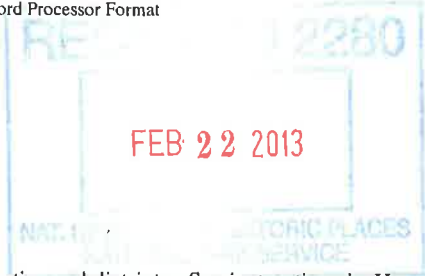


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



147

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 F. W. FITCH COMPANY HISTORIC DISTRICT

other names/site number BMS Building; Fitch Studio, LLC

2. Location

street & number 300-306 15th Street; 1510-1526 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 N/A not for publication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.)

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official/Title

2/19/13  
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]  
Signature of Keeper  
Edson H. Beall

Date of Action

4-9-13

F. W. Fitch Company Historic District  
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa  
County and State

**5. Classification**

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

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private      | <input type="checkbox"/> building(s)         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State            | <input type="checkbox"/> site                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal          | <input type="checkbox"/> structure           |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> object              |

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
		sites
<u>1</u>		structures
		objects
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

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

N/A

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

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

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

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/manufacturing facility

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

VACANT/NOT IN USE

COMMERCE/TRADE/professional  
COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

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

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/

Commercial Style

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

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

**Narrative Description**

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

F. W. Fitch Company 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)

INDUSTRY

**Period of Significance**

1917-1949

**Significant Dates**

1917

1929

1942

**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

F. W. Fitch Company 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	<u>15</u>	<u>44 6 93 5</u>	<u>4 60 3 49 0</u>
Zone	Easting		Northing
2	---	-----	-----
Zone	Easting		Northing
3	---	-----	-----
Zone	Easting		Northing
4	---	-----	-----
Zone	Easting		Northing

**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 Exile Brewery, L.L.C. date March 20, 2011

street & number 520 East Sheridan Ave. (Page) telephone 515-243-5740

city or town Des Moines state IA 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 See Continuation Sheet

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ 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.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

Site

Begun in 1917 and completed incrementally over approximately the next 25 years, the F. W. Fitch Company Historic District is located on the north and south sides of Walnut Street on the southwest edge of downtown Des Moines. Walnut Street divides the historic district into two areas: the North Plant and the South Plant. Walnut Street is one of downtown Des Moines' principal streets. It runs fairly level through the downtown, but at Walnut Street's intersection with 15th Street, the street-grade falls sharply before intersecting and terminating at 16th Street.

Historically, the land surrounding the F. W. Fitch Historic District has served multiple uses. Much of the area developed originally as single-family dwellings. A loop in the Raccoon River runs about three city blocks to the southwest of the district. The location of this river predestined the establishment of the Des Moines Water Company, the city's water works, just to the west of 16th Street in this area. (See Figure 2.) In the 1920s, the Meredith Corporation purchased this land and redeveloped it as the headquarters for *Better Homes & Gardens* magazine and its other publications. The Meredith firm subsequently built a substantial campus on this site.

During the late 19th century, several railroad companies laid tracks north of the Raccoon River along a corridor a little to the south of where the F. W. Fitch Company Historic District stands today. A spur line was built to serve the Fitch firm. During the early 20th century, the westward march of expansion from downtown Des Moines redeveloped all of the single-family dwellings in this area, the Fitch firm contributing to this change. A number of automobile-related enterprises played the most prominent role in this redevelopment. A portion of this area might be eligible for nomination to the National Register as the "West End Historic District," significant because of its historical use as a center for the sales and servicing of automobiles and trucks. (Page 2008) Earlier reports had reached similar conclusions embracing a larger area (now partially demolished) and dubbed "Auto Row." (City of Des Moines) The F. W. Fitch Company Historic District abuts this area on the west and, although historically significant in and of itself, also contributes within the context of this early 20th century expansion of downtown Des Moines.

Mixed use continues to characterize the area today. Commercial use predominates, but residential use has reappeared or is planned in some buildings in the area, including the Main Building of the F. W. Fitch Company Historic District.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

Overview of Historic District

The F. W. Fitch Company Historic District is a complex of buildings and includes the following resources:

F. W. FITCH COMPANY HISTORIC DISTRICT

<u>Resource Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Date of Construction</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Main Building & Addition *	300-306 15th St.	1917 & 1929	Contributing
Soap Plant #	1514 Walnut St.	1929 & 1942	Contributing
Soap Plant Annex #	1526 Walnut St.	1944	Contributing
Tunnel	Walnut St. bet. 15th & 16th Sts.	1929 or 1942	Contributing

\* = North Plant  
# = South Plant

The *North Plant* included the Main Building and several nonextant properties. Because of the Walnut Street slope, the Main Building's basement is level with the grade at its west elevation where a dock for loading and unloading trucks is located on an alley. F. W. Fitch might have chosen to erect his plant on this site for that reason.

The *South Plant* includes the Soap Plant and the Soap Plant Annex. A parking lot, original to the establishment of the historic district, is situated adjacent to the Soap Plant but is not counted as a resource. All of these properties are situated on land sloping down from Walnut Street to the Raccoon River valley to the south. A tunnel underneath Walnut Street links the Main Building and the Soap Plant. It was constructed either in 1929 or in 1942.

The size and appearance of this industrial complex nicely calls attention to the products it manufactured: mostly bottled goods designed to fit into a home's kitchen or medicine cabinet, so that, although this plant manufactured millions of dollars worth of products, its size and appearance could fit unobtrusively into the environment of a central business district.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

Main Building & Addition

Located at 300-304 15th Street, the Main Building was the first facility erected on this site for the firm. Constructed in 1917, the Main Building is a rectangular-shaped, 4-story, masonry edifice. The footprint of the building measures 36 x 70 feet, the narrower dimension forming the east elevation and primary facade of the building. This design extensively utilizes reinforced concrete for the building's structural support system, foundation, and floors. A flat roof covers the building. One penthouse surmounts the top story. Situated on the south elevation of the building, it includes space for elevator hoisting equipment and an access to the roof. A brick chimney, approximately 20 feet in height, is situated on the northwest corner of the roof.

A 1-story addition, built in 1929-1930, abuts the north elevation of the Main Building and bears the address 306 15th Street. The footprint of this addition is long and narrow. It measures about 23 x 132 feet with the narrow measurement that of the front facade. (See Figure 4.) According to the Des Moines City Assessor, the addition is of reinforced concrete construction with brick curtain walls on its east and west elevations. According to the F. W. Fitch Company authorized history:

Oddly, this building had no walls—a roof was built in 1930 between buildings allowing utilization of the narrow space. (Rehder: 33)

The north elevation of the addition abuts the building at 1506 Locust Street. The front facade of the addition was remodeled in 2005. Its front facade was painted gray and a new metal door and storefront window installed. This addition has a full basement. The building now is used as an artist gallery.

Several historic images of the Main Building picture it at various points in time. An early engraving, used on the firm's letterhead, shows the building much as it appears today. (See Figure 12.) Three photographs, all shot circa 1947, picture the Main Building and its context within the historic district at the time of the district's greatest extent. The major change to the building, evident in a comparison of these images and the building today, is its replacement windows on the east and south elevations. The openings on their upper stories originally featured steel, commercial style windows. Toward the end of the 20th century, these were removed and replaced with aluminum windows. Replacement windows with multiple small panes later were installed on the first floor.

The Main Building clearly expresses the tenets of the Chicago Commercial Style and shows the influence of Classical Revival design. The building's east and west elevations utilized the Commercial Style's tripartite facade organization of base, shaft, and capital. That approach is manifested in the readily apparent differentiation between the ground level facade—with its purplish red-colored brick surmounted by a cast concrete water table—upper stories—with vertical stripes of maroon-colored brick flanking window openings and creating the illusion of buff yellow-colored columns—and cornice—a sleek design of the same yellow-

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

colored brick accented by cast concrete detailing and striking because of its height. The influence of Classical Revival styling is evident in the strict symmetrical arrangement of these window openings, employment of light-colored brick, and front entrance with cast concrete columns flanking the door and supporting a pediment. Other Chicago influences on the building include a name plaque beneath the pediment ("F. W. Fitch Co.") and diamond patterned designs of maroon-colored brick set between window openings.

The architect of the Main Building has not been identified as yet. A search of the Proudfoot & Bird archives failed to discover a link between that firm and the F. W. Fitch Company. (Stephen Stimmel) Research has shown that the Fitch family commissioned the Des Moines architectural firms of Vorse, Kraetsch & Kraetsch and Kraetsch & Kraetsch for architectural designs. These included two residences in Des Moines and construction at the Fitch factory in Toronto, Canada. (Architects in Iowa) Perhaps these architects participated in the design of buildings within the F. W. Fitch Company Historic District.

Soap Plant

Located at 1514 Walnut Street, the Soap Plant was constructed in two phases: the first floor and a tunnel under Walnut Street in 1929 (Rehder: 37) and the second floor in 1942.

The Soap Plant is a masonry, warehouse-type building with a footprint measuring 66 x 120 feet. The Soap Plant rests on a poured concrete foundation. The front facade faces to the north and is clad with purplish blue-colored face brick laid in running bond. The side and rear elevations are clad with orangish red-colored common brick laid in running bond. An historic photograph pictures this building as originally built. (See Figure 7.) The Soap Plant cost \$50,000 to erect. (*Des Moines Register* 2001)

A second floor was added to this building in 1942. The Fitch Company already had intended in 1929 to add an upper floor (or floors) to the building, attested by the fact that the first floor of the 1929 building included massive support columns throughout the floorplan unnecessary otherwise for a 1-story building. The front, side, and rear facades of the second floor feature essentially the same brick as employed on the first floor, except for some minor color variations. These differences are only apparent upon close observation, and the casual viewer does not perceive that the building was constructed in two phases. A flat roof, slightly sloping from front to rear, covers the second floor and is clad with synthetic membrane. An elevator house is situated at the rear of the building with its south wall flush with that of the building's south elevation.

The first story includes large openings on its north and east elevations. Most of these openings originally featured steel, commercial-style windows with small panes. A few of these original windows remain in place; some of them have been removed. All of these openings are now covered with plywood. Two large openings at the rear of the building served as doors for the transfer of freight to and from railroad cars or delivery trucks. They too are now clad with plywood. One of the openings on the east elevation has been converted from a window opening into a vehicular entrance with overhead door.



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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

The fenestration on the second floor retains its original steel, commercial-style windows with small panes arranged symmetrically across each of the building's elevations. The east end of the front facade features a large opening, now infilled with opaque glass block, which originally provided an access to an over-the-street conveyor. Several historic photographs picture this conveyor. (See Figure 8 and Figure 9.) Because of the height difference between the two buildings, the flow of gravity suggests that manufactured goods moved from the Main Building to the Soap Plant, where they were bulk-packaged for shipment.

The east elevation also includes a large opening on the second floor similar to that on the north elevation. (See Figure 10.) This opening, now infilled with brick, appears to be original to the second floor's construction. Was it also to serve as an opening for an over-story conveyor to another Fitch building to the east, planned but never built? The lower edge of this opening is near floor-level, suggesting such an intended use.

The front door of the building faces Walnut Street. A fire-escape door is now situated mid-way down the east elevation of the building. This door and fire escape postdate the construction of the second floor, as the historic photographs referenced above do not picture them.

Overall, the design of the Soap Plant emphasizes efficiency. Although kept to a minimum, decorative features include face brick on the front facade, a symmetrically placed pediment surmounting it, and a cast-stone name plaque situated below the pediment and between the first and second floors. Although partially obliterated, the word "Fitch" can still be discerned on this plaque.

The first floor of the Soap Plant's interior—on its north end— features a vestibule, offices, and staircases to the basement and second floor of the building. An open space, which occupies about 80% of the total first floor area, is situated at the south end of the building. Today, this area is open and looks like a warehouse. A mezzanine, jerrybuilt and constructed of wood, is situated along part of the west wall and along the north wall of the warehouse area. This mezzanine postdates the Fitch occupancy of the building and dates, perhaps, to the 1950s.

On the second floor, the interior of the Soap Plant originally featured an open warehouse layout. The roof is supported by a system of steel trusses, wood joints, and wood sheathing. The War Production Board (WPB), or a like federal agency, must have granted permission for the Fitch firm to use this steel, as it was a restricted building material during the war. An historic photograph pictures the northwest corner of this space. (See Figure 11.) Sometime during the late 20th century, extensive remodeling occurred on this floor. Sheet rock partitions on wood studs created a double loaded central corridor flanked with offices or storage areas. This remodeling also dropped the second floor ceiling.

The Soap Plant features a full basement with support columns similar to those on the first floor. In its northeast corner, a portion of this basement extends under the public right-of-way.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

A freight elevator shaft is centered on the south interior wall of the building and serves all floors. This shaft, along with the freight elevator within it, likely dates to the 1942 construction of the second floor.

A tunnel under Walnut Street links the Soap Plant and the Main Building. This tunnel provides a walkway between the two buildings along with several utility lines. Today, a locked steel door in the Soap Plant basement blocks the entrance to the tunnel.

The architect of the Soap Plant has not been identified. A search of the Proudfoot & Bird archives failed to discover a link between that firm and the F. W. Fitch Company. (Stephen Stimmel)

Soap Plant Annex

The F. W. Fitch Company further expanded its facilities in 1944 with the construction of the Soap Plant Annex, a 1-story masonry building situated at 1526 Walnut Street. The west wall of the Soap Plant and the east wall of the Soap Plant Annex abut one another.

The Soap Plant Annex rests on a concrete slab and features concrete block walls now painted creamy-white. A flat roof clad with synthetic membrane covers the building. There is no basement.

Openings on the north elevation include two doors, one near the east end of the facade and one near its center. Four small windows range symmetrically along this facade and are situated above pedestrian sight lines. These windows are now clad with cover-up materials. The west elevation features one double-door and several window openings now infilled with concrete block.

The Soap Plant Annex was substantially remodeled in 1965. (Des Moines City Assessor) This remodeling erected partitions throughout the warehouse area to create offices and other smaller spaces.

The architect of the Soap Plant Annex has not been identified as yet. A search of the Proudfoot & Bird archives failed to discover a link between that firm and the F. W. Fitch Company. (Stephen Stimmel)

Parking Lot

Located at 1510 Walnut Street, a parking lot, owned by the F. W. Fitch Company throughout its period of operation, is situated adjacent to the east of the Soap Plant. Although not counted as a resource in this nomination, this parking lot is described here in order to present a comprehensive picture of the South Plant.

This parking lot originally consisted of eight lots (Lots 1-4 and 13-16) in an official plat of Block 42 of Lyons Addition. Walnut Street borders the parking lot on the north, and SW 15th Street borders it on the east.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

Several years ago, SW 15th Street in this area was realigned in conjunction with the construction of Martin Luther King, Jr., Parkway. Today, about one-third of the Fitch parking lot has been reconfigured as a curving extension of SW 15th Street as it bends to link up with SW 16th Street before joining the new parkway.

During the heyday of the F. W. Fitch Company, this parking lot served the firm's commuting personnel. Several historic photographs picture this parking lot. (See Figure 7 and Figure 8.) A 1939 photograph pictures the site as looking to the north. The perimeter of the lot appears mostly over-grown with weeds. A 1940s photo pictures the northeast corner of the parking lot with a mix of concrete and grass surfaces. Six or seven automobiles are parked on the north edge; some cars face in and some face out. Today, the parking lot is hard-surfaced with concrete. Two curb cuts on Walnut Street provide access to it. One, partially paved in brick, dates from the early 20th century. The other is more recent and is constructed of concrete.

Nonextant Resources

Historic photographs picture several resources associated with the F. W. Fitch Company Historic District during its period of significance that are now nonextant. These served various ancillary manufacturing functions. Their descriptions are provided here to give the reader a comprehensive picture of the firm's physical plant, although they are not included in this nomination.

*Loading Dock.* The loading dock was a 1-story structure, covered with a side gable roof, and attached to the southeast corner of the Soap Plant. It was built between 1939 (an historic photograph from that year does not picture it) and 1942, when the second floor of the Soap Plant was constructed. The loading dock apparently served shipments for both railroad and motorized truck. An historic photograph pictures the north elevation of the loading dock and shows a cantilevered roof extending over a dock. (See Figure 10.) Presumably, this roof extended over a dock on the building's south elevation in a similar fashion. Residue tar lines above the first floor of the Soap Plant's east elevation mark where the loading dock's roof abutted it.

*Monitor Building.* This was a 1-story, aluminum clad building situated to the west of the Main Building and covered with a monitor roof with gable end facing Walnut Street. This building was erected in 1935 (*Des Moines Register* 2001) on several small building lots with the remaining site enclosed with a chain-link fence and used as a storage lot. The monitor building was demolished sometime after 1949. Some of this site remains unimproved to the present day, and a 1-story concrete block building, constructed in the 1950s or 1960s, occupies the rest of it.

*Conveyor.* An enclosed conveyor (an enclosed hallway above Walnut Street) linked the third floor of the Main Building to the second floor of the Soap Plant. (See Figure 8, Figure 9, Figure 10.) It was constructed in 1945. (Rehder: 37) This conveyor allowed the efficient movement of finished goods by gravity flow from the Main Building to the shipping department in the Soap Plant. Sometime in the past, after the Fitch firm ceased operations, this conveyor was removed.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

Contemporary History

The Fitch family continued to hold title to the Main Building into the 1970s. Building Maintenance Services (BMS) subsequently purchased the property. For more than 30 years, artists have maintained studios in the building. In 2001, the Alter Group, Ltd., a Chicago-based development firm, sought to demolish the Main Building along with many others to redevelop a dozen city blocks in this section of downtown Des Moines. This scheme failed. In 2003, Fitch, L.L.C. filed incorporation papers with the State of Iowa to own and operate the Main Building. (Iowa Secretary of State Records, December 24, 2003) That corporation continues to hold title to the property to the present day, and it remains fully occupied with artists and other design professionals.

The Soap Plant and Soap Plant Annex served a variety of purposes following the close of Fitch operations. A wholesale radio and appliance firm occupied both of these buildings for a while in the 1950s. (Sanborn Map Company, 1920-Updated 1950) Today, both of these buildings are not in use.

Dates of Construction

The construction date of the Main Building is documented by several sources, including Denny Rehder (Rehder: 146) and the Des Moines City Assessor's Office. Rehder wrote his book with the assistance of F. W. Fitch's children, and this direct link with the managers of the property attests to the accuracy of the 1917 date. A newspaper story documents the construction date of the nonextant monitor building. (*Des Moines Register* 2001) The Des Moines City Assessor's Office documents the construction date of the Soap Plant and Soap Plant Annex, as well as the authorized history of the Fitch firm. (Rehder: 37)

**RESOURCE EXCLUDED FROM HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Although the F. W. Fitch Company constructed a commercial building at 211-213 16th Street, that firm never occupied it. For that reason, this building is excluded from the boundaries of the F. W. Fitch Company Historic District.

Physical Description

This 1-story commercial building is located near the northeast corner of 16th and Mulberry Streets. It abuts the Fitch Soap Plant on the east and the Fitch Soap Plant Annex on the north.

Built in 1942, this commercial building features a rectangular footprint measuring 44 x 66 feet, concrete block walls, and a flat roof. The city directory lists it for the first time in 1943. (City Directory 1943: 394)

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

Historically, the building bore the address of 213 16th Street. (*Ibid.*) A fire insurance map pictures the building in 1950. (See Figure 4.) It shows a narrow space separating it from the Fitch Soap Plant on the east and a 12-foot corridor separating it from the Fitch Soap Plant Annex on the north. The gap depicted between the commercial building and the Soap Plant remains a mystery because the buildings actually share a common wall. However, there is no opening of any kind in this common wall to link the two buildings internally. A careful inspection of this wall reveals that no opening of any kind has ever existed between the two buildings.

Following the demise of the Fitch firm in 1949 and postdating the period of significance of the F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, this commercial building was remodeled and enlarged. Since these circa 1951 alterations, the property has borne the address of 211-213 16th Street.

The circa 1951 changes included the construction of an addition to the commercial building, which now infills the vacant space between it and the Soap Plant Annex. This addition features a rectangular footprint measuring 12 x 66 feet, concrete block walls, and a flat roof. The construction of this addition included the removal of about two-thirds of the commercial building's north wall and the erection of partitions within it to create a new floor plan. Changes also occurred to the commercial building's front facade (west elevation). These included the removal of two big windows, their replacement with foreshortened units, and the reconstruction of the concrete block wall across the top of the commercial building to tie into a new concrete block at the top of the addition. Sometime later, a smaller change occurred when the vehicular door opening near the southwest corner of the commercial building was increased in height and a new door installed.

Building Occupancy

The Soft Water Supply Co. of Iowa occupied this commercial building from its construction in 1942 through the early 1950s.

The Soft Water Supply Co. of Iowa was incorporated in Iowa in 1939. The majority of its directors resided in Peoria, Illinois, with only one, its treasurer, living in Des Moines. (Iowa Secretary of State Office) Throughout its life, Soft Water Supply rented and serviced soft water equipment.

Soft Water Supply's advertisements point to a residential and perhaps a commercial customer base. The firm used "SERVISOFT" as an advertising tag and, as a slogan, "For Continuous Soft Water at a Small Rental Fee. No Investment—No Maintenance—No Depreciation—No Bother." (City Directory 1944 Buyer's Guide: 79) Indeed, the 1950 fire insurance map identifies this commercial building as "S" for "store," a term which would not have been used if Soft Water Supply had conducted industrial operations. The modest size of this commercial building would have precluded that anyway. As mentioned above, there has never been a physical opening between this building and the Fitch Soap Plant—virtually irreconcilable if the two buildings had operated in industrial conjunction with each other.

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Soft Water Supply originally had officed at 1425 Grand Avenue in Des Moines. By 1943, it had relocated to 213 16th Street. (City Directory 1943: 669) Soft Water Supply remained at this location into the 1950s. (City Directory 1954) It later relocated to Bettendorf, Iowa. In fact, the firm had failed to file its 1952 corporation renewal report to the Iowa Secretary of State's office, and the State of Iowa cancelled its articles of incorporation in 1953. (Iowa Secretary of State Office, Record of Cancellation dated April 10, 1953)

Except for the fact that the Soft Water Supply Co. occupied a Fitch-owned property, no evidence has been uncovered to link it in a business relationship with the F. W. Fitch Company. Nor is there any evidence that Soft Water Supply was connected to Fred Fitch's family. If it had, a Fitch family member would have served as one of its officers according to the business model outlined elsewhere in this document and to which Fred Fitch cleaved. Throughout the period of significance of the F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, this building served as a rental property for that firm and served no purpose for its manufacturing operations.

**PRESENT CONDITION AND INTEGRITY**

Condition

The condition of the F. W. Fitch Historic District remains good with a few exceptions. The replacement windows on the Main Building and its addition are somewhat distracting, as noted above. The exterior walls of the Main Building Addition and Soap Plant Annex have been painted. The window openings on the Soap Plant are now clad with cover-up materials and the status of the windows remains undetermined.

Integrity

The integrity of the F. W. Fitch Company Historic District is good to fine in its seven aspects.

Because the buildings remain on their original sites, the historic district's level of integrity as it relates to *location* is excellent.

The integrity of the F. W. Fitch Historic District as it relates to its *design* is very good. "Design," in this instance should be understood within two contexts—function and architectural style. As to function, the extant buildings associated with the property—Main Building, Soap Plant, and Soap Plant Annex—retain their original functional characteristics. As to architectural style, each of these resources retains its original stylistic characteristics as evident in its masonry design.

The integrity of the historic district's *setting* is fine. Although the district's site has lost the Monitor Building, Loading Dock, and Conveyor, these facilities were support facilities rather than key to the plant's operation. The historic district's immediate surroundings remain much the same as during the early 20th century. While

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it is true that the construction of Martin Luther King, Jr., Parkway has replaced much of the railroad corridor, which originally ran at the rear of the historic district, this parkway continues that use as a transportation corridor. Further, the design of that parkway—at grade and level in this area—does not intrude visually upon the historic district. It should be noted that the continued existence of the Fitch parking lot is surprising as well as fortunate, given its location near the core of downtown Des Moines and the value of raw land there for development.

The integrity of the historic district's *materials* is very good. Although the exterior walls of the Soap Plant Annex are now painted, all of the district's contributing resources retain their original masonry surfaces. While the loss of original windows is regrettable, virtually all of the resources' window openings remain intact and some windows now clad with cover-up materials might remain intact behind them. The damage to the "Fitch" name plaque on the Soap Plant is also regrettable but can be repaired.

The integrity of the historic district's *workmanship* is excellent, primarily evident in its massive internal support columns and the resources' structural elements. Additionally, the Main Building's masonry, which remains in excellent condition, exhibits careful craftsmanship in the construction of its multi-colored brick walls and terra cotta front entrance to the Main Building.

The historic district retains an excellent *feeling* of its historic function. The district's extant resources convey the sense of a small, light-industry manufacturing district.

The historic district retains excellent integrity as it relates to *association*. Management, employees, and visitors from its period of significance would readily recognize its buildings and surroundings today.

**FUTURE PLANS**

Developers are presently exploring the potential for the adaptive reuse of the Soap Plant and Soap Plant Annex as a brewery and restaurant. Federal and state historic preservation tax credits will play an important role in this rehabilitation. The use of the Main Building for artists' studios will remain unchanged.

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**SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Begun in 1917 and expanded piecemeal from the 1920s through the early 1940s, the F. W. Fitch Historic District is significant, locally under National Register Criterion A, because it calls attention to an important industry in Des Moines during that time. From 1917 to 1949, the F. W. Fitch Company manufactured personal care products known for their innovation and marketed throughout the United States, Canada, and overseas with total sales exceeding \$11 million in 1945. Aggressive advertising—including “Fitch’s Bandwagon,” a weekly radio program broadcast by NBC across the nation—propelled the company’s growth, further spurred by big contracts with the U.S. Army during World War II.

The historic district’s period of significance, under Criterion A, is 1917-1949, the time when the F. W. Fitch Company occupied the property. Significant dates include the year 1917, when the firm opened the first building in the historic district, and 1949, when the firm ceased operations.

The property contains four resources for this nomination: the Main Building, Soap Plant, Soap Plant Annex, and Tunnel. All of these resources are classified as buildings, except the tunnel, which is classified as a structure. All of these resources are evaluated as contributing.

**F. W. FITCH COMPANY**

From the 1920s through the mid-1940s, the F. W. Fitch Company dominated much of the shampoo industry in the United States. This firm—together with Carl Weeks’ Armand Co. (a local cosmetics and perfume manufacturer also with national market share)—cemented Des Moines’ reputation as a leader for the personal care products industry in the United States. (Long: 53, 55) While neither of these firms remains in operation today, the extant resources associated with them call attention to Des Moines’ status during that time as a noted manufacturing center.

Early Years (1892-1917)

In 1898, F. W. Fitch opened a barbershop in Boone, Iowa, and began to manufacture Fitch Shampoo. During the early years, Fitch won several awards, which lent prestige to his products and elevated their status in the marketplace. These awards included a Grand Award, Medal of Honor, and Diploma of Honor at the Paris International Exposition (1911) and similar awards at expositions in London (1913) and San Francisco (1915). (Rehder: 146) In 1912, Fitch purchased a hotel building in Boone and converted part of it into a plant to produce his shampoo. The rise in sales soon convinced Fitch that he needed to expand his operations and, in 1915, he purchased land in Des Moines to erect a new plant.



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Growth and Prosperity (1917-1945)

Completed in 1917, the Main Building of the F. W. Fitch Company at 300-304 15th Street in Des Moines marks the beginning of the firm as a national manufacturer of personal care products. The building itself calls attention to Fred Fitch's confidence in the success of his company. He over-built the edifice, leasing the second floor of this five-story building to the Walter Boyt Sadlery Co. from 1917 to at least 1919. (City Directory) Later, the Fitch firm occupied the entire building, where it housed the its general offices, laboratories, and factory operations.

By the 1920s, the F. W. Fitch Company had expanded its line of barber's products to include more than a dozen different ones for home use. The new building, designed to produce soap, was constructed in 1929, and signaled the firm's growth. Appropriately, the new building was named the "Soap Plant." The Fitch letterhead from this period (see Figure 12) listed the following products:

- Fitch's* Dandruff Remover Shampoo
- Fitch's* Ideal Dandruff Remover
- Fitch's* La Foma Tonique
- Fitch's* Tonique Superbe
- Fitch's* Quinine Hair Dressing
- Fitch's* Lov-Lay
- Fitch's* Lilac Royal
- Fitch's* Sweet Smile
- Fitch's* Florella
- Fitch's* Dis Menthol Cream
- Fitch's* Lemon Cream
- Fitch's* Face Poudre
- Fitch's* Lois Perfume
- Fitch's* Lois Rouge
- Fitch's* Triple Vanity

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Another Fitch product, "Mentho-Pep," could be used as an after-shave lotion, mouthwash, or treatment for insect bites and sunburn. (*Des Moines Register* 2001)

This noninclusive list of Fitch products shows how the firm had moved by the 1920s from products for barbershops to a full-line of personal-care products for both men and women. The names of these products suggest the particular aura the company wished to convey to the user. The frequent use of French-sounding words—La foma Tonique, Tonique Superbe, Face Poudre, etc.—lent an air of sophisticated elegance, while other names like Lov Lay and Sweet Smile hinted physical allure. Two of the products, a perfume and rouge, were named for Fitch's younger daughter, Lois Fitch Sandahl. Of course the flagship products, Fitch's Dandruff Remover Shampoo and Ideal Dandruff Remover, headed the list. The firm's total output included about 40 different products.

With the construction of the Soap Plant in 1929, the Fitch firm now could produce its own soap, and its production began on November 15, 1930. (Rehder: 148) As this building's name indicates, this space served as a factory, where the various elements of Fitch shampoo were mixed together. When the second floor of the building was added in 1942, it apparently served as a packaging and packing department to prepare them for bulk shipment. (See Figure 11.) The construction of the Soap Plant Annex in 1944 provided additional space for Fitch operations, but its specific function remains unclear.

The F. W. Fitch Company excelled at advertising. During the 1920s, Fred wrote "Fred's Own Page," a regular column appearing in *Square Deal*, a Fitch house organ for barbers. In the late 1920s, the firm added an advertising department, headed by Jule Gordon. Featuring glamorous men and women touting its products, Fitch advertising promised beauty and handsome good looks to its users.

Then, to exploit the immense popularity of radio in the late 1930s, the Fitch company launched its biggest advertising venture ever, inaugurating "Fitch's Bandwagon" in 1938. (Rehder: 148) Originating as a Sunday night radio program on the National Broadcasting Corporation, it featured a variety of popular big bands and other musical offerings. Broadcasts originated from different cities across the nation. Whether aired from New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, or elsewhere, this change of venue increased the program's mass appeal. Over the years, Fitch's Bandwagon featured such entertainers as Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Lawrence (then "Larry") Welk, Bing Crosby, Ozzie Nelson, Harry James, Tommy Dorsey, and other stars of the 1930s and 1940s. In 1944, the program added comedy skits with Dick Powell as its host.

Of course this radio program advertised Fitch products. The lyrics of the show's theme song ran:

Laugh a while,  
Let a song be your style  
Use Fitch Shampoo!  
Don't despair,

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Use your head, save your hair,  
Use Fitch Shampoo!

“Don’t Itch It. Fitch It!” — became a catchy advertising jingle. The cost to produce this radio program was high, but its folksy advertising served the company well and transformed “Fitch” into an American household brand. One source claimed, in 1942, that Fitch had spent \$1.2 million on advertising. (Rehder: 68)

Decline and Demise (1945-1949)

By 1945, the firm’s payroll had swelled to 400 workers. (*Des Moines Register* 2001) Following World War II, however, the F. W. Fitch Company experienced a steep decline in its sales. The loss of contracts with the United States Army following the end of the war, substantial construction costs associated with a new plant in Jackson, Mississippi, and the on-going expense to sponsor Fitch’s Bandwagon drained the firm’s cash flow in an unsustainable hemorrhage.

Many changes had taken place in the grooming industry. Men and women’s hairstyles had become less closely shaped to the head. Shingling and oiling the hair, so widely popular during the 1930s, gave way to a more natural look, commensurate with the growing informality of Americans’ post-war lifestyles. These styles required a new approach to good grooming products. Advertising techniques had changed too, and Fitch advertisements began to look out of the mainstream and passé. (Rehder: 135)

Fitch continued to sponsor the Bandwagon until 1948, but the cost to sponsor it became too heavy. On May 21, 1949, the firm slashed its radio advertising and announced that its future advertising would focus on newspaper and magazines. (*New York Times*, May 21, 1949) Fitch sold the Bandwagon to Rexall Drug, but Fitch’s demise was already apparent. Unable to sustain further cash hemorrhage, the F. W. Fitch Company sold its assets to Grove Laboratories of St. Louis, Missouri in 1949. (*New York Times*, May 21, 1949) Grove retained the Fitch name and product line for several years before selling them to Bristol-Meyers. That company subsequently dropped both the Fitch name and products. (*Des Moines Register* 2001) Members of the Fitch family were barred by the sales agreement from working for other cosmetic firms for five years. (Rehder: 139)

**F. W. FITCH**

Because the fortunes of the F. W. Fitch Company were intimately bound up with those of F. W. Fitch and his family, the following sections of this nomination provide information about the lives of these individuals and contributions to the Fitch firm.

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Fredrich W. Fitch, usually referred to as "Fred" or "F. W." (see Figure 14), was born January 28, 1870, in Burnside, Webster County, Iowa. His parents, Dr. Henry Lucius Carey Fitch and Mary Eleanor Epperson Fitch, had twelve children, ten of whom survived to adulthood. F. W. was the tenth. Dr. Fitch was born in Connecticut, but he moved to Iowa in 1847 after completing his education as a physician. Dr. Fitch gave up his medical practice in 1872, when F. W. was 2 years old, and moved the family to a homestead in South Dakota. While there, Dr. Fitch and his wife separated. Mary and eight of their small children were left without financial support. As a result, she took them to Boonesboro (now Boone), Iowa, where she had family. Until F. W. built a splendid home in 1929-1930 on Foster Drive in Des Moines, he would consider Boone to be "home." (Rehder: 9-12)

Because of his family's poverty, F. W. was forced to make his own way in the world from a young age. At age 8, in 1878, he was apprenticed to an Ogden farmer. He endured the intensive labor required by farming for three years, and then ran away to a farm in Greene County where an older brother was working. This set a pattern for his youth, with F. W. apprenticing himself twice more, abandoning those placements, and then working intermittently at a variety of hard tasks for different bosses. At fifteen he returned to Boone long enough to complete his grammar school education. Although he was very intelligent, he received no further formal education, and continued his pattern of working for farmers and ranchers until early adulthood. (Rehder: 12-13)

At age twenty, in 1890, Fitch finally found his life's work, becoming an apprentice barber in Boone. From boyhood, F. W. had suffered from a condition known as "scaldhead," which resulted in the loss of most of his hair. Doctors in Boone and Des Moines were unable to help him find relief from the itching caused by the disease, despite trying all remedies known at the time. On his own, he began studying medical textbooks and watching barbers as they worked on people with various scalp conditions. He suspected that the disease was not caused by internal problems, thus discounting the effect of medications taken internally. He discovered that most hair products of the time contained wood alcohol, some as much as 96%. He began experimenting and soon decided that wood alcohol was poisonous to humans. (Rehder: 13-15)

Fitch also discovered that dandruff, then thought to be caused by a germ, was actually nothing more than an accumulation of dead particles that clogged the pores and of the scalp and resulted in a hard covering that impeded the hair follicles. He tested all kinds of soaps, but realized they aggravated the problem rather than solving it. He finally found an entirely different kind of solvent that resulted in the development of a new product, Fitch's Ideal Dandruff Remover. To use the product effectively, the barber first had to apply the dandruff remover and work it through the scalp, then to shampoo the hair, and then to reapply the dandruff remover. Fitch embarked on efforts to manufacture and market the product, calling on individual barbers and demonstrating his wares, at the same time trying to maintain his own barbershop. The Ideal Dandruff Remover eventually would cement Fitch's fortune and lead to establishment of a multi-product line of toiletries and cosmetics, but the growth process for the young start-up company was slow, difficult, and labor-intensive. It would be a number of years before the product sold well enough that Fitch could hire some employees, and even longer before he would become wealthy. (Rehder: 13-24)

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In 1892, F. W. married Letitia S. ("Lettie") Williams (18??-1943). The couple had five children: Zoe Francis (1894-1897), Gail Walter (1898-1972), Mildred Belle (1901-19??), Lois Ardelle (1902-1968), and Lucius Williams (1906-1984). During the early years of their marriage, Letitia played a large role in the F. W. Fitch Company, the firm Fitch founded in 1898 to produce and market his products. Both of their sons would join The F. W. Fitch Company as adults, and both surviving daughters would marry men who would also join the firm.

The couple later became estranged, suffered a long, drawn-out separation, and finally divorced in 1925 to much notoriety. Her daughter Mildred testified on Letitia's behalf during those proceedings. The divorce deeply hurt Letitia's sense of pride. The 1928 city directory lists her as Fred's "widow." (City Directory 1928: 453) The last city directory before her death lists her simply as "Fitch, Letitia, Mrs." (City Directory 1943: 222) Letitia had no financial worries, however. She had sued Fred for alimony (*New York Times*, April 16, 1925) and subsequently received a monthly maintenance stipend from a trust established at the time of the separation and retained stock in the F. W. Fitch Company throughout its years of great prosperity, enabling her to live in comfort in one of Des Moines' most prestigious residential hotels until her death. Her shares in the Fitch company passed to her children at that time. (Rehder: 37)

In 1926, F. W. married Gertrude Westburg, a young woman 23 years his junior, who had first worked as a domestic for Letitia while living in the Fitch family home and later as one of F. W.'s employees at his plant. (Rehder: 16, 37-39, 147, 157) One local newspaper sniffed:

Honeymoon at Clear Lake.  
Gertrude Westburg was a bottler at plant before marriage  
(*Des Moines Tribune* 1926)

In the 1920s, Iowa law prohibited remarriage within one year of divorce. Fitch received court permission, however, to remarry after six months. (*Des Moines Register*, 2001) In 1917, Fred had moved from Boone without his family into an apartment in the Main Building at the Fitch plant. This apartment, located on the first floor, featured wood-paneled walls and luxury furnishings. After his marriage with Gertrude, the couple lived in this apartment. Letitia had moved to Des Moines with the children in 1918 and lived without her husband in a home at 923 35th. After her youngest child, Lucius, moved out, Letitia subsequently relocated to the Commodore Hotel at 3440 Grand Avenue in Des Moines, where she lived for the rest of her life. (Rehder: 37) Fitch's apartment in the Main Building at the Fitch plant is nonextant.

In the meantime, Fred and Gertrude Fitch built a new house for themselves at 669 Foster Drive and occupied it for the rest of their lives. The couple sent a Christmas card to friends soon after the house was completed. It shows the building, vignette photos of Fred and Gertrude, and a drawing of their dog "Chief." (Rehder: 76) Gertrude survived Fred by thirty-one years, dying in 1982. (Rehder: 150)

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Fitch was both practical and flamboyant. His early years showed brilliant powers of observation and innovation in the formulation of an effective dandruff remover. He showed the ability to build a multi-million dollar industry from scratch and demonstrated exceptional capability at advertising and promotion—all this powered by a strong work ethic and an ambition derived, at least in part, by his hardscrabble youth.

Fitch was dapper, pleasure loving, and fiercely independent. He enjoyed alcohol, society, golf, airplane travel, and his relationships with the radio and movie stars he employed to advertise his products. Fitch's devil-may-care attitude toward the social conventions shocked and amused Des Moines society as on-going chapters in his messy divorce, second marriage, and family business squabbles played out prominently in the newspapers.

In his lifestyle, Fitch's personality was closely attuned to the products he manufactured with their promise of glamour and urbane sophistication. During the 1920s and the Great Depression this worked. Fitch possessed an innate sense of what the public wanted and how to sell it to them. As advertising techniques changed following World War II, Fitch, now in his 70s, lost contact with the new era and ignored the advice of younger board members more attuned to the postwar world. Fitch died as independent-minded as ever, suing members of his own family in the last years of his life over the management of the firm he had created.

**FITCH FAMILY**

Each of F. W. Fitch's four children, or their spouses, played an important role in the F. W. Fitch Company. The following paragraphs sketch the biographies of these people. Each one was closely involved in the management of the firm, yet essentially beholden to the power of F. W. Fitch. The family's wealth benefited the children, as each attended college for at least some time, and the younger two, Lois and Lucius, both graduated.

Gail Walter Fitch (1898-1972)

The oldest surviving Fitch child, Gail, was born in Boone, Iowa, on July 2, 1898. He attended school in Boone, and attended Culver Military Academy and Drake University. Gail preferred a career in music, forming a dance band "Fitch's Famous Five" that toured Iowa and expanded to twelve members at one time. The band, however, never really took off, and finally Gail joined the family company. Fred Fitch gave Gail little encouragement in this endeavor. (Rehder: 39, 157)

Gail developed a rivalry with Les Sandahl, his brother-in-law, and the two were often at odds over how to run the company. Gail began as Fitch sales manager for the barber trade in the late 1920s and later switched to advertising manager, a position he held for most of the 1930s. He was one of the original trustees, along with

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his brothers-in-law, of the F.W. Fitch Trust when his father established it in 1926. He served as president of the F. W. Fitch Company from 1943 to 1945. (Rehder: 75)

Gail served the last 18 months of World War I as a member of a U.S. Army band. Between the wars, he served in the National Guard. Called up again for World War II, he served three-and-a half years before his discharge in July 1944. (Rehder: 157)

Gail married three times and had five children: daughter Carolyn Letitia Fitch Shelly with first wife Adeline Lang; sons Jon S. and Frederick D. with second wife Charlotte Stuart; and sons Gail W., II, and Perry James with third wife Arlene James. Gail died July 6, 1972, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. (Rehder: 157)

Mildred Belle Fitch (1901-19??) & Richard ("Dick") H. Young (1901-1974)

The older surviving Fitch daughter, Mildred Belle, was born March 29, 1901, in Boone, Iowa. She attended public schools in Boone and Des Moines, but graduated from Frances Shimer School in Illinois. She attended the University of Iowa, where she met her future husband. (Rehder: 158) Unlike her younger two siblings, Mildred was healthy as a teenager, and Letitia left her behind in Des Moines when she took the younger children to the southwest. F.W. ignored his young daughter at these times and spent little time with her. For this reason, she also discovered the affair between F.W. and Gertrude before other family members, and when Letitia filed for divorce, Mildred testified for her. (Rehder: 39, 43)

Mildred played less of a role in the Fitch Company than any of her siblings, but she did try working the assembly line once as a young woman. The work did not suit her and she soon quit. (Rehder: 39) At times her father tried to get her to influence her husband's vote on matters that divided the family, showing that she was aware of company business. (Rehder: 137)

Richard ("Dick") H. Young was born December 30, 1901, in North Liberty, Iowa, where his family farmed. He graduated from the Iowa City public schools and attended the University of Iowa for two-and-a half years. Upon dropping out of the university, he moved to Waterloo, where he held a series of short-term jobs. Mildred and Dick were married November 9, 1922.

Dick Young joined the Fitch company in 1925, working in the shipping department. Subsequently he worked for at least ten years as a purchasing agent. He was first elected to the Fitch company's board of directors in 1926, a position he held continuously until 1972. In 1935, he was elected secretary/treasurer of the F. W. Fitch Company, a position he held until his retirement in 1963. He also served as one of the original trustees of the F. W. Fitch Trust, along with his brothers-in-law Gail Fitch and Les Sandahl. Following the sale of the Fitch Company, he held positions in other family-run companies. (Rehder: 75, 158)

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Dick and Mildred Young had two daughters, Marilyn and Marlys. Dick developed Parkinson's disease in 1949 and resigned his trusteeship in 1968. At that time, his daughter Marilyn Hein was elected to the board to fill his seat. He died in Des Moines on May 31, 1974. (Rehder: 158)

Lois Ardelle Fitch (1902-1968) & Lester ("Les") R. Sandahl (1898- 1959)

Lois Ardelle Fitch, the younger daughter, was born in Boone, Iowa, on September 2, 1902. She attended public schools in Boone and Des Moines, and traveled for a number of winters to the southwest with her mother and younger brother because of poor respiratory health. (Rehder: 39) She attended the University of Iowa, and graduated from St. Mary's College of Notre Dame.

As a young woman Lois served as the voice of the "secretary" on "The Professor," the earliest radio program sponsored by her father. She also spent many hours serving as a hostess at conventions and trade shows attended by her husband for the company. (Rehder: 39)

Lester ("Les") R. Sandahl was born in Des Moines on January 1, 1898. He attended public schools there. He had the best business sense and training of any of F.W. children or their spouses—he was a graduate of the School of Finance (now Wharton School of Business) at the University of Pennsylvania and Drake University Law School. He also served in the navy in World War I. Les worked in the restaurant and grocery industry while attending college, and he briefly practiced law in Des Moines.

Lester Sandahl joined the F. W. Fitch Company in 1922, working in production. The following year he moved into sales, where he would spend the rest of his career. He became sales manager of the drug trade while Gail Fitch served as sales manager of the barber trade. Eventually, Gail would be moved into other parts of the operation while Les stayed in sales. Sandahl was a major force behind F.W.'s move into active marketing and shared his father-in-law's emphasis on the importance of personal involvement in sales. Despite frequently having stormy relations with both F.W. and Gail Fitch, Les's value to the company was clear to the family. His arguments were listened to and usually prevailed. His business background gave him the authority to overcome objections. (Rehder: 75) Following the sale of the Fitch Company, he worked in other family businesses.

With his brothers-in-law, Les Sandahl was appointed an original trustee of the F. W. Fitch Trust. He held this position until his death on July 4, 1959. At that time Lois assumed his position as a trustee and became an officer and director of the F.W. Fitch Investment Company. Lois and Les had two sons, Robert and Craig. Following Lois's death on March 5, 1968, Craig became a trustee and director in her place. (Rehder: 158-159)



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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

Lucius Williams Fitch (1906-1984)

The youngest of the Fitch children, Lucius Williams Fitch was born in Boone, Iowa, on March 27, 1906. He attended schools in Boone and Des Moines, and graduated from Kemper Military School in Booneville, Missouri. He was young when his parents separated, and his mother gained custody of him in the separation agreement. Because he and older sister Lois had various health problems, their mother took them to New Mexico for much of the school year when they were young. Lucius first studied at Drake University, but later transferred to and subsequently graduated from the University of Southern California with a degree in chemistry. (Rehder: 31, 159)

Despite having less contact with his father than his older siblings, however, Lucius would become more involved with the Fitch company as an adult than any of the others. He worked briefly as a salesman for the company, and was made a trustee of the F. W. Fitch Trust in 1930 and an officer of the company. In 1929 his father put him in charge of the Des Moines soap-making plant. Lucius formed the American Chemical Products Company in 1930, a company within the F. W. Fitch Company. He used his chemical training to develop new products for the Fitch Company, including liquid hand soap, floor wax, scrubbing soap, and insecticides. Despite his success, his brother Gail refused to let the company develop packaging for Lucius's products, and Les Sandahl, his brother-in-law, denied him use of the Fitch sales force. Indeed, Lucius housed American Chemical in the Old Colony Building in downtown Des Moines away from the Fitch plant. When Lucius served with the U.S. Army in World War II, Sandahl liquidated the American Chemical Products Company. (Rehder: 127-129)

Lucius joined the Army Reserve in the 1930s and saw active duty for the Army in the war. Following his discharge, Lucius served as vice president and general manager of the F. W. Fitch Company. In 1948, he became president. He also served as an officer at various times of other Fitch family companies. Following the death of his father and brother, he became president of the F. W. Fitch Investment Company. (Rehder: 159)

Lucius married Zona Gale Stevenson on April 10, 1931, in Des Moines. They had three children: Zoe Ann Pearson, Lew Gregory, and Sanford. (Rehder: 159) Lucius died in 1984 in Okoboji, Iowa. (*Des Moines Register*: 1984b)

**L'ENVOI**

The F. W. Fitch Company was a successful but not a happy family business. The latter quality eventually led to its demise.

Fred Fitch had a difficult childhood, and his lack of a father's love denied him a parental model. Money and the privileges it confers evidently became the means by which Fitch expressed familial responsibility.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

Although Fitch involved all his children and their families in what was essentially his firm, real affection seems to have eluded his relationships with them. Bickering, secrecy, and perhaps jealousy attended the firm's board meetings, and one senses that Fred played some family members off against one another in ever-changing rotation to maintain control.

Among the firm's management, Les Sandahl possessed the best business sense, but his relationship with Fred was often contentious. While this might place the onus of the firm's demise on Sandahl, this was likely not the case because of Fred's authority and the support he could muster from other family members. Although the firm explored the development of international sales, it failed to follow through on this growth potential because of board disputes. Trained as a chemist, Lucius Fitch appreciated the technical side of the business and the need to develop new products, but Les Sandahl and Gail Fitch denied him the opportunity to bring his ideas to fruition. At the same time, Fitch's Bandwagon—spotlighting national attention on the firm albeit costing a fortune the firm could not afford—blinded management's recognition until too late that the company needed new marketing strategies and products to compete in post-war American industry. Failing to meet these challenges, the firm quickly ceased to exist as its sales evaporated in the late 1940s.

**REPRESENTATION IN OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEYS AND METHODOLOGY**

To date, the F. W. Fitch Company has received minimal cultural resource survey attention. In 1974, Steven Elmets of the Iowa State University Department of Architecture conducted a windshield survey of the area and prepared Iowa Site Inventory Forms for the Main Building and Soap Plant. This documentation was limited to photographs, a map, and the buildings' addresses.

**POTENTIAL FOR HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY**

The site's potential for archaeological significance is, as yet, unevaluated. Historical archaeological investigations appear to have limited potential for discovery, given the fact the land south of Walnut Street remained unimproved until the present buildings were erected and the land north of Walnut Street substantially was disturbed during the construction of the Main Building. The potential for the site's pre-historic archaeological significance remains unassessed.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND REGISTRATION**

The career of F. W. Fitch deserves further research because of his significance as an industrial manufacturer. The status of the F. W. Fitch Company's plants in Bayonne, New Jersey; Los Angeles, California; Jackson,

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

Mississippi; and Toronto, Ontario, Canada should be researched and their significance evaluated for National Register potential.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

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*Des Moines Register*

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*Des Moines Tribune*

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*Des Moines Tribune*

1949a "Lucius W. Fitch, 42, son of founder, named pres." January 17, 1949.

*Des Moines Tribune*

1949b "Fitch Firm Is Sold, New Owner Of Business Is Grove Co." May 26, 1949.

*Des Moines Tribune*

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*Des Moines Tribune*

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

*Des Moines Tribune*

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*Des Moines Register*

1959 "L. R. Sandahl of D. M. Dies." July 6, 1959.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

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**MAPS**

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"Des Moines, Iowa."

1906 No Fitch-related property pictured.

1920 Main Building pictured.  
["Whol. Drugs/Fire Proof Const'n/Built 1917"]  
No other Fitch-related property pictured.

1920 updated to 1950 Main Building ["Whol. Drugs/Fire Proof Const'n/Built 1917"],  
Main Building Addition, Soap Plant and Soap Plant Addition  
["Whol. Radios & Appliances"], & tunnel between Main  
Building & Soap Plant pictured.

1920 updated to 1950 Building at 211 16th Street pictured as "S" [store].

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1953 Sidwell Studio, West Chicago, Illinois.

**ORAL INFORMANTS**

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2011 Communication with William C. Page. Stimmel searched the records of the Proudfoot & Bird firm and did not find information linking it with The F. W. Fitch Company.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

North Plant

The south 10 feet of Lot 5 and all of Lot 8 in Block 43 of Lyons Addition to Des Moines, Iowa.

South Plant

Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 in Block 42 of Lyons Addition to Des Moines, Iowa, excluding the right-of-way of 15th Street south of Walnut Street to its intersection with 16th Street.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

Contains all extant properties associated historically with the F. W. Fitch Company. The commercial building at 211-213 16th Street is excluded from the historic district because it never functioned as part of the Fitch Company manufacturing operation.



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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

**LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

1. F. W. Fitch Company Historic District  
300-306 15th Street & 1510-1526 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Main Building, looking northwest  
William C. Page, Photographer, March 2, 2011
2. F. W. Fitch Company Historic District  
300-306 15th Street & 1510-1526 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Main Building, looking northwest  
William C. Page, Photographer, March 2, 2011
3. F. W. Fitch Company Historic District  
300-306 15th Street & 1510-1526 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Main Building, main entrance, looking west  
William C. Page, Photographer, March 2, 2011
4. F. W. Fitch Company Historic District  
300-306 15th Street & 1510-1526 Walnut Street  
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Main Building Addition, looking northwest  
William C. Page, Photographer, March 2, 2011
5. F. W. Fitch Company Historic District  
300-306 15th Street & 1510-1526 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Main Building, 3rd floor studio, looking northeast  
William C. Page, Photographer, March 2, 2011
6. F. W. Fitch Company Historic District  
300-306 15th Street & 1510-1526 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Main Building, 4th floor hallway, looking west  
William C. Page, Photographer, March 2, 2011
7. F. W. Fitch Company Historic District  
300-306 15th Street & 1510-1526 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Soap Plant, looking southwest  
William C. Page, Photographer, January 10, 2011
8. F. W. Fitch Company Historic District  
300-306 15th Street & 1510-1526 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Soap Plant, looking south southwest  
William C. Page, Photographer, January 10, 2011

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

9. F. W. Fitch Company Historic District  
300-306 15th Street & 1510-1526 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Soap Plant Annex, looking southeast  
William C. Page, Photographer, January 10, 2011
10. F. W. Fitch Company Historic District  
300-306 15th Street & 1510-1526 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Commercial Building, Soap Plant & Soap Plant Annex, looking northeast  
William C. Page, Photographer, January 10, 2011
11. F. W. Fitch Company Historic District  
300-306 15th Street & 1510-1526 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Soap Plant, looking northwest  
William C. Page, Photographer, January 10, 2011
12. F. W. Fitch Company Historic District  
300-306 15th Street & 1510-1526 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Soap Plant, 2nd floor studio, looking southeast  
William C. Page, Photographer, January 10, 2011

These photographs were printed on Hewlett-Packard Premium Plus Photo Paper with Vivera HP ink.

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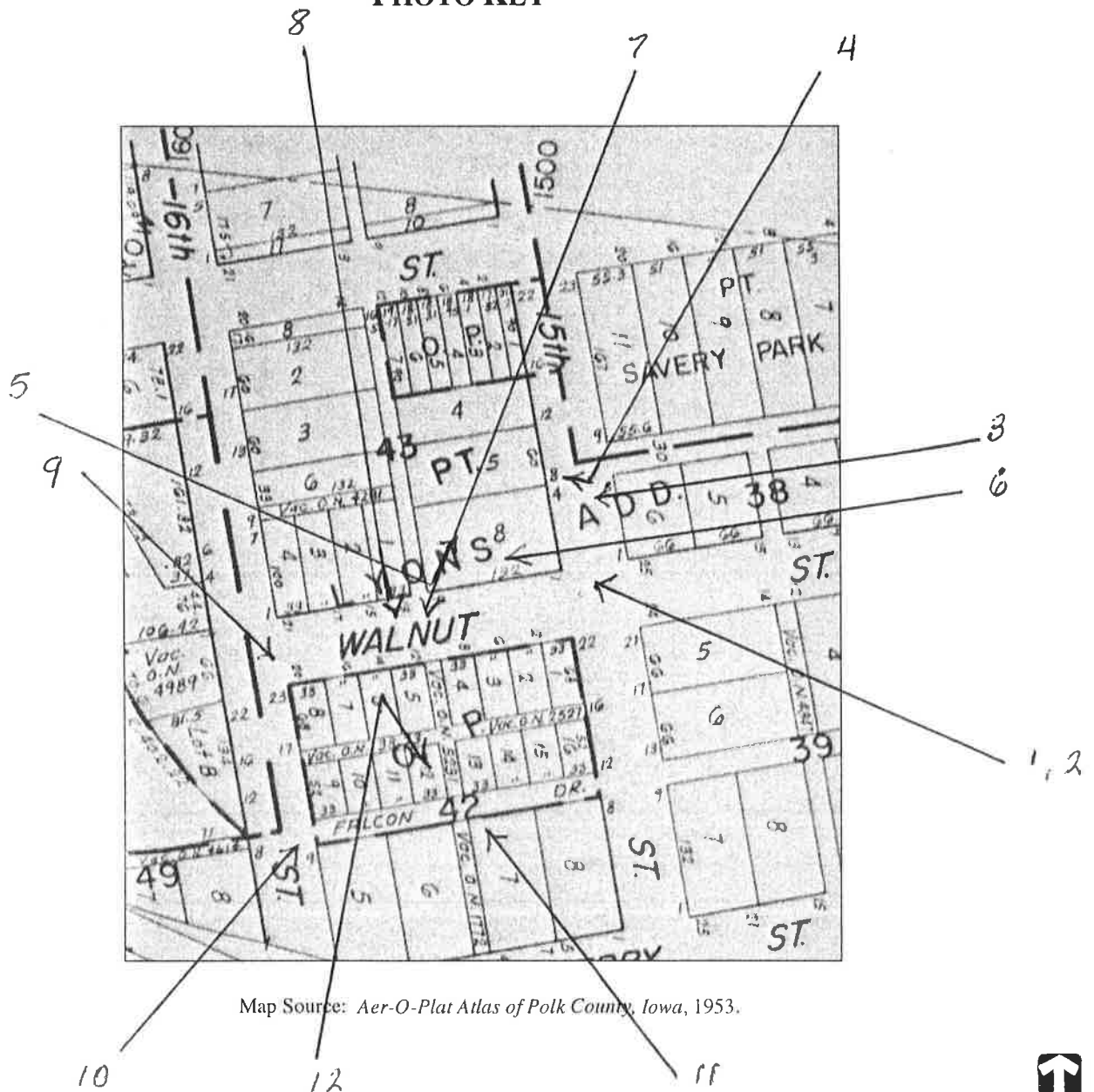
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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

PHOTO KEY



Map Source: Aer-O-Plat Atlas of Polk County, Iowa, 1953.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

**PROPERTY OWNERS**

North Plant

Fitch Studios, L.L.C.  
304 15th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309

South Plant

Robert James Tursi Trust and Amy L. Tursi Trust  
2200 Hubbell Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50317

Walnut Street

City of Des Moines, Iowa  
City Hall  
400 Robert Ray Drive  
Des Moines, IA 50309

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

## HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY

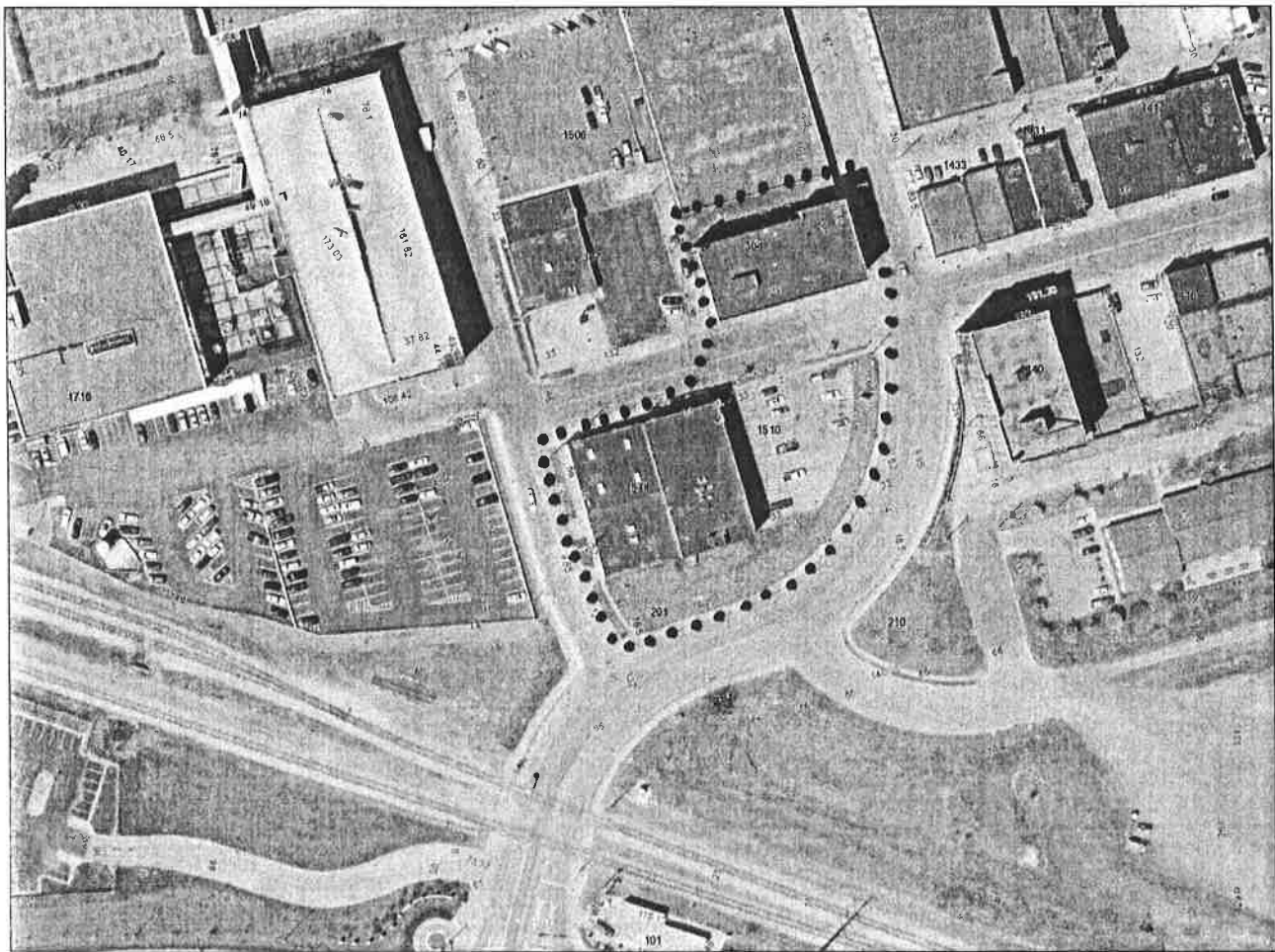


Figure A

The dotted line shows the boundary of the F. W. Fitch Company Historic District.

Source: Polk County Assessor Office, 2009.



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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

## POSTCARD CIRCA 1917

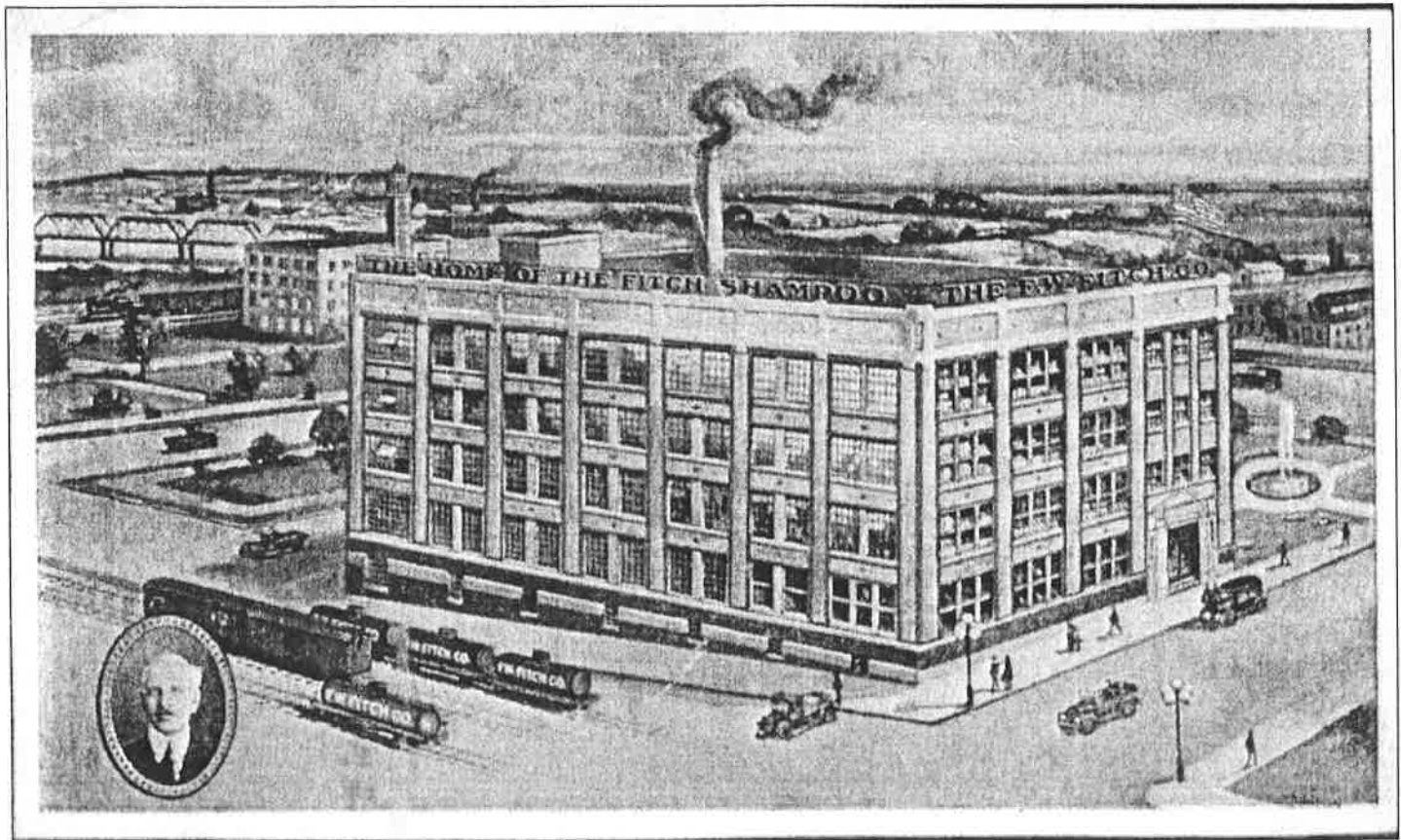


Figure 1

Looking to the northwest, this artist's depiction of the F. W. Fitch Company presents a highly embroidered image of it. Fanciful elements include the park and fountain at far right and left, the tank and boxcars in the middle of Walnut Street, and possibly the signs on top of the building. Although the building's colors are overstated, its design is accurately detailed.

The lower left corner of the postcard features a photograph of F. W. Fitch.

Source: Courtesy Catherine L. Dreiss, Printmaker, Des Moines, Iowa.

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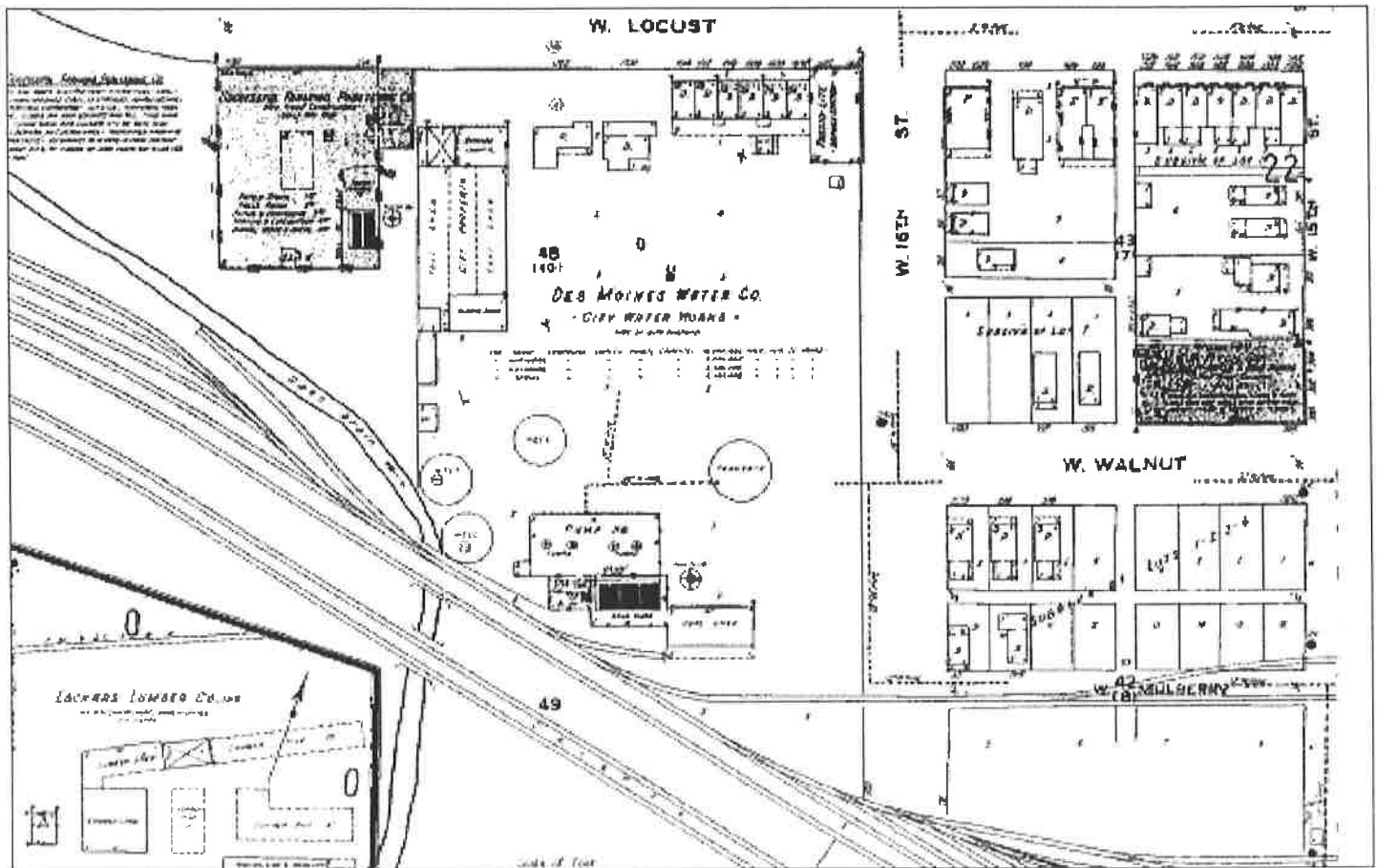
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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

1920 FIRE INSURANCE MAP



This map pictures the Main Building of the F. W. Fitch Company in black (far right center) and its environs. The firm has not yet expanded its operations with the construction of the South Plant. Land to the west of the historic district is occupied by the Des Moines Water Company.

Figure 2

Source: Sanborn Map Company, "Des Moines, Iowa," 1920, Vol. 1, Sheet 21.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

1920 FIRE INSURANCE MAP DETAIL

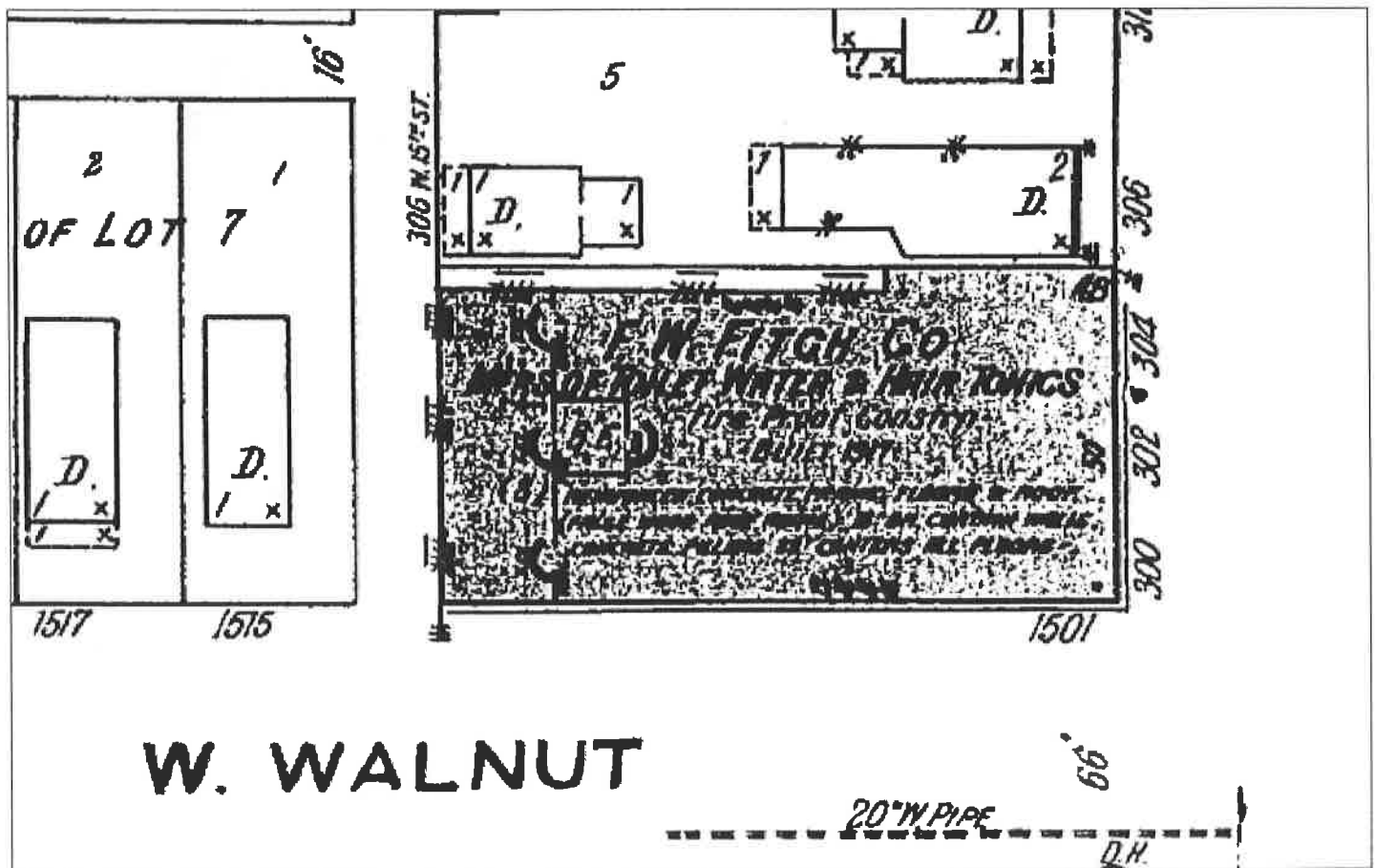


Figure 3

Source: Sanborn Map Company, "Des Moines, Iowa," 1920, Vol. 1, Sheet 21.





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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

1920 UPDATED TO DECEMBER 1950 FIRE INSURANCE MAP

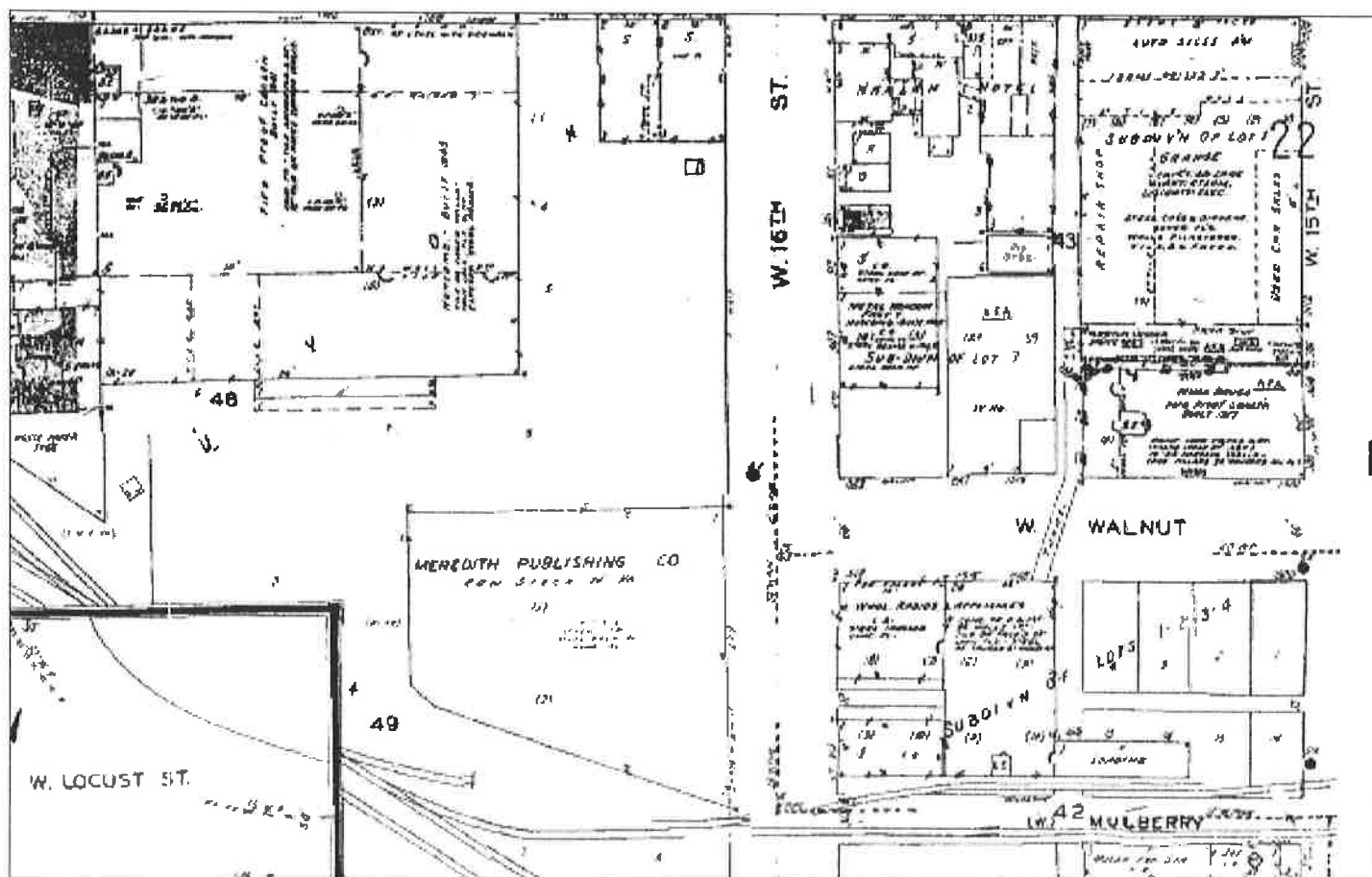


Figure 4

Source: Sanborn Map Company, "Des Moines, Iowa," 1920 Updated to December 1950, Vol. 1, Sheet 21.



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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

DETAIL OF SOUTH PLANT - 1950

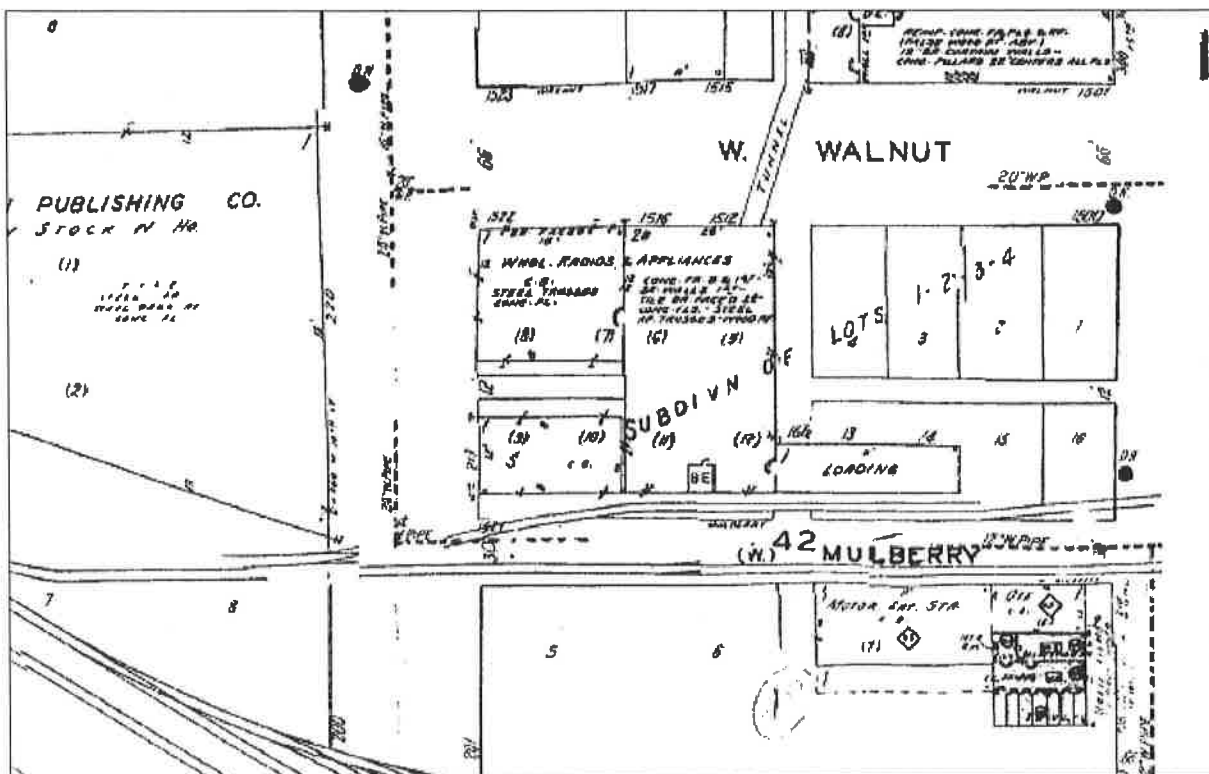


Figure 5

This map shows resources associated with the South Plant of the F. W. Fitch Company Historic District and their locations: 1 = Parking Lot; 2 = Soap Plant; 3 = Soap Plant Annex; 4 = Tunnel. A nonextant railroad spur south of the plant provided transportation. The commercial building ["S"] at 213 16th Street [\*] was built circa 1952, never formed part of the F. W. Fitch Company, and is excluded from the F. W. Fitch Company Historic District for that reason. The loading dock shown on this map [#] is nonextant.

Source: Sanborn Map Company, "Des Moines, Iowa," 1920-December 1950, Vol. 1, Sheet 21.



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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

### F. W. FITCH COMPANY HISTORIC DISTRICT CIRCA 1929



Figure 6

This photograph, although fuzzy, pictures preparations underway for new construction, likely the Soap Plant in 1929. A temporary contractor's office has been erected facing the alley where that building now stands. Building materials are scattered haphazardly about the site. This image was taken from the archives of the Des Moines Register & Tribune Company and published in a 2001 feature story about the Fitch firm without dating or describing the photo.

Source: *Des Moines Register* 2001.

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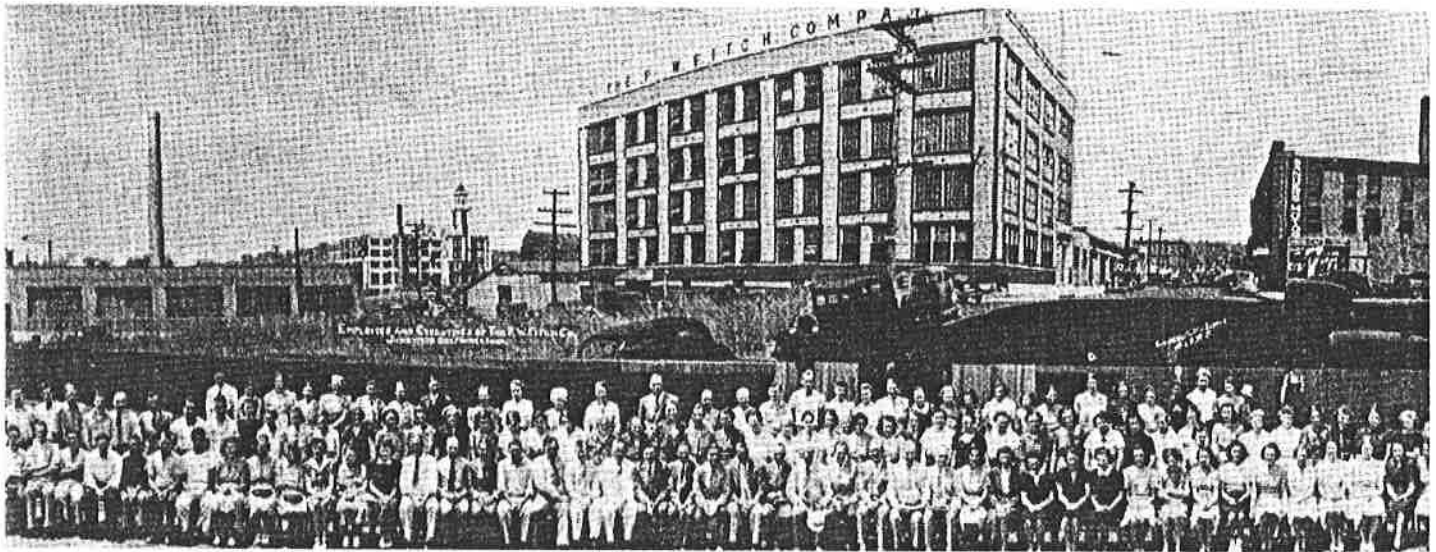
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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

### “Employees and Executives of the F. W. Fitch Co. June - 1939 Des Moines, Iowa”



This image is a composite of two photographs. A “yard-long” panorama pictures more than 120 Fitch personnel (below). A photo (above) pictures the Fitch complex in Des Moines. Fifteenth Street is visible to the right of the Fitch Main Building (center), and the tower of the Meredith Corporation on Locust Street is visible at the left. This photograph documents the two-phased construction of the Soap Plant. Seen at the far left, this plant had only one story in 1939. The second story was added in 1942. The parking lot for the complex is shown directly below the 4-story main building.

Figure 7

Source: Rehder, p. 94.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

## NORTH PLANT CIRCA 1949



Figure 8

This and the following two photographs picture the F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, likely in 1949 when the firm was sold to Grove Laboratories.

Source: Rehder, p. 34.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

### NORTH PLANT CIRCA 1949

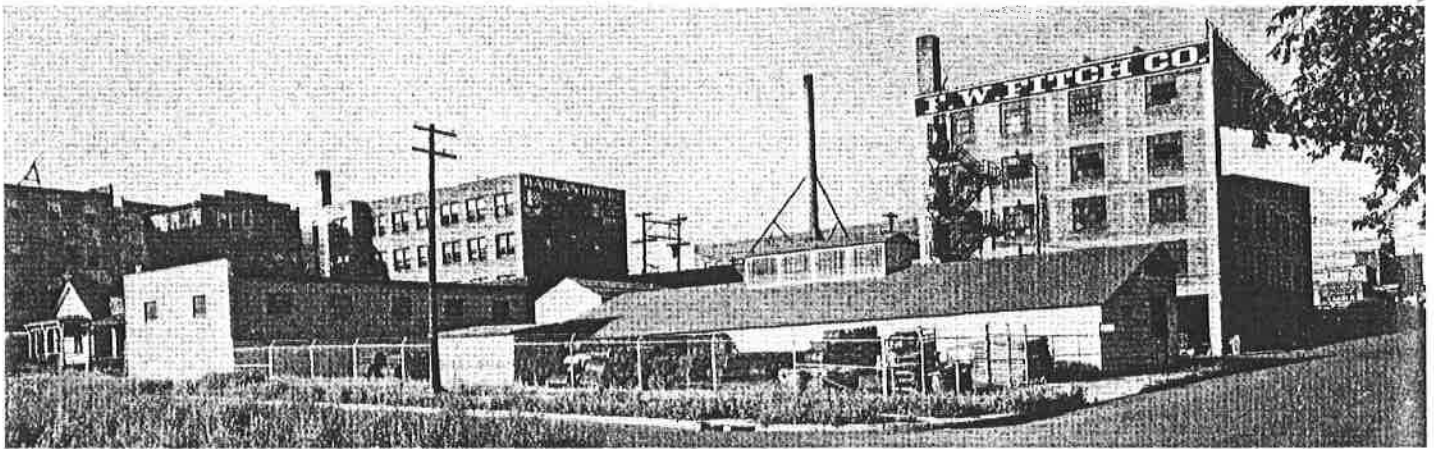


Figure 9

Looking to the northeast, this photograph pictures the nonextant Monitor Building with its smokestack and "F. W. Fitch Co." painted in big white letters against a black field across the west elevation of the Main Building. The conveyor (far right over Walnut Street) links the Main Building and the Soap Plant. The conveyor was designed to move by gravity flow manufactured goods from the Main Building to the shipping department on the second floor of the Soap Plant.

(See next page.)

Source: Rehder, p. 34.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

### SOUTH PLANT CIRCA 1949



Figure 10

Looking to the southwest, this photograph pictures the nonextant Loading Dock (far left), Soap Plant (center), and Soap Plant Annex (far right). The conveyor links the Soap Plant to the Main Building. The Loading Dock served both railroad and truck transportation

Source: Rehder, p. 35.

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

**SOAP PLANT SHIPPING DEPARTMENT**

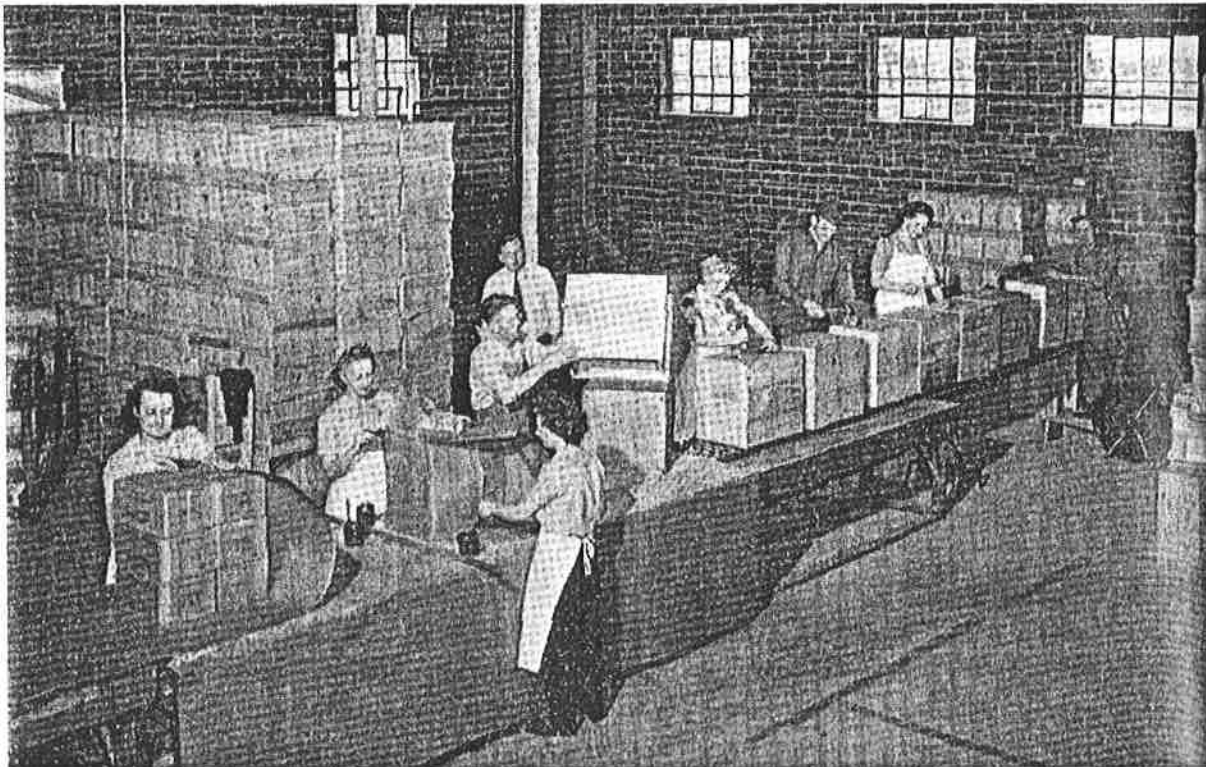


Figure 11

Looking to the northwest on the second floor of the Soap Plant Building, this posed photograph pictures Fitch employees packaging bulk products for shipment. One man is nailing a wooden crate shut. Several women appear to be gluing pasteboard boxes shut. Sales of Fitch products peaked in 1945 at over \$11.7 million. By 1949, sales had declined to just over \$2.6 million. The company's loss of U.S. Army contracts after World War II accounted for much of this decline.

Source: Rehder, p. 92.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

## LETTERHEAD



Figure 12

This letterhead dates from the early years of the firm in Des Moines and pictures the Main Building. The lettering of firm's name shown here was used as a trademark, for product labels, and for advertising purposes. This styling remained consistent throughout the company's existence; and, although it provided branding continuity, it had become indicative by the late 1940s of the firm's inability to respond to changing advertising techniques.

Source: Rehder, p. 34.

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

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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

### **FITCH'S BANDWAGON**



Figure 13

Phil Harris and Alice Faye perform on "Fitch's Bandwagon," a Sunday evening radio program sponsored by the F. W. Fitch Company and broadcast across the nation in the 1930s and 1940s.

Source: [HTTP://WWW.OTRCAT.COM/FITCH-BANDWAGON-P-48800.HTML](http://www.otrcat.com/fitch-bandwagon-p-48800.html)

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
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F. W. Fitch Company Historic District, Polk County, Iowa.

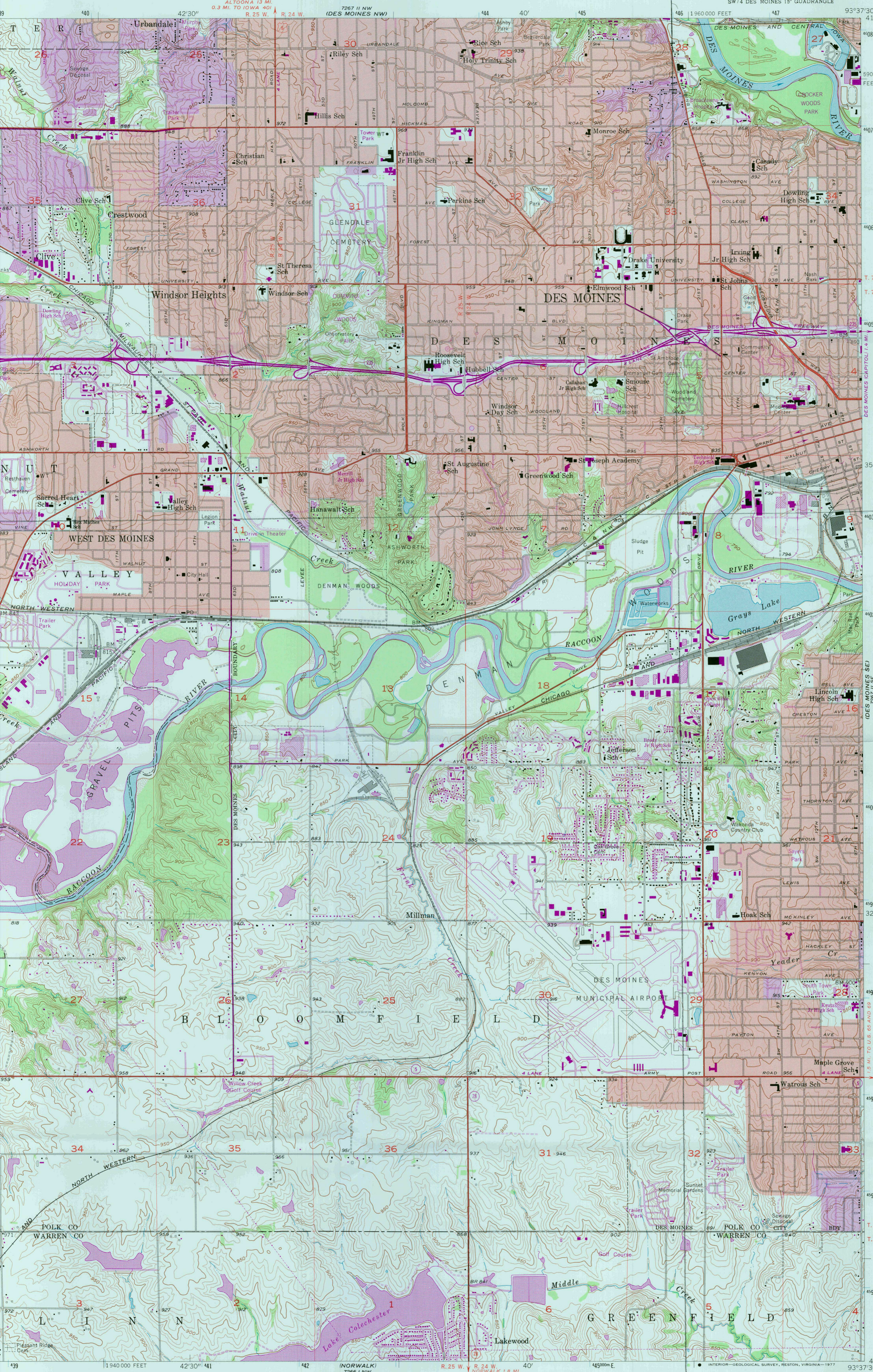
**F. W. FITCH**



Figure 14

Source: Rehder, p. 25.

7267 II SW NE  
DES MOINES NE

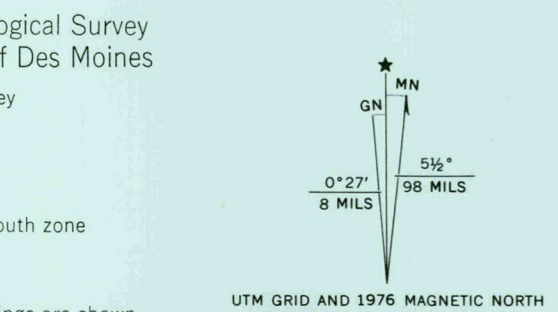


F.W. FITCH  
COMPANY  
HISTORIC DISTRICT

E 446935  
N 4603490

DES MOINES SE  
7267 II SE

SCOTCH RIDGE  
7267 II NE



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
SCALE 1:24,000

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

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



DES MOINES SW, IOWA  
SW 1/4 DES MOINES 15' QUADRANGLE  
N4130—W9337.5/7.5

1956  
PHOTOREVISED 1967, 1971, AND 1976  
AMS 7267 II SW—SERIES V876

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
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F·W·FITCH·CO.

304













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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Fitch, F.W., Company Historic District  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Polk

DATE RECEIVED: 2/22/13                      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/21/13  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/05/13                      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/10/13  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000147

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT       RETURN       REJECT      4.9.13 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF

# CULTURAL AFFAIRS

MARY TIFFANY COWNIE, DIRECTOR



TERRY E. BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR  
KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR

STATE  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY of  
IOWA

JEROME THOMPSON  
ADMINISTRATOR



MATTHEW HARRIS  
ADMINISTRATOR

600 E. LOCUST  
DES MOINES, IOWA  
50319

T. (515) 281-5111  
F. (515) 282-0502

CULTURALAFFAIRS.ORG

February 19, 2013

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

Dear Ms. Shull:

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

- F.W. Fitch Company Historic District, 300-306 16<sup>th</sup> Street; 1510-1526 Walnut Street, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa
- Memorial Building, 340 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue East, Dyersville, Dubuque County, Iowa

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Foster Hill, Manager  
National Register and Tax Incentive Programs