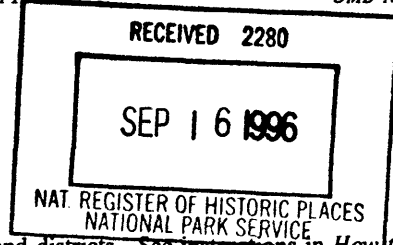


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



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 SIXTH AND FOREST HISTORIC DISTRICT  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Northeast & northwest corners of 6th and Forest Avenues N/A not for publication  
city or town Des Moines N/A vicinity  
state Iowa code IA county Polk code 153 zip code 50314

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.)  
Patricia Christman DSTRP 9-12-96  
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) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Keeper Linda McClelland Date of Action 10/25/96

Sixth and Forest Historic District  
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)

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

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

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

|              |                 |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
| 6            |                 | buildings  |
|              |                 | sites      |
|              |                 | structures |
|              |                 | objects    |
| 6            | 0               | Total      |

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

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

Towards a Greater Des Moines

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Richardsonian Romanesque

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Commercial Style

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Glass

Metal

**Narrative Description**

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

Sixth and Forest Historic District  
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)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

Circa 1891-circa 1941  
Circa 1891-circa 1924

**Significant Dates**

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**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

Sixth and Forest Historic District  
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 47 825 | 46 05 820 |

Zone Easting Northing

2 | 15 | 4 47 825 | 46 05 885 |

Zone Easting Northing

3 | 15 | 4 47 920 | 46 05 885 |

Zone Easting Northing

4 | 15 | 4 47 920 | 46 05 820 |

**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 River Bend Neighborhood Association date June 16, 1995  
street & number 520 East Sheridan Avenue telephone 515-243-5740; FAX 515-243-7285  
city or town Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50313

**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 Various (see attached list)  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state Iowa zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**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 Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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Page 1

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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

Prominently sited at the intersection of Forest Avenue with 6th Avenue, one of the main arteries into downtown Des Moines from the north, the Sixth and Forest Historic District is a suburban commercial node established during the late Nineteenth Century. As 6th Avenue climbs upward from the flood plain of the Des Moines River and the city's central business district, it crests around University Avenue. Beyond University, the topography of 6th Avenue undulates several times before it reaches the bluffs adjacent to the Des Moines River, approximately nine blocks north of University. Forest Avenue intersects 6th Avenue near one of the crests of one of these undulations two blocks north of University.

The intersection of 6th and Forest became a commercial node in North Des Moines for several reasons. Forest Avenue served as an important east-west street in the city of North Des Moines (although its service in this regard was somewhat restricted because of its irregular layout, which jogs several times east of 6th). Forest Avenue was one of the streets in North Des Moines, which, after considerable public debate, was paved with brick at an early date. Although Forest did not become a streetcar route, the intersection occupies a central location within North Des Moines, easily accessible from the densely built-up residential sections that surround it on all sides. For several of these reasons, Forest Avenue also became a corridor of preference for semi-public institutions, particularly churches.

The Sixth and Forest Historic District possesses a dual site orientation. While some buildings face 6th Avenue, the massive Temple Block faces Forest Avenue.

**SIXTH AND FOREST HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Boundaries

The edges of the Sixth and Forest Historic District are bounded by public rights-of-way--Forest Avenue on the south, the alley between 6th Avenue and 7th Street on the west, the alley between Forest Avenue and Clark Street on the north, and by a measured property line on the east.

These boundaries contain all land improved for commercial purposes at this node during the period of significance for this nomination. Although two historic buildings in this node are nonextant (1412 and 1414 6th Avenue), the city lots they occupied are currently unimproved. For this reason, these lots are not included in the resource count.

Resources

The Sixth and Forest Historic District contains six resources. All resources are contributing to the historic district.

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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

These historic resources include the following:

1. Temple Block  
601-611 Forest Avenue

This is counted as one contributing building to the historic district. The Temple Block is individually eligible for nomination to the National Register.

2. Odd Fellows Hall  
1401-1403 6th Avenue

This is counted as one contributing building to the historic district.

3. Commercial Building  
1405 6th Avenue

This is counted as one contributing building to the historic district.

4. Orvis Block  
1407-1409 6th Avenue

This is counted as one contributing building to the historic district.

5. Commercial Building  
1404 6th Avenue

This is counted as one contributing building to the historic district.

6. Ruth & Clark Building  
1406-1410 6th Avenue

This is counted as one contributing building to the historic district.

### General Architectural and Site Description

Resources within the Sixth and Forest Historic District possess a uniformity of brick employed as building material. There are no frame buildings in this historic district.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

Within this uniformity, however, a variety of color and texture exists. The Orvis Block features a yellow-colored brick with a textured finish for its walls, as well as a purple-brown colored brick for ornamental trimwork. The Temple Block employs an orange-red colored brick with a smooth finish. The building at 1404 6th Avenue employs brick of brown, orange, and purple mottled color with a striated finish.

Resources within the historic district also exhibit a uniformity of height. No building has more than two stories. Three resources are one-story in height, and three resources are two stories in height.

Uniformity within the historic district is also conveyed through a similarity of architectural style and a general period of contemporaneous construction. Although detailing varies from building to building, the overall design of these resources was conceived within the general format of the so-called commercial box. Roofs are flat, facades are symmetrically arranged, and cornices at the top of many buildings help relate them to one another. The fact that the two later buildings in the district (the Ruth & Clark Building at 1406, 1406, and 1410 6th Avenue and the building at 1404 6th Avenue) are also conceived within this format contributes to their compatibility to the earlier ones.

The general level of integrity within the Sixth and Forest Historic District is good. The storefronts of the Temple Block at 601-611 Forest Avenue all retain their original cornices and second floor windows. While the first floor storefronts have been considerably altered, these changes constitute in-fill of the original storefront bays and appear to be reversible. Although the buildings facing 6th Avenue have suffered more alterations (such as boarded-over second floor windows), the cornices generally remain intact. It should be noted that historic commercial architecture in Des Moines is rarely encountered in good condition. Many of these historic buildings have either been razed or radically remodeled. The Sixth and Forest Historic District remains intact by comparison.

The site of the Sixth and Forest Historic District is the intersection of 6th and Forest Avenues. The Temple Block and the Odd Fellows Hall stand on the northwest and northeast corners of that intersection. The massive presence of these buildings has historically anchored this suburban commercial node and visually announced that this site is a place of importance.

The site orientation of this historic district is dual. The Temple Block faces Forest Avenue with a secondary facade on 6th Avenue. The Odd Fellows Hall faces 6th Avenue with a secondary facade on Forest Avenue. Other buildings within the historic district face 6th Avenue exclusively.

Constructed mostly in the 1890s, the Sixth and Forest Historic District was the largest suburban commercial node built in the metropolitan area during the Victorian period. The Temple Block is outstanding in this regard because of its large size and is without equal within this context.

Another historic commercial node survives in North Des Moines. Located at the intersection of 6th and College Avenues, the integrity of this node has been substantially impaired. For that reason, this commercial node is evaluated as not eligible for nomination to the National Register as an historic district. In spite of this determination, the presence of two commercial nodes in historic North Des

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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

Moines points out one reason why that community was known as "the big suburb" during the Victorian period.

Although other suburban commercial nodes were also constructed in Des Moines during this period, none was as large as the Sixth and Forest Historic District. In Sevastopol, for example, SE 6th Street (formerly Main Street) was developed as a commercial node in the block south of Hartford Avenue. University Place also possessed such a suburban commercial node, stretching along University Avenue between 24th and 25th Streets. A more diluted commercial node was established in Capitol Park in the vicinity of East 9th Street and Cleveland Avenue.

The Sixth and Forest Historic District is immediately recognizable as a commercial node. The facade lines of its buildings abut the sidewalks and are clearly differentiated from residential resources in the area, which are set back from the sidewalks and possess front yards. The exclusive employment of brick for the district's buildings also helps differentiate it. Most residential buildings in the immediate area are constructed of frame.

Temple Block

Constructed circa 1895, the Temple Block is a two-story, brick, commercial building facing south. The first floor contains the following five commercial rooms (listed east to west):

601 Forest Avenue  
603 Forest Avenue  
605 Forest Avenue  
609 Forest Avenue  
611 Forest Avenue

Although designed to house five separate businesses, the rooms at 601 and 603 6th Avenue have historically housed one business. Street number 607 Forest Avenue contains an entrance on the first floor to access the series of apartments, which stretches across the entire second floor of the building. A canted entrance is located on the southeast corner of the building. Inset into the first floor facade of the building, the overhang is supported by a square column of brick.

Each of the storefronts on the first floor consists of a bulkhead, under a storefront window with transoms, under an iron I-beam lintel, supported on each side by a brick pier. Although each of the storefront windows have been foreshortened and in-filled, the original cavities remain intact. Removal of cover-up materials in the transoms may reveal original glass in that area. The iron I-beam lintels are embellished with metal rosettes. This lintel is surmounted by a course of denticulated brick. The canted entrance at 601 provides access from both Forest and 6th Avenues. The entrance at 607 to the apartments features a Romanesque arch of brick.



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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

The second floor features 13 bays, four of which contain triplet windows, while the other nine contain single windows. Each of these windows possesses a 1/1, double hung sash configuration and aluminum combination storms. It is unclear if wood window materials are also present. These windows feature cast stone sills. The windows are capped with arched hood molds, worked in brick, with extensions from them forming a horizontal band. This belt course features a denticulated brick pattern like the course separating the first and second floors. The Temple Block is capped with a brick cornice embellished with bricks laid in denticulated patterns, reflecting similar brickwork to the belt course described above.

Although the exterior walls of the west and north elevations have been painted red, the south and east facades retain their original brick finishes. Here the surface of the brick is smooth finished, while that used on the west and north elevations is common.

This building is in good condition.

Odd Fellows Hall

Constructed circa 1894, the Odd Fellows Hall is a two-story, brick, commercial building with rooms for lodge meetings on the second floor. The original red brick of the building has been painted dark brown.

The first floor storefront has been extensively altered, including installation of new brick bulkheads and supporting piers, and corrugated metal now covers the storefront windows. The original canted entrance to the building remains intact on the southwest corner. This entryway is supported by a cast iron column. A series of transom windows, framed in wood, remains intact above the storefront windows. These transoms extend across the entire west facade of the Odd Fellows Hall and a portion of the south facade, as well as across the facade of the building at 1405 6th Avenue.

The second floor of the Odd Fellows Hall contains six bays symmetrically conceived in two sets, three bays on the south and three bays on the north, each set flanking a central panel, which is defined by brick pilasters. Each set of bays possesses a wide, central window flanked by two narrower windows. Although corrugated metal now clads all these windows, original materials may exist underneath them. Each of these windows on the second floor is surmounted with hood molds worked in brick. The central windows feature arched hood molds, while the narrower windows feature rectangular ones. The second floor is surmounted by a brick cornice worked with denticulation. A pediment is situated above the central panel, standing somewhat higher than parapets on either side. This pediment is capped with cast stone coping embellished with scroll details.

This building is in fair condition.

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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

Commercial Building (1405 6th Avenue)

Constructed circa 1895, this is a one-story, brick, commercial building. The storefront is now infilled with modern materials. Although this is very distracting, it is not uncommon in Des Moines for commercial buildings to have such alterations on the first floor.

The storefront window is surmounted by transom windows, framed in wood and extending across the facade of both this building and the Odd Fellows Hall immediately adjacent to the south. A brick cornice, original to the building, is situated above the transom at 1405 6th. It features a series of two sets of dentils one surmounting the other. The parapet of this building is capped with concrete coping.

This building is in fair condition.

Orvis Block

Constructed circa 1898, the Orvis Block is a 2-story, brick, building with two commercial rooms on the first floor, and apartments on the second. The building features polychrome brick. The facade employs mottled orange-yellow colored brick with architectural detailing worked in purple-colored brick. The exterior walls of the rear and portions of the north elevation are clad in red brick.

The first floor of the building features three bays. The central bay contains an entrance to the second floor, while the flanking bays each, originally, contained inset entrances themselves flanked by windows. Of these latter bays, the southern one has been infilled with concrete block. The windows in the north bay have also been infilled with the same material, but the entrance remains intact. Although these alterations are very distracting, the original brick piers supporting these three bays remain intact. The first floor facade is now painted light brown.

Two courses of purple-colored brick separate the first and the second floors. The second floor features four bays, each containing window cavities. These windows have been boarded over, and it is not clear if original building materials remain extant beneath them. This purple-colored brick is also employed as rectangular-shaped hood molds above the windows and as a denticulated band extended across the facade as an extension of the window lintels. The building features a cornice of yellow brick embellished with dentils worked in the purple-colored brick. A cast stone plaque reading "Orvis/Block" is situated above the second floor windows in the center of the facade.

This building is in fair condition. The building might be vacant, and one window of double hung sash is missing on the north elevation of the second floor.

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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

Commercial Building (1404 6th Avenue)

Constructed circa 1924, this is a one-story, brick, commercial building. It is conceived within the framework of the commercial style of architecture. As such, it compliments its neighbor adjacent to the north, the Ruth & Clark Building at 1406, 1408, and 1410 6th Avenue.

The facade of 1404 is virtually the same design as that at 1410. The 1404 building, however, retains a higher degree of integrity. This includes the original finishes of its mottled colored brick, in shades of brown, purple, and orange. Although the storefront window has been replaced with infill materials and the entrance door has also been replaced, their original cavities remain intact. The original bulkhead under these cavities also remains in place.

The building is in good condition.

Ruth & Clark Building

This 1-story, brick building was built in two phases. As completed, it possesses a three-bay facade, each bay corresponding to street numbers 1406, 1408, and 1410 6th Avenue. The rooms at 1406 and 1408 were constructed circa 1919, while the room at 1410 was constructed circa 1924. The Ruth & Clark Building works in conjunction with the commercial building abutting it on the south at 1404 6th Avenue. Together all four of these units form a united architectural composition. The history of their construction and of their use, however, is different. For this reason, the Ruth & Clark Building and the 1404 unit are analyzed and evaluated separately.

Each of the three units, which make up the Ruth & Clark Building, contains a storefront window, giving the building the feeling of three separate rooms. However, they might have functioned originally as one space for the Ruth & Clark heating and furnace business. Although the storefronts are now infilled with modern window materials, these changes have not altered the original cavities. The entrance to this building is at 1410 6th Avenue. The original brick bulkheads on all these storefronts windows are now covered with metal siding, but the original materials may remain intact underneath it. Although the facade of the unit at 1410 was virtually the same originally as the unit at 1404, the integrity of the 1410 facade is higher, as can be seen in the description of it below.

A brick parapet surmounts the storefront. The parapet at 1406 and 1408 6th Avenue is higher than the one at 1410. The former two feature rectangular panels worked in brick under the parapet. The room at 1410 features a stylized cornice, worked in brick, under the parapet of shorter height. The design of this room at 1410 was originally the same as the commercial building at 1404 6th Avenue (as noted above). This parapet was originally capped with a tile coping, but it has been replaced with sheet metal. The original brick finish on the facade of the Ruth & Clark Building has been covered with gray paint. A concrete block addition is situated at the rear of this building. This addition is unobtrusive because it is not visible from the street.

The building is in good condition.

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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

**HISTORICAL EVOLUTION**

In the late Nineteenth Century, the present Sixth and Forest Historic District replaced in the late Nineteenth Century an earlier commercial node on this site. Constructed of impermanent frame buildings, this node also served commercial purposes. Some idea of its configuration can be gained from an historic map of 1891 (see Continuation Sheet 7-10), but historic photographs of it have not yet been discovered.

The redevelopment, which produced the present commercial node, occurred quickly. Most of the present buildings were constructed within a few years of one another. The Temple Block, for example, dates from the 1890s. The Odd Fellows Hall, the commercial building at 1405 6th Avenue, and the Orvis Block also date from this period. The continued commercial viability of this node can be seen in the construction during the early 1920s of another series of commercial buildings in it. Several other nonextant buildings also stood within the historic district on sites now unoccupied. These included two 1-story, frame commercial buildings at 1411 and 1411-1/2 6th Avenue (see Continuation Sheet 7-12).

A selected list of businesses occupying the buildings in the Sixth and Forest Historic District indicates the important commercial function this node played in North Des Moines. In 1901, for example, these businesses included two meat markets, a cobbler, a jeweler, a feed store, a bakery, and a coal and wood yard (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1901). While the staple goods might be expected, the presence of a jeweler indicates a level of sophistication and prosperity commensurate with North Des Moines' image as a genteel section of the city.

**EXCLUDED RESOURCES**

The Sixth and Forest Historic District is abutted by other resources on the north associated with commercial enterprise but of latter day construction. These resources have been excluded from the boundaries of the historic district because their construction postdates the period of significance for this nomination.

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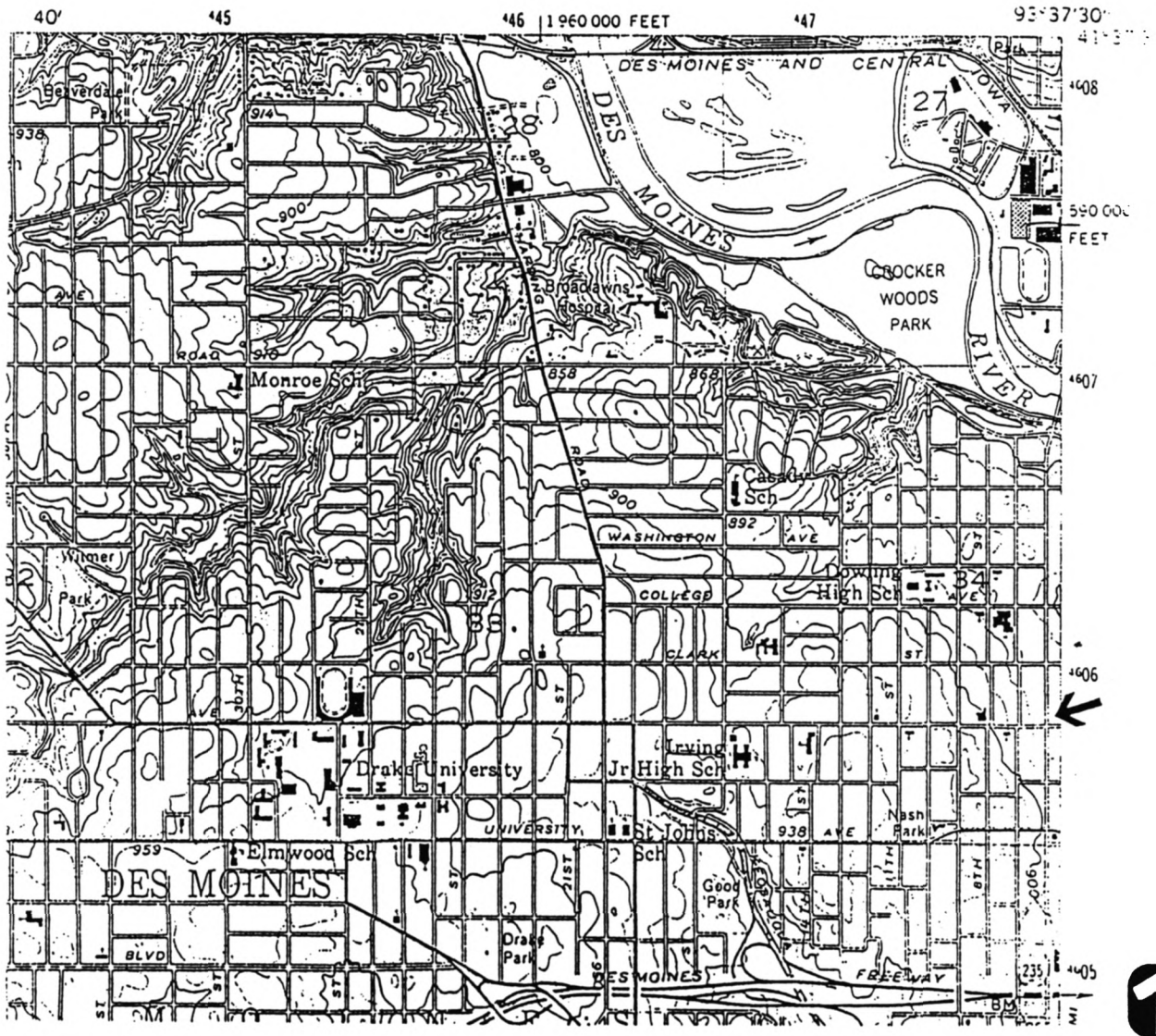
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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

## SITE MAP

ARROW LOCATES PROPERTY



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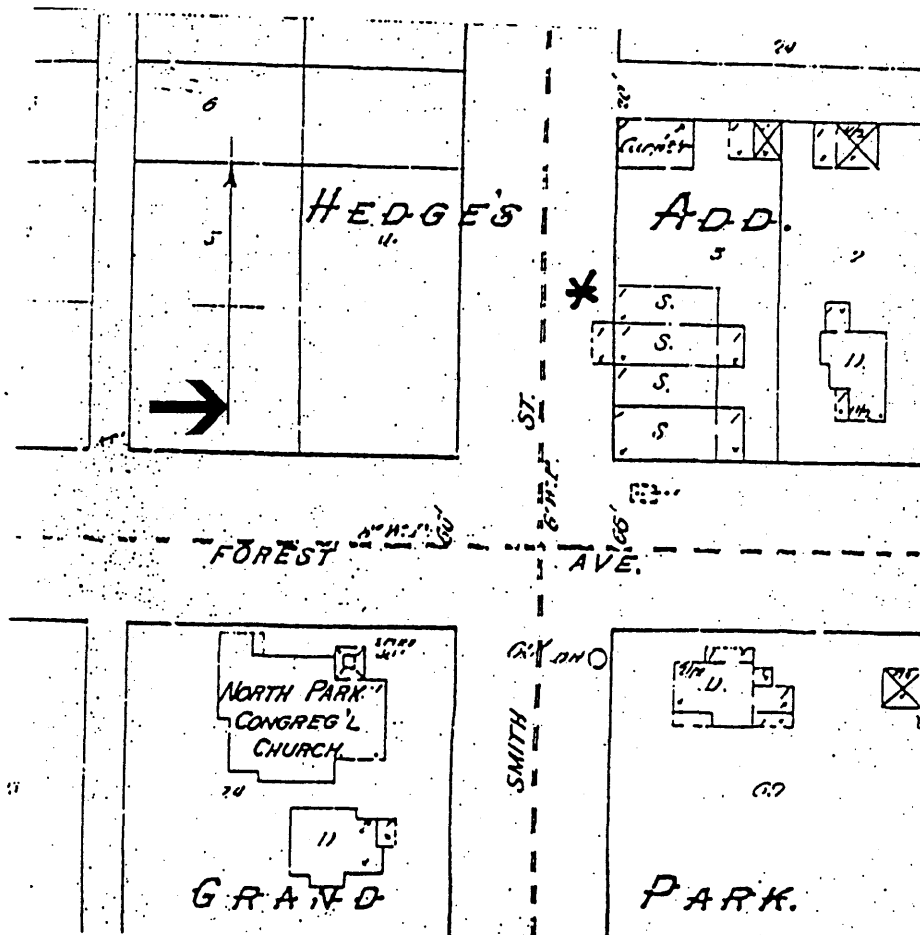
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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

## 1891 PLAT MAP

ARROW SHOWS UNDEVELOPED PROPERTY AT TEMPLE BLOCK SITE.

ASTERISK INDICATES FRAME COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS.



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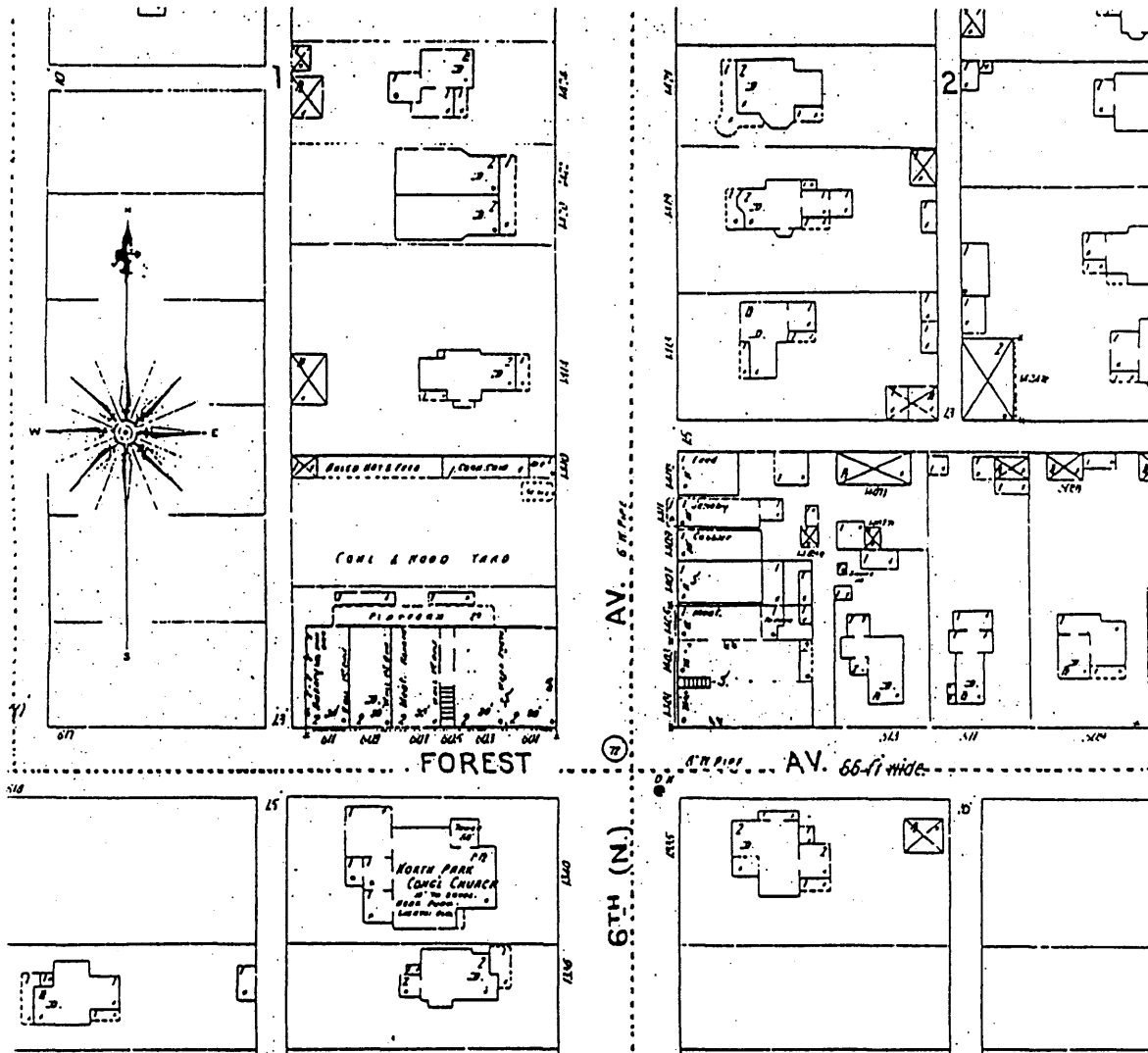
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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

## 1901 PLAT MAP



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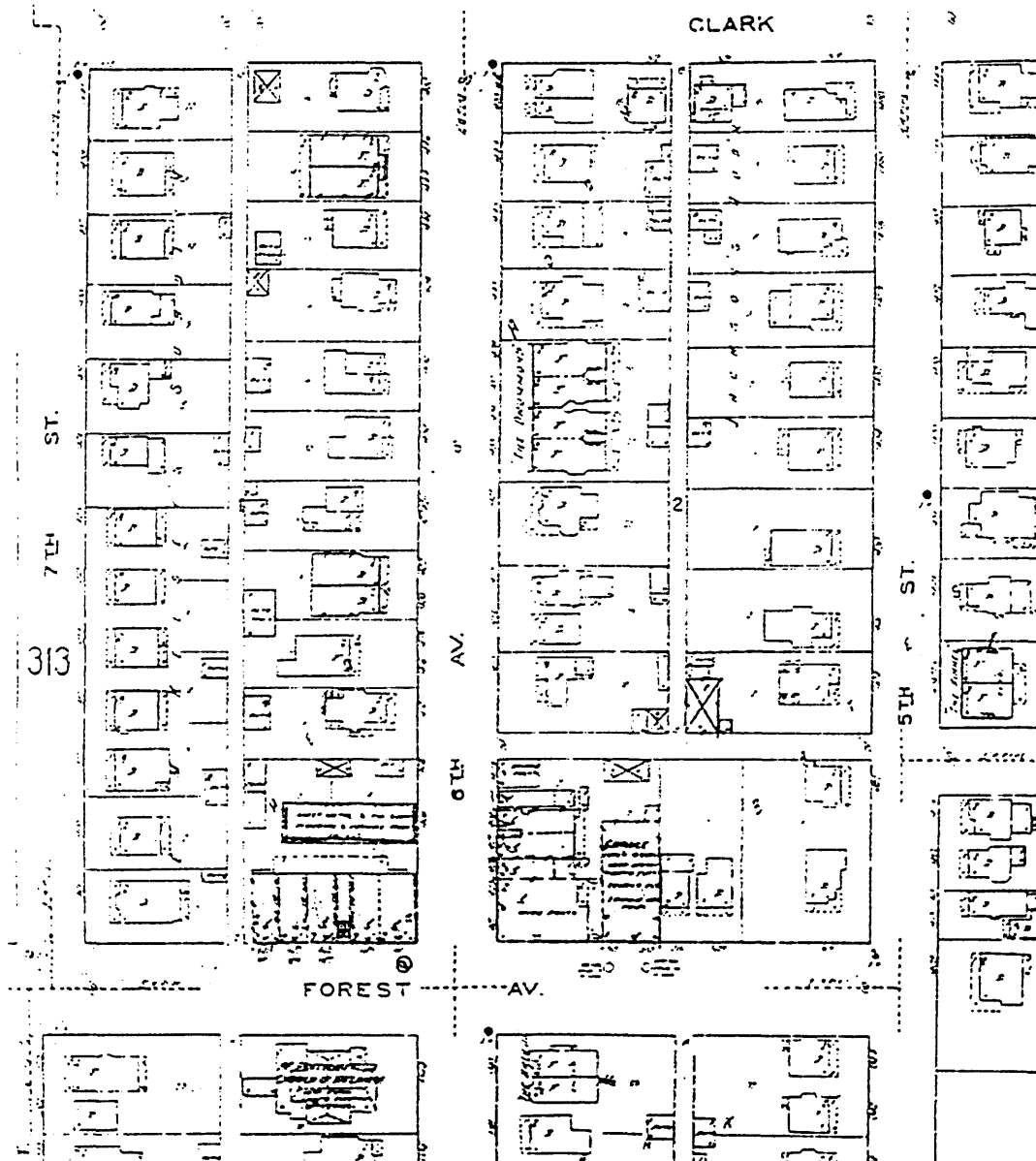
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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

## 1920 PLAT MAP





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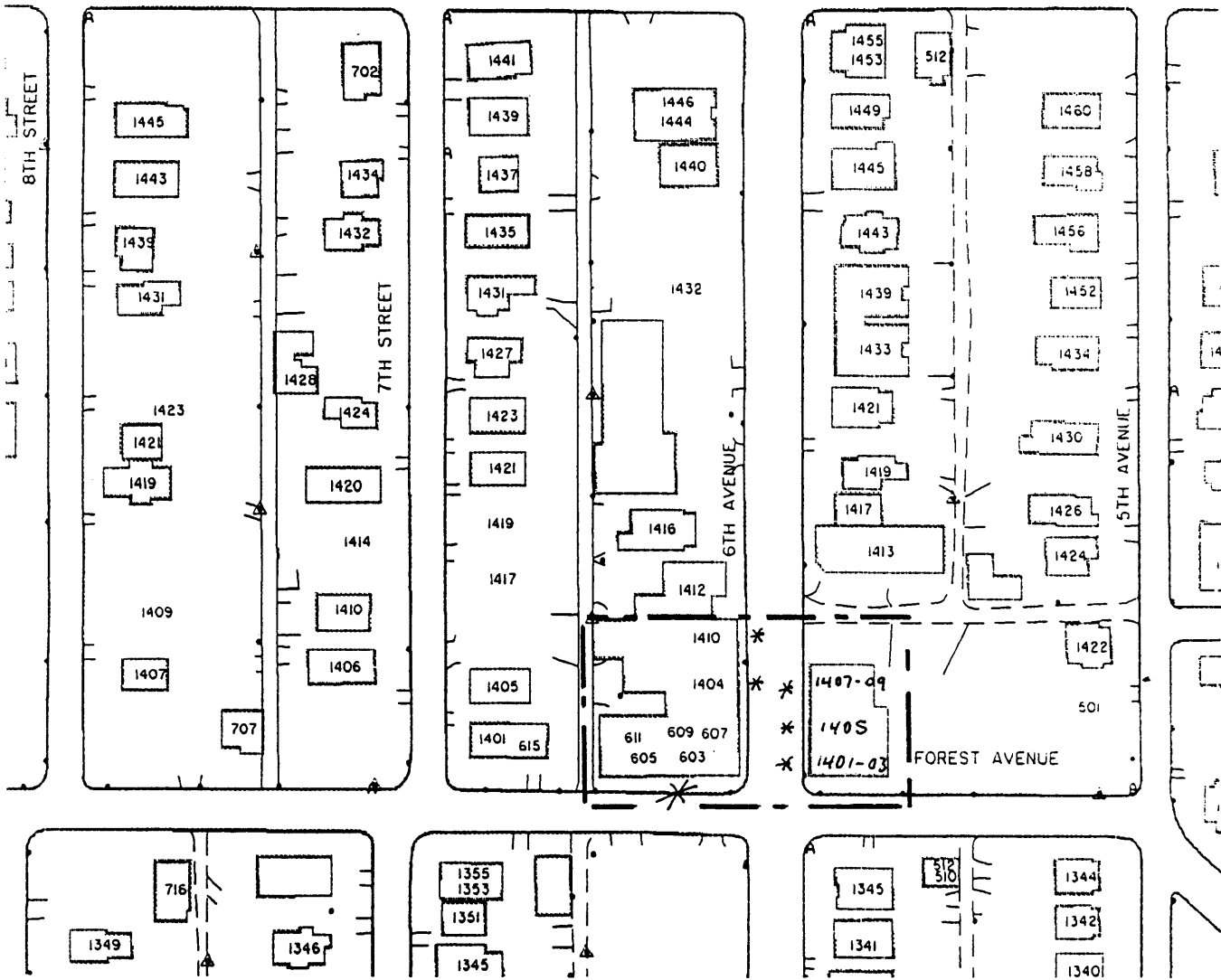
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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

## SIXTH AND FOREST HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARIES



An asterisk (\*) indicates a contributing Resource. A pound sign (#) indicates a noncontributing resource.

Source: City of Des Moines Engineering Department.

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National Park Service**

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Sixth and Forest Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

**SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Sixth and Forest Historic District is significant, under National Register Criterion A, because it calls attention to a new phenomenon in late Nineteenth Century community development in Des Moines--the rise of suburban commercial nodes. Stimulated by the area's population boom and improved public transportation, North Des Moines, the largest of the city's Victorian suburbs, saw the development of two such commercial nodes. Of these, the Sixth and Forest Historic District was the larger and remains the better preserved today. It also obtains city-wide significance as the most fully developed example of this phenomenon. The Sixth and Forest Historic District also calls attention to the dominant role North Des Moines played among the Victorian suburbs in attracting financial investment. Construction of the massive Temple Block at 601-611 Forest Avenue could only have taken place in a location where a rational return on its high construction cost was possible. Such considerations excluded all but downtown Des Moines and "the big suburb," as North Des Moines was then popularly known, from a real estate development of this magnitude.

The Sixth and Forest Historic District is additionally significant, under National Register Criterion C. The district possesses some of Des Moines' finest Victorian examples of suburban commercial architecture. The Temple Block stands as an outstanding example of commercial architecture influenced by the Romanesque Revival taste.

The period of significance, under Criterion A, for the Sixth and Forest Historic District is circa 1891 to circa 1941, the years when this commercial node was built and flourished. The period of significance, under Criterion C, is circa 1891 to circa 1924, the period of time in which the buildings were erected.

The property contains six resources for this nomination. All are classified as buildings.

**SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT**

Among the many independent suburban communities surrounding Des Moines in the late Nineteenth Century, the Sixth and Forest Commercial District is exceptional. This is because it was the largest suburban commercial node in the metropolitan area during the Victorian era. Others such nodes evolved, as in Sevastopol and University Place, but they were smaller in size.

The Sixth and Forest Historic District also illustrates a commercial node in the Victorian suburbs in its full-blown maturation. For example, residential and commercial land use are carefully defined, lending an urban feeling to the area. Residential units within the district are only located on second floors above commercial stores, not, for example, as in the Sevastopol or University Place commercial nodes, where single-family dwellings were interspersed jowl-to-cheek.

In some respects, the Sixth and Forest Commercial District also stands as representative of suburban commercial nodes in Victorian Des Moines. For example, the presence of a lodge hall, located at 1401 6th Avenue, follows a common Nineteenth-Century practice, whereby members of fraternal

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organizations pooled financial resources, erected multi-storied commercial buildings for first floor rental, and used the upper story as meeting halls.

As the largest of the city's Victorian suburbs, the City of North Des Moines saw the evolution of two such commercial nodes. Of these two, the Sixth and Forest Historic District was the more fully developed and remains the better preserved. Within a broader context, the Sixth and Forest Historic District also obtains significance city-wide as the best preserved example of this phenomenon.

The Sixth and Forest Historic District illustrates how Victorian entrepreneurship in Des Moines chose locations of dense population and convenient public access to establish neighborhood commercial nodes. Situated near the center of historic North Des Moines--the largest Victorian suburb in the city--the intersection of 6th and Forest Avenues stood at the heart of this populous community. This site also offered convenient access for customers. As a major streetcar corridor in Des Moines, 6th Avenue provided a well-trafficked route for the walk-in trade. During the Victorian period, Forest Avenue emerged as an important east-west vehicular route on Des Moines' west side. The intersection of these two streets, therefore, provided a fine site for entrepreneurial activities.

A thumbnail sketch of Forest Avenue's development shows how it also became a corridor of some importance in North Des Moines. Semi-public institutions, particularly churches, built their houses of worship along Forest Avenue. They included North Park Congregational Church (nonextant, southwest corner 6th and Forest), Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church (1348 7th Street, southwest corner Forest), Forest Avenue Baptist Church (southeast corner 11th and Forest), and Westminster Presbyterian Church (nonextant, northeast corner 12th and Forest). Multiple-family dwellings were also constructed along Forest Avenue. They included the Bokhara Apartments at 812-814 Forest Avenue and the Lorenz Apartments at 1354 8th Street, the southwest corner of that street's intersection with Forest.

The intersection of 6th and Forest also shows how transportation corridors encouraged higher residential density. Prior to construction of the Temple Block, for example, this site was unoccupied (Sanborn 1891). After construction of the Temple Block, the number of dwelling units on the same site climbed to seven (City Directory 1920).

## ARCHITECTURE

The Sixth and Forest Historic District is architecturally significant because it possesses the most sophisticated and best-preserved examples of Nineteenth Century suburban commercial architecture in Des Moines, as well as more modest expressions of that mode. The employment of polychrome brick in several buildings distinguishes this historic district from other such nodes in the city. The massive and richly embellished Temple Block is in a category without equal. At the same time, several modest commercial buildings also remain in this historic district from its period of significance. Their presence imparts to it the feeling of a suburban commercial node and distinguishes it from the city's central business district. Although located in a currently designated "slum-blight" neighborhood, the Sixth and Forest Historic District also retains the highest integrity of the Nineteenth Century suburban

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commercial nodes in Des Moines. More buildings in this historic district survive relatively unaltered than in the city's other suburban commercial nodes, where they have been either razed or radically remodeled.

Distinctions can be drawn between urban commercial architecture and suburban commercial architecture in Des Moines during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. While commercial edifices in the central business district tended to be large in scale, richly embellished, multi-storied, and built of permanent materials, those in the suburbs were likely to be smaller in size, more modest in architectural detailing, and sometimes built of balloon frame.

Within this context, the Sixth and Forest Historic District stands as an exceptional example of suburban commercial architecture. The quality of building materials in this district, for example, is generally higher than in other suburban commercial nodes. Sevastopol provides one comparison, containing as it does commercial buildings of balloon frame construction, as well as brick. The use of polychrome brick and a variety of brick textures--evident in the Orvis Block, for example--also points towards an architectural sophistication in the Sixth and Forest Historic District not found in other Victorian commercial nodes in Des Moines' suburbs.

It should be said that some buildings in this historic district are representative examples of suburban commercial architecture rather than exceptional in their design. What makes the Sixth and Forest Historic District significant in this regard is that it possesses examples of both representative and exceptional commercial buildings. Although a moderately large building, the Odd Fellows Hall at 1401-1403 6th Avenue, for example, possesses modest architectural detailing. The commercial building at 1405 6th Avenue illustrates a modest one-story store. Either of these two buildings might have been found in other Victorian commercial nodes in Des Moines' suburbs. The Temple Block stands in dramatic contrast because of its imposing size.

The Temple Block stands at 601-611 Forest Avenue. This edifice possesses a total of five commercial rooms on its first floor and stretching along a half-city block, this two-story commercial building is richly embellished with brickwork. The large size and rich architectural detailing of the Temple Block distinguishes it as the finest example of suburban commercial architecture in Des Moines during the Victorian era.

The extended facade line of the Temple Block is unified by symmetrically placed bays, an undulating rhythm of its second floor belt course, and a denticulated cornice. The forethought behind this design indicates an architect's participation. Although such an individual or firm has not yet been identified, further research might discover this person's name and make further analysis of the building's design possible. In addition to design considerations, the Temple Block also required a major financial commitment for its construction. Such an undertaking outside Des Moines' central business district was feasible economically only in suburban North Des Moines during the Victorian period. As "the big suburb," only this section of the metropolitan area possessed a sufficient population base and economic capability to support such a commercial venture. The Temple Block is an exceptional building for all of these reasons.

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**RESOURCE COUNT JUSTIFICATION**

Among the six buildings within this historic district, each is counted as contributing to it. This is because each building falls within the period of significance for this nomination and retains sufficient integrity for original owners to recognize it.

The Temple Block, located at 601-611 Forest Avenue, is counted as one contributing resource because of the architectural unity of its design. Historically, the five storefronts of this resource have served different purposes. Although significance is not claimed, under National Register Criterion A in this regard, the following city directory analysis is included here because it shows the complexity of commercial operations this section of North Des Moines could sustain. The following table shows the variety of these businesses at three points in time:

TEMPLE BLOCK

| <u>STREET NUMBER</u> | <u>1907 USE</u> | <u>1920 USE</u>       | <u>1943 USE</u>    |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 603 Forest Avenue    | Commercial      | Leon Kaplan           | Grocery Store      |
| 605 Forest Avenue    | Commercial      | Temple Block          | Temple Apartments  |
| 607 Forest Avenue    | Commercial      | Modern Shoe Repair    | Dilly Dally Tavern |
| 609 Forest Avenue    | Commercial      | I. W. Sinderson       | Rusings Bakery     |
| 611 Forest Avenue    | Commercial      | Up To Date Dress Club | Shoe Repair        |

It will be seen that these historical street numbers do not tally with present-day usage. The commercial storefronts at 601 and 603 Forest Avenue have historically been used as one large store, and the street number "603" has been used to denote it. It should also be noted that 605 Forest Avenue provides the entrance hall and staircase access to the second floor residential units of the building, but today the address 607 is used for that purpose.

**REPRESENTATION IN OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEYS**

The Sixth and Forest Historic District was surveyed in 1994 as part of the "Towards a Greater Des Moines" reconnaissance survey of Des Moines' Victorian suburbs. As a resource within the intensive survey of the River Bend neighborhood (another part of this project), this district was evaluated as eligible, under National Register Criteria A and C, for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The State Historical Society of Iowa concurred in this determination.

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### POTENTIAL FOR HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Although the site's potential for archaeological research is, as yet, unevaluated, there appears to be little if any in this regard. Construction of the commercial resources in this area substantially reduced the likelihood to discover subsurface deposits from earlier habitations.

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### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Please refer to Section I of the Multiple Property Documentation Form for complete bibliography.

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Forest Avenue on the south, the public alley between 6th Avenue and 7th Street on the west, the public alley between Forest Avenue and Clark Street and its extension west of 6th Avenue on the north, and a north-south line on the east located 70 feet east of the right-of-way of 6th Avenue.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The National Register boundary contains all land associated historically with the resources within this historic district.



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**LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

1. Sixth and Forest Historic District  
Des Moines, IA 50314  
Temple Block  
601-611 Forest Avenue  
Looking northeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
August 16, 1995
  
2. Sixth and Forest Historic District  
Des Moines, IA 50314  
Temple Block  
601-611 Forest Avenue  
Looking northwest  
William C. Page, Photographer  
August 16, 1995
  
3. Sixth and Forest Historic District  
Des Moines, IA 50314  
Commercial Building (1404 6th Avenue) and  
Ruth & Clark Building (1406-1410 6th Avenue)  
Looking northwest  
William C. Page, Photographer  
August 16, 1995
  
4. Sixth and Forest Historic District  
Des Moines, IA 50314  
Orvis Block (1407-1409) and Odd Fellows Hall (1401-1403)  
Looking southeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
August 16, 1995