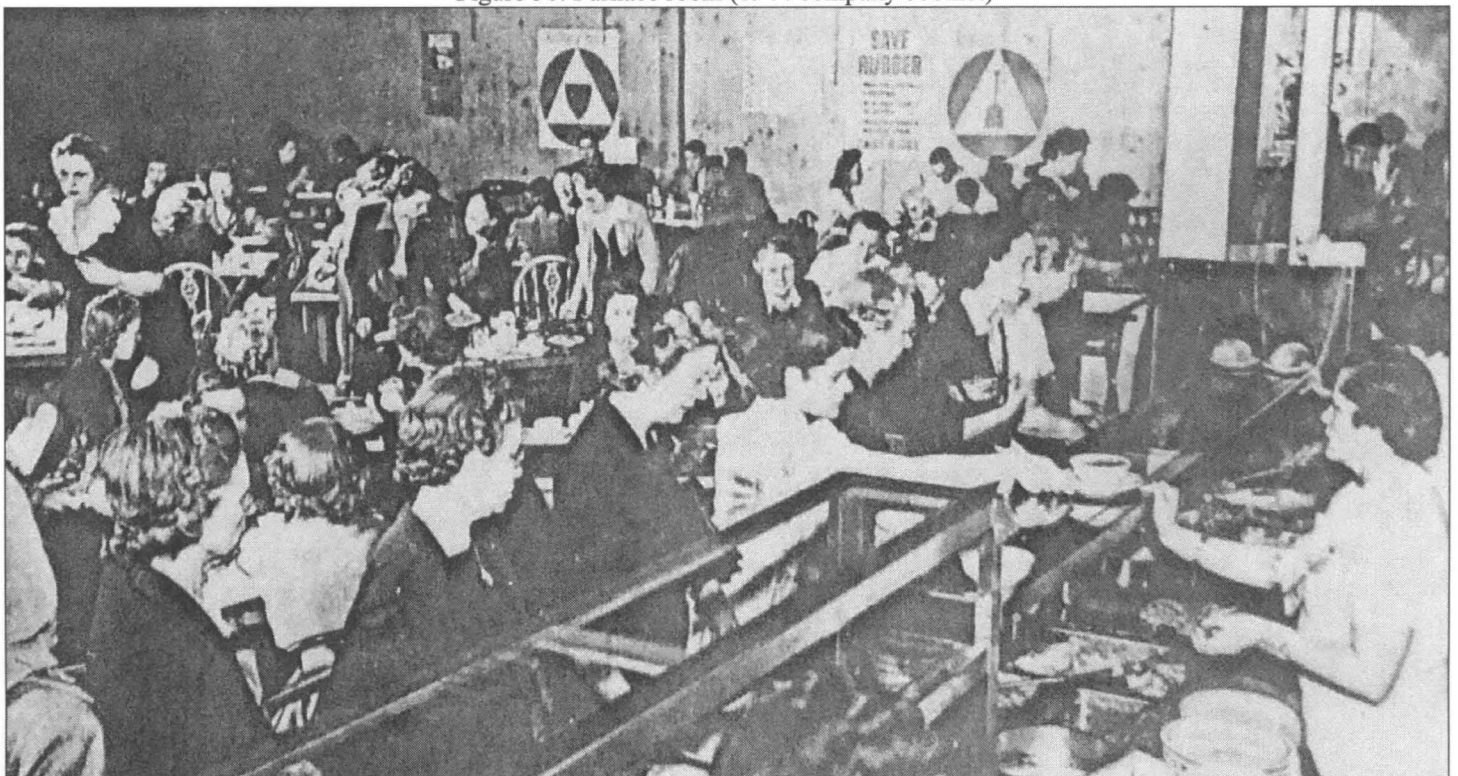


Figure 57: Company employee cafeteria (1944 company booklet)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 64

Younger Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa



Figure 58: Company bowling team, cribbage in the men's lounge, sixth floor and Younkens Athletic Club (1944 company booklet)⁸

In 1946 the Store For Homes was established to the west of the main store, across 8th Street and an underground passageway was built under that street. In 1958 a furniture warehouse with retail sales floor was opened (on the Des Moines riverfront) and represented an expansion of that department. In 1952 the "north annex" burned and 30,000 square feet of storage and service space was lost to the store (1968 history).

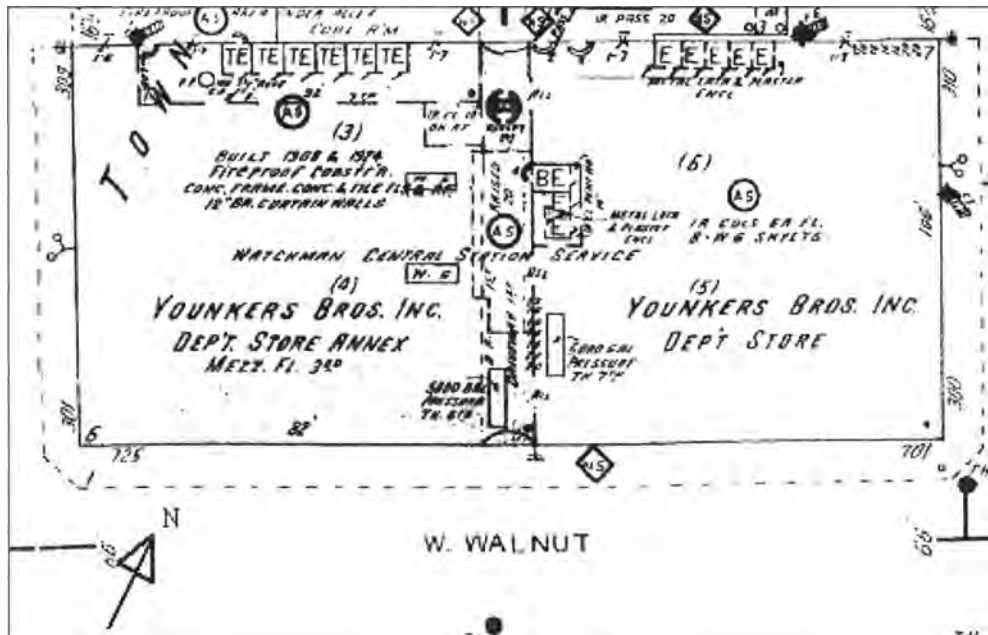


Figure 59: Detail, 1920/50 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map with 14 elevators, note annex link

⁸ Every Des Moines department store sponsored baseball and basketball teams. Younkens, Harris-Emery, Frankels, and Wilkins all had baseball teams as early as 1913. Younkens' basketball team lost to the Harlem Globetrotters in 1933 and its baseball team reached the State softball meet level in 1937 (*Daily News*, April 28, 1913; *Bystander*, January 6, 1933; *Tribune*, July 15, 1937).

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images **Page** 65
Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa



Figure 60: View, Walnut and 8th streets, looking northwest
(SHSI historical inventory photo, either from the Elmet's Windshield Survey, 1974)



Figure 61: View, Walnut and 7th streets, looking northwest

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 66

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa

(SHSI historical inventory photo, either from the Elmet's Windshield Survey, 1974)

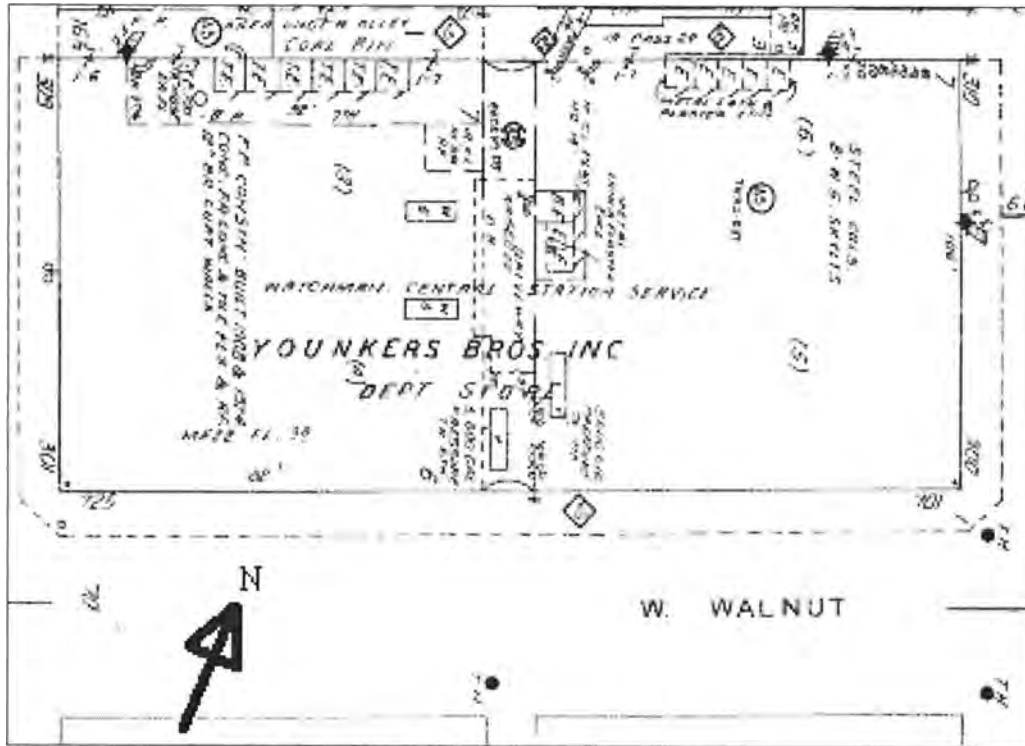


Figure 62: 1957 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number imbedded images Page 67

Yunker Brothers Department Store

Polk County, Iowa



Figure 63, view east along Walnut Street, c.1960
(Iowa State Historical Society)

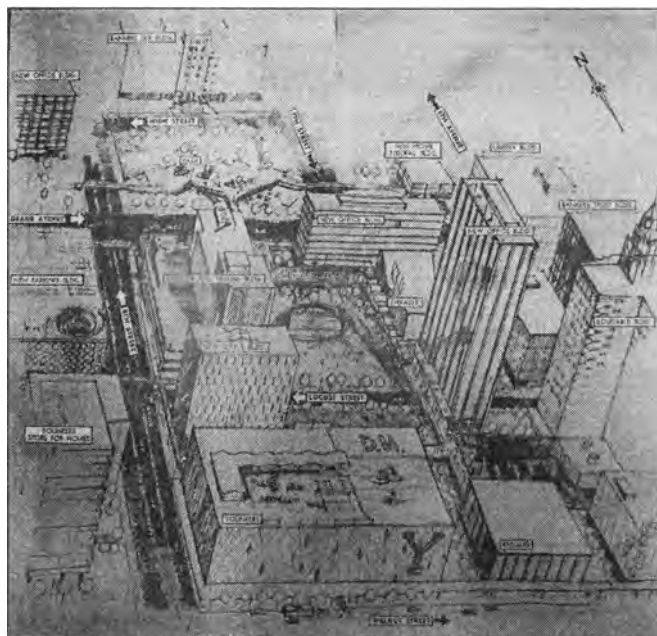


Figure 64: Yunkers in a box, lower center, futuristic vision, view north
(Tribune, December 5, 1960)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Younker Brothers Department Store

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Polk

DATE RECEIVED: 2/05/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/24/10
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/11/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/22/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000079

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 3.17.10 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

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.



NO LEFT TURN
6PM - 6:15 PM
EXCEPT BUSES
AND TAXIS

United Brotherhood of
Carpenters and Joiners of
America

Ryder
Truck Rental & Leasing
Ryder is here by truck
24 hours a day

Kousser Brothers Department Store, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa

Photo #1

05/22/09 001 79-842495
24950001.JPS L08BGA6



Yunker Brothers Department Store, Des Moines, Polk County Iowa

Photo #2

05/22/09 007 79-842495
24950003.JPS L888046



Younker Brothers Department Store, Des Moines, Polk County IOWA

Photo #3

05/22/89 084 79-842495
24950002.JPS L0880A6



NO STOPPING
OR STANDING

Younker Brothers Department Store, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa

Photo # 4

05/22/09 010 79-842495
24950004.Jpg L0BB0A6



Yonker Brothers Department Store, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa

Photo #5

05/22/09 015 79-842495
24950005 Jes L0BBQA6



Younker Brothers Department Store, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa

Photo #6

05/22/03 018 79-842495
24950005.JP9 L088096



Younker Brothers Department Store, Des Moines, Polk County Iowa

Photo # 7

05/22/09 030 79-842495
24950011.jp# L088006



Younker Brothers Department Store, Des Moines, Polk County, IOWA

Photo #8

05/22/09 024 79-842495
24950009.JPG L0880A6



Younger Brothers Department Store, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa

Photo # 9

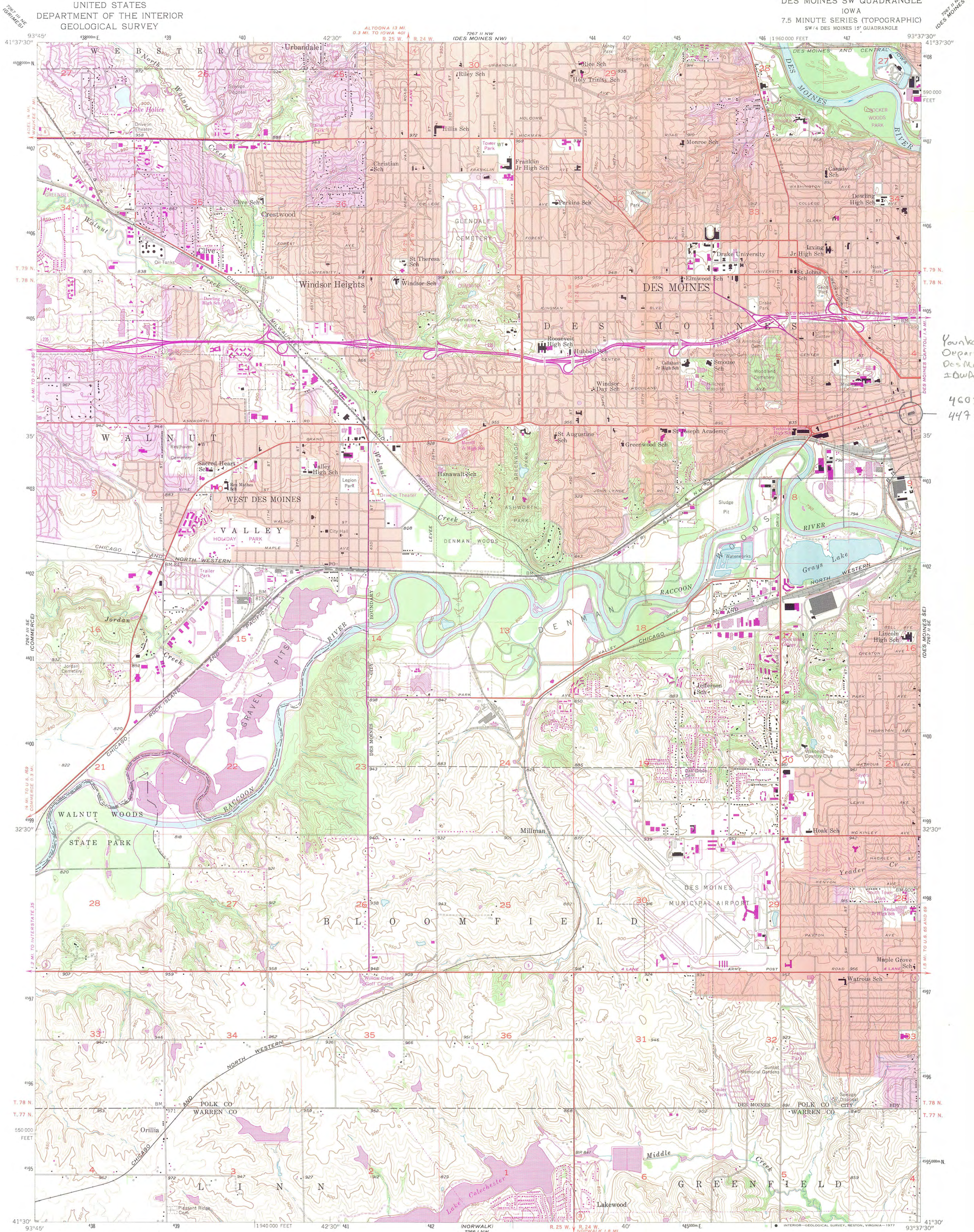
05/22/09 025 79-842495
24950010.JPS L06B0A6



Yunker Brothers Department Store, Os Moines, Polk County, Iowa

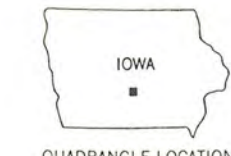
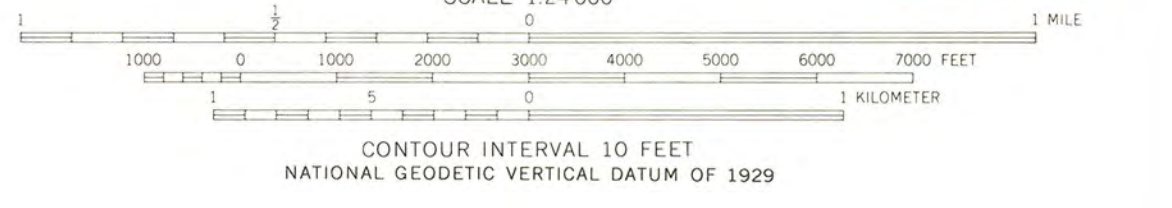
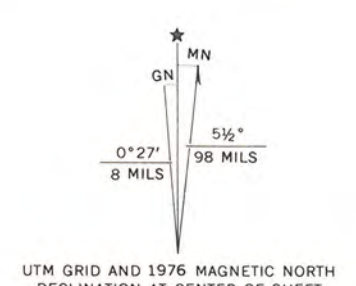
Photo #10

05/22/09 031 79-842495
24950012.jpg L0BB0A6



Younger Brothers
Department Store
Des Moines, Polk Co.
IOWA
4603750
447820

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 Kelsch 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.



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

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

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

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

CLG NATIONAL REGISTER REVIEW

CLG Name Des Moines Date of Public Meeting 9/14/09

Property Name Younkers Brothers Department Store, 713 Walnut Street, Des Moines, Polk County

1. For Historic Preservation Commission:

- Recommendation of National Register eligibility
- Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature [Signature] Date 9/24/09

Print Name Jason Van Essen

Title Senior City Planner

Reason(s) for recommendation:

Concur with the findings in the nomination form.

2. For Chief Elected Local Official:

- Recommendation of National Register eligibility
- Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature [Signature] Date 9/30/09

Print Name T. M. Franklin Cownie

Title Mayor

Reason(s) for recommendation:

3. Professional Evaluation:

- Recommendation of National Register eligibility
- Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature [Signature] Date 10/9/09

Print Name RALPH J. CHRISTIAN

Title SHPO HISTORIAN

Reason(s) for recommendation:



January 26, 2010

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

Dear Ms. Shull:

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

- Roshek Brothers Department Store, 250 West 8th Street, Dubuque, Dubuque County
- Brown Apartments, 1234 4th Avenue SE, Cedar Rapids, Linn County
- Younkers Brothers Department Store, 713 Walnut Street, Des Moines, Polk County
- Hawkeye Transfer Company Warehouse, 702 Elm Street, Des Moines, Polk County
- Schmitt and Henry Manufacturing Company, 309 Southwest 8th Street, Des Moines, Polk County

Sincerely,

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

Elizabeth Foster Hill
Tax Incentive Programs Manager/
National Register Coordinator