

**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 HUBBELL BUILDING

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number 904 Walnut Street N/A not for publication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.)

David J. Solke  
Signature of certifying official/Title  
**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA**  
State or Federal agency and bureau

June 28, 2004  
Date

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**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) \_\_\_\_\_

Edsa H. Beall  
Signature of Keeper

8/11/04  
Date of Action

Hubbell Building  
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many lines as apply)

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

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one line)

- 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
		structures
		objects
1	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**

0

**6. Function or Use**

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

COMMERCE/TRADE/business  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

COMMERCE/TRADE/business  
VACANT/NOT IN USE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

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

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Skyscraper  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
walls Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof Asphalt  
other Glass  
Metal  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

Hubbell Building  
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)

COMMERCE

**Period of Significance**

1913-1954

**Significant Dates**

1913

1948

1950

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson

Brooks Borg Architects Engineers

**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

\_\_\_\_\_

Hubbell Building  
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 15 | 4 47 | 600 | 46 | 03 | 750 |

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

organization Hubbell Realty Company date January 25, 2004

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 Hubbell Realty Company

street & number 6900 Westown Parkway telephone 515-243-3228

city or town West Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50266

**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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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

The Hubbell Building is a 10-story commercial building constructed on a reinforced concrete and steel frame with concrete-reinforced, 12-inch thick, brick curtain walls and concrete and tile floors. Completed and first occupied in 1913, the exterior of the building was remodeled in 1948 and 1950. A 2-story addition, built on the west elevation in 1946-1947, is nonextant. The condition of the Hubbell Building is excellent, having been well maintained since its original construction.

The Hubbell Building is situated on portions of Lots 3 and 4 in Block 2 of the West Fort Des Moines plat. This parcel measures about 86' x 141' (east-west frontage by north-south frontage). The area not taken up by the building footprint is used for parking.

Downtown Des Moines was originally platted on a grid oriented to the Des Moines River, which flows slightly northwest to southeast through the downtown. Consequently, downtown is skewed to the cardinal points of the compass. To the north of Grand Avenue, the city's plats were aligned to those cardinal points. An irregularity occurs in the downtown plats and streets where these two patterns abut. This irregularity occurs four blocks to the north of the Hubbell Building, where 9th Street bends to the northeast. The Raccoon River is located about 1.5 miles south of the Hubbell Building. A viaduct along 9th Street links the downtown side of the river with its south side for vehicular traffic.

**BUILDING**

The footprint of the Hubbell Building on the ground floor is rectangular in shape. It measures 133' x 78'. The footprint of the skyscraper itself is basically L-shaped. The bottom stroke of the "L" faces Walnut Street. It measures 78' x 67'. The vertical stroke of the "L" faces 9th Street. It measures 133' x 78'. A wing at the southwest corner of the building fills out the rectangular footprint of the ground floor. It measures 66' x 32' and is one story in height. A 12-story elevator and stairwell house is situated near the northwest corner of the skyscraper. It measures 20' x 45'. (See Continuation Sheet 7-7.)

Exterior

The east façade of the Hubbell Building possesses six bays. Its north façade possesses four. The brick curtain walls are constructed of mottled, brownish-red colored brick.

Originally, a series of seven terra cotta pilasters defined these bays on the east elevation, and five of them defined the bays on the north. These pilasters were removed in 1950 (see below) and replaced with dark green stone panels. A series of three ribbon windows are situated in each of the upper story bays on the east elevation. This same window configuration is repeated on the central two bays of the north elevation, but the outer two bays feature only paired windows. The main entrance to the skyscraper is situated in the most westerly bay on the north elevation.

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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

The Hubbell Building features 1/1 double hung wood sash throughout the building except on the south elevation and portions of the west elevation where 2/2 double-hung wood sash are situated. The fine condition of the 1/1 sash suggest that they might date to the building's remodeling in the 1940s; and, if so, replicated the building's original fenestration design.

The east and north elevations of the Hubbell Building are clad with a mottled brownish-red colored face brick. Nine courses of light brown-red brick are situated between the storefront of the building and its upper floors. A slightly projecting cast concrete band on the east and north elevations separates the ninth from the tenth floor of the building.

The south and west elevations of the skyscraper are constructed of a mottled, creamy yellow-colored brick. This brick and the brownish-red brick of the east elevation are laid as quoinwork on the southeast corner of the skyscraper. The 1-story wing is constructed of brick, but it has been painted a cream color.

A metal fire escape is located on the south elevation of the building. A 1.5-story, metal chimney stack is situated at the southwest corner of the skyscraper. A flagpole is situated above the elevator and stairwell house.

Interior

Virtually the entire interior of the Hubbell Building has been altered. In 1987, the lobby on the ground floor was remodeled, a series of ground floor retail areas were replaced with offices, and two new elevators were installed, albeit in the original elevator shafts. New wall surfaces and finishes replaced earlier ones. The second floor was remodeled in 2002, when the skywalk system was installed in the building.

The upper floors of the Hubbell Building originally included an L-shaped central hall with small offices feeding off this hall. Most of this interior plan has been altered. Although the floor configurations vary somewhat from floor to floor, all of the partitions of the original central hall and its gypsum walls have been removed. No original woodwork remains extant. Some floors feature one large, open space, while other floors have been reconfigured with reception areas, offices, and workrooms. Many of these floor plans and their accoutrements date from the 1980s and 1990s. The building's original arrangement of service spaces remains intact--two elevators at the west end of the buildings, staircases from the ground floor to the roof at its southwest corner, and rest rooms located on the half-landings of the staircases.

Integrity

The exterior of the Hubbell Building, as remodeled in 1948 and 1950, retains high integrity. Sometime in the past, some wall failure occurred in the southwest corner of the skyscraper. Portions of the upper floors of the south and west elevations were rebuilt to remedy this situation. A slightly different

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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

colored brick was used for these repairs, and the difference between the color of this brick and the original walls is noticeable.

The Hubbell Building was connected to the Des Moines skywalk system in 2002. This system consists of a number of pedestrian hallways, situated above the city's streets, which link downtown Des Moines buildings together at the second floor level. The skywalk link to the Hubbell Building is attached to the exterior of the building's south and west elevations. The south portion is situated above a vacated public alley and is constructed of brownish-colored brick to harmonize with the east elevation of the Hubbell Building. The west portion of the skywalk is painted in shades of creamy-yellow to match the west elevation of the building. This skywalk does not impair the integrity of the Hubbell Building because it is situated at the rear (south elevation) and side (west elevation) of the building and does not impede the view of its primary facades.

#### **ALTERATIONS**

Following World War II, the Hubbell Building Company launched a series of projects to update the Hubbell Building and to remedy deferred maintenance. Designed by Brooks Borg, the successor firm to the building's original architects, these projects changed the building's look from one influenced by Academic styling to one influenced by a watered-down expression of International or Art Moderne styling. None of these projects impaired the structure's signal element as a skyscraper—its height.

#### Skyscraper Exterior

By the late 1940s, the Hubbell Building showed some signs of deterioration. Portions of the original terra cotta cornice broke loose from the building and fell ten stories to the pedestrian walk below. In response, the Hubbell firm commissioned Brooks Borg to remedy this safety hazard and to update the building's appearance.

The firm's design stripped the entire terra cotta cornice and tenth floor wall cladding from the building and replaced them with smooth concrete panels without the slightest hint of a cornice. The selection of natural-colored cast stone for these panels gave a further nod to contemporary architecture's preference for light-colored surfaces. The light color at the top of the building draws the eye upward, particularly because it contrasts so dramatically with the building's dark brick walls. The original plans for this remodeling, dated 1948, remain extant.

Two years later, in 1950, the Hubbell Building Company commissioned Brooks Borg to remodel the building's storefront. This design stripped the terra cotta pilasters and wall cladding from the first two stories. The terra cotta pilasters were replaced with dark green-colored panels of stone. Cast concrete panels replaced the terra cotta window surrounds on the second floor and the Luxfer-type glass transoms on the first floor above the storefront windows. These concrete panels featured slightly projecting outside frames, which lent a certain cantilevered effect to the new storefront. The repeated

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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

use of cast concrete harmonized the 1950 design with that of 1948. The original plans for the 1950 remodeling remain extant.

Architectural historians might wish to study the 1948 and 1950 redesigns of the Hubbell Building within the context of Brooks Borg's post-World War II opus and to evaluate them as an expression of the firm's then contemporary design proclivities.

Annex (nonextant)

In 1946, the F. M. Hubbell & Son Company, Inc., commissioned Brooks Borg Architects Engineers, the successor firm of the Hubbell Building's original architects, to design an addition to it. Original plans for this "annex," as it was called, remain extant. This 1-story addition was constructed on the west side of the building, faced Walnut Street on the north, and bore street address numbers 906-910. At the time the skywalk link to the Hubbell Building was constructed in 2002 (see above), the annex was razed.

Photographic Documentation

The Hubbell Building Company documented each of these projects with a series of photographs. (See Continuation Sheets 7-10, 7-11, 7-12, 7-13, 7-14, 7-15, and 7-16 for some of them.) A list of these photographs is on file in the Hubbell Collection at the State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

**SITE**

The immediate site of the Hubbell Building is generally level in topography. The building is sited in the heart of downtown Des Moines, along Walnut Street, one of the downtown's three principal east-west thoroughfares. The Federal Home Loan Bank occupies the city block immediately to the north. A grouping of Proudfoot & Bird (and successor firm) designs cluster nearby along 10<sup>th</sup> Street. These buildings include the Hotel Fort Des Moines (NRHP) at 10<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Streets, the Masonic Temple (NRHP) at 1011 Locust Street; and First Methodist Episcopal Church (NRHP) at 10<sup>th</sup> and Pleasant Streets. This axis along 10<sup>th</sup> Street presents an impressive vista to the north. The Proudfoot & Bird buildings, which edge the street, lend grandeur to it. First Methodist Church with its massive dome stands on the crest of a ridge at the terminus of this street and provides a visual terminus to the axis.

Relatively few commercial buildings within Des Moines' central business district are presently listed on the National Register. They include the Homestead Building at 303 Locust Street; Hawkeye Insurance Company Building at 209 4th Street; Des Moines Saddlery Company Building at 307 Court Avenue; Hotel Fort Des Moines at 10th and Walnuts Streets; Masonic Temple Building at 1011 Locust Street; Rumely-Des Moines Drug Company Building at 110 SW 4th Street; and Iowa Des Moines National Bank Building at 520 Walnut Street. Properties listed on the National Register within the city's East Side business district include the Northwestern Hotel at 321 East Walnut Street; the Studio



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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

Building at 524 East Grand Avenue; the Teachout Building at 500-502 East Locust Street; the Hohberger Building at 506 East Locust Street; and the Syndicate Block at 501 East Locust Street. The City of Des Moines has designated Mies van der Rohe's 1960s Home Federal Savings and Loan Building, at 601 Grand Avenue, as a local landmark.

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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

## SITE MAP

ARROW LOCATES PROPERTY



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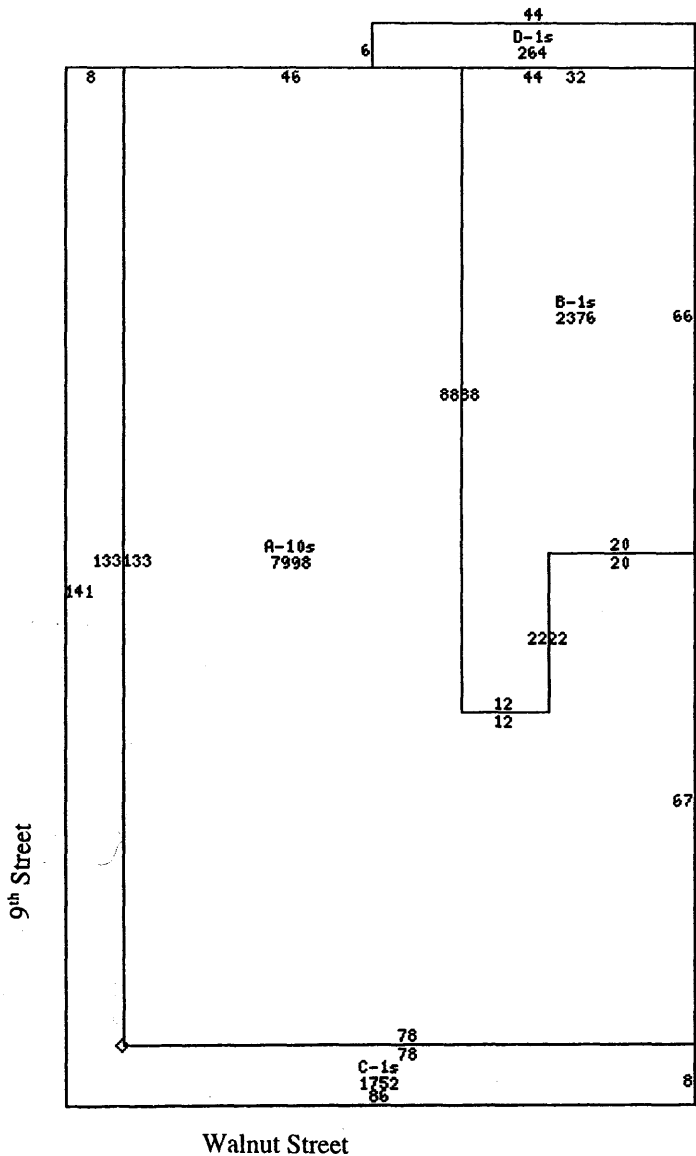
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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

## FOOTPRINT OF BUILDING AND SITE



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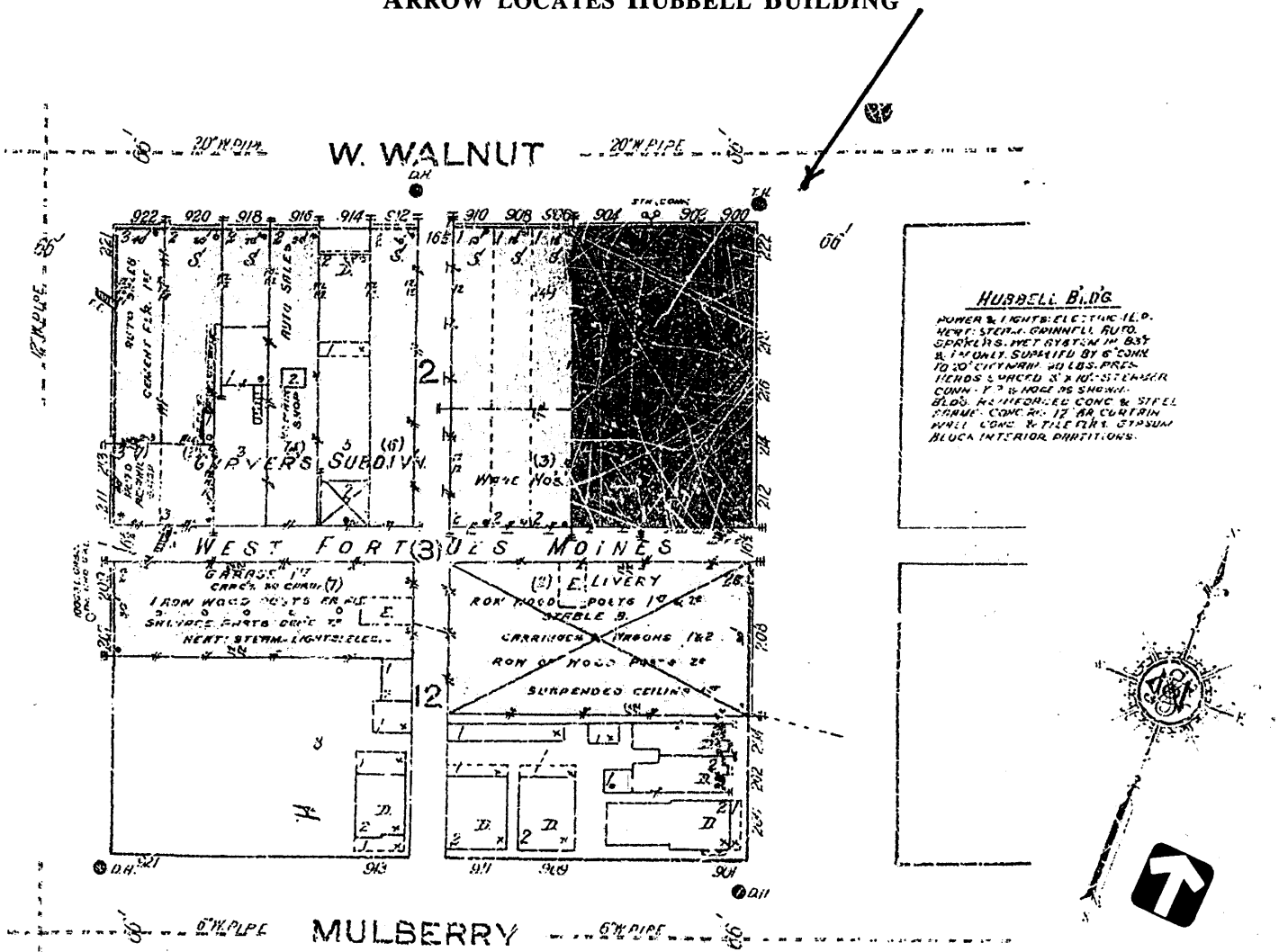
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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

## 1920 FIRE INSURANCE MAP

ARROW LOCATES HUBBELL BUILDING



The Hubbell Building (black rectangle) is singled out for verbal description on this map.  
A livery stable is now located to the south of the building.

Source: Sanborn Map Company, Des Moines, 1920, p. 11.

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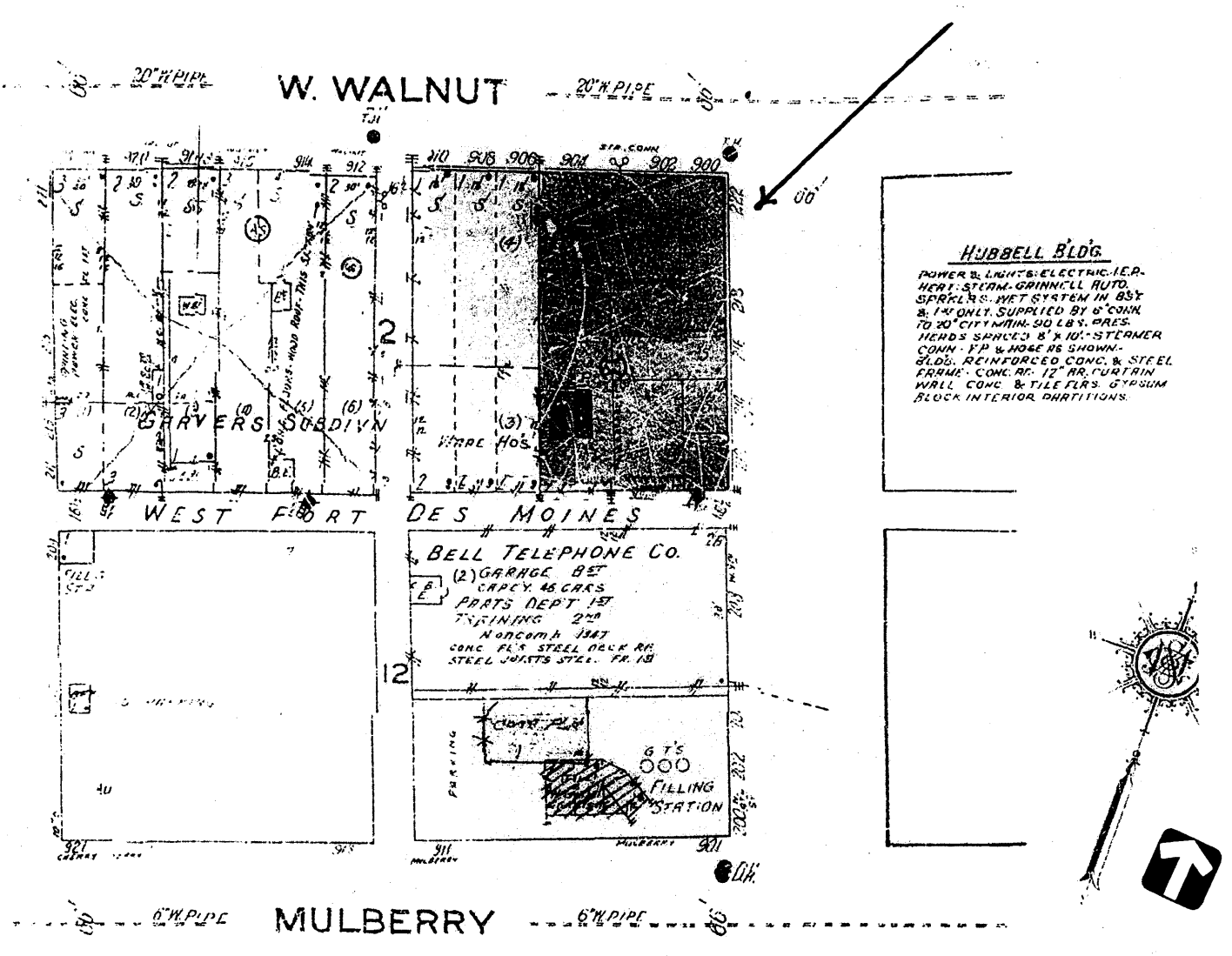
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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

## 1920 FIRE INSURANCE MAP UPDATED

### ARROW LOCATES HUBBELL BUILDING



This updated 1920 map predates the construction in 1946 of the annex on the west elevation of the Hubbell Building. A series of three stores are shown on the site, as they also appeared in 1920.

Source: Sanborn Map Company, Des Moines, 1920-Updated, p. 11.

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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

**“HUBBELL OFFICE — 1930”**



B. F. Flenniken (left), George Zeller (center), and R. S. ("Sam") Ruemper (right)  
in the offices of F.M. Hubbell & Son Company, Inc. on the second floor of the Hubbell Building.

Source: *Hubbell Trust Scrapbook #1*, p. 11, Hubbell Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

## HUBBELL BUILDING CIRCA 1946

ORIGINAL STOREFRONTS ON WALNUT AND 9<sup>TH</sup> STREETS



Source: Hubbell Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

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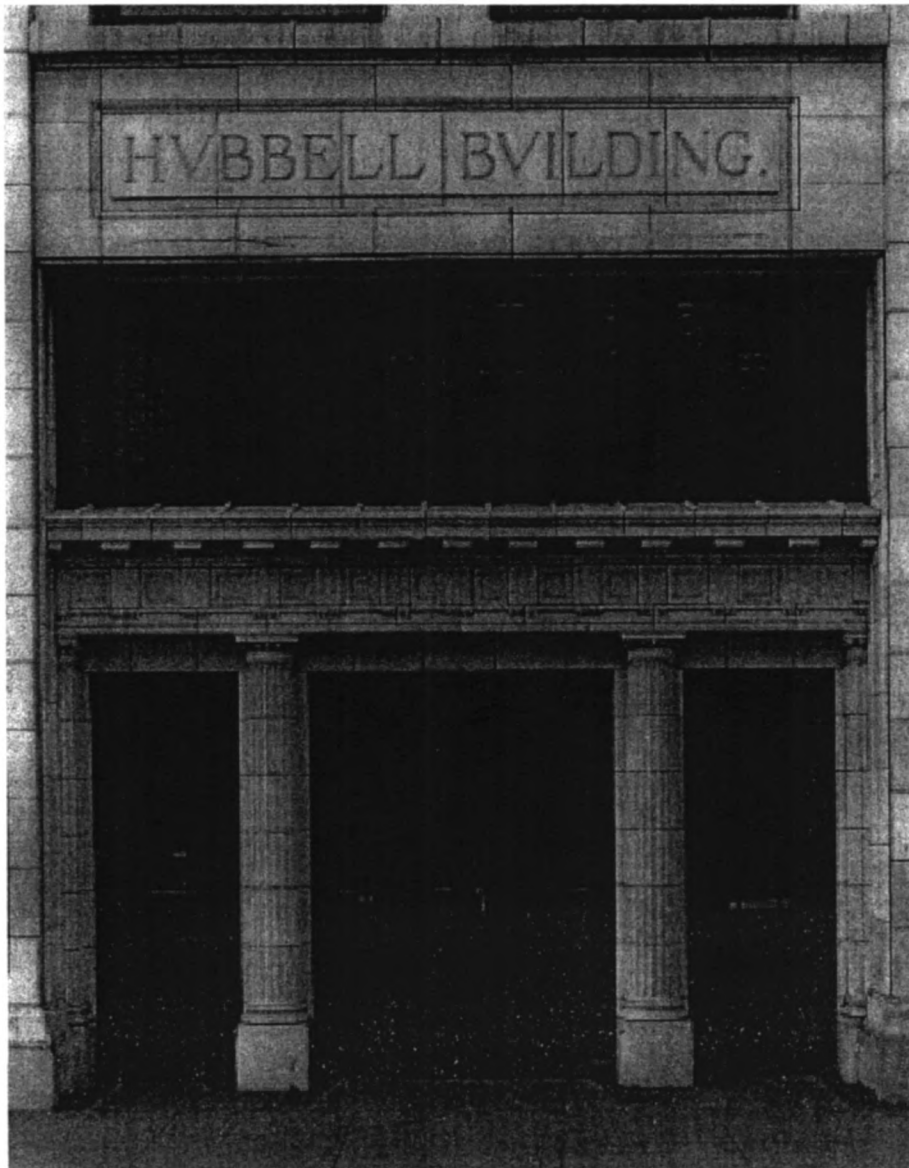
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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

**HUBBELL BUILDING CIRCA 1946**

**ORIGINAL ENTRANCE AT 904 WALNUT STREET**



Source: Hubbell Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.



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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

## HUBBELL BUILDING CIRCA 1947



Looking southwest, this photograph pictures the Hubbell Building before its exterior remodeling in 1947. The photograph was featured in a *Floor Craft*, a national trade association publication in 1948, and was later colored and printed in this postcard format.

Source: *Hubbell Trust Scrapbook #1*, Hubbell Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

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## HUBBELL BUILDING 1948

SHOWING FAILURE OF CORNICE AT NORTHEAST CORNER OF BUILDING



Source: Hubbell Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

**HUBBELL BUILDING 1950**

**TOP STORY REMODELING COMPLETE AND STOREFRONT REMODELING IN PROGRESS**



Source: Hubbell Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

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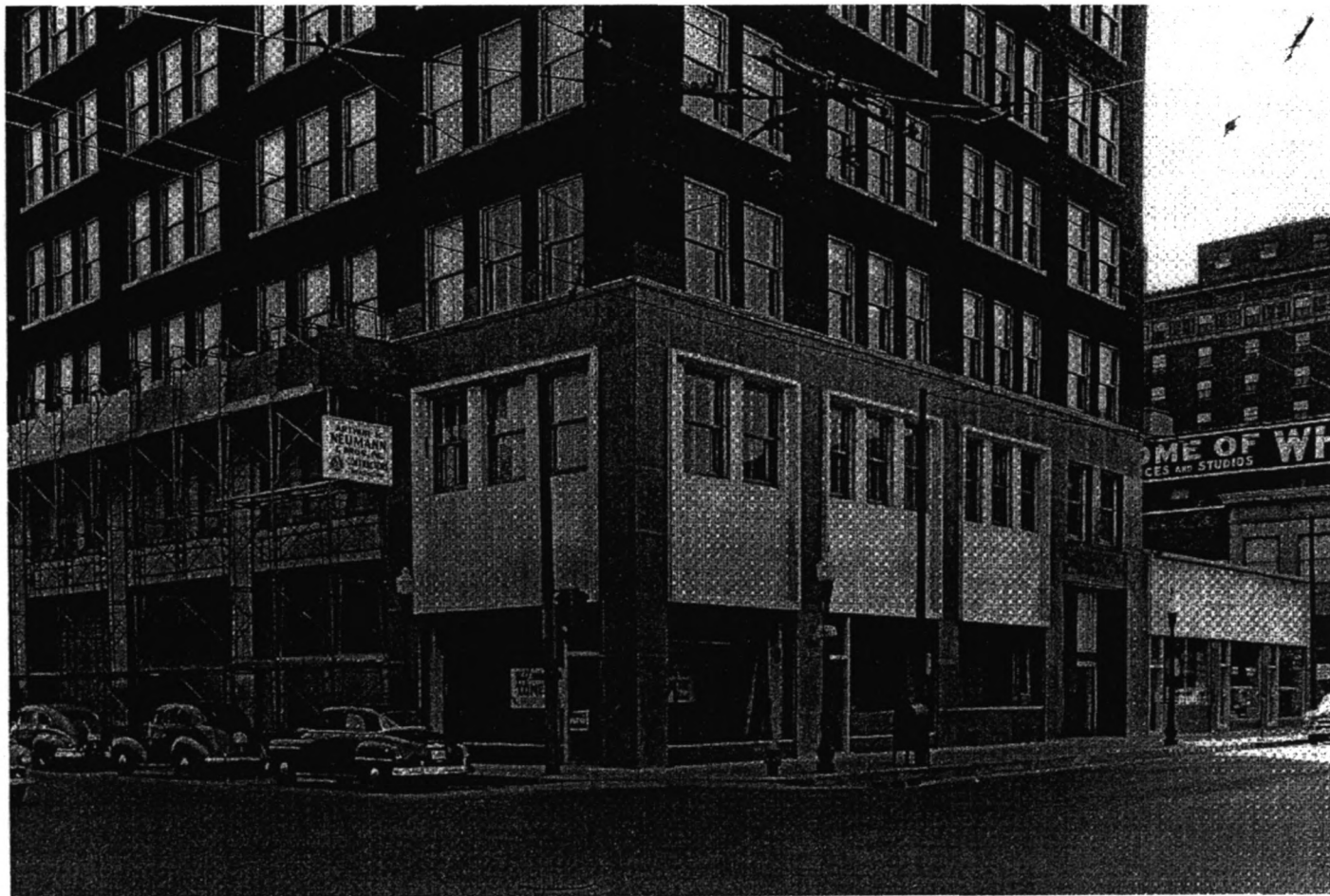
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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

### HUBBELL BUILDING 1950

STOREFRONT REMODELING IN PROGRESS



Note the nonextant, 1-story addition to the Hubbell Building, completed in 1946, at right.

Source: Hubbell Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

**SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Completed and first occupied in 1913, the Hubbell Building is locally significant, under National Register Criterion A, because of its association with commerce. This 10-story building calls attention to the Hubbell dynasty and its business interests. These businesses included the F. M. Hubbell, Son, & Company, Inc., a real estate firm established in 1887; a trust known as the Frederick M. Hubbell Estate, established in 1903 to administer many of the family businesses; the Hubbell Realty Company, established in 1913 to manage the Hubbell Building; and more than a dozen other corporate entities. These business interests continued as a driving force in central Iowa long after the death of F. M. Hubbell, the founder of the family fortune and "Iowa's Richest Man," in large part because of the business acumen of his sons, F. C. Hubbell, G. C. Hubbell, the extended members of the Hubbell family, and the Frederick M. Hubbell Estate, a legal instrument, which protected the fortune from dispersion. The second floor of the Hubbell Building headquartered these many interests. The rest of the building was leased and became a center for the corporate offices for central Iowa's building industry.

The period of significance, under Criterion A, for the Hubbell Building is 1913 to 1954. These years witnessed its historic service as the headquarters of the Hubbell Family business interests.

The property contains one resource for this nomination—the edifice itself, which is counted as a building.

**BACKGROUND**

F. M. Hubbell

Frederick Marion Hubbell (1839-1930) took a leading part in building up the financial and industrial institutions of Des Moines. Hubbell's ambition, business acumen, and drive were largely responsible for the establishment of the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa; for contributing to the city's emergence as a national insurance center; for the establishment of the Des Moines Waterworks; for the amassing of great real estate holdings; and for siring a dynasty of children, who followed in his footsteps and excelled in all of these and other fields of business endeavors. Hubbell accomplished much of this during an era when government lacked regulatory powers and provided only basic services for the common weal and in a business climate, where capitalists operated under *laissez faire*, with only the restraint provided by fierce competition, a *modus operandi* in which Hubbell excelled and which earned him both repugnance and grudging respect among his competitors.

F. M. Hubbell was born in Connecticut and relocated to Des Moines in 1855, shortly after the incorporation of the community as a town. He joined a land office and then joined a law and real estate firm with J. S. Polk and P. M. Casaday, first as a clerk and then as a partner in 1862. Hubbell was admitted to the bar in 1858. For a time, he relocated to Sioux City, Iowa, where he was involved in the organization of government in the newly established Woodbury County, Iowa.

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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

Upon his return to Des Moines, Hubbell rejoined the partnership with Polk and Casaday. When Casaday retired, the firm was reorganized as Polk & Hubbell. The partners realized the importance of transportation for the nation's growing economy. Together they organized a railroad line from Des Moines to Ames, which later became part of the Northwestern system. In 1882, they assisted in financing the construction of a railroad line from Albia, Iowa, to Des Moines and later a branch line from Clive, Iowa, to Boone. Hubbell was also active in the establishment of streetcar service in Des Moines. Hubbell mistakenly believed that narrow gauge railroads held a key for transportation's future, one of the few, albeit big, mistakes of his financial career.

In 1871, Polk & Hubbell formed the Des Moines Waterworks Company. The firm's new plant replaced the cisterns in the city's streets, which hitherto had supplied public water to the city, with water drawn from the Raccoon River by the "Holly" system, a modern pumping machine. Polk & Hubbell dissolved their partnership in 1887 amid friction. It required two years to separate their entwined business interests. (Mills: 100) In 1888, Hubbell incorporated the F. M. Hubbell & Son Company, Inc., to manage his holdings. He also acquired all of Polk and Hoyt Sherman's shares in the Equitable for a controlling interest in the company. (Mills: 119-120) Sherman had served as a founder of the firm and one of its officers.

Hubbell's greatest achievement was the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa. He organized the firm in 1866 and 1867, became its secretary and first policyholder, and president of the Equitable in 1888, a position that he held until 1907. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the Equitable ranked 25<sup>th</sup> in volume of assets among the nation's 700 life insurance companies (Mills: 118) and had become the second largest insurance company in Iowa. The Frederick M. Hubbell Estate held the majority of its shares and was officed on the second floor of the Hubbell Building.

F. C. Hubbell

Frederick Cooper Hubbell (1864-1947) was the eldest child of F. M. For more than forty years, he served as an executive with the F. M. Hubbell & Son Company, Inc., and was, indeed, the "son" in the firm's name. F. C. became vice-president of the company in 1907 and served the firm until 1946, when he retired. Under his watch, the company's assets increased from \$6 million to \$325 million. (*Des Moines Tribune*, May 3, 1947)

F. C. Hubbell's other corporate positions included:

Trustee, Frederick M. Hubbell Estate  
President, Des Moines Terminal Railroad  
President, Des Moines Western Railway  
Director, Iowa Des Moines National Bank  
Director, Equitable of Iowa Life Insurance Company

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The Frederick C. Hubbell branch of the Hubbell Family included his two sons, Frederick Windsor Hubbell (1891-1952) and James Windsor Hubbell (b.1895). F. W. became president of the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa in 1939. He also served as an officer and director of the F. M. Hubbell Son & Company, Inc., trustee of the F. M. Hubbell Estate, and a director of the Bankers Trust Co., as well as a noted breeder and exhibitor of Shorthorn cattle. (*Des Moines Register*, December 14, 1952). J. W. was Secretary-Treasurer of the Equitable, became the chairman of the board of the Bankers Trust Company of Des Moines, and was the last survivor of the original trustees of the Hubbell Estate. James Windsor Hubbell, Jr. (b.1922), his son, headed the Hubbell Realty Company; and his son, James Windsor Hubbell III (b.1948) presently serves as its C.E.O. The Hubbell Realty Company was officed in the Hubbell Building until 1990.

G. C. Hubbell

Grover Cooper Hubbell (1883-1956) was the youngest child of F. M. After graduation from Culver Military Academy, Lawrenceville Academy, and Yale University, where he earned an engineering degree, Grover returned to Des Moines. He was closely associated with F. M. Hubbell & Son Company, Inc., and served on the board of directors of the Equitable Life Insurance Company for 45 years, as vice president beginning in 1930. At the time of Grover's death, the Equitable was the second largest insurance company in Iowa.

G. C. Hubbell's other corporate positions included:

Trustee, Frederick M. Hubbell Estate  
Treasurer, Hubbell Realty Company  
Treasurer, F. M. Hubbell, Son & Company, Inc.  
Secretary-treasurer and director, Hubbell, Inc.  
Director, Hubbell Building  
Vice-president and director, Des Moines Western Railway Company

G. C. Hubbell was also involved in numerous other enterprises. During World War I, he and V. L. Clark partnered in the Des Moines Saw Mill Company, which fabricated gunstocks for the U.S. Army and the Allied Forces. In 1955, Grover sold his interests in sand and gravel and the Crown Concrete Company to the Hallett Construction Company. (*Des Moines Register*, December 10, 1956) Grover participated actively in many charitable, educational, and civic causes, becoming a life member of Drake University's board of trustees after serving as its chair from 1931 to 1949. (Pease: 98-99) Grover grew up at Terrace Hill, the family's mansion in Des Moines, and lived there continuously from 1924 until his death.



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Beulah C. Hubbell Wachtmeister

Countess Beulah Wachtmeister, (1874-1958) the only daughter and middle child of F. M., married Count Carl Axel Wachtmeister, a Swedish diplomat, in 1899 in the most glittering social event in Des Moines' history. This marriage provided the Hubbell family with the luster of international prestige.

The Wachtmeisters subsequently lived in various parts of the world, while the count served his country at diplomatic posts. They retired to Paris, France. The count died in 1935. Beulah continued to live in Paris. She made occasional visits to Des Moines and relocated to New York City during the German occupation of France in World War II. She died in Paris in 1958, and her ashes are buried at the Wachtmeister family home in Sweden. Fredrik Hans Carl Wachtmeister, Beulah's only child, served as a member of the board of trustees of the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa.

**COMMERCE**

The Hubbell Building is historically significant because of its role as the headquarters of F. M. Hubbell & Son Company, Inc., Iowa's premier investment firm during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Hubbell Building officed this and other firms associated with the financial interests of the Hubbell Family. The Hubbell Building also served as the headquarters of numerous companies associated with the building trades and professions in Iowa, such as Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson, the architects who designed it.

F. M. Hubbell & Son Company, Inc.

The F. M. Hubbell & Son Company, Inc., owned and managed the real estate and railroad holdings of F. M. Hubbell and his heirs. Formed in 1888, as noted above, the original corporation consisted of F. M. Hubbell, F. C. Hubbell, his son, and H. De Vere Thompson, F. M.'s longtime business associate and brother-in-law. The assets of the firm included a narrow gauge railway, stock in the Des Moines Northwestern Railway, stock in a railroad line to Boone, Iowa, stock in the Des Moines Waterworks, coal companies, and other interests.

The firm's real estate holdings received annual net rents in 1925 totaling \$242,865, one example of its size. (Mills: 221) By 1956, the firm's real property included about 75% of Des Moines' Factory Addition, a large tract of land south of downtown Des Moines. The improvements on this land included, among others, the Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel Company, Des Moines Steel Company, New Monarch Machine & Stamping Company, Carr & Moehl & Company, Iowa Concrete Block & Material Company, and Crown Concrete Company. (*Des Moines Register*, December 10, 1956).

The holdings of this firm and that of the Hubbell Estate were intertwined. In 1955, for example, these entities together held the title to the land at 5<sup>th</sup> and Grand in Des Moines, where the Insurance Exchange Building stands. (Mills: 153)



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Hubbell Building Company

Another of the family's businesses, the Hubbell Building Company, was incorporated on December 13, 1913. This corporation served as the property managers of the Hubbell Building. Its responsibilities included the collection of rents from the building's tenants, overseeing the building's maintenance, and conducting the general accounting for the building. The Hubbell Building Company was housed on the second floor of the Hubbell Building. In 1978, the Hubbell Building Company merged by mutual agreement with F. M. Hubbell, Son & Company, Inc. Financial records of the Hubbell Building Company remain extant at the State Historical Society of Iowa. They include ledgers, cash journals, payroll summaries, lease and rental registers and other company records. This collection also includes the financial records of the Walnut Building Company, another firm associated with Hubbell business interests. Recently, the Hubbell Realty Company donated this collection to the State Historical Society of Iowa, where the Hubbell Project Archivist is indexing it.

Building Trades and Professions

From its opening day, the Hubbell Building served as the headquarters of numerous firms associated with the building trades and professions in Iowa. Built at a time when the population of Des Moines and central Iowa and its building activity was greatly expanding, the building benefited from this climate of economic growth. As one of the city's first skyscrapers, the building offered potential tenants the prestige of modern American architecture, as well as an office address associated with a name widely recognized and respected.

An arbitrary slice of time—the year 1923—reveals the numerous and diverse representation of building trades and professions officed in the building:

**HUBBELL BUILDING TENANTS ASSOCIATED WITH BUILDING TRADES & PROFESSIONS**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Office Location</u>
The Reliance Brick Co.	312-314
Kewanee Boiler Co.	315
The Barber Asphalt Co.	316
Ever Hot Heater Sales Co.	316
Portland Cement Association	404-405
Iowa Cement Stave Silo Association	404-405
Iowa Concrete Products Association	404-405
The Permanent Building Society	406
Concrete Engineering Co.	406
Permanent Construction Magazine	406
Twin City Brick Co.	406
Central Sand & Gravel Co.	511
Arthur H. Neumann & Co.	516-520
American Radiator Co.	521-522

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**HUBBELL BUILDING TENANTS ASSOCIATED WITH BUILDING TRADES & PROFESSIONS (cont.)**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Office Location</u>
Tower Materials Co.	522
Kewanee Private Utilities Co.	621
Stokely Lumber Co.	504-706
General Electric Co.	712-714
Edison Lamp Works	712-714
Union Iron Works	721
Hawkeye Portland Cement Co.	803-807
Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson	810
Hawkeye Engineering Co.	820-821
Wayne Tank & Pump Co.	822A
Koehring Co.	910

Source: City Directory, 1923.

Although tenants in the Hubbell Building came and went over the years, an appreciable number remained in the building for long periods of time. Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson, an original tenant and longest leasee, officed in the building for 90 years. The F. M. Hubbell & Son Company, Inc., remained almost as long.

As one might expect in Des Moines—one of the nation’s leading insurance centers—numerous insurance-related businesses officed in the Hubbell Building. The 1923 city directory lists at least nine of them, including the Des Moines headquarters of the Aetna life Insurance Company of Hartford, Connecticut, which occupied much of the third floor. Railroads also officed in the Hubbell Building, including the Des Moines Terminal Company and the Des Moines Western Railway (Hubbell Family interests); the Erie Railroad Company; and the Chicago Great Western Railroad Company. Other occupants included companies associated with grain, coal, farming, educational, and financial businesses. An analysis of tenant lists for years other than 1923 would reveal variations in these and other occupants, but the research done for this nomination suggests that the year 1923 provides a representative slice of time for the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As the years moved on, the Hubbell Building’s tenants changed. Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson and its successor firms grew and expanded their offices to include the entire seventh and eighth floors of the building. The Hubbell Family businesses, which had occupied rooms on the second floor for many years, moved to the top floor. Today, the upper eight floors of the building remain vacant, and plans for their residential adaptive reuse are in progress.

Equitable Building

In the popular imagination, the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa Building at 602 Locust in Des Moines is the commercial structure most closely associated with the Hubbell family—not the

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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

Hubbell Building. This is because of the Equitable Building's prominence as the tallest skyscraper in Des Moines for many years. While it can be said that the Equitable of Iowa was F. M. Hubbell's greatest achievement, the headquarters of the Hubbell family's many other business interests remained in the Hubbell Building, even after the Equitable was constructed. Within this context, it can be said that the Equitable Building calls attention to the Hubbell interests in the insurance business, while the Hubbell Building calls attention to the multiplicity of their other enterprises.

**ARCHITECTURE**

The Hubbell Building is of architectural interest because of its skyscraper design and associations with the Des Moines architectural firm of Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson. The Hubbell Building was one of the earliest skyscrapers to appear on the Des Moines skyline and among the first in Iowa designed by an Iowa firm. Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson's success with this building not only proved to the Des Moines business community that local architects possessed competence with this new architectural form, the Hubbell Building also helped established Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson's reputation as "Iowa's Pre-eminent Architectural Firm." (Long 1981) This and its successor firms subsequently won most of the commissions for the other skyscrapers built in Des Moines during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Skyscraper

The Hubbell Building is of architectural interest within the context of Des Moines skyscrapers because it helped inaugurate this new architectural form to the community and because it demonstrated the architectural skills of Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson, its designer.

For the purpose of this nomination, "skyscraper" is defined as a 10-story or taller building. This double-digit number appears to have served historically as a threshold for this architectural form during its advent in Des Moines. Other localities may have defined the word in other ways, including East Des Moines, where the Teachout Building has been thus described. (Cackler)

The advent of skyscrapers to Des Moines altered the city's skyline. Previous to their appearance, the Iowa State Capitol had dominated the city. Located at the top of a hill above the downtown, the capitol's dome soared above the city's central business district, which clustered at its foot in the flood plain of the Des Moines and Raccoon River valleys. Des Moines resembled Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Capitol's visual pre-eminence there. Now—with a host of office and hotel skyscrapers rising above the flood plain—downtown Des Moines possessed a commercial skyline like other modern American cities.

The Hubbell Building helped inaugurate this new architectural form in Des Moines. Before the construction of the Hubbell Building, few skyscrapers stood in the city. The following table lists these and other historic skyscraper office buildings in Des Moines:

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**SKYSCRAPER OFFICE BUILDINGS IN DES MOINES BEFORE 1945**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Notes and Construction Date</u>
Equitable Life Assurance Building	6 <sup>th</sup> & Locust St.	8 story, 1891; 4 stories added, 1911*
Observatory Building	402 Locust St.	9 story + 5 story tower, 1896*
Fleming Building	604 Walnut St.	10 story, 1907
Hubbell Building	904 Walnut St.	10 story, 1913
Hippee Building	6 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	12 story, 1913
Des Moines Register Building	715 Locust St.	13 story, 1913-1915
Insurance Exchange Building	421 Grand Ave.	10 story 1923
Equitable Life Insurance Co. of Iowa Bldg.	604 Locust St.	18 story, 1923
Liberty Building	418 6 <sup>th</sup> Ave.	12 story, 1925
Des Moines Building	405 6 <sup>th</sup> Ave.	14 story, c. 1931
Northwestern Bell Telephone Building	604 9 <sup>th</sup> St.	10-story, 1929

\* Nonextant

Some might add the six-story Teachout Building (NRHP, 500 East Locust Street, built in 1912) to this list of skyscrapers; and, perhaps within the context of East Des Moines, this might be justified. (Cackler) Still, for downtown Des Moines proper, double-digit stories, like the Fleming Building's ten floors, formed the threshold for the skyscraper appellation.

Within this context, the Hubbell Building showcased Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson's considerable architectural skills in skyscraper design and paved the way for more commissions. The Hubbell Building demonstrated that a local firm could successfully design a safe, efficient, and attractive skyscraper. It is true that Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson had designed an addition to the Equitable Life Assurance Building (a.k.a. Bankers Trust Building) in 1911 at the request of the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa. That building at 6<sup>th</sup> and Locust had been constructed as an eight-story office building in 1891 from a design by the architectural firm of Andrews, Jacques & Rantoul. Still, Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson itself had not yet designed a building with double-digit stories. Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson confirmed their pride in the Hubbell Building by leasing offices for their headquarters in it, a decision which effectively added the luster of the Hubbell name to the architects' letterhead.

The Des Moines architectural firm of Proudfoot & Bird and its successor partnerships became "Iowa's Pre-Eminent Architectural Firm." (Long 1981) Their notable designs in Des Moines included the Polk County Courthouse, First Methodist Episcopal Church, Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa Building, Hubbell Building, Des Moines Building, Iowa-Des Moines National

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Bank, Masonic Temple, Liberty Building, Drake University Stadium and Fieldhouse, Des Moines Register Building, and Roosevelt and East High Schools among many others.

Proudfoot & Bird's 1913 commission for the Hubbell Building provided the firm with the opportunity for the first time to demonstrate its solo skills at skyscraper design. Prior to this time, few local architects had prepared designs for the city's handful of skyscrapers. The firm's success with the Hubbell Building demonstrated to local businesses Proudfoot & Bird's competency with this new architectural form. Over the next twenty years, the firm and its successors won most of the commissions for other skyscraper office buildings constructed in the downtown. They included the following:

*PROUDFOOT & BIRD, ET AL. SKYSCRAPERS IN DES MOINES*

<u>Property</u>	<u>Firm</u>	<u>Date</u>
Bankers Trust Company Building*	Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson	1891
Hubbell Building	Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson	1913
Des Moines Register Building	Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson	1915
Hotel Fort Des Moines	Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson	1919
Equitable Life Insurance Co. of Iowa Bldg.	Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson	1923
Iowa-Des Moines National Bank#	Proudfoot, Rawson, Souers & Thomas	1930-1932
Des Moines Building	Proudfoot, Rawson, Brooks & Borg	c. 1939

\* Originally designed by Andrews, Jacques & Rantoul and built in 1891 as an 8-story building. The top four floors, designed by Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson, were added in 1911

# Built in 1930-1932 as a 3-story building but designed and constructed with the structural capability to support a skyscraper. The top stories remain unimplemented.

When other skyscrapers were built downtown—compare the two lists directly above—as likely as not out-of-state architects working for out-of-state firms designed them. The Northwestern Bell Telephone Building at 604 9<sup>th</sup> Street (built in 1929 from a design by George Prine) is an example. Another exception, which proves the rule, is the Insurance Exchange Building, designed by the short-lived partnership of Boyd & Moore. These men trained at Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson.

Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson's design for the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa Building at 604 Locust Street became the firm's landmark skyscraper. Completed in 1924, the Equitable Building was the tallest structure in Iowa; and, according to one source, "the highest office building west of the Mississippi River at the time it first was occupied." (Mills: 118) The Equitable remained the tallest

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structure in Iowa for more than four decades. A 90-foot tower tops the 18-floor building. The distance from the top of this tower to the street measures 319 feet. (*Ibid.*) Moreover, the Equitable Building reaffirmed the architects' close connection with F. M. Hubbell not only as their landlord in the Hubbell Building, but as their client for that 1913 edifice, which had given Proudfoot & Bird the opportunity to demonstrate their expertise in skyscraper design.

The success of the skyscraper office building in Des Moines encouraged local hoteliers to follow suit. Between 1919 and 1930, a series of three skyscraper hotels arose in the downtown. Competition to be the tallest stimulated their design.

**SKYSCRAPER HOTELS IN DES MOINES**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Hotel Fort Des Moines	10th & Walnut	11 story, opened in 1919
Savery Hotel	4th & Locust	11 story, opened in 1919
Hotel Kirkwood	4th & Walnut	12 story, opened in 1930

The Hotel Kirkwood was intentionally designed to be taller than the other two big downtown hotels.

Integrity

The Hubbell Building retains its integrity as a skyscraper. The essential element of that architectural form—the building's full ten story height—remains unimpaired by alteration.

It could be argued that the building calls attention to post-Academic styling as redesigned by Brooks Borg Architects Engineers in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Such an interpretation might serve as a launching pad for further research and evaluation.

**REPRESENTATION IN OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEYS**

Barbara Beving Long surveyed the Hubbell Building in 1981 as part of *Iowa's Pre-Eminent Architectural Firm: the Architectural Legacy of Proudfoot and Bird, et al, in Iowa*, a research report prepared for the State Historical Society of Iowa. In that survey, she evaluated the Hubbell Building under Criterion C as not National Register eligible but did not evaluate the building under Criterion A.

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 Hubbell Building was not included among the surveyed resources. (Eckhardt: 33-34)

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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. Surprisingly, the Hubbell Building is not included on this list, which belies the claim that "this survey provides a comprehensive list of architecturally and historically significant structures in the Downtown area" (Zingsheim: n.d.), and raises the likelihood that other historic and architecturally significant buildings remain as yet unidentified in downtown Des Moines.

**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 building in 1912 disturbed the entire site.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND REGISTRATION**

The rise of the skyscraper in the State of Iowa deserves further research. As architectural historians flesh out this subject, this information should be used to re-evaluate the architecture of the Hubbell Building and its role within this statewide context.

The opus of Proudfoot & Bird and its successor firms is noticeably lacking in hotel designs to its credit in Des Moines. The subject deserves scholarly investigation.

This nomination does not claim significance for the Hubbell Building under Criterion B. Although this building calls direct attention to F. M. Hubbell's business activities (Terrace Hill, his mansion residence in Des Moines, calls direct attention to his personal life), this nomination selected Criterion A as a point of reference. F. M. Hubbell created a dynasty in Des Moines, and the Hubbell Building calls attention to the subsequent significance of the Hubbell Family to the city's commercial history. Other historians might evaluate the building's significance under Criterion B.

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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

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## MAPS

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## ORAL HISTORY

Hubbell, James W. III; Informant interview with William C. Page; July 8, 2003. Hubbell is a fifth generation member of the F. M. Hubbell family and the C.E.O. of Hubbell Realty Company. He shared information about the Hubbell Family and its business interests.

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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

East one-half of Lots 3 and 4 in Block 2 of the West Fort Des Moines plat of the City of Des Moines.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

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

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Hubbell Building, Polk County, Iowa.

**LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

1. Hubbell Building  
604 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50311  
Looking southwest  
William C. Page, Photographer  
March 31, 2003
  
2. Hubbell Building  
604 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50311  
Looking northwest  
William C. Page, Photographer  
March 31, 2003
  
3. Hubbell Building  
604 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50311  
Looking northeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
March 31, 2003
  
4. Hubbell Building  
604 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50311  
Looking southeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
March 31, 2003