



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name EARLE & LEBOSQUET BLOCK  
other names/site number Redhead & Wellslager Block

2. Location

street & number 407-409 Court Avenue N/A not for publication  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.)

Babara A. Mitchell DSHPO April 16 2009  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA**  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

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

Lawson H. Beall  
Signature of Keeper Date of Action 6-11-09

Earle & LeBosquet Block  
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa  
County and State

**5. Classification**

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
2	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/warehouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/storage  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/  
Classical Revival  
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY MOVEMENTS/  
Commercial Style

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone  
walls Brick  
roof Asphalt  
other Terra Cotta

**Narrative Description**

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

Earle & LeBosquet Block  
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1896

circa 1954

**Significant Dates**

1896

circa 1953

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Eastman, Charles Edward

Van Ginkel, Gerrit

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

**9. Major Bibliography References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository

Earle & LeBosquet Block  
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 15 | 4 | 48183 | 46 | 03690 |

Zone Easting Northing

2 |    |    |    |    |    |

Zone Easting Northing

3 |    |    |    |    |    |

Zone Easting Northing

4 |    |    |    |    |    |

#### Verbal Boundary Description

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

#### Boundary Justification

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

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title William C. Page, Public Historian, Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting  
organization Randolph Corner, L.L.C. date September 20, 2008  
street & number 520 East Sheridan Avenue (Page) telephone 515-243-5740 (Page)  
city or town Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50313-5017

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

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

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

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

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

### Property Owner

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

name Randolph Corner, L.L.C.  
street & number 400 Locust Street, Suite 790 telephone 515-244-2622  
city or town Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50309

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

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

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

### SITE DESCRIPTION

The Earle & LeBosquet Block is located in the southern portion of Des Moines's commercial downtown. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this area formed the core of the city's downtown. Later, the downtown moved several blocks to the north and west, leaving this area to serve as the city's warehouse district and subsequently to languish. Today, the area is under intense redevelopment with new construction and adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

The Earle & LeBosquet Block is situated on the north side of Court Avenue, in the block between West 4<sup>th</sup> and West 5<sup>th</sup> Streets on a fractional parcel of Lot 7 in Block 21 of the Fort Des Moines plat. This parcel measures approximately 45 x 136 feet. The building's primary elevation faces south. A parking lot is located directly west of the Earle & LeBosquet Block. This parking lot was created following the demolition of a circa 1910, four-story, brick building which, in 1917 housed the Mickel Brothers Company, wholesale distributors of the Victor talking-machine.<sup>1</sup> The Randolph Hotel, an eight-story brick building constructed in 1911-1912, abuts the Earle & LeBosquet Building on the east. A public sidewalk runs flush to the building on the south, providing pedestrian access to the building's two commercial entrances on Court Avenue.

Court Avenue is an historic corridor in downtown Des Moines. Other of the area's historic resources include the Seth Richards Commercial Block (NRHP, 2005) at 300-310 Court Avenue, the Des Moines Saddlery Company Building (NRHP, 1985) at 307-311 Court Avenue, and the Polk County Courthouse (NRHP, 1979) at the west end of Court Avenue where the street terminates at West 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The Hotel Row Historic District, with properties facing both sides of 4<sup>th</sup> Street between Walnut Street and Court Avenue, was recently determined National Register eligible by the State Historical Society of Iowa.

### DESCRIPTION OF BLOCK

#### Exterior

The Earle & LeBosquet Block is a doublewide, brick edifice constructed on a limestone foundation. From its full basement, the block rises four stories. Its south elevation measures 45 feet wide. Its east elevation measures 82 feet; and the west elevation measures 115 feet. (See Continuation Sheet 7-9.) The block is covered with a flat roof.

<sup>1</sup> *Des Moines Spokesman for the City of Des Moines*. (Des Moines: Des Moines Chamber of Commerce, Oct. 1917), 16.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

South Elevation

The south elevation is the primary façade of the block. This façade is organized into three design zones: base, shaft, and capital. The storefront of the block—a post-World War II remodeling—serves as the base of the composition. The three upper floors of the block serve as its shaft. A cornice surmounts the block and completes the organization arrangement. The visual differentiations between these three zones are readily apparent.

The storefront anchors this tripartite scheme. Although a post-World War II remodeling, it continues to express its historic function as the base of the design. This modern rehabilitation utilizes red-orange, Roman bricks laid in a running bond – a combination that creates a sort of “basket weave” appearance. The existing display windows have metal frames and the transoms are infilled with horizontal boards. Although this remodeling radically altered the character of the 1896 storefronts, including the reorientation of their symmetrically conceived front entrances, it did preserve the general sense of the block’s original two storefronts.

The upper three stories of the south elevation are faced with creamy buff-colored brick set in a running bond, with narrow, flat joints. Laid over and set within that buff-colored ground are numerous decorative elements that reflect both the order and control of the Classical and the stylization of those historic precedents in keeping with the Chicago Commercial Style.

A cast stone belt course divides the first story from the second story of the block. A series of super-order pilasters rise from this belt course. These non-structural elements establish a visual grid, which organizes the block’s fenestration and which creates a trans-story connection—the pilasters visually divide the space and tie it together. The use of pilasters appears clearly a classical device, but their understated form and stylized capitals reflect the more modern aesthetic of the Chicago Commercial Style. The use of vertical unifying elements such as the pilasters was a common device employed by the Chicago Commercial to accentuate a building’s sense of verticality as height became increasingly desirable.<sup>2</sup>

The fenestration of the upper stories is organized into six vertically oriented bays within the grid created by the pilasters. A sense of subtle hierarchy unfolds as the eye moves up and down this complex surface. At the second story, windows are simple, punched openings with only plain wood brickmold. The windows rest on the stone running sill that creates the visual separation between storefront and upper story façade; in this way the second floor windows remain nominally connected to the ground level – they lack a full expression of individual identity. The windows are set in recessed panels that heighten

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<sup>2</sup> Harris, Cyril M., 340.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

the visual play of light and shadow, emphasizing the austerity of the windows themselves. It should be noted that the window glazing has been removed and replaced by wood panels, but the frames remain intact. A simple course of dogtooth brickwork at the top of the recessed window panels provides the sole ornamental expression at this level. The windows on this floor, as on the third and fourth floors, originally featured 1/1 double-hung sash. All of these sash have been removed and plywood installed to infill their voids.

At first glance, the façade's third story fenestration is identical to the second. However, a closer inspection reveals an increase in decorative detail that begins with the introduction of a segmented beltcourse of dark, red-brown terra cotta. Like the cream buff brick, the Platt Company manufactured the façade's terra cotta.<sup>3</sup> This beltcourse creates a visual line between floors in a simple bead pattern. The use of terra cotta tiles inset in recessed panels beneath the windows is a common decorative device of the Chicago Commercial Style. These panels feature four tiles with stylized leaf forms, one of the signature motifs of Chicago's greatest architects, Louis Sullivan.

Like the windows of the floor beneath it, the fourth story windows are recessed and feature simply molded window frames, a segmented, terra cotta beltcourse, and a recessed panel with four terra cotta tiles. The fourth floor windows also have a dogtooth course, which spring in an arched form from the capitals of the pilasters.

Two courses of arcaded, stepped brickwork follow the line of the arcaded windows and provide a transition from fenestration to cornice. A series of terra cotta tiles set in the spandrels of the arches carry on the foliated motif and the play of dark against the neutral ground of the cream buff brick. The cornice, while comparatively modest in scale, relies on a controlled expression of intricately patterned, decorative brickwork for its beauty. By alternating brickwork patterns—dentils and chains—with the neutral ground of the wall surface and terra cotta panels with foliated motifs, the cornice plays off the contrast of patterns and materials to create visual interest and provide a subtle, but definitive conclusion to the hierarchical façade.

Other Elevations

The west and north elevations of the Earle & LeBosquet Block are both constructed of red-colored common brick, laid in common bond. They are generally devoid of architectural detailing. Historically, the west elevation was attached to a 3-story building, so only the fourth floor of the Earle & LeBosquet

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<sup>3</sup> *Des Moines Leader*, April 23, 1896.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

Block was exposed. That floor originally featured three window openings. At some time in the past, these openings were bricked in; their original cast stone window sills remain in place and visible.

Two ghost signs are visible on the west elevation of the building. A fragment of one, painted in white on the fourth floor brick wall on the south end of the elevation, reads "Lower Prices." Another fragment, painted in black on the third floor brick wall on its north end, is illegible. Although the writing on both of these signs is faint, they help document the building's historic use and call attention to common architectural practices within its commercial milieu.

The north façade of the Earle & LeBosquet Block is divided into two planes because the 409 unit projects further to the north than the 407 unit. (See Continuation Sheet 7-18.) The exterior wall of the 409 unit features red-colored, common brick laid in common bond. Its first floor has been substantially altered over the years with the construction of large dock doors and a loading dock. The exterior wall of the 407 unit is now parged with stucco. The upper floors of both units feature three tall windows with cast stone sills, segmental arches, and double-hung, wood sash across each of their floors. These sash are in poor condition, some with missing mullions. Some of the window openings have been clad with cover-up materials.

Only a portion of the Earle & LeBosquet Block presents an eastern elevation because it abuts the 8-story Hotel Randolph. That exposed eastern elevation is situated at the rear of the block, where the 409 unit extends beyond that of the 407 unit. This exposed elevation is now parged with stucco.

A neon sign, installed circa 1953 and reading "Hotel Randolph," surmounts the building and is situated on the southwest corner of its roof. Influenced by Art Moderne styling, the horizontal bars of this sign and its sleek lettering evoke a sense of streamlined design. The neon in this sign is now non-working. Both this and the ghost signs mentioned above are important features of the building and should be treated with respect.

Interior

The interior space of the Earle & LeBosquet Block reflects both the building's rectangular shape and its historic function. The rectangular form creates a relatively long and narrow interior space, the width of which is separated at basement level and the first floor by a brick, load-bearing wall. Constructed to function as commercial rooms at street level with warehouse space in the upper stories, each of the upper level spaces is fully open, with cast iron posts providing the interior support.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

The storefront space of the doublewide Earle & LeBosquet Block is divided in half, each half with its own entrance. As indicated, the post-World War II remodeling of both storefronts included the shift of their historic entrances from the center of each bay. Currently cut into the west edge of each storefront, the recessed entrances feature a wood frame and glazed door with a transom. Just inside the entrance, a small landing precedes a pair of steps that leads up to the first floor.

The west storefront (407) features a pair of cast iron columns extending from the bulkhead to the ceiling, although they do not serve as load-bearing elements. These columns are apparently the sole survivors of an 1876 building, which previously stood on the site and was destroyed by fire in 1896. (See Section 8.) The columns are of cast iron and feature a fluted shaft and a simple base and capital. The east storefront (409) likely includes another pair of these columns, although cover-up materials now clad the area.

From the bulkhead of the storefront, the interior space of each is open from front to back with no interior sub-divisions. At the time of its construction, the interior at ground level was a single, open space, separated only by a series of iron columns.<sup>4</sup> Today, a brick wall divides the historic space into self-contained bays. Because the block was historically located within a line of contiguous buildings, there are no windows on the east or west walls. In the west bay (407), the building extends to 115 feet (33 feet longer than the east half of the block) and this space includes the freight elevator and a staircase.

The commercial space is virtually absent of decorative elements. The walls and ceiling appear to retain the historic lath and plaster, with no apparent addition of materials other than paint and no loss of ceiling height, which measures approximately 15 feet. Mechanical systems (electrical and plumbing) are suspended from the ceiling and remain fully exposed. The floors are currently covered in 6 x 6 inch industrial tile. There is no base or crown trim molding.

As noted, the west bay of the doublewide building extends back 115 feet, and a freight elevator and staircase are located within that additional space. As would be expected, the wood freight elevator is oversized and industrial in appearance. The elevator, now non-operational, provided transport of goods from the main floor to each of the upper stories. The open, switchback staircase is located against the rear wall. The wood stairs include a metal, pipe railing with no balustrade. A base molding follows the wall adjacent to the stairs. These stairs pass across the windows of the rear wall. A wainscoted knee wall marks the opening of the staircase where it descends into the basement.

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<sup>4</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1901.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

The rear wall of the Earle & LeBosquet Block is punctuated by windows at each story. These windows are double-hung with a two-over-two light configuration set in a wood frame. On the interior, the window openings bullnose the adjacent wall surfaces and lack any decorative window trim. Although the glazing is currently painted over, the majority of the glass remains intact.

The upper floors of the Earle & LeBosquet Block are nearly identical one to the other. Designed to function as warehouse space, each floor is open across the entire width of the block and functions as a fully unencumbered room with only iron posts as interior supports. Five iron posts support a central north-south built-up wood beam with an iron sill plate.

Like the commercial spaces of the first floor, the upper stories lack any decorative adornment. In these spaces the floors are finished in 3" wood strip, the plaster walls and ceilings remain intact, and the historic 12-foot ceiling height remains. The interior of the window openings of the upper story façade features bullnose edges and wood sills.

### **INTEGRITY CONSIDERATIONS**

The Earle & LeBosquet Block retains a high level of six aspects of historic integrity: location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The integrity of its setting is fair.

Because the Earle & LeBosquet Block remains on its original site, its integrity of location is excellent.

The integrity of the building as it relates to design is high, due in great part to the excellent integrity of its 1896 façade, which is central to the resource's architectural character. The loss of the 1876 storefront, while unfortunate, is typical of commercial retail buildings and, given the retention of the iron columns and the existence of historic images of the 1896 building, an historically sympathetic storefront could be created. As to the west elevation of the building, which was exposed following the loss of its historically adjoining neighbor, it retains its strictly utilitarian character as a common wall. Like the façade, the north elevation retains the integrity of its design with window openings intact. It does appear that the exit has been altered, though that alteration does not detract significantly from the building's design integrity.

The integrity of the Earle & LeBosquet's setting is fair. Court Avenue remains an urban thoroughfare, as it did during the building's period of significance (1896). The nearby Polk County Courthouse heads the avenue on the west, and many of the buildings that line both sides of Court Avenue to the Des Moines River on the east date from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. While it is true that a modern parking ramp and a parking lot stand to the west of the Earle & LeBosquet Block, the massing and scale of these

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

properties do not overpower the building. The Hotel Randolph, an 8-story hotel built in 1911-1912, abuts it to the east and provides a firm anchor to the historic character of the entire city block.

The integrity of the Earle & LeBosquet Block as it relates to materials also remains excellent. The retention of the cream buff brick and dark terra cotta is particularly significant as these materials are integral components of the façade design, which, in great part, defines the building's historic visual character. In addition, although the façade's upper story windows have been covered over, their historic frames remain intact. The retention of much of the interior's finish materials (e.g., plaster and wood flooring) further strengthens the integrity of the materials.

The outstanding integrity of the block's workmanship is best seen in the complexity of the masonry on the façade. The building's architect, C.E. Eastman, designed a façade using classical precedents translated through the lens of the Chicago Commercial Style. The decorative devices used to express his design involved brick and terra cotta forms laid in a series of forms and patterns that draw the eye from storefront to cornice. This intricate masonry work exhibits the virtuosity of a yet unidentified master mason.

The Earle & LeBosquet Block retains an excellent feeling of commercial purpose. The lively pace of urban activity that surrounds the building today on Court Avenue lends a sense of vitality to the property, as it did during the period of significance.

The Block also retains a high level of integrity as it relates to association. Visitors from its period of significance would recognize the building's distinctive buff color of the building and its design today.

As a resource whose significance is tied to its architecture, the retention of such a high level of integrity as it relates to design, materials, and workmanship is of particular importance.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

## SITE MAP

ARROW LOCATES PROPERTY



Source: U.S.G.S. Map (7.5 Minute Series), Des Moines SE Quadrangle, 1956, Photorevised 1976.



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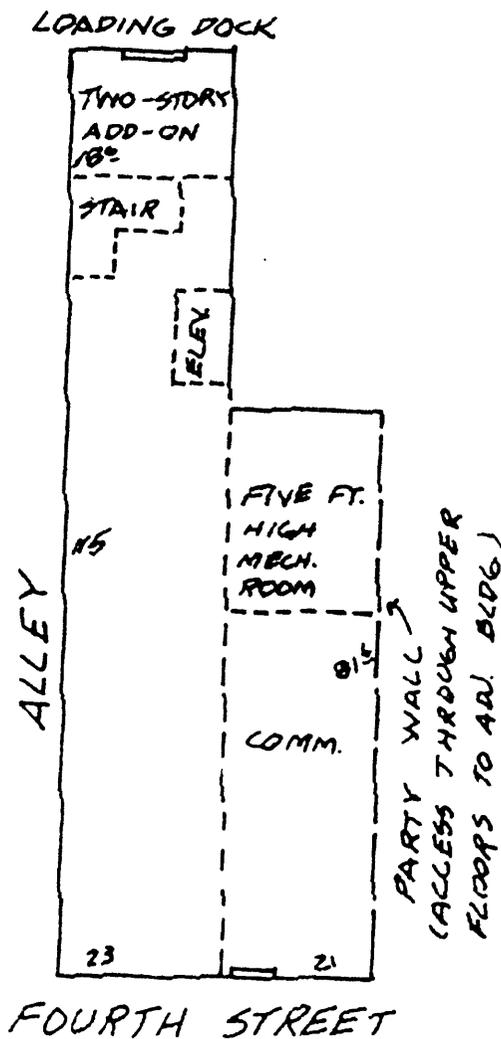
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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

## FOOTPRINT OF BUILDING



Source: Des Moines City Assessor's Office, 2003.

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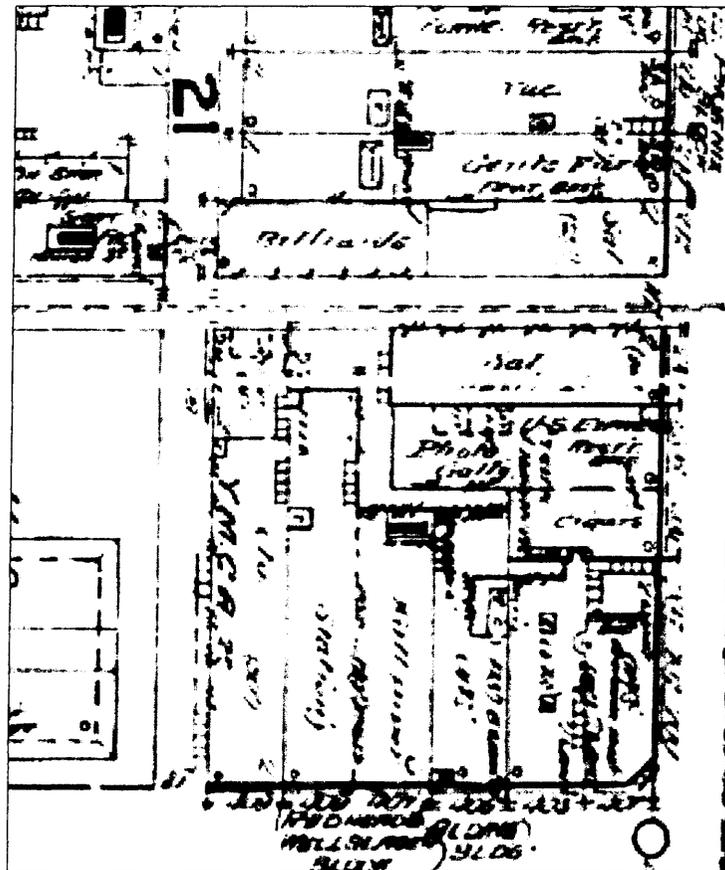
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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

## 1884 FIRE INSURANCE MAP

ARROW LOCATES REDHEAD & WELLSLAGER BLOCK PREVIOUSLY ON SITE



This map pictures the Redhead & Wellslager Block before the 1896 fire.

Source: Sanborn Map Company, Des Moines, Iowa, 1884.

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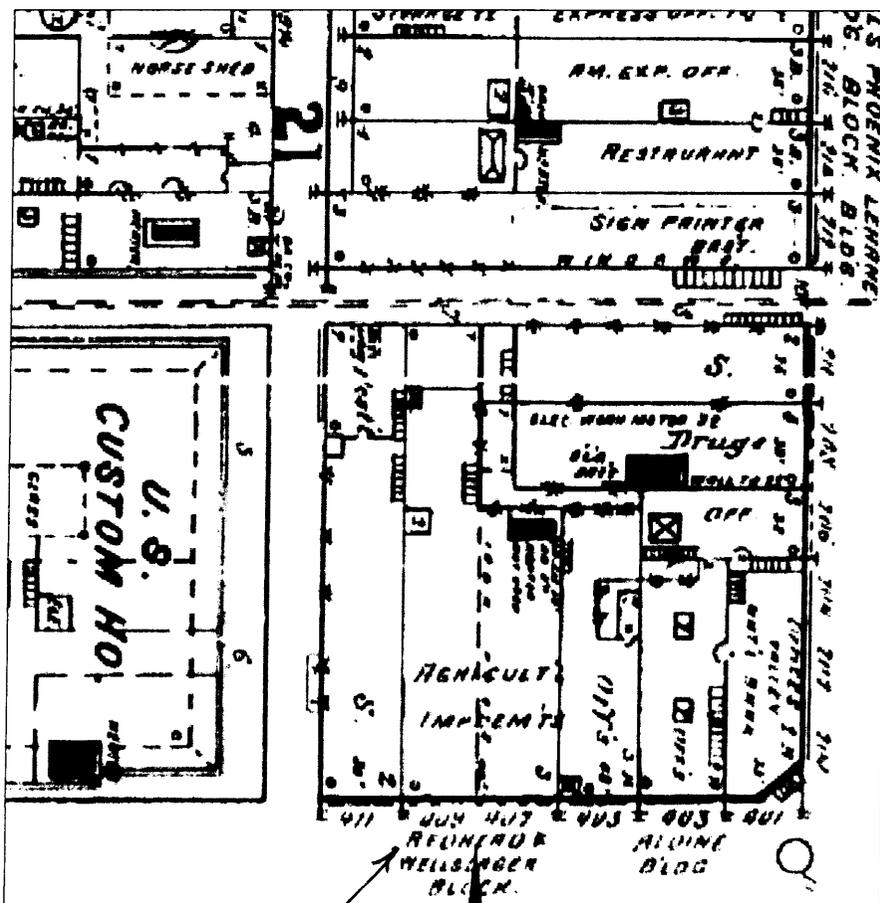
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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

## 1891 FIRE INSURANCE MAP

ARROW LOCATES REDHEAD & WELLSLAGER BLOCK PREVIOUSLY ON SITE



By 1891, a 1-story addition had been constructed at the rear of the building, as shown on this map.

Source: Sanborn Map Company, Des Moines, Iowa, 1891.

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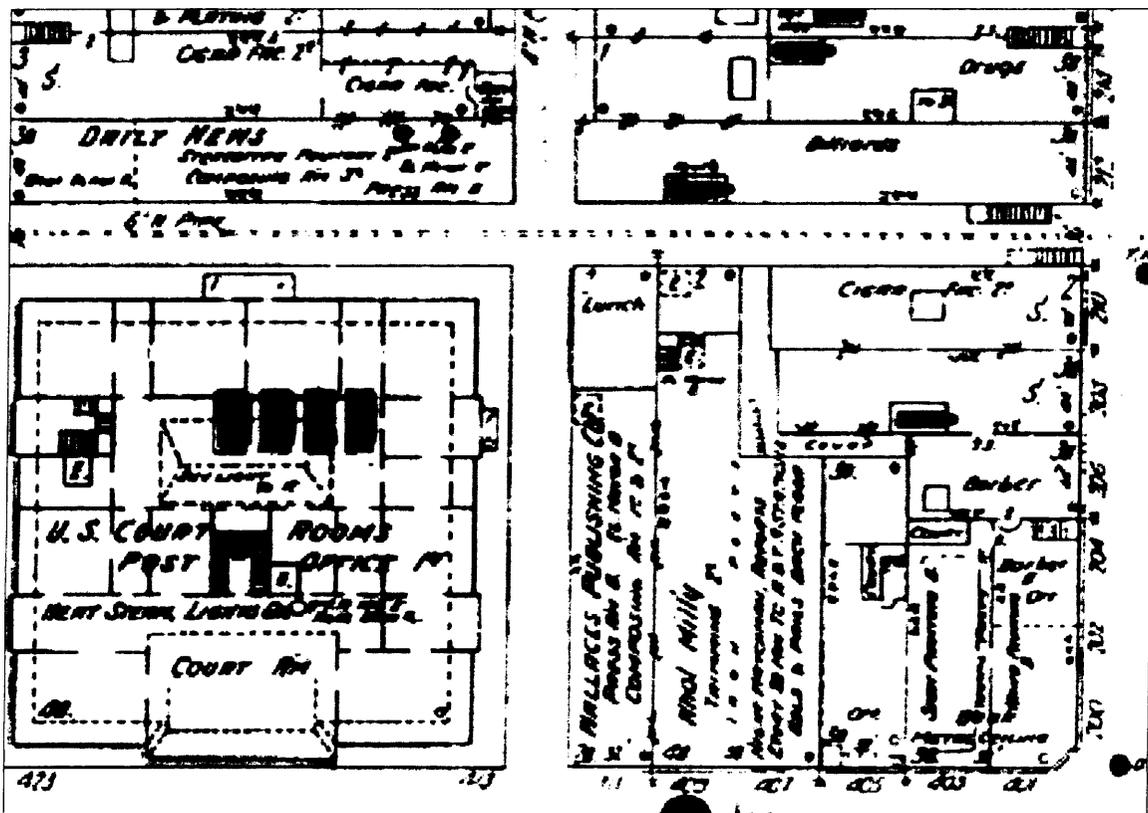
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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

## 1901 FIRE INSURANCE MAP

ARROW LOCATES EARLE & LEBOSQUET BLOCK



This map pictures the block as rebuilt after the 1896 fire. Its original footprint remains largely the same, although the 1-story addition at the rear has become 2-story with an elevator.

Source: Sanborn Map Company, Des Moines, Iowa, 1901.

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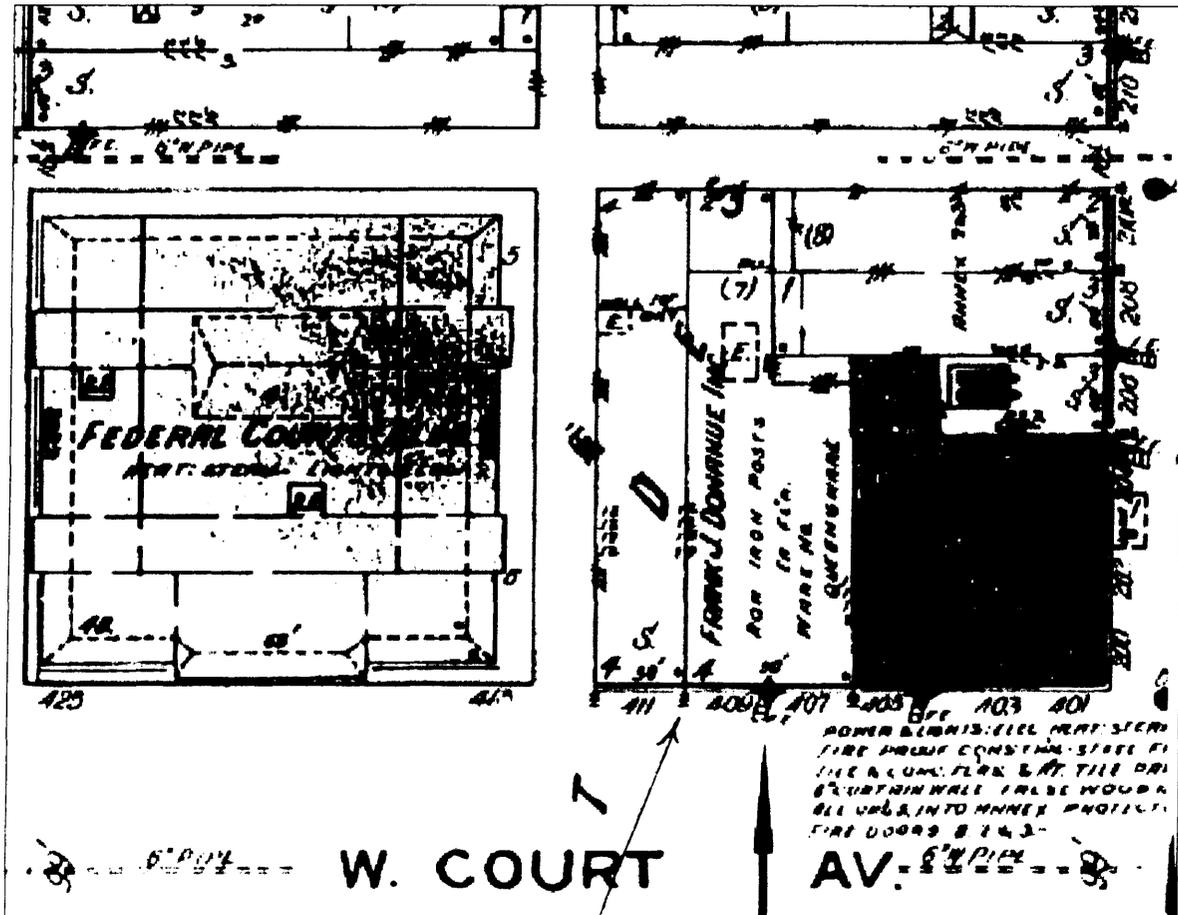
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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

## 1920 FIRE INSURANCE MAP

ARROW LOCATES EARLE & LEBOSQUET BLOCK



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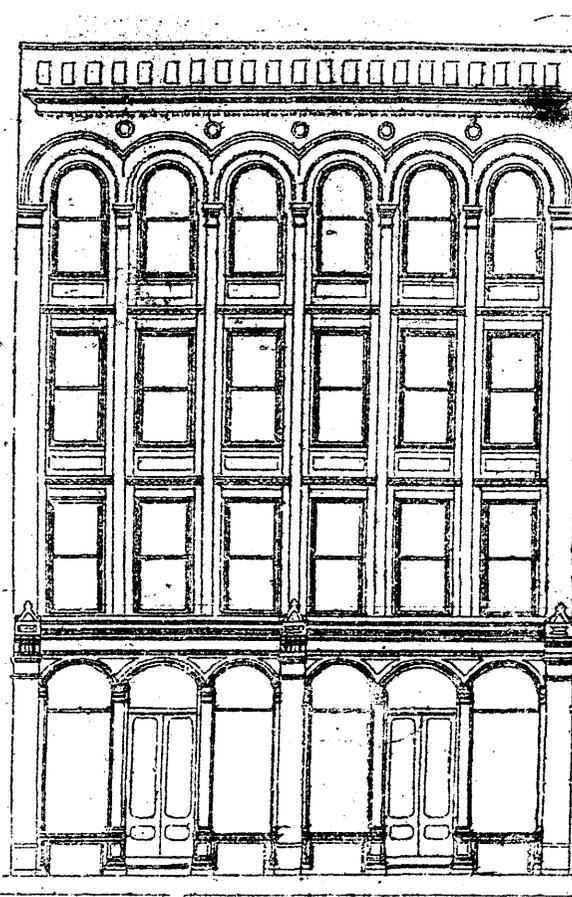
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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

## 1896 ARCHITECT'S DRAWING



The above is a picture of the new Business block being erected at 400, 411 Court avenue. The front is of Platt buff brick and terra cotta. The building is 48x143, and will be used by a jobbing firm.

Construction of the Earle & LeBosquet Block largely adhered to this drawing by C. E. Eastman, although the storefront transoms were configured as rectangles rather than arched.

Source: *Des Moines Leader*, April 23, 1896.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

## “FOURTH AND COURT AVENUE”



This circa 1898 drawing pictures the Earle & LeBosquet Block soon after its reconstruction. The storefront transoms are rectangular configured rather than arched.

Source: Unreferenced newspaper clipping. William C. Page archives.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

## EARLE & LEBOSQUET BLOCK IN 1917



This view pictures both first floor rooms occupied by Frank J. Donahoe's wholesale operation. Separate fire escapes serve the upper floors at 407 and 409 Court.

Source: *The Des Moines Evening Tribune*, August 22, 1917.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

### SITE IN 1917



Although this photograph pictures the building at 411 Court Avenue, it shows much of the west half of the Earle & LeBosquet Block (far right) and its storefront transoms with rectangular configurations. A large sign on top of the 411 building advertises Victor talking machines and records. This sign has been let into the photo as a montage, a phantom precursor of the "Hotel Randolph" neon sign, which surmounted the Earle & LeBosquet Block following World War II and remains today.

Source: *Des Moines Spokesman*, October 1917.

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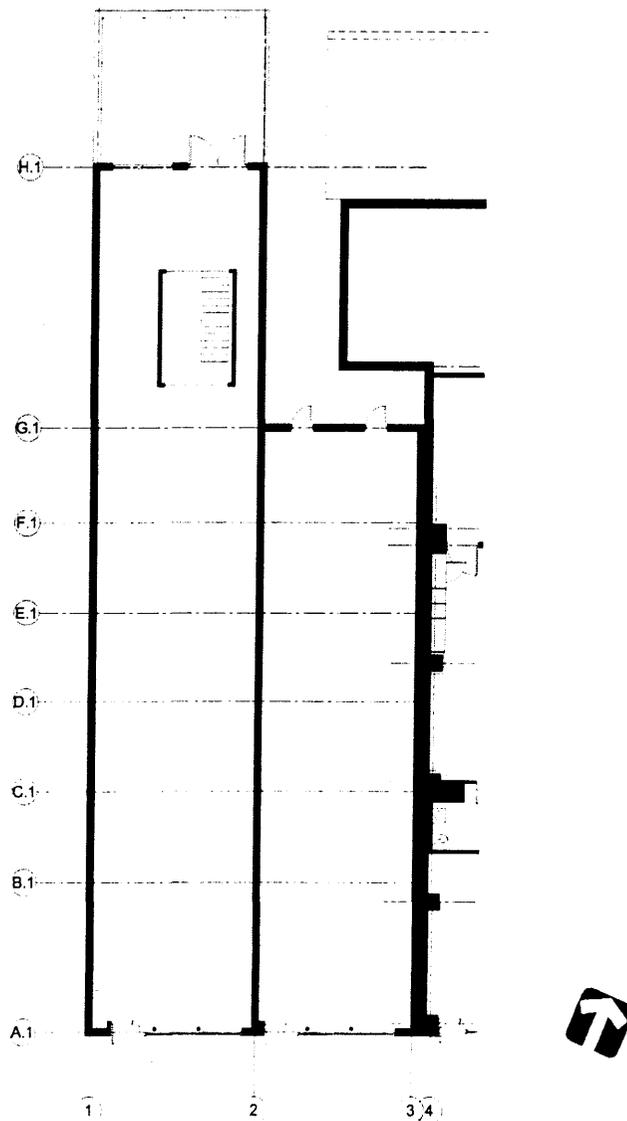
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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

## FIRST FLOOR PLAN



Source: Substance Architecture Interiors Design, 2008.

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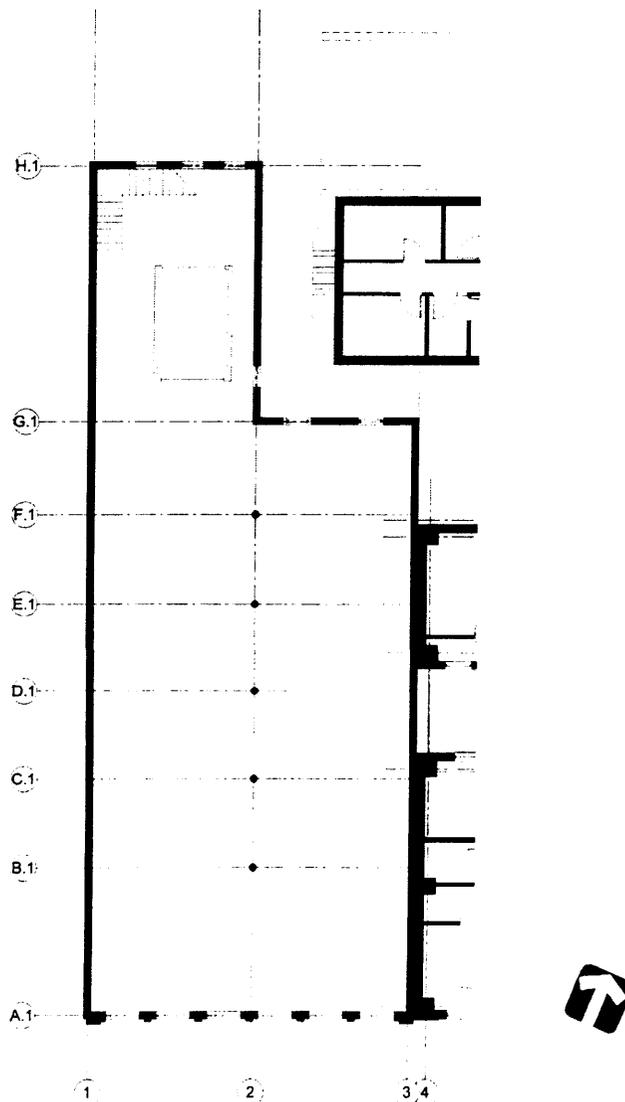
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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

## TYPICAL UPPER FLOOR PLAN



Source: Substance Architecture, 2008.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

**SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Earle & LeBosquet Block is locally significant under National Register Criterion C as an outstanding architectural design by Charles E. Eastman. Eastman was a noted late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century architect in Des Moines whose work embraced many contemporary property types and architectural styles. The south façade of the Earle & LeBosquet Block demonstrates Eastman's creative power to call on classical precedents while integrating the more modern sensibility coming out of Chicago in the form of the Chicago Commercial Style. Eastman's use of terra cotta for architectural detailing and buff-colored brick for the front façade of the building was an early employment of those materials in Des Moines and presaged their widespread use in the city over the next several decades. Gerrit Van Ginkel of Des Moines served as the general contractor for the building.

The period of significance, under Criterion C, for the Earle & LeBosquet Block is 1896, the year the block was rebuilt, and circa 1953 when the neon sign was installed. The property contains two resources—the commercial block itself, which is contributing and counted as a building, and the neon sign, which surmounts it. The latter is contributing and counted as an object.

The Earle & LeBosquet Block housed two commercial rooms at street level (numbering 407 and 409), with upper stories devoted to warehouse space. The block's exterior appearance and interior arrangement reflect that historic function. The block also reflects the typical form of commercial buildings with its generally rectangular shape and flat roof. Historically located in a line of contiguous commercial buildings, the Earle & LeBosquet Block was designed to sit flush with its neighbors, with all stylistic expression devoted to its façade. As an architect-designed building we expect an elevated level of connection to both historic precedent and contemporary trends, as well as refined sense of design - that is the case in the Earle & LeBosquet Block.

**BACKGROUND**

The Earle & LeBosquet Block stands today as a 4-story commercial building constructed in 1896 by Gerrit Van Ginkel as general contractor for the job. I. M. Earle and P. S. LeBosquet were the original owners of this block. Ira M. Earle was a Victorian attorney in Des Moines who practiced first with Peter S. LeBosquet (a.k.a. Bousquet) in the firm of Bousquet & Earle and later with Solomon F. Prouty in the firm of Earle & Prouty.<sup>1</sup> Earle also engaged in a wide variety of business pursuits, including the Des

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<sup>1</sup> Des Moines City Directory, 1889, 1890, 1891. According to the directories, Bousquet & Earle was located over 322 Walnut in 1889

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

Moines Lumber Co. as its vice-president along with R. B. Warren, its president, and Solomon F. Prouty, its treasurer.<sup>2</sup>

P. S. LeBosquet was of Dutch descent and Pella, Iowa, upbringing, Peter S. LeBosquet was an attorney in practice with I. M. Earle in 1889 and 1890. As indicated above, by 1891 Earle had taken up partnership with Solomon Prouty. As with many of the moneyed-men at the turn of the 20th century, LeBosquet looked to real estate as an investment for his capital. His decision and that of his partner Earle to employ C. E. Eastman to plan their reconstructed block indicate their willingness to trust a young man with its design and to commit a substantial amount of money to construct a building in dramatic departure from tried-and-true commercial architecture in Des Moines.

The Earle & LeBosquet Block stands on the site of an earlier, 3-story brick edifice constructed in 1876 by Conrad Youngerman<sup>3</sup> for the firm of Redhead & Wellslager, a local book and stationery business. On January 3, 1896, a fire broke out in the Redhead & Wellslager Block and substantially damaged it. Local newspapers extensively reported the events surrounding this fire and its aftermath.<sup>4</sup> These many accounts attest to the importance of this 1876 property for the city of Des Moines and document the problems caused by the fire and the efforts required to rebuild. The fire also damaged the Atkinson Bros. Building, located one door to the west at 411 Court Avenue, when brick fell from the upper stories of the Redhead & Wellslager Block through its roof. To the east, the Des Moines Fire Insurance Co. at 405 Court Avenue narrowly escaped the flames. Around the corner to the north, the Youngerman Block at 206-208 4<sup>th</sup> Street sustained some fire damage.<sup>5</sup> The damage to the Redhead & Wellslager Block was so extensive that Martin Melander, Chief Engineer of the City Fire Department, ordered its owners to remove it as a hazard.<sup>6</sup>

Earle and LeBosquet, then the owners of the property, debated between themselves whether to raze the ruins of their building or to rebuild. By mid-February, the partners apparently had decided on the former course.

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and 1890. In 1891 Earle & Prouty was in business at 211 W. 4<sup>th</sup> – both addresses located in the immediate vicinity of the Earle & LeBosquet Block.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1893: 256, 269, 510.

<sup>3</sup> *Des Moines Leader*, April 19, 1876.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, January 4, 1896; *Iowa State Register*, January 4, 1896.

<sup>5</sup> *Iowa State Register*, January 4, 1896.

<sup>6</sup> *Des Moines Leader*, January 7, 1896.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

Earle and Le Bosquet will commence erecting a new building on the site of the one recently destroyed by fire as soon as the insurance is settled.<sup>7</sup>

The partners soon changed their minds.

Earle & Bosquet [*sic*] will commence work soon on the reconstruction of their building on Court avenue, near the corner of Fourth street, which was destroyed by fire January 2. It is undecided yet whether the building will be three or four stories high. If a four-story building is erected the old walls will be torn down, and if not they will be utilized. It is probable that G. Van Ginkel will have charge of the new building.<sup>8</sup>

By the end of February, the owners of the building and its occupants had settled their insurance claims for their losses; James L. Thornton began to remove salvaged machinery from the building<sup>9</sup> and Earle and LeBosquet had decided to erect a four-story building.

A force of men commenced work yesterday removing the wreck of the Earle & Le Bosquet Building at 407 & 409 Court Ave., recently destroyed by fire. As soon as the wreck is cleared away a new 4-story brick building will be erected on the property. . . The building will be rebuilt by G. van Ginkel at once and will probably be a double front building and be occupied by a wholesale house.<sup>10</sup>

This local newspaper continued its coverage of unfolding events.

A large part of the front wall of the Earle & Le Bosquet Building on Court avenue, which was recently destroyed by fire, is to be torn down in the rebuilding of the structure and the general appearance of the building will be greatly changed. The new building will be a story higher than the old, making four stories. It is understood a lease of the building has been made to a wholesale organization, but the character of the business cannot be ascertained.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, February 14, 1896.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, February 20, 1896.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, February 22, 1896.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, February 29, 1896.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, April 14, 1896.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

These newspaper accounts answer the question of the block's construction date, which had lingered in the history of Court Avenue since Sylvia I. Raabe began to research it in the 1980s. As to the block's reconstructed configuration, Raabe had written:

Actual date of construction is unknown although it appears possible the top floor was added and a new façade put on sometime between 1910 and 1915.<sup>12</sup>

She correctly pointed to the possibility that the fourth story was an addition to the block.

### ARCHITECTURE

The Earle & LeBosquet Block is significant, locally, under National Register Criterion C, as an outstanding architectural design by Des Moines architect C. E. Eastman and as an expression of the Chicago Commercial Style, a potent architectural influence spreading across the nation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

#### C. E. Eastman

Charles E. Eastman (1868-1948) was a significant architect in Des Moines at the turn of the 20th century. As an avid self-promoter, Eastman's work has been recorded in the pages of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century publication, *The Midwestern*, where he wrote numerous articles and printed many sketches of his projects (both built and not). In addition, Eastman published a sketchbook of his work, which can be found in the special collections archive at Iowa State University.

Eastman was born in Springfield, Illinois, in 1868, of New England parents. In the late 1880s, he studied architecture at the University of Illinois.<sup>13</sup> Eastman left Illinois and began his architectural practice in Ogden, Utah in 1890, but soon relocated to Des Moines and entered into partnership with John C. McLeland. In the early 1890s, the firm of McLeland & Eastman had offices on the seventh floor of the

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<sup>12</sup> Raabe, 108.

<sup>13</sup> State Historical Society of Iowa. State Historic Preservation Office. Architects Files.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

Youngerman Block. This building—located on the northwest corner of Mulberry and Fifth and not to be confused with the Youngerman Block at 206-208 Fourth Street—was touted as “The Finest Office Building in the City.”<sup>14</sup> The selection of this building for the firm’s office lent it a prestigious address and associated it with the building trades. Conrad Youngerman, one of Des Moines’ early and most successful building contractors, had constructed it. In 1893, Eastman boarded at 716-20<sup>th</sup> Street in Des Moines, an indication of his bachelor status, which would end with his 1896 marriage to Delia Hunt of Princeton, Missouri.<sup>15</sup>

By 1895 Eastman was on his own, doing business as C.E. Eastman Co. and would continue so through 1919, at which time he was the superintendent of construction with W.E. Hulse, Inc. In 1928, at the age of 59, Eastman was registered to practice by exemption, with his registration canceled by 1934.<sup>16</sup>

KNOWN EASTMAN WORKS IN IOWA<sup>17</sup>

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Construction Date</u>
Drake Public Library (NRHP)	115 Drake Ave., Centerville, IA	1901-1902
Rees Gabriel House (NRHP)	1701 Pennsylvania Ave., Des Moines, IA	1896
House (Address & status unknown)	Des Moines, IA	c.1908
Observatory Building (Nonextant)	402 Locust St., Des Moines, IA	1896
Earle & LeBosquet Block (Extant)	407-409 Court Ave., Des Moines, IA	1896
First Baptist Church (Nonextant)	8 <sup>th</sup> & High Street, Des Moines, IA	Unknown
Chalfont Apartments (Nonextant)	1504 High St., Des Moines, IA	Unknown
Trinity Evangelical Church (Extant)	12 <sup>th</sup> & Des Moines Street, Des Moines, IA	c.1897
Auditorium (Address & status unknown)	Des Moines, IA,	c.1897
Store (Nonextant)	6 <sup>th</sup> & Walnut, Des Moines, IA	c.1897

<sup>14</sup> City Directory 1893: 122.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 270 and Shank, 55.

<sup>16</sup> Shank, 55.

<sup>17</sup> Shank, 55; SHSI Architects’ File; and *{The Des Moines} Evening Tribune*, January 19, 1915 (McNamara property).

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

KNOWN EASTMAN WORKS IN IOWA (CONTINUED)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Construction Date</u>
Christian Church (Status unknown)	Arlington, IA	Unknown
First Methodist Episcopal (Status unknown)	Grinnell, IA	Unknown
Tone Bros. Building (Nonextant)	109-111 Court Ave., Des Moines, IA	1894
McNamara Apartment Building (Nonextant)	15th & High Sts.*	1915

\* The Chalfont Apartments and the McNamara Apartment Building might be one and the same.

This table represents just a small fraction of Eastman’s work in Iowa. As one architectural historian has noted:

Eastman was a prolific designer. Issues of *The American Contractor* and *The Construction News* published between September 1897 and June 1901 (a period of less than four years) list approximately 100 Eastman commissions.<sup>18</sup>

Of course some, or perhaps many, of these commissions were likely never built.

Eastman’s professional training at the University of Illinois had an abiding influence on his career. Eastman benefited both from the technical training he received there and from the university’s proximity to Chicago and its architectural innovations. Two buildings in Des Moines call attention to this architectural milieu: the Earle & LeBosquet Block with its extensive use of terra cotta detailing and the nonextant Observatory Building, which in 1896 introduced the concept of the skyscraper to Des Moines. The Observatory Building was nine stories high surmounted by a 5-story tower. The scope and status of Eastman’s work in Utah, as well as possible work in Illinois, are presently unknown.

Eastman’s use of light-colored brick and terra cotta detailing—so prominent in the 1896 Earle & LeBosquet Block—helped introduce the use of those building materials, which subsequently became popular in the city.

<sup>18</sup> Carlson, Richard.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

Chicago Commercial Style

The south façade of the Earle & LeBosquet Block calls attention to design tenets of the Chicago Commercial Style and to its debt to classical precedents. The tripartite organization of this façade into base, shaft, and capital, creates a visual organization and follows a classical formula. In the Earle & LeBosquet Block, that design approach is manifested in the readily apparent differentiation between the storefront level, the upper stories, and the cornice.

The upper stories of the façade synthesize classical elements with the influence of the Chicago Commercial Style in a *tour de force* of color, texture, and form. The overall sense of order and symmetry found in the building's upper stories reflects the classical sensibility, as does the arcading of the third story fenestration. Even the use of the super-order—the pilasters that soar from the limestone running sill beneath the second floor through to the stylized capitals of the third—reflects the classical influence. In the Earle & LeBosquet Block, however, Eastman molded that influence into a more modern expression, as propounded by the Chicago Commercial Style.

A first blush, the upper façade of the Earle & LeBosquet's reads as a unified whole. Only by analyzing its parts does one appreciate the care Eastman took to create this appearance. Eastman's design begins with the utilization of a unifying material—a creamy buff colored brick.

Against this neutral ground, Eastman places the block's fenestration and decorative detailing of brick and terra cotta. As described in Section 7, this detailing increases in complexity from the second to the fourth floor. In this hierarchical arrangement, the most elaborate detailing occurs on the fourth floor with its round-topped (or arcaded) windows,<sup>19</sup> which dominate the design. Although classically inspired, arcading is closely associated with the Chicago Commercial Style.

Eastman's use of light-colored brick for a commercial edifice was novel in Des Moines at the time, and this block can be seen as a pioneer in what later became a popular building material. By 1893, cream buff colored brick had become available in Des Moines as a locally manufactured product. In that year, the Platt Brick and Fire Proofing Co. prominently advertised this type of brick in the city directory.<sup>20</sup> The firm maintained their office in Des Moines and operated their factory in Van Meter, Iowa, nineteen miles west of Des Moines on the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway. The firm advertised a variety of products, including fine pressed building brick, paving and fire brick, "calcined fire clay," and fired clay goods. It also advertised face brick in various shades, including cream buff, red, and mottled brick.

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<sup>19</sup> Harris, 340.

<sup>20</sup> *City Directory*, 1893, front page XIII.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

Cream buff headed this list of face brick shades, suggesting its up-to-date quality. As used in the Earle & LeBosquet Block, the neutral color of this brick acts as a ground for the façade's decorative detailing and creates an underlying unification of its design.

Eastman's drawing of his proposed design survives. Published in 1896 by the *Des Moines Leader* newspaper, this drawing pictures the south elevation of the building. (See Continuation Sheet 7-14.) Another historic drawing, circa 1898, pictures the block within the context of Court Avenue. (See Continuation Sheet 7-15.) A close comparison of these two historic images reveals that the Earle & LeBosquet storefront, as constructed, differed from Eastman's drawing. Eastman's drawing pictures arched transoms, while the streetscape drawing pictures rectangular transoms. Two photographs of the block in 1917 picture the latter configuration. (See Continuation Sheets 7-16 and 7-17.) Perhaps Eastman's drawing was completed while Earle and LeBosquet still intended to salvage the first floor of the fire-damaged Redhead & Wellslager Block.

A review of Eastman's work in Iowa reveals his competency in a variety of contemporary styles. The Drake Public Library (NRHP) at Centerville shows the influence of Classical Revivalism, with its symmetrically arranged façade. The Rees Gabriel House (NRHP) in Des Moines is a large, 2.5-story, frame single-family dwelling. It skillfully manipulates Queen Anne styling. The First Baptist Church (nonextant) in Des Moines was a large, stone edifice with a tall tower. Trinity Evangelical Church remains extant and shows the influence of Tudor Revival styling, most notable in the half-timbering of its gable front façade, steeply pitched roof, and Tudor-arched windows. The Observatory Building, Eastman's largest work in Des Moines, stood as the city's first skyscraper. Nine stories in height with an additional 5-story tower, this brick curtain and iron frame building was demolished in 1938.

### **HISTORIC NAMES**

Although commonly known by the earlier name of Redhead & Wellslager Block, the author of this nomination decided that the razing of this block and its replacement with the present one recommended the use of Earle & LeBosquet Block as its historic name.

P. S. LeBosquet and his contemporaries spelled his family name variously. Some newspaper accounts dropped its prefix. Some spelled it with a space after the prefix. Sometimes, newspapers spelled it "Bosquet." This nomination standardizes the spelling of this name as "LeBosquet." This is generally how the man himself spelled it, and how it appears in city directories.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

I. M. Earle's name is another source of orthographical variety. Newspapers frequently spelled it "Earl," but this nomination opts for "Earle" since it also appears that way in city directories.

**REPRESENTATION IN OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEYS**

John Maves and his students from Iowa State University surveyed the Earle & LeBosquet Block in 1975. This project classified the building stylistically as "Renaissance commercial" and evaluated it as follows: "The structure is not of architectural significance but contributes to the general visual quality of its surroundings." (Maves) This evaluation tells more about the quality of the Maves survey than that of the edifice under examination.

In 1983, Sylvia I. Raabe prepared a compilation of survey information for the City of Des Moines focusing on Court Avenue. This report was the first reliable effort to provide context for the Court Avenue area and paved the way for subsequent, intensive surveys of individual buildings in it. Tellingly, this report concluded that the "façade appears to be 1910-1915," a conclusion altogether understandable, given its *avant-garde* design. (Raabe: 108)

In 1995, Patricia A. Eckhardt conducted a reconnaissance survey of downtown Des Moines, prepared an historic context for the area, and completed a series of Iowa Site Inventory Forms. The Earle & LeBosquet Block was not included among the surveyed resources. (Eckhardt)

In 1995, the City of Des Moines compiled a listing of architecturally and historically significant structures in downtown Des Moines from information gathered over the previous ten years. This document raised the likelihood that other, as yet unidentified historic and architecturally significant buildings might remain in downtown Des Moines.<sup>21</sup> The Earle & LeBosquet Block is an example of such a building.

**POTENTIAL FOR HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY**

Although the site's potential for archaeological research is, as yet, unevaluated, there appears to be little in this regard. Excavation for the construction of this block in the 19<sup>th</sup> century substantially disturbed the entire site.

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<sup>21</sup> Zingsheim, n.p.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND REGISTRATION**

The transmission of new architectural ideas from Chicago to Des Moines during the late 19th and early 20th centuries is a subject of considerable interest. These new ideas included stylistic influences and technological innovations. Further research should explore these topics in depth.

The scope and status of C. E. Eastman's work in Illinois, Utah, and Iowa are research topics deserving further research.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

### **VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

W 22F E 44F & S 88F E 22F LOT 7 BLK 21 FORT DES MOINES.

### **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The National Register boundary contains all land historically associated with this resource.

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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

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407-409 Court Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Looking northwest  
William C. Page, Photographer  
September 4, 2007
2. Earle & LeBosquet Block  
407-409 Court Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Looking southeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
September 4, 2007
3. Earle & LeBosquet Block  
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Des Moines, IA 50309  
Looking southeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
June 6, 2008
4. Earle & LeBosquet Block  
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Detail of sign  
Looking east  
William C. Page, Photographer  
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William C. Page, Photographer  
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6. Earle & LeBosquet Block  
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Looking northeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
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Earle & LeBosquet Block, Polk County, Iowa.

7. Earle & LeBosquet Block  
407-409 Court Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Detail of front facade column  
Looking northeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
September 4, 2007

Printed on HP Premium Plus Photo Paper, high gloss paper using HP 84/85 ink.