NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Best Building

other names/site number Cleaveland Building, VanDerGinst Building

Name of Multiple Property Listing n/a

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

2. Location

street & number 1701-03 Second Avenue ☐ not for publication

city or town Rock Island ☐ vicinity

state Illinois county Rock Island zip code 61201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _x_ 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 _x_ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: ___ **national** ___ **statewide** _x_ **local**

Applicable National Register Criteria: ___ **A** ___ **B** _x_ **C** ___ **D**

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer — Date 6/7/18

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official — Date

Title — State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

X entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

Barbara Wyatt — 7-17-18

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

Name of Property ,Illinois
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [x] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		site
		structure
		object
1		**Total**

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce: Department Store
Commerce: Business

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant/Not In Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commercial Style
Classical Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete
walls: Brick
roof: Synthetic
other: Terra Cotta

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

Summary Paragraph

The Best Building is a five-and six-story commercial building located at 1701-1707 Second Avenue in Rock Island, Illinois. The building's design is in the Classical Revival style, with noticeable Commercial Style ("Chicago School") influences in its large windows, three-part vertical division and expression of its structural grid. The building was designed in 1908 by Clausen & Clausen of Davenport, Iowa, the best-known architectural firm in the region. It was constructed by Peoria contractors Valentine Jobst & Sons. The building has an early example of a fireproof concrete frame, with reinforced concrete columns and girders. The floor slabs consist of clay tile laid between girders, and the structural walls are of hollow clay tile and common brick. The foundation is also concrete. The exterior is clad with manganese-spotted dark brown brick at the first story and buff brick at the upper stories. There is a deep modillioned copper cornice. The building has a rectangular footprint at the ground level. Above the second story, the floor plan is U-shaped, with a light well facing 17th Street to the west. The floor levels are differentiated in each wing above the second story, with three upper stories to the north of the light well and four upper stories to the south. This division articulates the separate uses of the two sides of the building, with tall-ceilinged department store levels on the north and lower-ceilinged office space to the south. The building possesses integrity, with its definitive architectural features intact and legible. There have been some exterior alterations, and the interior layout reflects a highly modified floorplan. Some interior elements are intact, including the location of hallways on the office side of the building, the tin ceiling on the second story, many wood and terrazzo floors, and the lobby, which was remodeled in the 1930s or 1940s.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Best Building is sited at the northeast corner of Second Avenue and 17th Street in downtown Rock Island approximately one and a half blocks south of the Mississippi River. An alley runs along the north side of the building, and the east side of the building is connected at the first two and a half stories to a smaller historic building on Second Avenue. A row of historic buildings is across the street to the south, and a long glass and metal paneled mid-20th-century building is across the street to the west. The immediate vicinity is one of the densest sections of downtown Rock Island.

Exterior

The Best Building has two primary elevations (see photograph 1 and figure 3). Both the south and west elevations originally had a main entrance into the department store space, and the elevation lobby was accessed from an additional entrance at the south elevation.

The south elevation faces Second Avenue. This elevation is divided into four bays and is six stories high. The two center bays are slightly wider than the two outer bays. At the first story, the four bays are framed by variegated dark brown manganese-spotted brick piers. The piers' bases are limestone, and limestone runs across the top of the openings. The first and third bays are occupied by aluminum storefront systems over black granite bulkheads. The second bay is similarly detailed, but there is a pair of recessed glass double doors leading into the department store space. Historically, this was a main entrance with a double-leaf entrance flanked by sidelights beneath the transom, with a glass canopy

suspended by wire rope from the building wall (see figures 3 and 15). The canopy and original entrance configuration are both gone. Cloth canopies are over the right three bays; the left bay retains the metal structure for the canopy but the cloth is missing. At the fourth bay, brown brick recesses back to a pair of non-historic glass doors with sidelights and transom.

Above a limestone course, the second story begins the upper stories' use of buff brick. Every sixth and seventh course of brick is recessed to create a rusticated feel. Tall openings, one per bay, are wide enough to accommodate multiple windows. Originally the wood sash windows were configured in wide pairs with transoms at the outer bays and Chicago-style windows with transom lights at the center two bays. Today's aluminum replacements are pairs or paired 1/1s (four per opening) with colored panels instead of transom lights above. Over the windows, the rusticated pattern of the brick flares upward to suggest the voussoirs of a flat arch; at the center of each is a limestone keystone. Another limestone course caps the second story.

Floors three through six are designed as a single unit. Brick piers define the bays; the outer piers are rusticated, following the pattern established at the second story. The window planes are recessed, and the piers between them rise to a shallow arch over the window bays. The window openings themselves are separated so there are two per bay. There is more space between the windows at the two, wider center bays. Each of the window openings is filled with an aluminum window with a tall upper sash and a short, horizontal lower sash. A historic photo indicates that in the original wood windows, the bottom sashes were taller than the upper sashes.

The sixth floor is crowned with a copper cornice which features roundels on the frieze and heavy modillions at the eaves. At either end of the façade, large (story-high) stylized terra cotta compositions appear to drop down from the cornice. These vertical expressions are inspired by the parts of a column or of a cornice. The top section is square and is the height of roughly 12 ½ courses of brick. In the center is a stylized quatrefoil flower in a square recessed panel. The center section is slightly narrower than the square, and is inspired by the shaft section of a column or the frieze section of a cornice. It is the height of approximately 29 courses of brick. This section features a recessed rectangular panel. Like the section above it, it is flush with the brickwork to either side.

The bottom section of the terra cotta projects out slightly from the face of the brick. At its base are three guttae on a terra cotta panel, representing the bottom section of a cornice. This entire bottom section is the height of 14 courses of brick.

The west elevation of the exterior, which faces 17th Street, uses the same materials and vertical composition as the south. This elevation is wider, and one of its most prominent features is the light well above the second floor. The first floor is clad with spotted brown brick and has ten bays. Because the bays at the left are wider than those at the right, the entrance at the 5th bay is centered. The recessed entrance is one step above grade. Paired non-historic half-light doors are set back in a surround of wood or woodlike paneling. This bay and the five storefront bays to its right are covered with awning frames; the far right storefront (at the 10th bay) is missing the cloth from its awning. The configuration of limestone at the pier bases and over the storefronts is the same as that of the south elevation, but on this side the windows are much narrower (only two vertical panes instead of four). To the left of the centered entrance, the brown brick wall is mostly blind. Instead of storefronts, as at the right bays, this section of wall has small horizontal windows place high in the first story. The capping limestone course that separates the first from second story runs across the full elevation.

The second story is organized in the same way as the south elevation, with rusticated brick forming courses and voussoirs. The windows all have stone keystones. The entrance bay rises to a segmental arch, capped with cream colored terra cotta, at the base of the light well. To the left of the entrance bay,

the four bays have replacement paired 1/1 windows at the two inner bays, and single 1/1s at the first and fourth bays. The right five bays have narrow pairs of 1/1s. All of the windows (as at the south elevation) have colored panels over them instead of transom lights.

Above the second story, the floor levels to either side of the light well vary. This results in three additional tall stories at the left side of the well, and four shorter stories at the right side. (The height of the building is consistent at the roofline.) The taller floor-to ceiling heights at the north side of the building represent its use as a spacious department store, while the south side's lower ceilings reflect its use as offices. Left of the light well at the north half of the building, the four wide bays of the third story have windows that are the same as those at the second story. The fourth story windows above them are slightly shorter. The fifth story windows are shorter still and terminate in segmental arches.

To the right of the light bay at the south side of the building, the upper four stories possess 1/1 windows of uniform height, similar (or identical) to the upper story windows at the south elevation. Both halves of the west elevation possess the same cornice and stylized terra cotta features as the south elevation.

The north elevation of the Best Building faces the alley; since the demolition of the building to its north (date unknown), this elevation has been exposed to public view (see photograph 2). This elevation originally was finished in pressed brick laid flat with no relief work or decoration. In 1992, artist Richard Haas painted a trompe l'oeil mural featuring a large image of chief Black Hawk. The mural creates the appearance of a continuation of the design elements of the two front elevations: a brown base, rusticated brick second story, and copper cornice. The third of the five bays, a blind bay above the first story, is designed to look like a two-story projecting bay as a base for a niche featuring a three-story statue of Black Hawk. Haas' work necessitated the infill of four window openings in this bay for the project. The parapet wall above this bay is built up in a segmental arch to complete the illusion of a projecting bay.

All of the windows at this elevation are housed in segmental arched openings. The three left first story windows may be original, with three-light upper sashes and three-light transoms over a boarded lower sash. At the left bay at grade there is a metal and glass door with a large sidelight. A concrete foundation is visible at this elevation.

Interior

The building's interior shows abundant display of the reinforced concrete construction, with structural columns, vaulted floor slabs and clay tile walls visible on all levels. Generally, the building shows its alterations above the first floor, where an incomplete adaptive reuse project started by a previous owner entailed removal and reconfiguration of partitions in the office building wing, and construction of new partitions within the department store wing. New partitions are constructed of steel studs with hung gypsum board, and thus are reversible for a future more historically-informed rehabilitation project.

On the first floor, the former department store retail space (gutted) and the formal elevator lobby are the defining public areas . Most of the west side of the first story is occupied by the original department store space (see photograph 3). This area has full transparency of storefront windows in historic channels, and a voluminous sense of space. There are two sets of exterior doors, one at the south elevation and one at the west elevation. Exposed square concrete columns indicate the structural grid that supports the building. The elevator lobby is in the southeast corner of the building. Accessed from the street by inner and outer paired glass doors, the lobby evinces a modern appearance from a remodeling that took place circa 1950.[1] Walls are travertine, and the floor is geometric patterned terrazzo laid in four colors (see photograph 4). The two elevators are along the east wall; the west wall includes inset glass display

[1] The date of the remodeling is unknown, but it took place after the publication of 1950 updates to the original 1906 Sanborn map. No plans were found on file with the original architect's firm.

cabinets. Beyond the elevator lobby to the north, two doors along the east wall lead to stairs (one set going up and another to the basement). Beyond this historic lobby, there is modern partitioning at the eastern side of the building. A door leads into an office space and a corridor runs along the east wall.

On the east side of the building, there are located elevator lobbies above the main lobby. These elevator lobbies and flanking fire stairs occupy the vacated chase where the original office staircase was located. Plans show that the staircase was in a U-configuration with landings, and was open to each floor. The elevators and new stairs most likely date to circa 1950. At the north end of this elevation, the original public staircase for the department store is intact above the first floor level, where is historic U-shape has been modified with a straight run of stairs and intermediary landing along the east wall (see figures 4 and 10).

The department store sections are evident in the first floor and basement areas, which retain open areas used for retail. At its opening, the Young & McCombs Department store used all of the first two stories, all or part of the basement, and the north side of floors three, four and five. China and cut glass were located in the basement; a soda fountain and the men's department and accessories were located on the first floor; the second floor included ladies' clothes and millinery; the third floor included carpets, draperies and wallpaper; the fourth floor was the restaurant; and the fifth floor held company offices and storage.

Since the staircase provided public circulation within the department store, it was designed to be refined and open for visibility within the building (see photographs 6 and 7). The staircase has a decorated balustrade, steel treads and risers and sense of its past use. However, the staircase is contained by partition walls at the floor landings where it once was open. Retention of the staircase allows the building to demonstrate the past use of this north wing, however. The staircase is one of the key elements identifying the public retail use of the building, along with the first floor open retail space.

The historic layout of each wing placed the open plan department store levels on the north, and the cellular office wing arranged around L-shaped corridors on the south (see figures 10, 11 and 12). These wings were internally divided with no through access. Today the wings have been joined with through corridors that have required steel ramps placed at each floor above the second floor (see figures 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9).

The upper stories were divided into apartments in 2014, but this project was never completed. All historic partitions were demolished, even around the elevator lobbies. None of the partitions in place is original. All new framing consists of steel studs covered in gypsum board. Most constructed units have new manufactured door units in openings, as well as kitchen and bathroom fixtures. In some places, the delamination of the plaster from exterior walls led to an intentional design choice: exposed brick (and in some cases, hollow clay tile) next to jagged edges of plaster (see photograph 9). Throughout the upper floors, even with new construction, the concrete structural system is evident – interior columns, girders and exterior engaged columns are exposed and painted (see figures 13 and 14).

At the second story, the apartment units line a U-shaped hall which connects the elevators at the south end of the building with the freight elevator against the north wall and staircase near the north end of the east wall (see photograph 5). At this level, original tin ceilings of the department store are intact. Above the second story, most floors have the same plan, with variations in detailing. The corridor makes a U-shape around the light well (see figure 5). At the south corridor, there are three units along the south exterior wall and two along the light well. At the north corridor, there are two (larger) units along the north exterior wall and two along the light well. An additional unit is set against the east exterior wall. Because there are more stories at the south half of the building than the north, there is a half-story sandwiched into the south side between the 4th and top stories. This half-story has the same plan as the floors above and below.

At the south half of the building where offices were located, the corridor follows the path of the original office corridor, although in the new plan it is narrowed. At the 4th and 5th stories on this side, original terrazzo floors are intact in the corridor. In a few sections of the north side of the building, wood floors are exposed. Most of the former department store appears to have been covered in the mid-20th century with 8" square tiles, now removed although their traces are visible on the exposed subfloor.

Integrity

The Best Building retains integrity sufficient to display the traits for which the building meets local significance under Criterion C. The building's reinforced concrete structural system is fully intact, demonstrating enduring fireproof construction. The exterior elevations have seen few major changes since construction. The loss of historic windows, department store entrance and canopy are mitigated by the clear legibility of all historic storefront and window openings, and the clear sense of the retail display function of the first floor. With these changes evincing a minor visual impact, the exterior of the building is mostly intact and retains its original design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and location. The building setting has seen typical changes for a downtown location, including a parking lot now occupying the site to the north and the painting of that elevation which had not originally been prominently displayed.

The building's associations have also changed over time; the Best Building contained offices and a department store for the first seven decades of its existence. Today, its interiors reflect some of the historic uses in the open plan first floor, office and elevator lobbies, department store staircase and material evidence including terrazzo flooring and pressed tin ceilings. Alterations in interior plan impact interior integrity, but do not conceal or alter the important structural system of the building. Moreover, the Best Building is in very good condition.

Best Building | Rock Island, Illinois
Name of Property | County and State

8. Statement of Significance

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

- [ ] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [x] 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" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1908

Significant Dates

1908

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

n/a

Architect/Builder

Clausen & Clausen, architects

Valentine Jobst & Son, builder

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The Best Building, located at 1701-1707 Second Avenue in downtown Rock Island, Illinois, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECURE.[2] The Best Building is locally significant as an early representative example of an early large-scale commercial building enabled by reinforced concrete construction. When the Best Building rose, Rock Island began a boom of commercial buildings that were substantially larger than anything prior and were of fireproof steel or reinforced concrete construction. The Best Building was a leader in the new wave of large new downtown buildings. Constructed in 1908, the building was designed by Clausen & Clausen, the leading architectural firm of Davenport, Iowa, and employs sophisticated design that demonstrates a modern articulation of the building structure. Peoria-based Valentine Jobst & Sons, one of Illinois' largest construction companies in the era, built the building. At the time of completion, the Best Building was one of several buildings that transcended the low commercial blocks in the adjacent cities of Rock Island and Moline in Illinois and Davenport in Iowa. Today, the Best Building retains its stature as a major commercial block in what is now called the Quad Cities, and is the second-tallest building in Rock Island. The building's architectural influence can be seen in several subsequent buildings that utilized reinforced concrete structures and furthered the trend toward commercial buildings of substantial, rent-generating square footage. The building displays minor changes in its exterior integrity, and displays all attributes that made it a significant work of local architecture upon completion. The period of significance is limited to the date of construction, 1908.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Early Reinforced Concrete Architecture in the United States

By the time that the Best Building was completed, the use of reinforced concrete to build commercial building structures had become prevalent. Reinforced concrete allowed American architects a reliable fireproof construction, an economical method of achieving greater height and an opportunity to use modern cost-efficient and aesthetically-modern exterior curtain walls. Reinforced concrete overcame limits in the use of bearing wall construction, which required combustible milled structures and floors and also limited building heights. Furthermore, reinforced concrete was far less expensive than structural steel. As American cities' central business districts witnessed rising land values in the early twentieth century, methods of achieving maximum rents through massive forms became necessary. Real estate investors harnessed both steel and reinforced concrete framing, which were new technologies in the early twentieth century.

The modern use of reinforced concrete in architecture began in 1867 when French gardener Joseph Monier obtained patents for beams and posts on roadways and bridges. Monier began designing entire bridge structures in the material, despite having no formal engineering training.[3] Engineer Francois Hennebique first used concrete to fireproof structural steel beams in 1879, and eventually patented a reinforced concrete

[2] The National Park Service approved a Part 1 for the Best Building on December 19, 2017, with comments written by historian Alexis Abernathy stating that "the proper approach for the Best Building may be Criterion A for Commerce and not Criterion C for the method of construction." Review staff at the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, however, determined that the building lacked sufficient integrity to evince any traits associated with significance under Criterion A, due to loss of most of the department store interior plan.
[3] Mete Sozen, Toshikatsu Ichinose and Santiago Pujol, *Principles of Reinforced Concrete Design* (Boca Raton, Fla.: CRC Press, 2014), p. 1.

building structural system in 1892.[4] German engineer G.A. Wayss had patented Monier's techniques in 1879, as the Wayss-Monier System. By then, American William E. Ward had designed and built a reinforced concrete house at Port Chester, New York by 1875.[5] Ernest Ransome, and engineer and architect employed at a cast stone (concrete stone) manufacturer in San Francisco, began experimenting with application of the European ideas in the United States. However, architectural historian Donald Friedman notes that Americans were resistant to the advent of reinforced concrete, despite the availability of structural engineering reports and theory from Europe.[6] In the 1890s, as the Chicago School ushered in commercial modernism in the United States, the use of reinforced concrete for large buildings was nearly unknown and the technology frequently dismissed with skepticism.[7]

Ransome continued to develop ideas leading to a full column and beam "system" that would allow for the entire structure of a building to be fireproof concrete. The development of patented systems assuaged public fears that new materials were unsafe, or that builders would not build the structures to safe standards. Subsequent reinforced concrete structures often came through mass-made "systems," where engineers could specify elements from catalogs that ensured fast fabrication, standardized quality and patented joining systems that had to be scientifically tested to receive a United States Patent. Ransome had pioneered reinforced concrete structural systems for industrial architecture in the 1880s and 1890s.

The earliest major works of reinforced concrete architecture were industrial. When a terrible fire in 1902 left his concrete-framed Pacific Coast Borax Refinery in Bayonne, New Jersey (1897) largely unscathed, interest in use of reinforced concrete structures in fire-prone industrial buildings grew. Ransome's United Shoe Machinery Plant in Beverly, Massachusetts (1903) was the largest reinforced concrete industrial building built to date.[8] Early forms were built in place, with concrete poured on site. This method of building proved slow. Ransome eventually patented the Ransome Unit System, which allowed for all columns, beams and girders to be precast and brought to a construction site already made.[9] The precast members could be hoisted into place very quickly. Lightweight poured floor slabs utilized wire mesh or mortared clay tile beds.[10] Alongside Ransome, other manufacturers developed patented precast elements, rolled wire mesh for floors (the Clinton System offered 300 foot rolls by 1906), mass produced reinforcing rods and other elements.

Engineer Julius Kahn of Detroit had already developed a modular structural system of concrete columns and beams, patented in 1902. Kahn developed "trussed steel bars" with flanges that could be inserted between concrete beams to offset shear forces, as well as hooping to reinforce columns and metal netting to reinforce floor slabs and upright partitions.[11] Kahn's brother, noted architect Albert Kahn, employed the "Kahn system" sold through the Kahn Company throughout his career to design dozens of American factories. Meanwhile, engineer C.A.P. Turner developed a slab and column concrete structural system that eliminated the need for beams altogether.[12] First employed in Turner's Johnson-Bovey Building in Minneapolis (1906), an office

[4] Sozen, Ichinose and Pujol, p. 1.
[5] Sozen, Ichinose and Pujol, p 2.
[6] Donald Friedman, *Historical Building Construction: Design, Materials and Technology* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), p. 105.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Amy E. Slaton, *Reinforced Concrete and the Modernization of American Building, 1900-1930* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 138.
[9] Slaton, p. 144.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Slaton, p. 143.
[12] Lynn Josse, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Luyties Homeopathic Pharmacy Co. Building* (National Park Service, 2000), p. 8.8.

building, Turner's system was called the "mushroom cap system" due to the appearance of the caps Turner designed for his rounded columns. Turner patented his system in 1908. Turner's system allowed for faster construction of fireproof industrial and commercial buildings, while also making it easier for non-architects in the building trades to design these buildings (saving even more money).

The first major American commercial building to employ a reinforced concrete structure was the column and beam Ingalls Building in Cincinnati (1903; Elzner & Anderson, architects).[13] A 16-story speculative office block, the Ingalls Building demonstrated that the new structural method could still be concealed behind street-facing, proper architect-designed elevations. Thus investors learned that the new technology was safe, affordable, fast and had no impact on the building envelope design necessary to attract tenants to a commercial building. The architectural profession was slightly wary of reinforced concrete at first, however, because of the use of structural systems that relegated the architect's office to designing only exterior elevations, layouts and ornament. According to architectural historian Amy Slaton, most American reinforced concrete industrial buildings that avoided masonry cladding built between 1900 and 1930 were designed by engineers without the participation of trained architects.[14] Commercial buildings tended to utilize architects to design artistically sophisticated facades, while engineers (often working for one of the "systems" or for the general contractor) designed the structures. By 1910, the use of reinforced concrete was "generally accepted" in commercial and industrial architecture, and most architects could work with the method of construction.[15]

When Clausen & Clausen designed the Best Building, commercial architecture for large urban buildings had undergone a considerable refinement since the first "skyscraper" rose in Chicago in 1883. William Le Baron Jenney's Home Insurance Building (1883-1885) brought forth the first use of steel framing and a break from academic classicism in styling. The steel frame had liberated commercial buildings from heavy appearances and necessarily smaller window openings. Subsequent works of commercial architecture, including Louis Sullivan's Wainwright Building (1891) in St. Louis, explored the artistic potential of new steel forms, and broke with classical conventions. Soaring commercial buildings that, no matter what their style of ornament, embraced expression of their gridded steel skeletons and their thin outer "curtain" walls comprise the "Chicago School" movement in American architecture. Structural technology was far more important than style in defining the modern large-scale American commercial building.[16]

Steel construction remained expensive, and often costs exceeded maximum land rents possible in smaller cities like Rock Island. Reinforced concrete methods were far more affordable, and after the Ingalls Building completion, caught the attention of developers around the United States. The cost efficiency of reinforced concrete building techniques received favorable notice in the influential 1912 volume by Frederick Winslow Taylor and Sanford Eleazer Thompson entitled *A Treatise on Concrete, Plain and Reinforced.* The authors note "a growing confidence in [reinforced concrete's] utility for office buildings" driven by the recognition of the desirable fireproof qualities and by cost savings.[17] According to Taylor and Thompson, in 1904 the net savings for building a commercial building in reinforced concrete instead of steel was 20%.[18] The cost for building an industrial or wholesale loft in reinforced concrete was only 4% to 5% than mill method construction, with far

[13] Sozen, Ichinose and Pujol, p. 4.
[14] Slaton, p. 169.
[15] Amy E. Slaton, Paul E. Gaudette. William G. Hime, and James D. Connolly. "Reinforced Concrete" *in Twentieth-Century Building Material: History and Conservation*, Thomas C. Jester, ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill. 1995). 95-96.
[16] Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture* (Lebanon, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1999), p. 206.
[17] Frederick Winslow Taylor and Sanford Elzear Taylor, *A Treatise on Concrete, Plain and Reinforced* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1912), p. 607.
[18] Ibid.

greater fireproofing.[19] The Best Building and its successors represent developers harnessing the affordability of the technology to increase the size – and thus land rents – of buildings in the three large cities of Rock Island, Moline and Davenport.

Reinforced concrete building technology's economy and quality allowed for the development of large commercial buildings in smaller cities, where land values often were not high enough to support full steel construction. The Best Building fits into a group of reinforced concrete buildings rising across Illinois in cities that had never seen such large structures before. Comparable buildings include the 12-story Ziock Building in Rockford (1913; NR 2010); the six-story Murphy Building in East St. Louis (1909; NR 2014 in the Downtown East St. Louis Historic District; demolished, 2015); the 8-story Hofmann Tower in Lyons (1908; NR 1978); the 13-story Bresee Tower in Danville (1917) and the six-story Wood Building in Benton (1919). These buildings employ a variety of styles and varying reinforced concrete structural systems (mostly column and beam methods). Despite different styles and structures, all of these buildings share typological similarities in height, mass, fireproof construction and emphasis of window grids in façade design.[20]

The Best Building: A Large, Fireproof Modern Building in Rock Island

Prior to 1908, Rock Island lacked any large-scale commercial buildings in its downtown. None were taller than five stories, and almost none occupied more than one hundred feet of street frontage. Most buildings fit into the category that Richard Longstreth identified as the "two-part vertical block." This type reflects a resolution of the question of how to construct a tall building: a unified upper section of the building is placed over a base. The two parts are "different yet carefully related to one another."[21] Longstreth notes that while a variety of styles may apply to such a building, "generally, references to the past are classical."[22] The two-part block can be found in examples from 1850-1920 in the United States, with the typical example being a commercial storefront with a floor of residential, office or retail space above.

Rock Island saw a wave of two and three-story commercial buildings in the 1870s and 1880s, with most buildings either built the width of one parcel or with bay divisions at parcel lines. An early extant example is the Italianate Star Block (1874; Isaac N. Holmes, architect) at 1821-29 Second Avenue, a six-bay, three-story two-part block. The building is articulated as a set of facades rather than a unified block, although there is a shared cornice above. The more modern London Clothing House (1902; Nic Juhl, builder), a three-story brick bearing wall retail department store building that was three bays wide with Beaux Arts architectural details, still represents a small scale of construction. Across the river, Davenport had a few larger commercial blocks, including the five-story J.H.C. Petersen Son's Store (1892; Frederick Clausen, architect).

When Louis P. Best announced the new building, the early press reception announced that this was a significant project aligned with contemporary projects that were remaking Rock Island's look. Of course, Best hired his friend and long-time collaborator Frederick G. Clausen to serve as architect. Clausen's acumen meant that the project would produce a high-quality building. The *Rock Island Argus and Daily Union* was superlative in its article announcing the project on March 28, 1908. The article declared that the proposed Best Building was to be the "biggest and most complete business block in all of the three cities" (Rock Island,

[19] Taylor and Thompson, p. 608.
[20] Gelernter, p. 214.
[21] Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture* (Walnut Creek, California: Alta Mira Press, 2000. Kindle edition: n.p.
[22] Ibid.

Davenport and Moline implied) and that "the significance is of such import that it is hardly necessary to dwell upon it."[23] The article noted the building's height, mass and reinforced concrete construction.

Prior to the advent of reinforced concrete, Rock Island had not seen any large commercial buildings rise in its downtown save the Harms Hotel (1902), which at five stories had been the tallest building in the city. Yet the Harms Hotel was of bearing wall masonry construction, making it the pinnacle of the older building technology that had proliferated two-part commercial buildings across the city's downtown. None of these buildings was particularly massive, even larger buildings like the Peter Fries Building (1902) at 1903-5 Second Avenue or the State Bank Building (1891) at the northwest corner of Second Avenue and 17th Street. The buildings preceding the introduction of reinforced concrete showed their gravity-weighted masonry structural compositions, and while often elegant, did not reach toward the sky. A 1909 postcard view of downtown looking southeast from near the Best Building site shows the Safety Building rising above a group of mostly two-and three-story buildings.[24] A postcard view of Second Avenue dating to some year between 1910 and 1915 shows the Best Building rising above a street of smaller two-part commercial blocks, the only one of which comes close is a four-story block.[25] The reinforced concrete wave brought the city larger commercial blocks that exceeded the earlier wave of bearing-wall two-part vertical blocks.

Indeed, Best and Clausen planned a significantly modern building with the new Best Building. The Safety Building, a six-story office block that opened in 1908, was the city's first major reinforced concrete building. Best's building was going to be larger. The use of the new technology of reinforced concrete attracted considerable interest, and the notice of bid for construction carried in many national outlets. When Best let the project for bid, 14 companies bid on the project.[26] The building's specifics were impressive and substantial: a 150' by 90' block, six stories tall, space for offices and a department store, air conditioning and a massive chiller plant, fireproof construction mandated.[27] The local press had eagerly reported on the competition to build such a massive modern building.[28]

Reinforced concrete's rise came forward when architects of downtown office buildings and department stores sought to renew the use of ornamental and formal traits rooted in classicism. The architect of the Best Building, Frederick G. Clausen (1848-1940), would have been attentive to the trends. His practice embraced the periodization of classical influence between 1880 and 1920. Clausen was not a sectarian devotee of any style, but rather an accomplished and versatile designer (the type often dubbed "client-driven" by historians who overlook the demonstrated skill and training inherent in working across styles). Clausen was a friend of Best, as well as the most prominent architect in the Quad Cities at the time.[29] Clausen was born in Germany, training in architecture there before moving to Davenport, Iowa, in 1869. He opened his architectural firm in 1871. Between 1895 and 1904, he practiced with Park T. Burrows and James P. Hubbell. From 1904 until 1914, Frederick Clausen and his son Rudolph (1878-1961) practiced as Clausen & Clausen. After his father's

[23] "Another Six-Story Building for City's Business District; To Replace the Buford Block," *Rock Island Argus and Daily Union*, March 28, 1908, p. 13.
[24] Downtown, Looking Southeast. Rock Island Preservation Society, at http://www.rockislandpreservation.org/postcards-from-home/downtown-looking-southeast/; accessed 9 October 9, 2017.
[25] Farewell Night Scene, Second Avenue. Rock Island Preservation Society, at http://www.rockislandpreservation.org/postcards-from-home/farewell-night-scene-second-avenue/; accessed October 9, 2017.
[26] "Contract Let for Big Building," *Davenport Daily Times*, May 20, 1908, p. 10.
[27] "Notices," *Engineering News* 59.22, 21 May 1908, p. 184.
[28] "Bids Are Open for the Best Building," *Rock Island Argus and Daily Union*, May 19, 1908, p. 8.
[29] "L.P. Best, Prominent Business Man, Dies of Pneumonia in the West," *Davenport Democrat*, 4 March 1926, p. 1-2. The article stated that Best and Clausen were part of a foursome that got together to play cards once a week.

retirement, Rudolph added other partners to the firm and finally retired in 1933.[30] A successor firm, Studio 483, currently maintains offices in both Rock Island and Davenport.[31]

Whether Clausen designed the structural system or whether the contractor or an engineer designed it is unknown. The architectural drawings for the building from Clausen's office specify a concrete structural system based on patented innovations of its time. The building made use of reinforced concrete columns and beams on a modular plan, showing the influence of patented systems but not adopting any particular one. The concrete floor slabs had backing hollow clay tile. Exterior walls were made of reinforced clay tile and brick, and interior partitions were made of clay tile. The structure was fully fireproof. The cross-sections of the structural girders show that the steel reinforcement rods were formed to make diagonal rising ends that transferred shear loads away from the centers (figure 22). The shear bars were repeated in the same form. The reinforcement design thus diminished stress in the centers of each beam or girder. At the Best Building, there are single shear bar ends intersecting interval upright bars. The system of the building adheres to no other recorded patented system, so represents the architect or engineer's translation.

The builder of the Best Building, Valentine Jobst and Sons of Peoria, would have built the structure, and may have assisted in its design. In May 1908, Best chose the firm to build the new business block, nudging out bigger firms including the James Stewart Company of St. Louis.[32] Valentine Jobst & Sons was already an accomplished construction company, and had been in business since 1901.[33] The firm's many works include the Illinois Supreme Court Building in Springfield; the United States Courthouse and Post Office buildings in Galesburg, Illinois, Joplin, Missouri, Pekin, Illinois, Jacksonville, Illinois and Wichita, Kansas; the Champaign County Courthouse in Champaign, Illinois; the Logan County Courthouse in Lincoln, Illinois; several academic buildings at the University of Illinois campus in Champaign, Illinois; the Hotel Davenport in Davenport, Iowa; the Schipper & Block Department Store in Peoria, Illinois; the National Home for Soldiers in Danville, Illinois; the Public Library in Decatur, Illinois; the Southern Illinois Hospital for the Insane in Anna, Illinois; the First National Bank Building in Champaign Illinois; and the Soldiers and Sailors Home in Quincy, Illinois.[34]

Construction of the Best Building attracted press attention. The start of construction of the reinforced concrete forms merited at least one article's attention.[35] Toward completion, the *Rock Island Argus and Daily Union* opined that the completion of the Best Building marked a major turning point in downtown Rock Island's trajectory.[36] The newspaper posed that completion of the Best Building following construction of the Safety Building and the remodeling of People's National Bank Building constitutes a "fine impetus" for more major buildings to rise.[37] The article does not distinguish between reception of the Best or Safety buildings as stronger, and states that both were significant accomplishments advancing "modern" architecture in downtown Rock Island.

[30] Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1999), p. 40-42. The junior Clausen's firm became Clausen & Kruse and the Clausen, Kruse & Klein.
[31] Jennifer DeWitt, "Missman merges with combined Q-C architecture firms," *Quad-City Times*, November 13, 2015. http://qctimes.com/business/missman-merges-with-combined-q-c-architecture-firms/article_5f0a4076-8a23-59eb-94ac-137d1cfb59e5.html; accessed October 9, 2017.
[32] "Peoria Firm Gets the Contract for New Block," *Rock Island Argus and Daily Union*, May 20, 1908, p. 5.
[33] James Montgomery Rice, *Peoria City and County, Illinois: A Record of Settlement, Organization, Progress and Achievement* vol. 2 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912), p. 790-1.
[34] Ibid.
[35] "Brick Work Is Begin," *Davenport Daily Times*, August 17, 1908, p. 10.
[36] "More Blocks Going Up," *Rock Island Argus and Daily Union,* November 14, 1908, p. 5.
[37] Ibid.

The Best Building immediately influenced residential design in the future Quad Cities. While his eponymous building was under construction, Louis P. Best had built a new personal residence in Davenport across the river. There was no surprise that Best selected Clausen as the architect, but there was a surprise at Clausen's design: a fully fireproof, reinforced concrete two-and-a-half story dwelling. The *Davenport Democrat* declared the dwelling to be "a distinct departure from the former methods of residence construction in the tri-cities," and no known precedent exists.[38] The house utilized reinforced concrete columns and beams, concrete footings, brick basement walls, stucco-clad structural clay block interior partitions and reinforced concrete floors with hollow clay tile filler rows underneath. J. Sievers of Rock Island served as general contractors, and the Concrete Engineering Company of Davenport poured the concrete and designed the forms.[39]

The Best Building was only Rock Island's second reinforced concrete large commercial mixed-use building, but several followed. The Best Building had closely followed the construction of the most directly comparable building, the smaller Safety Building, also constructed in 1908.[40] This building is located at 1800 3rd Avenue. It has six stories, clad with brown brick at the ground level and buff brick at the upper stories (see figure 17). In its detailing, the building displays a mix of classical motifs (represented by the anthemion-laden architrave at the north elevation and the cornice's scrolled brackets) and more modern designs (most notably, a geometric raised brick pattern at the top two stories). Architect Olof Z. Cervin acknowledged that his Safety Building of 1908 was the first reinforced concrete building in the Quad Cities.[41] The Safety Building was occupied first, and was the tallest building in the city upon completion.[42] The near coincidence of the Best Building and Safety Building evince the relationship between maximizing land rents and the massive modern building forms enabled by new structural technologies. In the next two decades, several large commercial buildings followed.

The Rock Island Bank Building, located at 230 18th Street, was built in 1914 with a reinforced concrete structure (see figure 18).[43] It is perhaps the city's most directly Classically inspired office building; the first of its five stories is a stone base with round-arched windows below brick cladding above. Built for the Central Trust and Savings Bank as a four-bay building, the building was expanded to current size in 1926. The Rock Island Bank Building shows a tendency against frank expression of structure at its base, while adhering to a Chicago School grid above. Another comparable reinforced concrete bank building, the former Rock Island Savings Bank Building at 18th Street and 3rd Avenue (1912), presented a Bedford limestone Greek temple façade that concealed its modern structure, furthering the artistic severance of clear relation between structure and design. The building was completely reclad in granite, enameled metal panels and brick in 1927 and today is the Telco Building, home to television studios (see figure 120).[44]

The Ann Goldman Building, located at 1629 2nd Avenue, is a five-story brown brick building comparable in scale to the nominated building (see figure 19). The overall design of the building reflects alterations of the 1920s (apparently including the addition of the fifth floor). [45] Located on a prominent downtown corner, the

[38] *History—Grandview Apartments*. http://grandviewdavenport.com/history/. No date. Accessed 12 September 2017.
[39] Ibid.
[40] City of Rock Island Planning & Redevelopment Division. *History & Architecture: Downtown Rock Island* (2004: http://www.rigov.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1119. Accessed 7/11/2017.) n.p.
[41] City of Rock Island Planning & Redevelopment Division. *History & Architecture: Downtown Rock Island* (2004: http://www.rigov.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1119. Accessed October 9, 2017.) n.p.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Rock Island Preservation Society, Rock Island Savings Bank (2003; http://www.rockislandpreservation.org/postcards-from-home/rock-island-savings-bank/. Accessed 7/25/2017).
[45] Parts of the first two floors of the building may date from as early as the 1850s; a radical remodeling of 1894 added the third and fourth stories, and the current appearance dates to the 1920s. City of Rock Island Planning & Redevelopment Division. *History &*

façade is four bays at one elevation and five at the other. With a storefront ribbon base, rise of gridded large windows and upper cornice, the building seems to echo the Best Building nearby. However, the Ana Goldman Building shows simply a stylistic influence on a building that also housed a major retailer, the Hill Furniture Company, from 1923-27 (Sears occupied the building as department store starting in 1937).[46] The frame of the building is bearing masonry and some steel, with the building's earliest parts dating to 1894 or even to the 1850s.[47]

Three major commercial buildings utilizing reinforced concrete rose in the 1920s. The Art Deco Fort Armstrong Theater (1920; Cervin & Horn with Brawn & Ermling, architects) opened in January 1921 as a major air-conditioned movie house. The auditorium featured five levels of seats with a total of 1,566 seats. The Rock Island Argus Building, housing the news and printing departments of the daily newspaper, opened in 1924 in a two-story block at 1724 4th Avenue. The tallest reinforced concrete building in Rock Island, the 9-story Fort Armstrong Hotel (NR 1984), located at 1900 3rd Avenue was built in 1925-6 and shows that the artistic exploration of the reinforced concrete form was over by the 1920s in Rock Island (see figure 21). Chicago architect Charles W. Nicol designed the building. The dark brick hotel, now used as apartments, conforms to the Renaissance Revival style. Elaborate quoined window surrounds and other terra cotta ornament adorn the walls, which also feature diaper pattern matte brick pattern work.[48]

Reinforced concrete spurred large-scale commercial architecture in nearby Moline in the years after the Best Building's construction. The first major reinforced concrete commercial block was the Reliance Building (1913), a 5-story Prairie School office at 1518 5th Avenue block designed by Cervin. Subsequently, the 15-story LeCiare Hotel (1922; Kirsch & Kolb, architects) at 19th Street and 5th Avenue became the tallest reinforced concrete building in what is now called the Quad Cities. Although not a commercial building, the Gothic Revival Scottish Rite Cathedral at 1800 7th Avenue (1928-30) used a reinforced concrete structure to enclose its 80' x 130' auditorium and complex of meeting rooms.

Several significant reinforced concrete commercial buildings rose in Davenport after the Best Building was completed, although higher land values meant that developers more often turned to full steel construction there. The 6-story Davenport Hotel (NR 1983) at 324 Main Street completed in 1907 from designs by architect P.T. Burrows. Burrows also was involved in the design of the larger 11-story Hotel Blackhawk (NR 1983) at 309 Perry Street, completed in 1914 from designs by Temple & Burrows and Arthur Ebeling. The Linograph Building (NR 2009) at 420 W. River Drive is a four-story commercial loft building designed by Clausen & Kruse.

Louis P. Best and the Best Building

Rock Island received a major boost when the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad constructed the first bridge across the Mississippi River in 1854. Downtown boomed through the early 20th century, undergoing many phases of construction and rebuilding. The oldest extant building in downtown Rock Island dates to the 1860s; some residential buildings in nearby neighborhoods still exist to represent the 1850s.[49] Rock Island recorded a

Architecture: Downtown Rock Island (2004: http://www.rigov.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1119. Accessed October 9, 2017.) n.p.
[46] Rock Island Preservation Society, Central Trust and Savings Bank (2003; http://www.rockislandpreservation.org/postcards-from-home/central-trust-savings-bank/. Accessed October 9, 2017).
[47] Ibid.
[48] J. C. Ebach, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Fort Armstrong Hotel* (National Park Service: 1984).
[49] City of Rock Island Historic Structures Directory at http://www.rigov.org/BusinessDirectoryii.aspx, accessed October 9, 2017; City of Rock Island Planning & Redevelopment Division, *History & Architecture: Downtown Rock Island*, 2004. http://www.rigov.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1119, accessed October 9, 2017.

population of 1,711 in its first Census enumeration in 1850, and a rise to 5,130 in 1860. The rate of population increase remained above 17% per decade through 1920, with the average increase rate being 62.5%. Rock Island's growth was certain up through the Great Depression, with population decline only appearing in the 1970 Census.

Rock Island's growth was abetted by the construction of the railroad bridge and the opening of the arsenal. The arsenal first opened on the island in 1862 as a Confederate soldier war prison, and then was converted and expanded into a facility for manufacturing and storing small armaments for the United States Army.[50] The local industrial economy early was dominated by the lumber milling industry that relied on the excellent water and rail transportation lines.[51] Eventually, after the Civil War, major farm implement manufacturers located in Rock Island and Moline. By 1871, Rock Island counted two hotels downtown, a sign of business travel. The road-rail Government Bridge was completed in 1896, and the rail Crescent Bridge in 1899, expanding trade to the west.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Rock Island's downtown witnessed the rise of a competitive dry goods retail market. Prior to the age of the department store, most retailers were small, specialized stores, often with flexible pricing.[52] Established in the 1840s, A. T. Stewart's "dry goods emporium" in New York City is often considered the progenitor of the modern department store. By the 1860s, Stewart had replaced his dry goods emporium with a purpose-built department store dubbed "The Greatest Store in the World." According to author Vicki Howard,

> Stewart helped establish three major principles of modern selling – the one-price system, rapid stock turn, and departmentalized organization of goods…. Other early innovations during this period included a purpose-built, multifloored building in a central location; a free entrance policy, meaning customers could browse at will; customer services such as merchandise return, delivery, restrooms, parcel wrapping, and checking; low markup; cash selling or short credit terms; large sales volume; centralization of nonselling functions; and stock clearance through bargain sales.[53]

By the 1880s, most major cities boasted at least one department store. The earliest extant purpose-built store in the Rock Island metro area is the J. H. C. Petersen's Sons Store across the river in Davenport, Iowa (1892; NR 1983). Other companies doing business in Rock Island at the time include Young & McCombs and McCabe's. By 1910, the Rock Island City Directory listed two additional "department stores" which appear to have been significantly smaller: the Mill Store and Harry Horblit's store.[54] Two stores (including Petersen's) were also listed in Davenport.

With the opening of its store in the Best Building in 1909, Young & McCombs became Rock Island's premiere retailer. Both Frank C. Young (b. 1862) and William S. McComb (b. 1859) had garnered extensive business and retail experience by the time they opened their first store in 1894. Their first location was at 1727 Second Avenue. In 1897, that building and two adjacent neighbors were demolished and a new building was

[50] Federal Writers Project, *The WPA Guide to Illinois* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), p. 378-379.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Vicki Howard, *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). P. 9-11.
[53] Howard, p. 11-13
[54] *R. L. Polk & Co.'s Rock Island City Directory*, 1910.

constructed for the store.[55] The new Young & McCombs building contained 22,400 square feet of retail space, making it likely the largest department store space upon opening.[56] The building, however, was even more noteworthy for its appearance than for its size. The front elevation of the three-story was starkly divided into three bays, with large triple windows in opening above the storefront. Above the windows was an attic story featuring porthole windows. The proportion of glazing to solid on the façade was nearly equal, marking a break from reliance on older masonry forms. The building, however, relied on a traditional bearing wall structure, which limited its height and tied it to Gilded Age engineering conventions for Midwestern commercial blocks.

Young and McCombs outgrew its new building before a decade's time, keeping pace with Rock Island itself. The city rose from 19,463 residents in 1900 to 24,335 in 1910. By 1908, the department store entered into an arrangement with businessman Louis P. Best, who purchased the Buford Block (on the same block as the original store) and built a new home for Young & McCombs.[57] Best became the eponymous investor in this real estate project, which combined new, even larger retail space with a speculative office wing capitalizing on downtown demand. Downtown Rock Island had steadily developed with new retail and office blocks in recent years, ranging from the three-story retail block the London Building (1902) at 1715 2nd Street to the three-story Elks Club Building at 111 18th Street (1908). None of these buildings had topped four stories, however.

Louis Best lived across the Mississippi River from Rock Island in Davenport, Iowa. Born in Germany in 1848, he immigrated to New York City in 1869. After five years' experience in business and as a chemist in a sugar company, Best came to Davenport to run the Glucose Manufacturing Company. At his death in 1926, he was remembered as the man who turned around the Glucose Manufacturing Company and built a second glucose plant in Granite City, Illinois; as president of the Davenport Foundry & Machine Company; as a director of the Citizen's National Bank; head of the School Board; and co-founder of the Davenport Crematorium. One of his obituaries specifically singled out his service as treasurer of Young & McCombs. [58]

At the department store's opening in 1909, its new building was heralded as "as fine a building as will be found in any city of this size in the country."[59] Young and McCombs enjoyed a moment as the premiere department store in Rock Island, although rising competition would follow. Reporting on the store's opening, the *Davenport Daily Times* called Young & McCombs' new facility "the Marshal (sic) Fields of the Mississippi valley."[60] While the new store may have been smaller than that famed establishment, the newspaper claimed it was "just as magnificent." Another article suggested that the opening "marked an epoch in the advancement of the city from a commercial standpoint." Subsequent investments in department store retail around downtown, including expansion of chief rival McCabe's Plunder Store at 1713 3rd Street, and S.S Kresge's arrival in the late 1910s, rendered the bombast of 1909 moot. By the 1920s, Rock Island had multiple major department stores, and McComb and Youngs struggled to stay on top.

By 1922, Young & McCombs had been taken over by the head of the store's main competitor, L. S. McCabe's. In 1923, a consortium of local businessmen calling themselves the Rock Island Department Store, Inc. bought

[55] Karen Lang Kummer, National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Peoples National Bank Building/Fries Building (National Park Service, 1999), p. 36.
[56] City of Rock Island Planning & Redevelopment Division. *History & Architecture: Downtown Rock Island* (2004: http://www.rigov.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1119; accessed October 9, 2017.) n.p.
[57] "Thousands Visit Young & M'Combs New Store," *Davenport Daily Times*, March 26, 1909, p. 10.
[58] "L.P. Best, Prominent Business Man, Dies of Pneumonia in the West," *Davenport Democrat*, March 4, 1926. 1-2; "Pioneer Business Man Passes Away at San Diego, Cal.," *Davenport Daily Times*, March 4, 1926, p. 1-2.
[59] "Grand Store Opens; Hundreds Visit It," *Davenport Times*, March 25, 1909, p. 12.
[60] "Grand Store Opens; Hundreds Visit It," *Davenport Times*, March 25, 1909, p. 12.

out the merchandise, fixtures, and lease.[61] A few months later, the group sold a controlling interest to Dubuque businessman C. F. Kurtz.[62] The Kurtz Department Store was forced into bankruptcy in 1927 and was purchased at auction by Moline residents David Brady and Abe Waxenburg.[63] Montgomery Ward opened a Davenport location in 1929,[64] and in in the 1930s the chain expanded across the river. Brady-Waxenburg moved down the street and Montgomery Ward took over the Best Buildings retail spaces.[65] The store operated as a Montgomery Ward into the mid-1970s, when it closed.[66] Office use of the building continued through the 1990s, and the building was known as the Cleaveland Building when it closed.

Summary

The Best Building remains a great example of the earliest use of reinforced concrete in Rock Island architecture to develop massive commercial buildings that could generate maximum land rents. Before the construction of the Best Building, Rock Island had built a downtown of modest-sized commercial blocks. After the Best Building's construction, the city bloomed with other large modern, fireproof commercial buildings, and developed a downtown skyline. The building's influences on both commercial architecture and structural technology were evident in Rock Island, Moline and Davenport in following years. Today the Best Building retains its features that allow it to demonstrate its architectural significance. Rehabilitation is planned for the near future, where its exteriors would have historic fenestration largely restores, and its interiors would be finally adapted into residential use while remaining historic fabric would be retained and enhanced.

[61] "R.I. Store to be Taken Over by the Civic Clubs," *Davenport Democrat and Leader*, April 29, 1923, p. 25.
[62] "Dubuque Man Purchases Controlling Interest in Rock Island Loop Store," *Davenport Democrat and Leader,* August 16, 1923, p. 15.
[63] "Two Moliners Purchase Rock Island Store," *Davenport Democrat and Leader,* January 17, 1927, p. 15.
[64] "Montgomery Ward & Co.'s New Store opens Saturday," *Davenport Democrat and Leader*, April 4, 1929.
[65] Rock Island Classified Business Directory, 1939.
[66] "Best Building a Cornerstone of 19th Century Rock Island Business," *Quad Cities Dispatch-Argus*, September 4, 2005. http://www.qconline.com/news/local/best-building-a-cornerstone-of-th-century-rock-island-business/article_b818ab75-d77a-5ac7-b6dd-915513654b5e.html; accessed October 9, 2017.

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"Thousands Visit Young & M'Combs New Store." *Davenport Daily Times*. March 26, 1909.

"Two Moliners Purchase Rock Island Store." *Davenport Democrat and Leader.* January 17, 1927.

Best Building | Rock Island, Illinois
Name of Property | County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
____previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

____State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
__x__Other
Name of repository: Rock Island Public Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

Best Building | Rock Island, Illinois
Name of Property | County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.1
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	41.511244°	-90.575744°		3			
	Latitude	Longitude			Latitude	Longitude	
2				4			
	Latitude	Longitude			Latitude	Longitude	

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property is a single parcel, described by the Rock Island County Assessor as lot 10 and west ½ lot 9 in Block 1 of Spencer and Case Addition.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This is the entirety of the lot on which the Best Building was constructed. The lot boundaries have remained the same since the time of construction.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Allen and Lynn Josse date 10 October 2017
organization Preservation Research Office telephone (314) 920-5680
street & number 3407 S. Jefferson Avenue #207 email michael@preservationresearch.com
city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63118

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

Best Building | Rock Island, Illinois
Name of Property | County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Best Building

City or Vicinity: Rock Island

County: Rock Island **State:** Illinois

Photographer: Michael Allen

Date Photographed: June 24, 2017 (1); September 2, 2016 (2-9)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 9: View toward building looking northeast.

Photo 2 of 9: View toward building looking southeast.

Photo 3 of 9: View inside of office wing lobby, toward northeast.

Photo 4 of 9: View inside of first floor showing storefront windows, looking southwest.

Photo 5 of 9: Third floor hallway showing typical current condition.

Photo 6 of 9: Department store staircase at third floor looking northeast.

Photo 7 of 9: Department store staircase at fourth floor looking southeast.

Photo 8 of 9: Elevator lobby on fourth floor, looking southeast.

Photo 9 of 9: View of third floor northwest corner area, looking northwest.

List of Figures
(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all document should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.

1. Location Map (central Rock Island, Illinois).
2. Site Plan, with photo locations marked.
3. West elevation drawing, 1908.
4. First floor existing plan.
5. Second floor existing plan.
6. Third floor existing plan.
7. Fourth floor existing plan.
8. Fifth floor plans existing plan.
9. Sixth floor existing plan.
10. First and second floor plans as designed.
11. Third and fourth floor plans as designed.
12. Fifth and sixth floor plans as designed.
13. Interior of building showing exposed concrete structural system.
14. Interior of building showing exposed concrete structural system.
15. Historic postcard view of the Best Building.
16. Historic photpgraph of Best Building, undated.
17. Safety Building, view toward southeast.
18. The Rock Island Bank Building, view toward the northwest.
19. The Goldman Building, view toward the northwest.
20. Rock Island Savings Bank Building/Telco Building after completion and as it stands today.
21. The Fort Armstrong Hotel as it stands today, view toward southeast.
22. A comparison of the reinforced concrete girder of Julius Kahn's patented system and cross-section of girders from Clausen & Clausen's drawings for the Best Building.

Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 1: Location Map (central Rock Island, Illinois). Source: openstreetmap.org

Figure 2: Site Plan, with photo locations marked. Source: Google Maps.

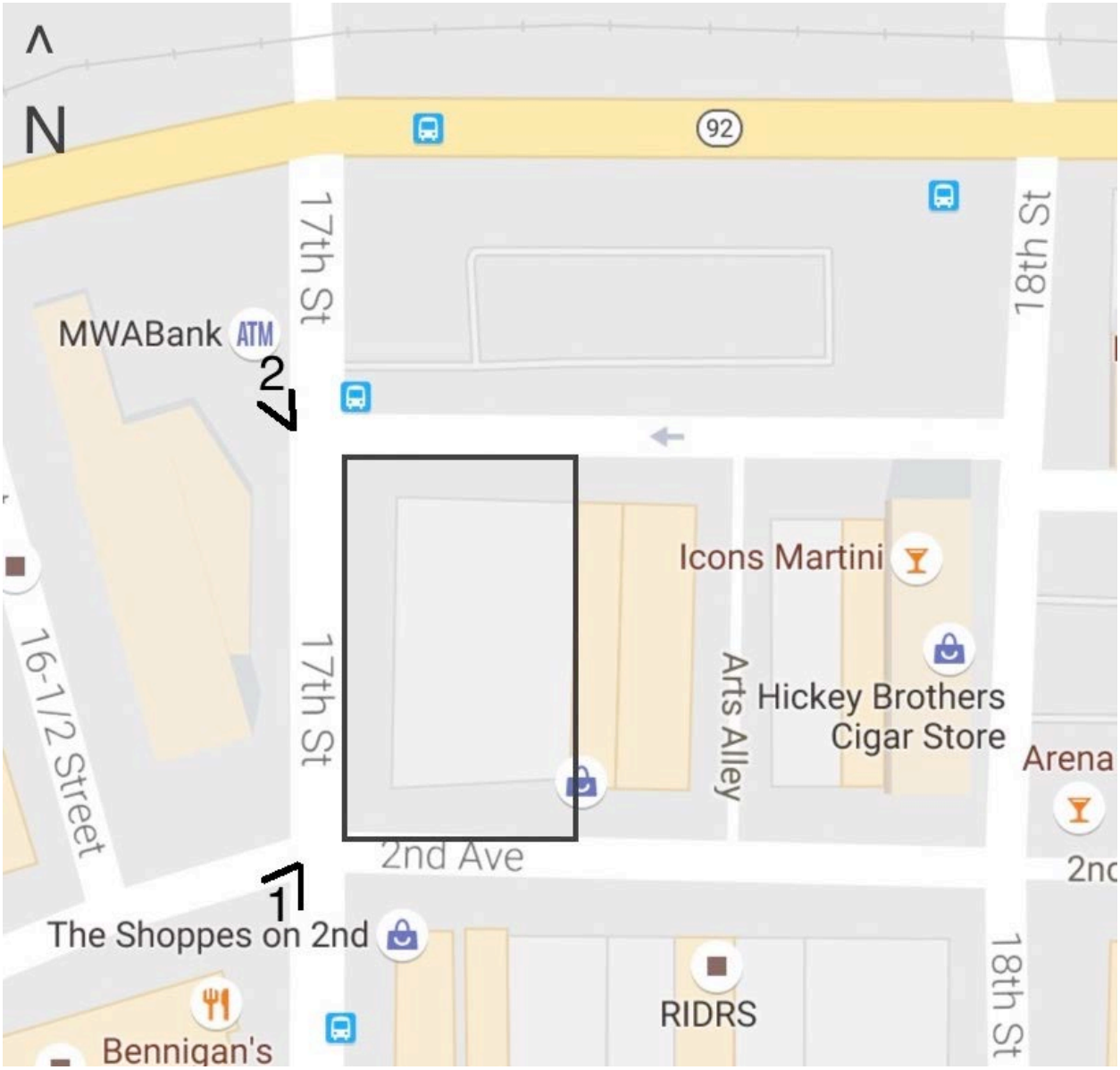
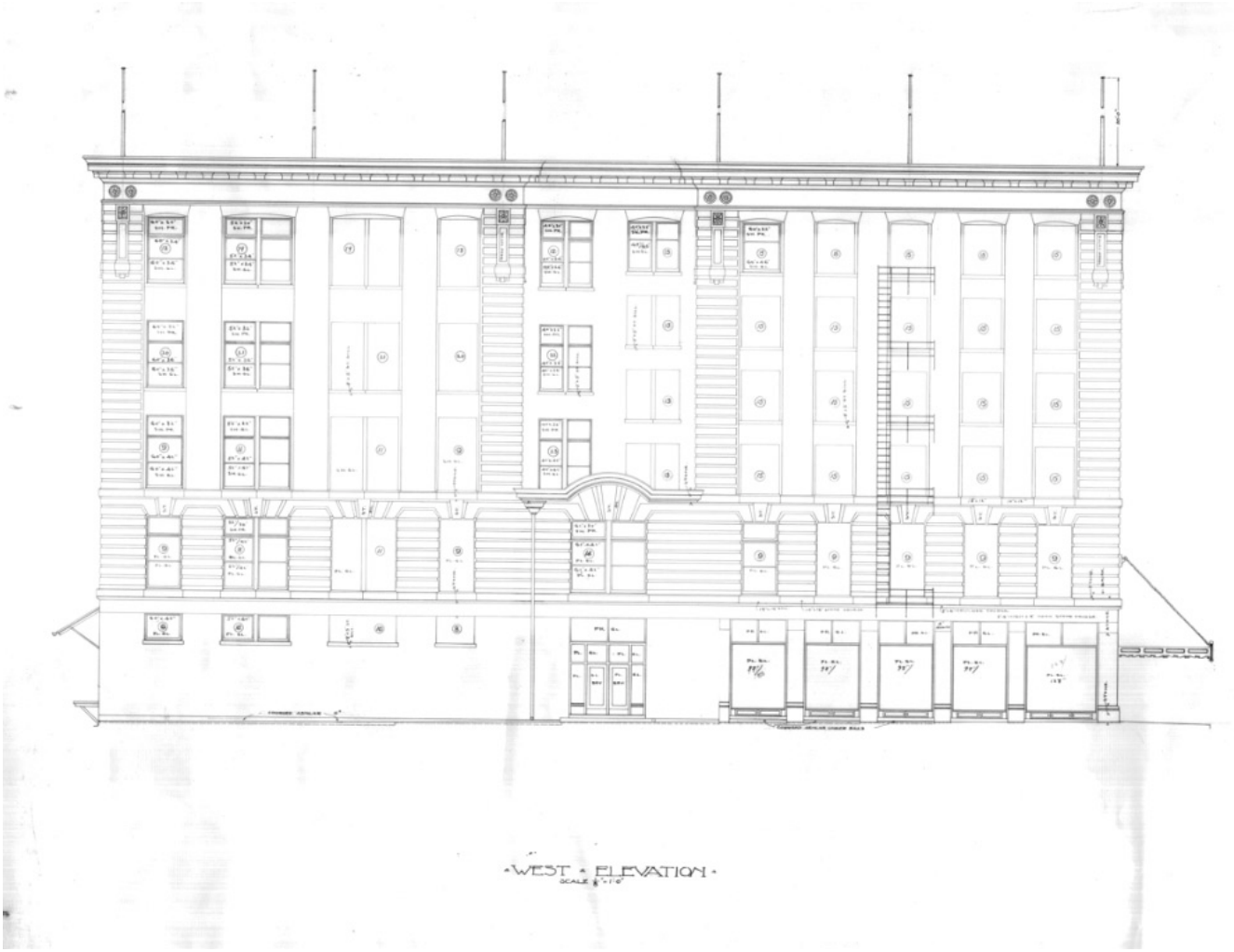
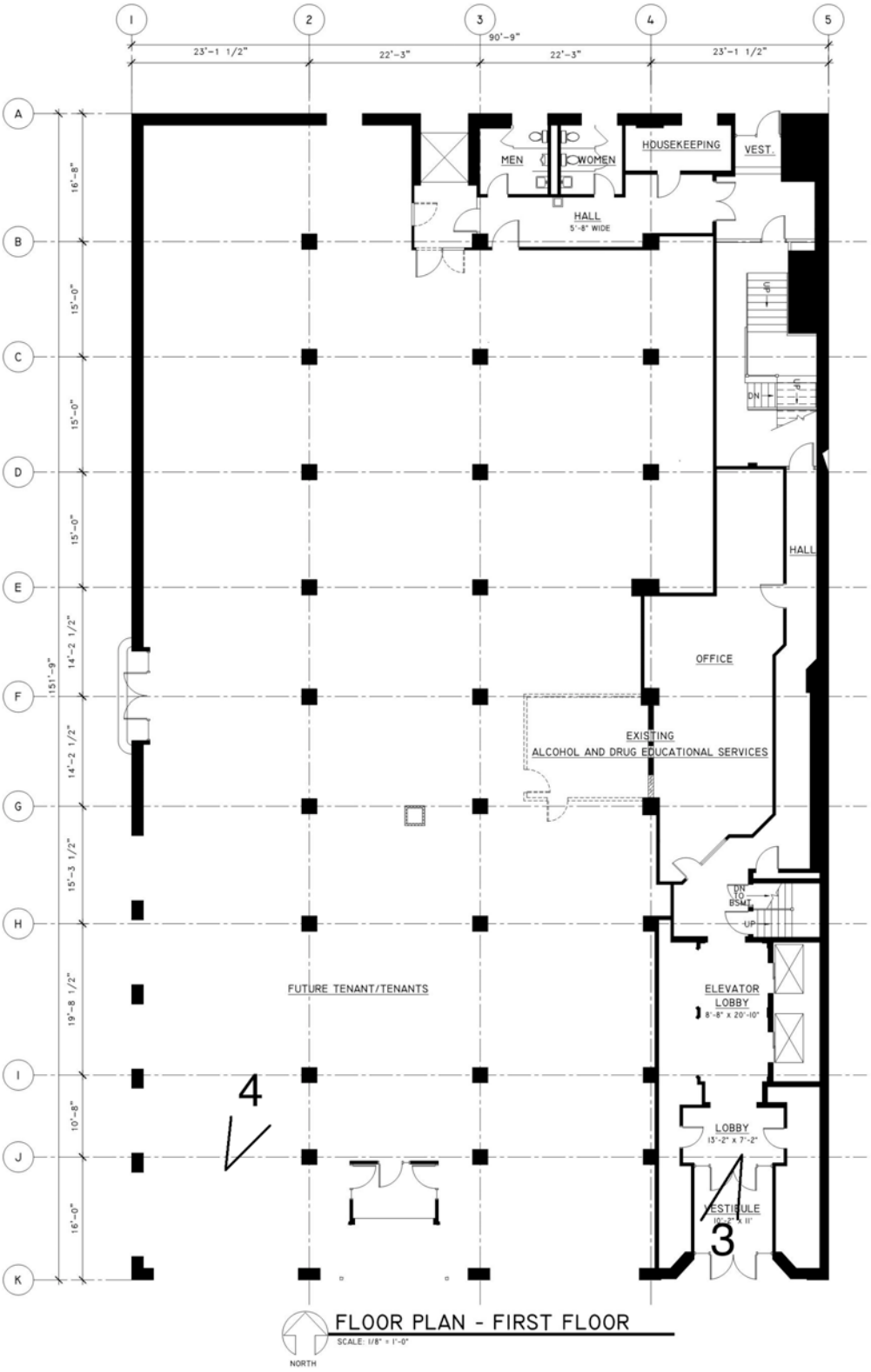


Figure 3: West elevation drawing, 1908. Source: Frederick G. Clausen Collection. Special Collections, Davenport Public Library.



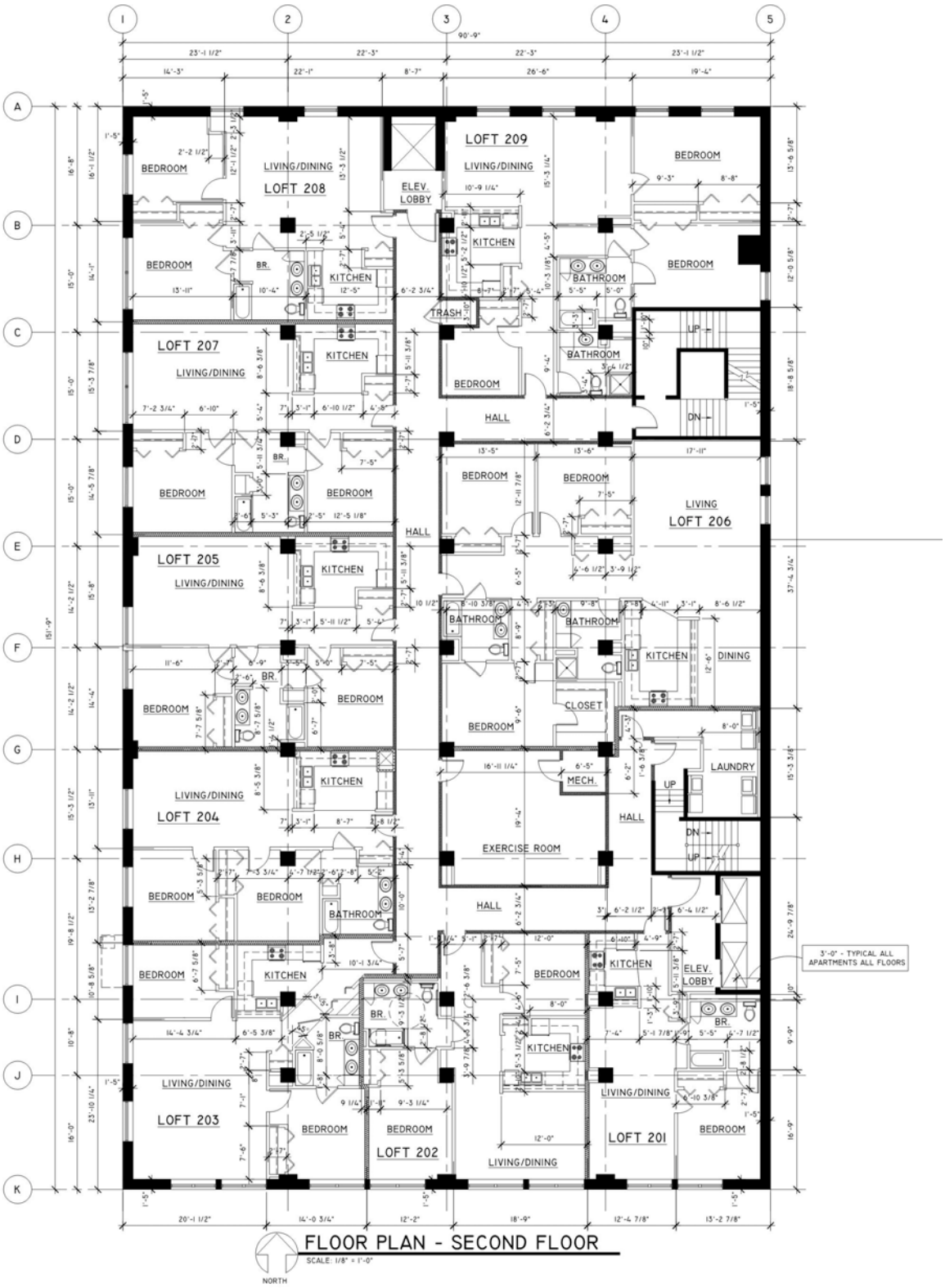
Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 4: First floor existing plan. Source: Design Build By Architects (2017).



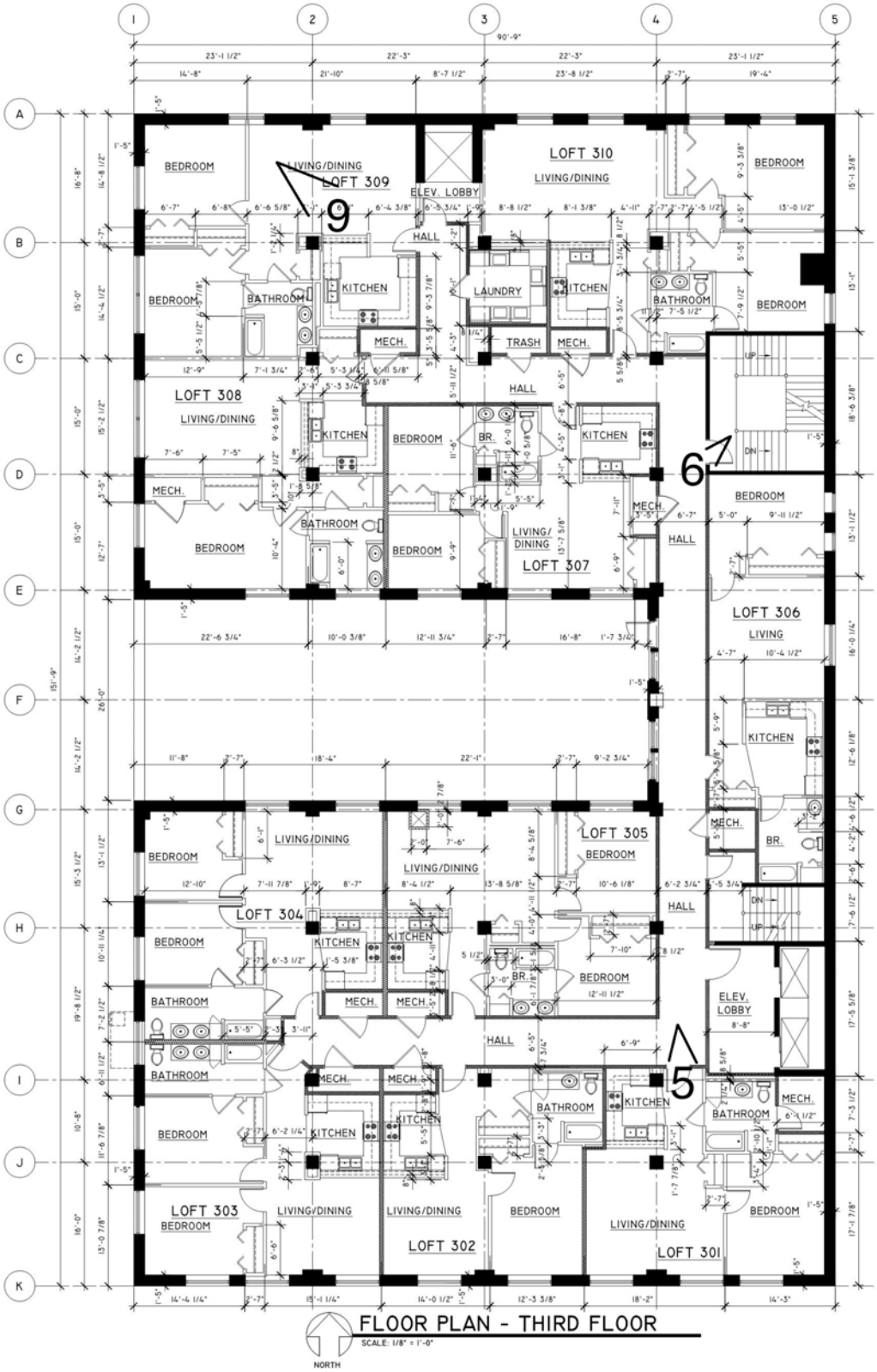
Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 5: Second floor existing plan. Source: Design Build By Architects (2017).



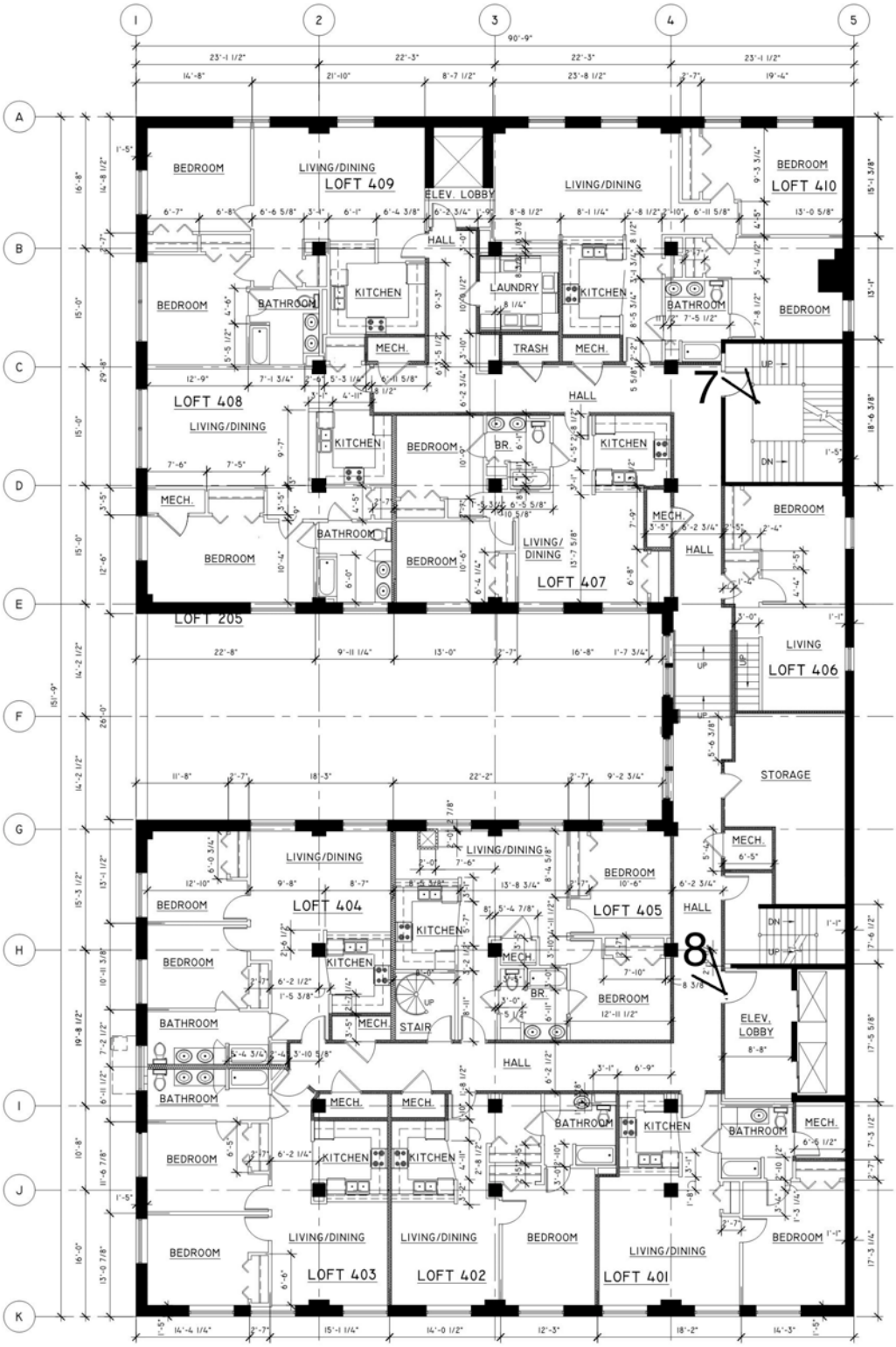
Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 6: Third floor existing plan. Source: Design Build By Architects (2017).



Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

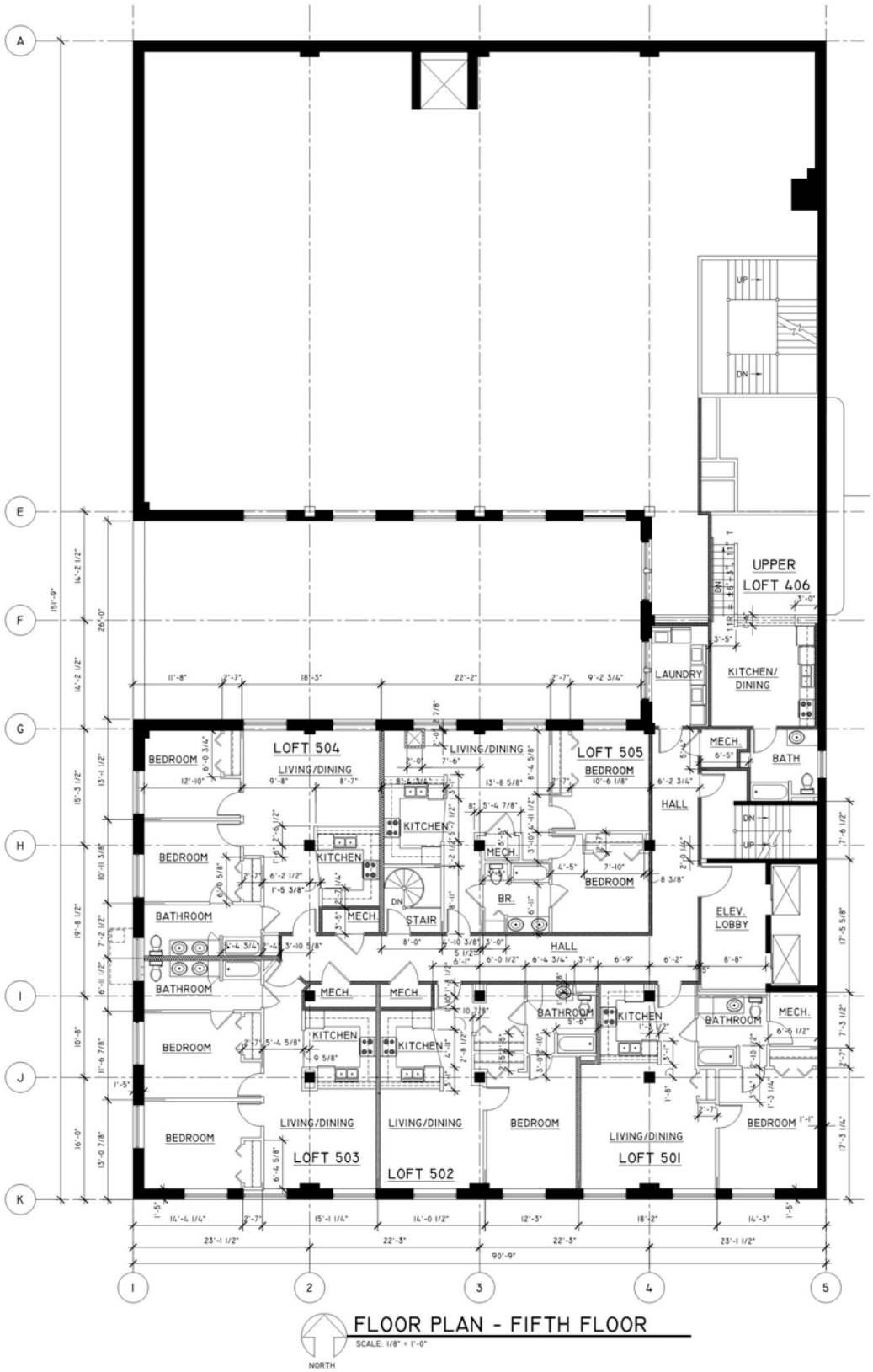
Figure 7: Fourth floor existing plan. Source: Design Build By Architects (2017).



FOURTH FLOOR EXISTING CONDITIONS

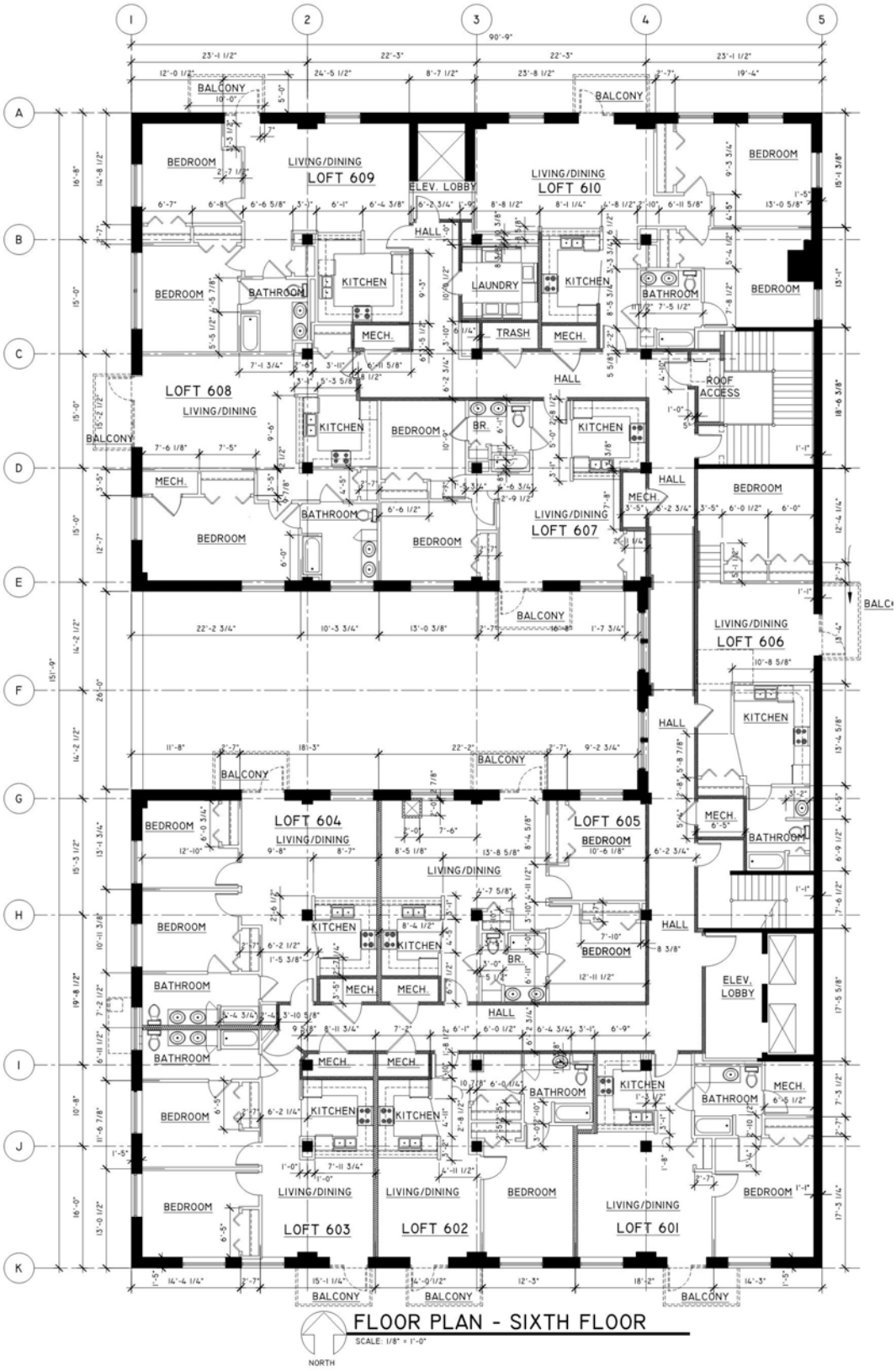
Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 8: Fifth floor existing plan. Source: Design Build By Architects (2017).



Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 9: Sixth floor existing plan. Source: Design Build By Architects (2017).



Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 10: First and second floor plans as designed. Source: Clausen & Clausen Collection; Special Collections, Davenport Public Library.

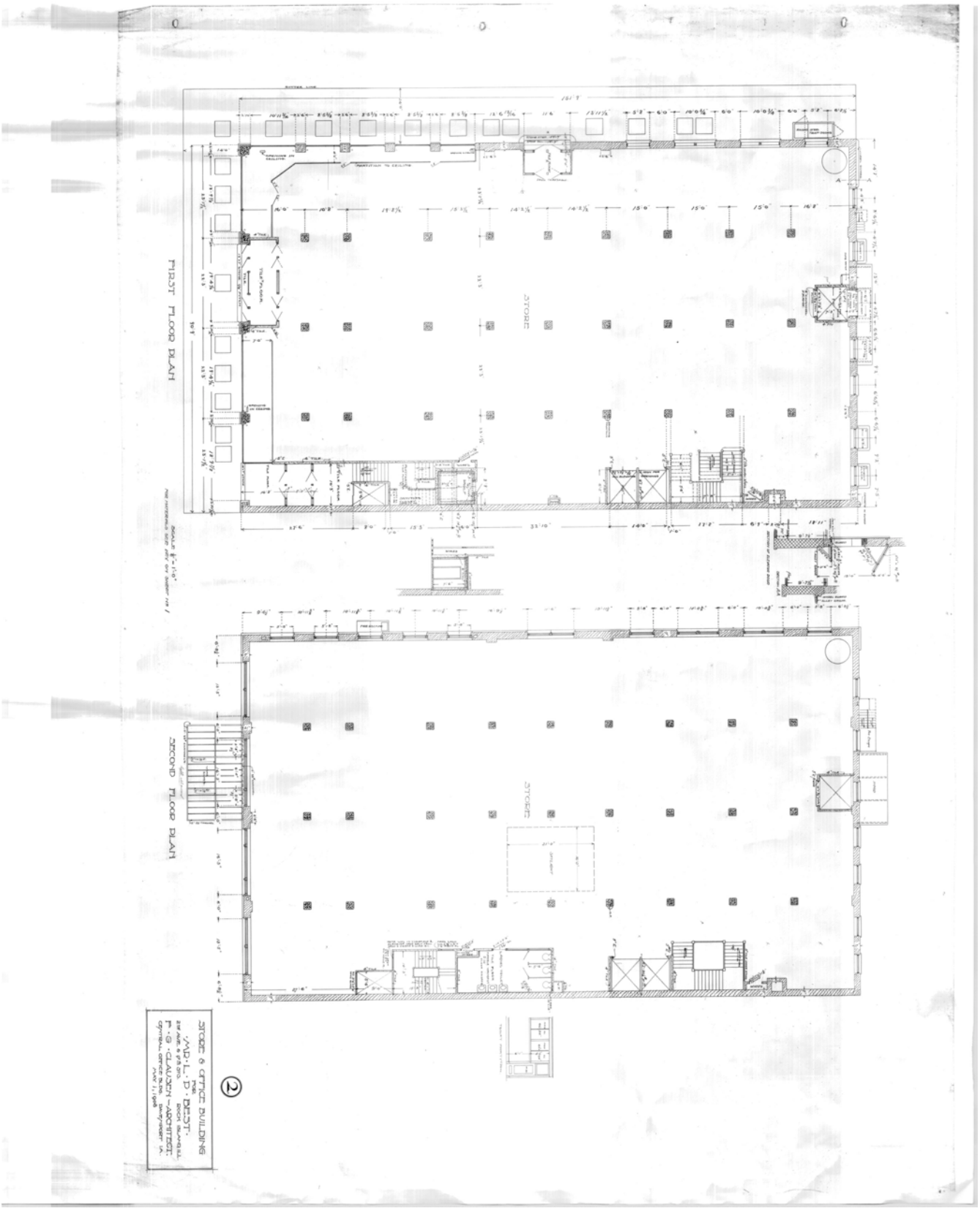


Figure 11: Third and fourth floor plans as designed. Source: Clausen & Clausen Collection; Special Collections, Davenport Public Library.

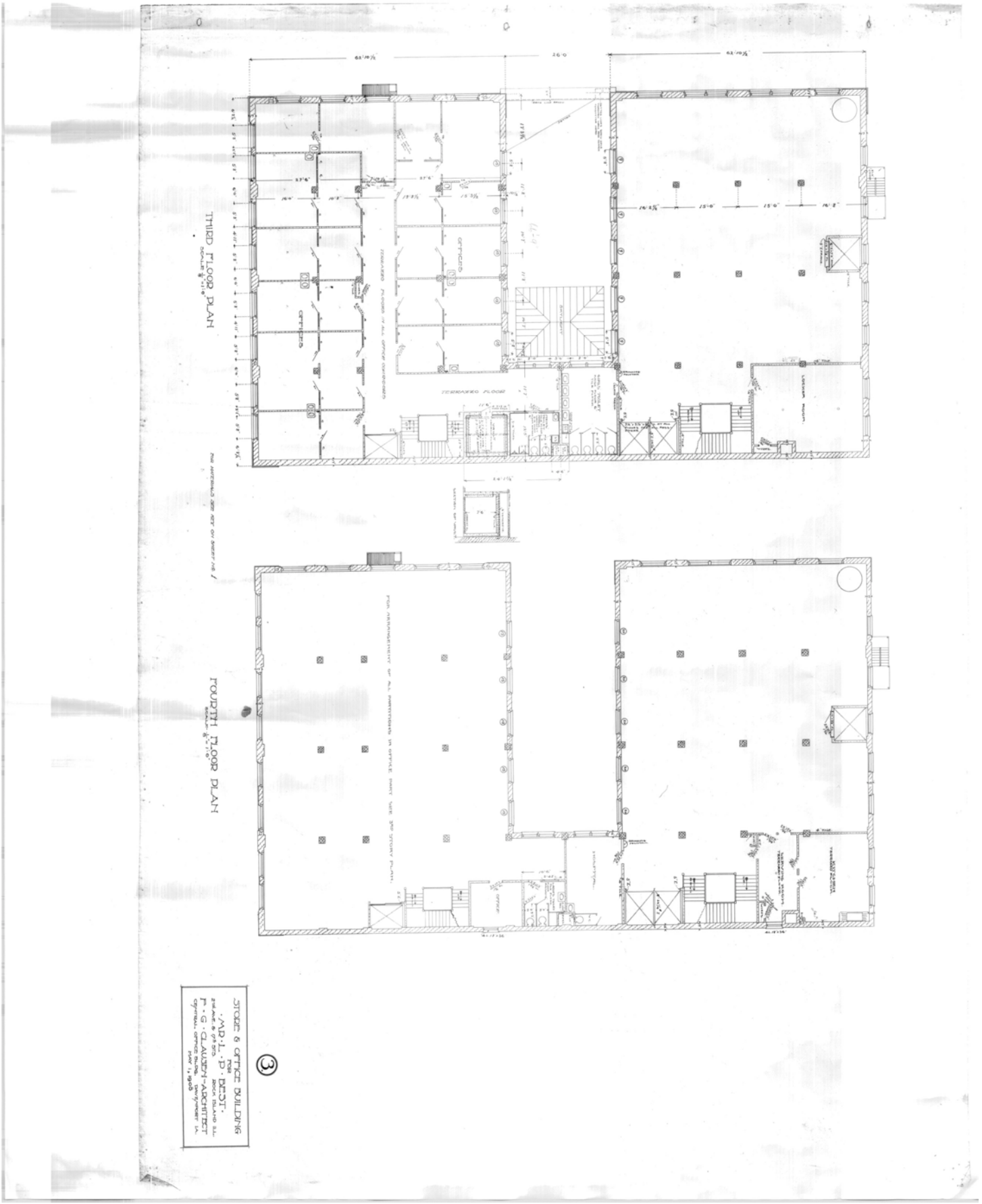


Figure 12: Fifth and sixth floor plans as designed. Source: Frederick G. Clausen Collection; Special Collections, Davenport Public Library.

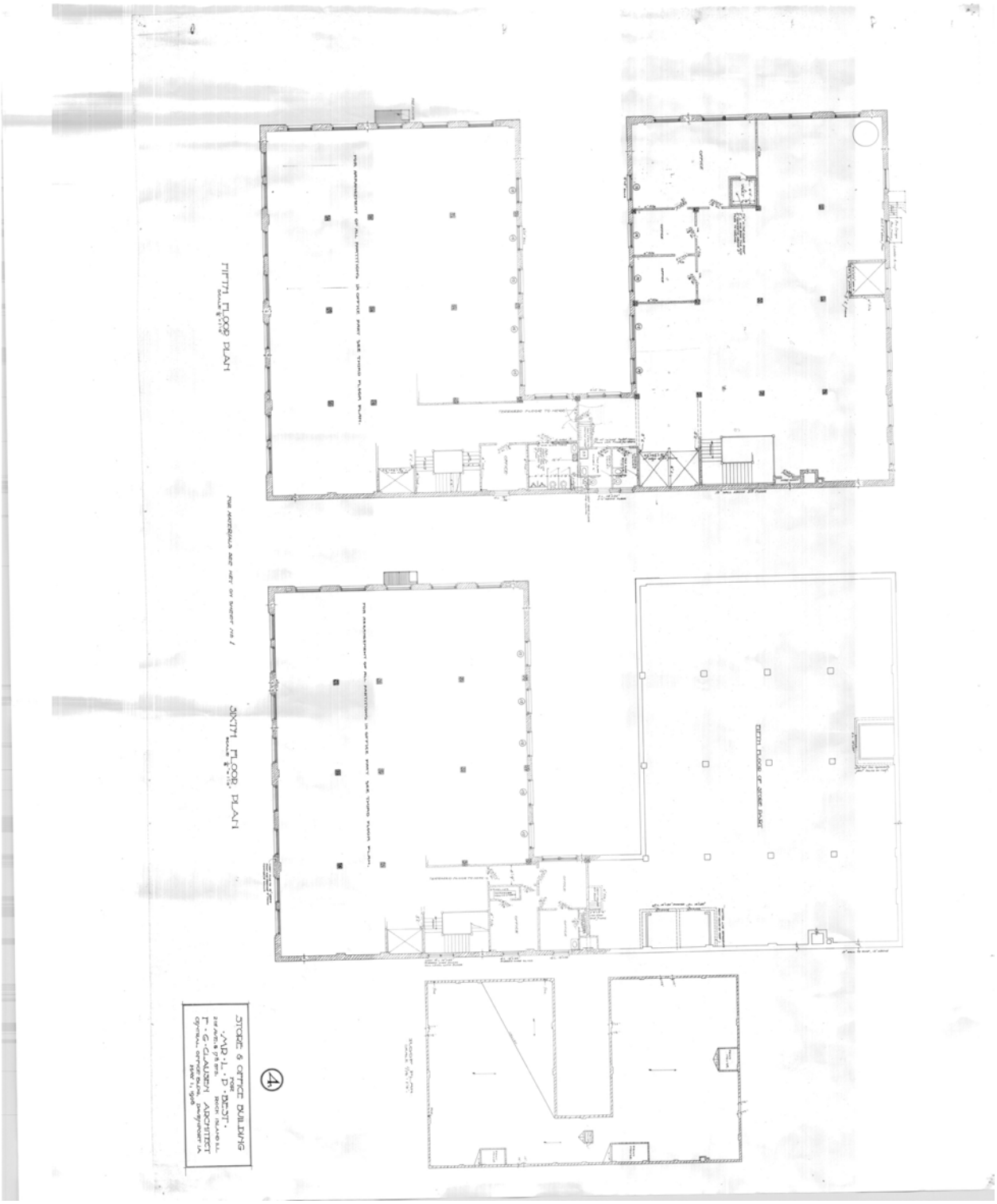


Figure 13: Interior of building showing exposed concrete structural system. Source: Michael Allen photograph taken June 20, 2016.

Figure 14: Interior of building showing exposed concrete structural system. Source: Michael Allen photograph taken June 20, 2016.

Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 15: Historic postcard view of the Best Building. Source: Rock Island Preservation Society.

Figure 16: Historic photpgraph of Best Building, undated. Source: Rock Island Preservation Society.

Figure 17: Safety Building, view toward southeast. Source: Michael Allen photograph taken June 24, 2017.

Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 18: The Rock Island Bank Building, view toward the northwest. Source: Michael Allen photograph, taken June 24, 2017.

Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 19: The Goldman Building, view toward the northwest. Source: Michael Allen photohgraph taken June 24, 2016.

Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 20: Rock Island Savings Bank Building/Telco Building after completion and as it stands today. Sources: Rock Island Preservation Society (postcard view) and Wikipedia Commons (contemporary view).

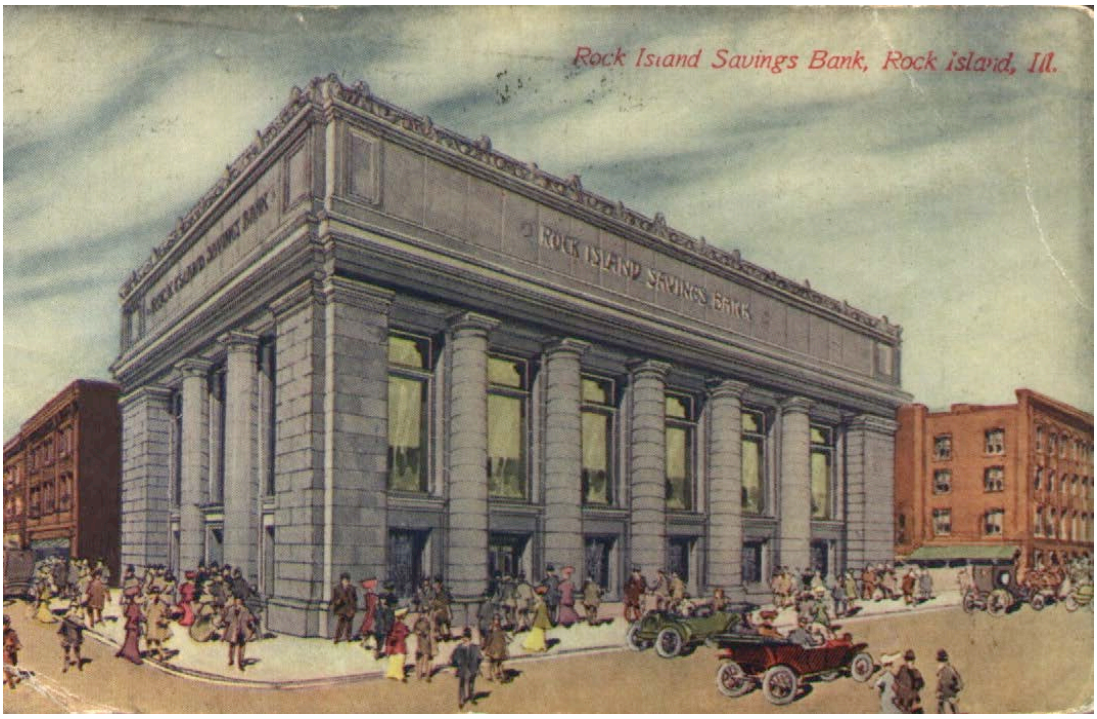
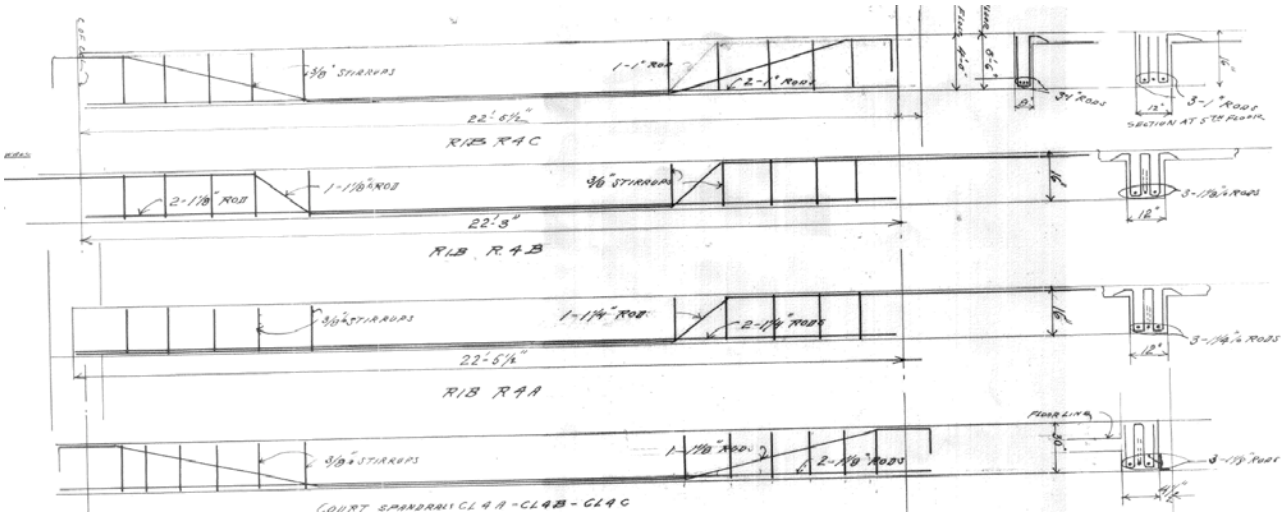


Figure 21: The Fort Armstrong Hotel as it stands today, view toward southeast. Source: Brandon Bartoszek photograph on Flickr, taken July 8, 2016.

Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 22: A cross-section of girders from Clausen & Clausen's drawings for the Best Building. Sources: *Structures* (online magazine, article in blibiography) and the Special Collections Davenport Public Library (1908).



Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Google Earth Map

Best Building
Rock Island (Rock Island), Illinois

Latitude: 41.511244°
Longitude: -90.575744°


DIRECTORY
BRUTE


EXIT

National Register of Historic Places
Memo to File

Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.
Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Illinois Department of **Natural Resources**

One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
www.dnr.illinois.gov

Bruce Rauner, Governor
Wayne A. Rosenthal, Director

February 28, 2018

Ms. Barbara Wyatt
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Wyatt:

Enclosed are the disks that contain the true and correct copies of the National Register nomination recommended for nomination by the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council at its February 23, 2018 meeting and signed by the Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer:

House at S.E. 502 4th Street, Fairfield, Wayne County
Bloomington High School, Bloomington, McLean County
Glen Carbon Village Hall and Firehouse, Glen Carbon, Madison County
Best Building, Rock Island, Rock Island County

PLEASE NOTE: The Best Building received a Preliminary Part 1 Approval with Conditions. Staff requests substantive review to ensure conditions were met.

Please contact me at 217/785-4324 if you need any additional information. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Andrew Heckenkamp, Coordinator
Survey and National Register program
Illinois State Historic Preservation Office
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

enclosures

SG-2328

NPS Form 10-900

OMB No. 1024-0018

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Best Building

other names/site number Cleaveland Building, VanDerGinst Building

Name of Multiple Property Listing n/a

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

2. Location

street & number 1701-03 Second Avenue ☐ not for publication

city or town Rock Island ☐ vicinity

state Illinois county Rock Island zip code 61201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

Returned

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this __x__ 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 __x__ meets___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: ___ **national** ___ **statewide** __x__ **local**

Applicable National Register Criteria: ___ **A** ___ **B** __x__ **C** ___ **D**

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer — Date 2/28/18

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official — Date

Title — State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

Best Building
Name of Property

Rock Island, IL
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [x] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		site
		structure
		object
1		**Total**

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

n/a

Returned

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce: Department Store
Commerce: Business

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant/Not In Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commercial Style
Classical Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete
walls: Brick
roof: Synthetic
other: Terra Cotta

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

Summary Paragraph

The Best Building is a five-and six-story commercial building located at 1701-1707 Second Avenue in Rock Island, Illinois. The building's design is in the Classical Revival style, with noticeable Commercial Style ("Chicago School") influences in its large windows, three-part vertical division and expression of its structural grid. The building was designed in 1908 by Clausen & Clausen of Davenport, Iowa, the best-known architectural firm in the region. It was constructed by Peoria contractors Valentine Jobst & Sons. The building has an early example of a fireproof concrete frame, with reinforced concrete columns and girders. The floor slabs consist of clay tile laid between girders, and the structural walls are of hollow clay tile and common brick. The foundation is also concrete. The exterior is clad with manganese-spotted dark brown brick at the first story and buff brick at the upper stories. There is a deep modillioned copper cornice. The building has a rectangular footprint at the ground level. Above the second story, the floor plan is U-shaped, with a light well facing 17th Street to the west. The floor levels are differentiated in each wing above the second story, with three upper stories to the north of the light well and four upper stories to the south. This division articulates the separate uses of the two sides of the building, with tall-ceilinged department store levels on the north and lower-ceilinged office space to the south. The building possesses integrity, with its definitive architectural features intact and legible. There have been some exterior alterations, and the interior layout reflects a highly modified floorplan. Some interior elements are intact, including the location of hallways on the office side of the building, the tin ceiling on the second story, many wood and terrazzo floors, and the lobby, which was remodeled in the 1930s or 1940s.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Best Building is sited at the northeast corner of Second Avenue and 17th Street in downtown Rock Island approximately one and a half blocks south of the Mississippi River. An alley runs along the north side of the building, and the east side of the building is connected at the first two and a half stories to a smaller historic building on Second Avenue. A row of historic buildings is across the street to the south, and a long glass and metal paneled mid-20th-century building is across the street to the west. The immediate vicinity is one of the densest sections of downtown Rock Island.

Exterior

The Best Building has two primary elevations (see photograph 1 and figure 3). Both the south and west elevations originally had a main entrance into the department store space, and the elevation lobby was accessed from an additional entrance at the south elevation.

The south elevation faces Second Avenue. This elevation is divided into four bays and is six stories high. The two center bays are slightly wider than the two outer bays. At the first story, the four bays are framed by variegated dark brown manganese-spotted brick piers. The piers' bases are limestone, and limestone runs across the top of the openings. The first and third bays are occupied by aluminum storefront systems over black granite bulkheads. The second bay is similarly detailed, but there is a pair of recessed glass double doors leading into the department store space. Historically, this was a main

entrance with a double-leaf entrance flanked by sidelights beneath the transom, with a glass canopy suspended by wire rope from the building wall (see figures 3 and 15). The canopy and original entrance configuration are both gone. Cloth canopies are over the right three bays; the left bay retains the metal structure for the canopy but the cloth is missing. At the fourth bay, brown brick recesses back to a pair of non-historic glass doors with sidelights and transom.

Above a limestone course, the second story begins the upper stories' use of buff brick. Every sixth and seventh course of brick is recessed to create a rusticated feel. Tall openings, one per bay, are wide enough to accommodate multiple windows. Originally the wood sash windows were configured in wide pairs with transoms at the outer bays and Chicago-style windows with transom lights at the center two bays. Today's aluminum replacements are pairs or paired 1/1s (four per opening) with colored panels instead of transom lights above. Over the windows, the rusticated pattern of the brick flares upward to suggest the voussoirs of a flat arch; at the center of each is a limestone keystone. Another limestone course caps the second story.

Floors three through six are designed as a single unit. Brick piers define the bays; the outer piers are rusticated, following the pattern established at the second story. The window planes are recessed, and the piers between them rise to a shallow arch over the window bays. The window openings themselves are separated so there are two per bay. There is more space between the windows at the two, wider center bays. Each of the window openings is filled with an aluminum window with a tall upper sash and a short, horizontal lower sash. A historic photo indicates that in the original wood windows, the bottom sashes were taller than the upper sashes.

The sixth floor is crowned with a copper cornice which features roundels on the frieze and heavy modillions at the eaves. At either end of the façade, large (story-high) stylized terra cotta compositions appear to drop down from the cornice. These vertical expressions are inspired by the parts of a column or of a cornice. The top section is square and is the height of roughly 12 ½ courses of brick. In the center is a stylized quatrefoil flower in a square recessed panel. The center section is slightly narrower than the square, and is inspired by the shaft section of a column or the frieze section of a cornice. It is the height of approximately 29 courses of brick. This section features a recessed rectangular panel. Like the section above it, it is flush with the brickwork to either side.

The bottom section of the terra cotta projects out slightly from the face of the brick. At its base are three guttae on a terra cotta panel, representing the bottom section of a cornice. This entire bottom section is the height of 14 courses of brick.

The west elevation of the exterior, which faces 17th Street, uses the same materials and vertical composition as the south. This elevation is wider, and one of its most prominent features is the light well above the second floor. The first floor is clad with spotted brown brick and has ten bays. Because the bays at the left are wider than those at the right, the entrance at the 5th bay is centered. The recessed entrance is one step above grade. Paired non-historic half-light doors are set back in a surround of wood or woodlike paneling. This bay and the five storefront bays to its right are covered with awning frames; the far right storefront (at the 10th bay) is missing the cloth from its awning. The configuration of limestone at the pier bases and over the storefronts is the same as that of the south elevation, but on this side the windows are much narrower (only two vertical panes instead of four). To the left of the centered entrance, the brown brick wall is mostly blind. Instead of storefronts, as at the right bays, this section of wall has small horizontal windows place high in the first story. The capping limestone course that separates the first from second story runs across the full elevation.

The second story is organized in the same way as the south elevation, with rusticated brick forming courses and voussoirs. The windows all have stone keystones. The entrance bay rises to a segmental

arch, capped with cream colored terra cotta, at the base of the light well. To the left of the entrance bay, the four bays have replacement paired 1/1 windows at the two inner bays, and single 1/1s at the first and fourth bays. The right five bays have narrow pairs of 1/1s. All of the windows (as at the south elevation) have colored panels over them instead of transom lights.

Above the second story, the floor levels to either side of the light well vary. This results in three additional tall stories at the left side of the well, and four shorter stories at the right side. (The height of the building is consistent at the roofline.) The taller floor-to ceiling heights at the north side of the building represent its use as a spacious department store, while the south side's lower ceilings reflect its use as offices. Left of the light well at the north half of the building, the four wide bays of the third story have windows that are the same as those at the second story. The fourth story windows above them are slightly shorter. The fifth story windows are shorter still and terminate in segmental arches.

To the right of the light bay at the south side of the building, the upper four stories possess 1/1 windows of uniform height, similar (or identical) to the upper story windows at the south elevation. Both halves of the west elevation possess the same cornice and stylized terra cotta features as the south elevation.

The north elevation of the Best Building faces the alley; since the demolition of the building to its north (date unknown), this elevation has been exposed to public view (see photograph 2). In 1992, artist Richard Haas painted a trompe l'oeil mural featuring a three-story image of Black Hawk. The mural creates the appearance of a continuation of the design elements of the two front elevations: a brown base, rusticated brick second story, and copper cornice. The third of the five bays, a blind bay above the first story, is designed to look like a two-story projecting bay as a base for a niche featuring a three-story statue of Black Hawk. The parapet wall above this bay is built up in a segmental arch to complete the illusion of a projecting bay.

All of the windows at this elevation are housed in segmental arched openings. The three left first story windows may be original, with three-light upper sashes and three-light transoms over a boarded lower sash. At the left bay at grade there is a metal and glass door with a large sidelight. A concrete foundation is visible at this elevation.

Interior

The building's interior shows abundant display of the reinforced concrete construction, with structural columns, vaulted floor slabs and clay tile walls visible on all levels. Generally, the building shows its alterations above the first floor, where an incomplete adaptive reuse project started by a previous owner entailed removal and reconfiguration of partitions in the office building wing, and construction of new partitions within the department store wing. New partitions are constructed of steel studs with hung gypsum board, and thus are reversible for a future more historically-informed rehabilitation project.

On the first floor, the former department store retail space (gutted) and the formal elevator lobby are the defining public areas . Most of the west side of the first story is occupied by the original department store space (see photograph 3). This area has full transparency of storefront windows in historic channels, and a voluminous sense of space. There are two sets of exterior doors, one at the south elevation and one at the west elevation. Exposed square concrete columns indicate the structural grid that supports the building. The elevator lobby is in the southeast corner of the building. Accessed from the street by inner and outer paired glass doors, the lobby evinces a modern appearance from a remodeling that took place circa 1950.[1] Walls are travertine, and the floor is geometric patterned

[1] The date of the remodeling is unknown, but it took place after the publication of 1950 updates to the original 1906 Sanborn map. No plans were found on file with the original architect's firm.

terrazzo laid in four colors (see photograph 4). The two elevators are along the east wall; the west wall includes inset glass display cabinets. Beyond the elevator lobby to the north, two doors along the east wall lead to stairs (one set going up and another to the basement). Beyond this historic lobby, there is modern partitioning at the eastern side of the building. A door leads into an office space and a corridor runs along the east wall.

On the east side of the building, there are located elevator lobbies above the main lobby. These elevator lobbies and flanking fire stairs occupy the vacated chase where the original office staircase was located. Plans show that the staircase was in a U-configuration with landings, and was open to each floor. The elevators and new stairs most likely date to circa 1950. At the north end of this elevation, the original public staircase for the department store is intact above the first floor level, where is historic U-shape has been modified with a straight run of stairs and intermediary landing along the east wall (see figures 4 and 10).

The department store sections are evident in the first floor and basement areas, which retain open areas used for retail. At its opening, the Young & McCombs Department store used all of the first two stories, all or part of the basement, and the north side of floors three, four and five. China and cut glass were located in the basement; a soda fountain and the men's department and accessories were located on the first floor; the second floor included ladies' clothes and millinery; the third floor included carpets, draperies and wallpaper; the fourth floor was the restaurant; and the fifth floor held company offices and storage.

Since the staircase provided public circulation within the department store, it was designed to be refined and open for visibility within the building (see photographs 6 and 7). The staircase has a decorated balustrade, steel treads and risers and sense of its past use. However, the staircase is contained by partition walls at the floor landings where it once was open. Retention of the staircase allows the building to demonstrate the past use of this north wing, however. The staircase is one of the key elements identifying the public retail use of the building, along with the first floor open retail space.

The historic layout of each wing placed the open plan department store levels on the north, and the cellular office wing arranged around L-shaped corridors on the south (see figures 10, 11 and 12). These wings were internally divided with no through access. Today the wings have been joined with through corridors that have required steel ramps placed at each floor above the second floor (see figures 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9).

The upper stories were divided into apartments in 2014, but this project was never completed. All historic partitions were demolished, even around the elevator lobbies. None of the partitions in place is original. All new framing consists of steel studs covered in gypsum board. Most constructed units have new manufactured door units in openings, as well as kitchen and bathroom fixtures. In some places, the delamination of the plaster from exterior walls led to an intentional design choice: exposed brick (and in some cases, hollow clay tile) next to jagged edges of plaster (see photograph 9). Throughout the upper floors, even with new construction, the concrete structural system is evident – interior columns, girders and exterior engaged columns are exposed and painted (see figures 13 and 14).

At the second story, the apartment units line a U-shaped hall which connects the elevators at the south end of the building with the freight elevator against the north wall and staircase near the north end of the east wall (see photograph 5). At this level, original tin ceilings of the department store are intact. Above the second story, most floors have the same plan, with variations in detailing. The corridor makes a U-shape around the light well (see figure 5). At the south corridor, there are three units along the south exterior wall and two along the light well. At the north corridor, there are two (larger) units along the north exterior wall and two along the light well. An additional unit is set against the east exterior wall.

Because there are more stories at the south half of the building than the north, there is a half-story sandwiched into the south side between the 4th and top stories. This half-story has the same plan as the floors above and below.

At the south half of the building where offices were located, the corridor follows the path of the original office corridor, although in the new plan it is narrowed. At the 4th and 5th stories on this side, original terrazzo floors are intact in the corridor. In a few sections of the north side of the building, wood floors are exposed. Most of the former department store appears to have been covered in the mid-20th century with 8" square tiles, now removed although their traces are visible on the exposed subfloor.

Integrity

The Best Building retains integrity sufficient to display the traits for which the building meets local significance under Criterion C. The building's reinforced concrete structural system is fully intact, demonstrating enduring fireproof construction. The exterior elevations have seen few major changes since construction. The loss of historic windows, department store entrance and canopy are mitigated by the clear legibility of all historic storefront and window openings, and the clear sense of the retail display function of the first floor. With these changes evincing a minor visual impact, the exterior of the building is mostly intact and retains its original design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and location. The builfing setting has seen typical changes for a downtown location, including a parking lot now occupying the site to the north and the painting of that elevation which had not originally been prominently displayed.

The building's associations have also changed over time. The Best Building contained offices and a department store for the first seven decades of its existence. Today, its interiors reflect some of the historic uses in the open plan first floor, office and elevator lobbies, department store staircase and material evidence including terrazzo flooring and pressed tin ceilings. Alterations in interior plan impact interior integrity, but do not conceal or alter the important structural system of the building. Moreover, the Best Building is in very good condition.

Best Building
Name of Property

Rock Island, Illinois
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

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

- [ ] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [x] 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" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1908

Significant Dates

1908

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

n/a

Architect/Builder

Clausen & Clausen, architects

Valentine Jobst & Son, builder

Best Building | Rock Island, Illinois
Name of Property | County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The Best Building, located at 1701-1707 Second Avenue in downtown Rock Island, Illinois, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECURE. The Best Building is locally significant as an early representative example of a reinforced concrete commercial building, developed at a time when the technology enabled the affordable construction of large commercial blocks in smaller cities. Constructed in 1908, the building was designed by Clausen & Clausen, the leading architectural firm of Davenport, Iowa, and employs sophisticated design that demonstrates a modern articulation of the building structure. Peoria-based Valentine Jobst & Sons, one of Illinois' largest construction companies in the era, built the building. At the time of completion, the Best Building was one of several buildings that transcended the low commercial blocks in the adjacent cities of Rock Island and Moline in Illinois and Davenport in Iowa. Today, the Best Building retains its stature as a major commercial block in what is now called the Quad Cities, and is the second-tallest building in Rock Island. The building's architectural influence can be seen in several subsequent buildings that utilized reinforced concrete structures and furthered the trend toward taller downtown commercial buildings. The building displays minor changes in its exterior integrity, and displays all attributes that made it a significant work of local architecture upon completion. The period of significance is limited to the date of construction, 1908.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Early Reinforced Concrete Architecture in the United States

By the time that the Best Building was completed, the use of reinforced concrete to build commercial building structures was perfected. Reinforced concrete allowed American architects a reliable fireproof construction, an economical method of achieving greater height and an opportunity to use modern cost-efficient and aesthetically-modern exterior curtain walls. Reinforced concrete overcame limits in the use of bearing wall construction, which required combustible milled structures and floors and also limited building heights. Furthermore, reinforced concrete was far less expensive than structural steel. As American cities' central business districts witnessed rising land values in the early twentieth century, methods of achieving maximum rents through tall forms became necessary.

The modern use of reinforced concrete in architecture began in 1867 when French gardener Joseph Monier obtained patents for beams and posts on roadways and bridges. Monier began designing entire bridge structures in the material, despite having no formal engineering training.[2] Engineer Francois Hennebique first used concrete to fireproof structural steel beams in 1879, and eventually patended a reinforced concrete building structural system in 1892.[3] German engineer G.A. Wayss had patented Monier's techniques in 1879, as the Wayss-Monier System. By then, American William E. Ward had designed and built a reinforced concrete house at Port Chester, New York by 1875.[4] Ernest Ransome, and engineer and architect employed at a cast stone (concrete stone) manufacturer in San Francisco, began experimenting with application of the European ideas in the United States. However, architectural historian Donald Friedman notes that Americans

[2] Mete Sozen, Toshikatsu Ichinose and Santiago Pujol, *Principles of Reinforced Concrete Design* (Boca Raton, Fla.: CRC Press, 2014), p. 1.
[3] Sozen, Ichinose and Pujol, p. 1.
[4] Sozen, Ichinose and Pujol, p 2.

were resistant to the advent of reinforced concrete, despite the availability of structural engineering reports and theory from Europe.[5] In the 1890s, as the Chicago School ushered in commercial modernism in the United States, the use of reinforced concrete for large buildings was nearly unknown and the technology frequently dismissed with skepticism.[6]

Ransome continued to develop ideas leading to a full column and beam "system" that would allow for the entire structure of a building to be fireproof concrete. The development of patented systems assuaged public fears that new materials were unsafe, or that builders would not build the structures to safe standards. Subsequent reinforced concrete structures often came through mass-made "systems," where engineers could specify elements from catalogs that ensured fast fabrication, standardized quality and patented joining systems that had to be scientifically tested to receive a United States Patent. Ransome had pioneered reinforced concrete structural systems for industrial architecture in the 1880s and 1890s.

The earliest major works of reinforced concrete architecture were industrial. When a terrible fire in 1902 left his concrete-framed Pacific Coast Borax Refinery in Bayonne, New Jersey (1897) largely unscathed, interest in use of reinforced concrete structures in fire-prone industrial buildings grew. Ransome's United Shoe Machinery Plant in Beverly, Massachusetts (1903) was the largest reinforced concrete industrial building built to date.[7] Early forms were built in place, with concrete poured on site. This method of building proved slow. Ransome eventually patented the Ransome Unit System, which allowed for all columns, beams and girders to be precast and brought to a construction site already made.[8] The precast members could be hoisted into place very quickly. Lightweight poured floor slabs utilized wire mesh or mortared clay tile beds.[9] Alongside Ransome, other manufacturers developed patented precast elements, rolled wire mesh for floors (the Clinton System offered 300 foot rolls by 1906), mass produced reinforcing rods and other elements.

Engineer Julius Kahn of Detroit had already developed a modular structural system of concrete columns and beams, patented in 1902. Kahn developed "trussed steel bars" with flanges that could be inserted between concrete beams to offset shear forces, as well as hooping to reinforce columns and metal netting to reinforce floor slabs and upright partitions.[10] Kahn's brother, noted architect Albert Kahn, employed the "Kahn system" sold through the Kahn Company throughout his career to design dozens of American factories. Meanwhile, engineer C.A.P. Turner developed a slab and column concrete structural system that eliminated the need for beams altogether.[11] First employed in Turner's Johnson-Bovey Building in Minneapolis (1906), an office building, Turner's system was called the "mushroom cap system" due to the appearance of the caps Turner designed for his rounded columns. Turner patented his system in 1908. Turner's system allowed for faster construction of fireproof industrial and commercial buildings, while also making it easier for non-architects in the building trades to design these buildings (saving even more money).

[5] Donald Friedman, *Historical Building Construction: Design, Materials and Technology* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), p. 105.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Amy E. Slaton, *Reinforced Concrete and the Modernization of American Building, 1900-1930* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 138.
[8] Slaton, p. 144.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Slaton, p. 143.
[11] Lynn Josse, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Luyties Homeopathic Pharmacy Co. Building* (National Park Service, 2000), p. 8.8.

The first major American commercial building to employ a reinforced concrete structure was the column and beam Ingalls Building in Cincinnati (1903; Elzner & Anderson, architects).[12] A 16-story speculative office block, the Ingalls Building demonstrated that the new structural method could still be concealed behind street-facing, proper architect-designed elevations. Thus investors learned that the new technology was safe, affordable, fast and had no impact on the building envelope design necessary to attract tenants to a commercial building. The architectural profession was slightly wary of reinforced concrete at first, however, because of the use of structural systems that relegated the architect's office to designing only exterior elevations, layouts and ornament. According to architectural historian Amy Slaton, most American reinforced concrete industrial buildings that avoided masonry cladding built between 1900 and 1930 were designed by engineers without the participation of trained architects.[13] Commercial buildings tended to utilize architects to design artistically sophisticated facades, while engineers (often working for one of the "systems" or for the general contractor) designed the structures. By 1910, the use of reinforced concrete was "generally accepted" in commercial and industrial architecture, and most architects could work with the method of construction.[14]

When Clausen & Clausen designed the Best Building, commercial architecture for taller urban buildings had undergone a considerable refinement since the first "skyscraper" rose in Chicago in 1883. William Le Baron Jenney's Home Insurance Building (1883-1885) brought forth the first use of steel framing and a break from academic classicism in styling. The steel frame had liberated commercial buildings from heavy appearances and necessarily smaller window openings. Subsequent works of commercial architecture, including Louis Sullivan's Wainwright Building (1891) in St. Louis, explored the artistic potential of new steel forms, and broke with classical conventions. Soaring commercial buildings that, no matter what their style of ornament, embraced expression of their gridded steel skeletons and their thin outer "curtain" walls comprise the "Chicago School" movement in American architecture. Structural technology was far more important than style in defining the new American tall commercial building.[15]

Steel construction remained expensive, and often costs exceeded maximum land rents possible in smaller cities like Rock Island. Reinforced concrete methods were far more affordable, and after the Ingalls Building completion, caught the attention of developers around the United States. The cost efficiency of reinforced concrete building techniques received favorable notice in the influential 1912 volume by Frederick Winslow Taylor and Sanford Eleazer Thompson entitled *A Treatise on Concrete, Plain and Reinforced.* The authors note "a growing confidence in [reinforced concrete's] utility for office buildings" driven by the recognition of the desirable fireproof qualities and by cost savings.[16] According to Taylor and Thompson, in 1904 the net savings for building a commercial building in reinforced concrete instead of steel was 20%.[17] The cost for building an industrial or wholesale loft in reinforced concrete was only 4% to 5% than mill method construction, with far greater fireproofing.[18] The Best Building and its successors represent developers harnessing the affordability of the technology to increase the size – and thus land rents – of buildings in the three large cities of Rock Island, Moline and Davenport.

[12] Sozen, Ichinose and Pujol, p. 4.
[13] Slaton, p. 169.
[14] Amy E. Slaton, Paul E. Gaudette. William G. Hime, and James D. Connolly. "Reinforced Concrete" *in Twentieth-Century Building Material: History and Conservation*, Thomas C. Jester, ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill. 1995). 95-96.
[15] Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture* (Lebanon, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1999), p. 206.
[16] Frederick Winslow Taylor and Sanford Elzear Taylor, *A Treatise on Concrete, Plain and Reinforced* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1912), p. 607.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Taylor and Thompson, p. 608.

Reinforced concrete building technology's economy and quality allowed for the development of tall commercial buildings in smaller cities, where land values often were not high enough to support full steel construction. The Best Building fits into a group of reinforced concrete buildings rising across Illinois in cities that had never seen such large structures before. Comparable buildings include the 12-story Ziock Building in Rockford (1913; NR 2010); the six-story Murphy Building in East St. Louis (2909; NR 2014 in the Downtown East St. Louis Historic District; demolished, 2015); the 8-story Hofmann Tower in Riverside (1908; NR 1978); the 13-story Bresee Tower in Danville (1917 and the six-story Wood Building in Benton (1919). These buildings employ a variety of styles and varying reinforced concrete structural systems (mostly column and beam methods). Despite different styles and structures, all of these buildings share typological similarities in height, fireproof construction and emphasis of window grids in façade design.[19]

The Best Building: A Tall Modern Building in Rock Island

Prior to 1908, Rock Island lacked any large commercial buildings in its downtown. Most buildings fit into the category that Richard Longstreth identified as the "two-part vertical block." This type reflects a resolution of the question of how to construct a tall building: a unified upper section of the building is placed over a base. The two parts are "different yet carefully related to one another."[20]. Longstreth notes that while a variety of styles may apply to such a building, "generally, references to the past are classical."[21] The two-part block can be found in examples from 1850-1920 in the United States, with the typical example being a commercial storefront with a floor of residential, office or retail space above.

Rock Island saw a wave of two and three-story commercial buildings in the 1870s and 1880s, with most buildings either built the width of one parcel or with bay divisions at parcel lines. An early extant example is the Italianate Star Block (1874; Isaac N. Holmes, architect) at 1821-29 Second Avenue, a six-bay, three-story two-park block. The building is articulated as a set of facades rather than a unified block, although there is a shared cornice above. The more modern London Clothing House (1902; Nic Juhl, builder), a three-story brick bearing wall retail department store building that was three bays wide with Beaux Arts architectural details, still represents a small scale of construction. Across the river, Davenport had a few larger commercial blocks, including the five-story J.H.C. Petersen Son's Store (1892; Frederick Clausen, architect).

When Louis P. Best announced the new building, the early press reception announced that this was a significant project capable of remaking Rock Island's look. Of course, Best aimed to build a remarkable building by hiring his friend and long-time collaborator Frederick G. Clausen to serve as architect. Clausen's acumen meant that the project would produce a high-quality building. However, few could have predicted the significance. The *Rock Island Argus and Daily Union* was superlative in its article announcing the project on March 28, 1908. The article declared that the proposed Best Building was to be the "biggest and most complete business block in all of the three cities" (Rock Island, Davenport and Moline implied) and that "the significance is of such import that it is hardly necessary to dwell upon it."[22] The article noted the building's height, mass and reinforced concrete construction.

[19] Gelernter, p. 214.
[20] Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture* (Walnut Creek, California: Alta Mira Press, 2000. Kindle edition: n.p.
[21] Ibid.
[22] "Another Six-Story Building for City's Business District; To Replace the Buford Block," *Rock Island Argus and Daily Union*, March 28, 1908, p. 13.

Prior to the advent of reinforced concrete, Rock Island had not seen any tall commercial buildings rise in its downtown save the Harms Hotel (1902), which at five stories had been the tallest building in the city. Yet the Harms Hotel was of bearing wall masonry construction, making it the pinnacle of the older building technology that had proliferated two-part commercial buildings across the city's downtown. None of these buildings was particularly tall, even larger buildings like the Peter Fries Building (1902) at 1903-5 Second Avenue or the State Bank Building (1891) at the northwest corner of Second Avenue and 17th Street. The buildings preceding the introduction of reinforced concrete showed their gravity-weighted masonry structural compositions, and while often elegant, did not reach toward the sky. A 1909 postcard view of downtown looking southeast from near the Best Building site shows the Safety Building rising above a group of mostly two-and three-story buildings.[23] A postcard view of Second Avenue dating to some year between 1910 and 1915 shows the Best Building rising above a street of smaller two-part commercial blocks, the only one of which comes close is a four-story block.[24] The reinforced concrete wave brought the city larger commercial blocks that exceeded the earlier wave of bearing-wall two-part vertical blocks.

Indeed, Best and Clausen planned a significantly modern building with the new Best Building. The Safety Building, a six-story office block that opened in 1908, was the city's first major reinforced concrete building. Best's building was going to be larger. The use of the new technology of reinforced concrete attracted considerable interest, and the notice of bid for construction carried in many national outlets. When Best let the project for bid, 14 companies bid on the project.[25] The building's specifics were impressive and substantial: a 150' by 90' block, six stories tall, space for offices and a department store, air conditioning and a massive chiller plant, fireproof construction mandated.[26] The local press had eagerly reported on the competition to build such a massive modern building.[27]

Reinforced concrete's rise came forward when architects of downtown office buildings and department stores sought to renew the use of ornamental and formal traits rooted in classicism. The architect of the Best Building, Frederick G. Clausen (1848-1940), would have been attentive to the trends. His practice embraced the periodization of classical influence between 1880 and 1920. Clausen was not a sectarian devotee of any style, but rather an accomplished and versatile designer (the type often dubbed "client-driven" by historians who overlook the demonstrated skill and training inherent in working across styles). Clausen was a friend of Best, as well as the most prominent architect in the Quad Cities at the time.[28] Clausen was born in Germany, training in architecture there before moving to Davenport, Iowa in 1869. He opened his architectural firm in 1871. Between 1895 and 1904, he practiced with Park T. Burrows and James P. Hubbell. From 1904 until 1914, Frederick Clausen and his son Rudolph (1878-1961) practiced as Clausen & Clausen. After his father's retirement, Rudolph added other partners to the firm and finally retired in 1933.[29] A successor firm, Studio 483, currently maintains offices in both Rock Island and Davenport.[30]

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[23] Downtown, Looking Southeast. Rock Island Preservation Society, at http://www.rockislandpreservation.org/postcards-from-home/downtown-looking-southeast/; accessed 9 October 9, 2017.
[24] Farewell Night Scene, Second Avenue. Rock Island Preservation Society, at http://www.rockislandpreservation.org/postcards-from-home/farewell-night-scene-second-avenue/; accessed October 9, 2017.
[25] "Contract Let for Big Building," *Davenport Daily Times*, May 20, 1908, p. 10.
[26] "Notices," *Engineering News* 59.22, 21 May 1908, p. 184.
[27] "Bids Are Open for the Best Building," *Rock Island Argus and Daily Union*, May 19, 1908, p. 8.
[28] "L.P. Best, Prominent Business Man, Dies of Pneumonia in the West," *Davenport Democrat*, 4 March 1926, p. 1-2. The article stated that Best and Clausen were part of a foursome that got together to play cards once a week.
[29] Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1999), p. 40-42. The junior Clausen's firm became Clausen & Kruse and the Clausen, Kruse & Klein.
[30] Jennifer DeWitt, "Missman merges with combined Q-C architecture firms," *Quad-City Times*, November 13, 2015. http://qctimes.com/business/missman-merges-with-combined-q-c-architecture-firms/article_5f0a4076-8a23-59eb-94ac-

Whether Clausen designed the structural system or whether the contractor or an engineer designed it is unknown. The architectural drawings for the building from Clausen's office specifies a concrete structural system based on patented innovations of its time. The building made use of reinforced concrete columns and beams on a modular plan, showing the influence of patented systems but not adopting any particular one. The concrete floor slabs had backing hollow clay tile. Exterior walls were made of reinforced clay tile and brick, and interior partitions were made of clay tile. The structure was fully fireproof. The cross-sections of the structural girders show that the steel reinforcement rods were formed to make diagonal rising ends that transferred shear loads away from the centers (figure 22). The shear bars were repeated in the same form. The reinforcement design thus diminished stress in the centers of each beam or girder. At the Best Building, there are single shear bar ends intersecting interval upright bars. The system of the building adheres to no other recorded patented system, so represents the architect or engineer's translation.

The builder of the Best Building, Valentine Jobst and Sons of Peoria, would have built the structure, and may have assisted in its design. In May 1908, Best chose the firm to build the new business block, nudging out bigger firms including the James Stewart Company of St. Louis.[31] Valentine Jobst & Sons was already an accomplished construction company, and had been in business since 1901.[32] The firm's many works include the Illinois Supreme Court Building in Springfield; the United States Courthouse and Post Office buildings in Galesburg, Illinois, Joplin, Missouri, Pekin, Illinois, Jacksonville, Illinois and Wichita, Kansas; the Champaign County Courthouse in Champaign, Illinois; the Logan County Courthouse in Lincoln, Illinois; several academic buildings at the University of Illinois campus in Champaign, Illinois; the Hotel Davenport in Davenport, Iowa; the Schipper & Block Department Store in Peoria, Illinois; the National Home for Soldiers in Danville, Illinois; the Public Library in Decatur, Illinois; the Southern Illinois Hospital for the Insane in Anna, Illinois; the First National Bank Building in Champaign Illinois; and the Soldiers and Sailors Home in Quincy, Illinois.[33]

Construction of the Best Building attracted press attention. The start of construction of the reinforced concrete forms merited at least one article's attention.[34] Toward completion, the *Rock Island Argus and Daily Union* opined that the completion of the Best Building marked a major turning point in downtown Rock Island's trajectory.[35] The newspaper posed that completion of the Best Building following construction of the Safety Building and the remodeling of People's National Bank Building constitutes a "fine impetus" for more major buildings to rise.[36] The article does not distinguish between reception of the Best or Safety buildings as stronger, and states that both were significant accomplishments advancing "modern" architecture in downtown Rock Island.

The Best Building immediately influenced residential design in the future Quad Cities. While his eponymous building was under construction, Louis P. Best had built a new personal residence in Davenport across the river. There was no surprise that Best selected Clausen as the architect, but there was a surprise at Clausen's design: a fully fireproof, reinforced concrete two-and-a-half story dwelling. The *Davenport Democrat* declared

137d1cfb59e5.html; accessed October 9, 2017.
[31] "Peoria Firm Gets the Contract for New Block," *Rock Island Argus and Daily Union*, May 20, 1908, p. 5.
[32] James Montgomery Rice, *Peoria City and County, Illinois: A Record of Settlement, Organization, Progress and Achievement* vol. 2 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912), p. 790-1.
[33] Ibid.
[34] "Brick Work Is Begin," *Davenport Daily Times*, August 17, 1908, p. 10.
[35] "More Blocks Going Up," *Rock Island Argus and Daily Union,* November 14, 1908, p. 5.
[36] Ibid.

the dwelling to be "a distinct departure from the former methods of residence construction in the tri-cities," and no known precedent exists.[37] The house utilized reinforced concrete columns and beams, concrete footings, brick basement walls, stucco-clad structural clay block interior partitions and reinforced concrete floors with hollow clay tile filler rows underneath. J. Sievers of Rock Island served as general contractors, and the Concrete Engineering Company of Davenport poured the concrete and designed the forms.[38]

The Best Building was only Rock Island's second reinforced concrete large commercial mixed-use building, but several followed. The Best Building had closely followed the construction of the most directly comparable building, the smaller Safety Building, also constructed in 1908.[39] This building is located at 1800 3rd Avenue. It has six stories, clad with brown brick at the ground level and buff brick at the upper stories (see figure 17). In its detailing, the building displays a mix of classical motifs (represented by the anthemion-laden architrave at the north elevation and the cornice's scrolled brackets) and more modern designs (most notably, a geometric raised brick pattern at the top two stories). Architect Olof Z. Cervin acknowledged that his Safety Building of 1908 was the first reinforced concrete building in the Quad Cities.[40] The Safety Building was occupied first, and was the tallest building in the city upon completion.[41] The Best Building would top the Safety Building in height, but otherwise the buildings compare to each other in form, massing, classically-ornamented gridded formal elevations and articulation of their modern structural systems. The quick surpassing of the Safety Building's height by the Best Building illustrates the effect of reinforced concrete construction in building the Rock Island skyline.

The Rock Island Bank Building, located at 230 18th Street, was built in 1914 with a reinforced concrete structure (see figure 18).[42] It is perhaps the city's most directly Classically inspired office building; the first of its five stories is a stone base with round-arched windows below brick cladding above. Built for the Central Trust and Savings Bank as a four-bay building, the building was expanded to current size in 1926. The Rock Island Bank Building shows a tendency against frank expression of structure at its base, while adhering to a Chicago School grid above. Another comparable reinforced concrete bank building, the former Rock Island Savings Bank Building at 18th Street and 3rd Avenue (1912), presented a Bedford limestone Greek temple façade that concealed its modern structure, furthering the artistic severance of clear relation between structure and design. The building was completely reclad in granite, enameled metal panels and brick in 1927 and today is the Telco Building, home to television studios (see figure 120).[43]

The Ann Goldman Building, located at 1629 2nd Avenue, is a five-story brown brick building comparable in scale to the nominated building (see figure 19). The overall design of the building reflects alterations of the 1920s (apparently including the addition of the fifth floor). [44] Located on a prominent downtown corner, the façade is four bays at one elevation and five at the other. With a storefront ribbon base, rise of gridded large

[37] *History—Grandview Apartments*. http://grandviewdavenport.com/history/. No date. Accessed 12 September 2017.
[38] Ibid.
[39] City of Rock Island Planning & Redevelopment Division. *History & Architecture: Downtown Rock Island* (2004: http://www.rigov.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1119. Accessed 7/11/2017.) n.p.
[40] City of Rock Island Planning & Redevelopment Division. *History & Architecture: Downtown Rock Island* (2004: http://www.rigov.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1119. Accessed October 9, 2017.) n.p.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Rock Island Preservation Society, Rock Island Savings Bank (2003; http://www.rockislandpreservation.org/postcards-from-home/rock-island-savings-bank/. Accessed 7/25/2017).
[44] Parts of the first two floors of the building may date from as early as the 1850s; a radical remodeling of 1894 added the third and fourth stories, and the current appearance dates to the 1920s. City of Rock Island Planning & Redevelopment Division. *History & Architecture: Downtown Rock Island* (2004: http://www.rigov.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1119. Accessed October 9, 2017.) n.p.

windows and upper cornice, the building seems to echo the Best Building nearby. However, the Ana Goldman Building shows simply a stylistic influence on a building that also housed a major retailer, the Hill Furniture Company, from 1923-27 (Sears occupied the building as department store starting in 1937).[45] The frame of the building is bearing masonry and some steel, with the building's earliest parts dating to 1894 or even to the 1850s.[46]

Three major commercial buildings utilizing reinforced concrete rose in the 1920s. The Art Deco Fort Armstrong Theater (1920; Cervin & Horn with Brawn & Ermling, architects) opened in January 1921 as a major air-conditioned movie house. The auditorium featured five levels of seats with a total of 1,566 seats. The Rock Island Argus Building, housing the news and printing departments of the daily newspaper, opened in 1924 in a two-story block at 1724 4th Avenue. The tallest reinforced concrete building in Rock Island, the 9-story Fort Armstrong Hotel (NR 1984), located at 1900 3rd Avenue was built in 1925-6 and shows that the artistic exploration of the reinforced concrete form was over by the 1920s in Rock Island (see figure 21). Chicago architect Charles W. Nicol designed the building. The dark brick hotel, now used as apartments, conforms to the Renaissance Revival style. Elaborate quoined window surrounds and other terra cotta ornament adorn the walls, which also feature diaper pattern matte brick pattern work.[47]

Reinforced concrete influenced commercial architecture in nearby Moline in the years after the Best Building's construction. The first major reinforced concrete commercial block was the Reliance Building (1913), a 5-story Prairie School office at 1518 5th Avenue block designed by Cervin. Subsequently, the 15-story LeCiare Hotel (1922; Kirsch & Kolb, architects) at 19th Street and 5th Avenue became the tallest reinforced concrete building in what is now called the Quad Cities. Although not a commercial building, the Gothic Revival Scottish Rite Cathedral at 1800 7th Avenue (1928-30) used a reinforced concrete structure to enclose its 80' x 130' auditorium and complex of meeting rooms.

Several significant reinforced concrete commercial buildings rose in Davenport after the Best Building was completed, although higher land values meant that developers more often turned to full steel construction there. The 6-story Davenport Hotel (NR 1983) at 324 Main Street completed in 1907 from designs by architect P.T. Burrows. Burrows also was involved in the design of the larger 11-story Hotel Blackhawk (NR 1983) at 309 Perry Street, completed in 1914 from designs by Temple & Burrows and Arthur Ebeling. The Linograph Building (NR 2009) at 420 W. River Drive is a four-story commercial loft building designed by Clausen & Kruse.

Louis P. Best and the Best Building

Rock Island received a major boost when the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad constructed the first bridge across the Mississippi River in 1854. Downtown boomed through the early 20th century, undergoing many phases of construction and rebuilding. The oldest extant building in downtown Rock Island dates to the 1860s; some residential buildings in nearby neighborhoods still exist to represent the 1850s.[48] Rock Island

[45] Rock Island Preservation Society, Central Trust and Savings Bank (2003; http://www.rockislandpreservation.org/postcards-from-home/central-trust-savings-bank/. Accessed October 9, 2017).
[46] Ibid.
[47] J. C. Ebach, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Fort Armstrong Hotel* (National Park Service: 1984).
[48] City of Rock Island Historic Structures Directory at http://www.rigov.org/BusinessDirectoryii.aspx, accessed October 9, 2017; City of Rock Island Planning & Redevelopment Division, *History & Architecture: Downtown Rock Island*, 2004. http://www.rigov.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1119, accessed October 9, 2017.

recorded a population of 1,711 in its first Census enumeration in 1850, and a rise to 5,130 in 1860. The rate of population increase remained above 17% per decade through 1920, with the average increase rate being 62.5%. Rock Island's growth was certain up through the Great Depression, with population decline only appearing in the 1970 Census.

Rock Island's growth was abetted by the construction of the railroad bridge and the opening of the arsenal. The arsenal first opened on the island in 1862 as a Confederate soldier war prison, and then was converted and expanded into a facility for manufacturing and storing small armaments for the United States Army.[49] The local industrial economy early was dominated by the lumber milling industry that relied on the excellent water and rail transportation lines.[50] Eventually, after the Civil War, major farm implement manufacturers located in Rock Island and Moline. By 1871, Rock Island counted two hotels downtown, a sign of business travel. The road-rail Government Bridge was completed in 1896, and the rail Crescent Bridge in 1899, expanding trade to the west.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Rock Island's downtown witnessed the rise of a competitive dry goods retail market. Prior to the age of the department store, most retailers were small, specialized stores, often with flexible pricing.[51] Established in the 1840s, A.T. Stewart's "dry goods emporium" in New York City is often considered the progenitor of the modern department store. By the 1860s, Stewart had replaced his dry goods emporium with a purpose-built department store dubbed "The Greatest Store in the World." According to author Vicki Howard,

> Stewart helped establish three major principles of modern selling – the one-price system, rapid stock turn, and departmentalized organization of goods. ... Other early innovations during this period included a purpose-built, multifloored building in a central location; a free entrance policy, meaning customers could browse at will; customer services such as merchandise return, delivery, restrooms, parcel wrapping, and checking; low markup; cash selling or short credit terms; large sales volume; centralization of nonselling functions; and stock clearance through bargain sales.[52]

By the 1880s, most major cities boasted at least one department store. The earliest extant purpose-built store in the Rock Island metro area is the J. H. C. Petersen's Sons Store across the river in Davenport, Iowa (1892; NR 1983). Other companies doing business in Rock Island at the time include Young & McCombs and McCabe's. By 1910, the Rock Island City Directory listed two additional "department stores" which appear to have been significantly smaller: the Mill Store and Harry Horblit's store.[53] Two stores (including Petersen's) were also listed in Davenport.

With the opening of its store in the Best Building in 1909, Young & McCombs became Rock Island's premiere retailer. Both Frank C. Young (b. 1862) and William S. McComb (b. 1859) had garnered extensive business and retail experience by the time they opened their first store in 1894. Their first location was at 1727 Second Avenue. In 1897, that building and two adjacent neighbors were demolished and a new building was

[49] Federal Writers Project, *The WPA Guide to Illinois* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), p. 378-379.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Vicki Howard, *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). P. 9-11.
[52] Howard, p. 11-13
[53] *R. L. Polk & Co.'s Rock Island City Directory*, 1910.

constructed for the store.[54] The new Young & McCombs building contained 22,400 square feet of retail space, making it likely the largest department store space upon opening.[55] The building, however, was even more noteworthy for its appearance than for its size. The front elevation of the three-story was starkly divided into three bays, with large triple windows in opening above the storefront. Above the windows was an attic story featuring porthole windows. The proportion of glazing to solid on the façade was nearly equal, marking a break from reliance on older masonry forms. The building, however, relied on a traditional bearing wall structure, which limited its height and tied it to Gilded Age engineering conventions for Midwestern commercial blocks.

Young and McCombs outgrew its new building before a decade's time, keeping pace with Rock Island itself. The city rose from 19,463 residents in 1900 to 24,335 in 1910. By 1908, the department store entered into an arrangement with businessman Louis P. Best, who purchased the Buford Block (on the same block as the original store) and built a new home for Young & McCombs.[56] Best became the eponymous investor in this real estate project, which combined new, even larger retail space with a speculative office wing capitalizing on downtown demand. Downtown Rock Island had steadily developed with new retail and office blocks in recent years, ranging from the three-story retail block the London Building (1902) at 1715 2nd Street to the three-story Elks Club Building at 111 18th Street (1908). None of these buildings had topped four stories, however.

Louis Best lived across the Mississippi River from Rock Island in Davenport, Iowa. Born in Germany in 1848, he immigrated to New York City in 1869. After five years' experience in business and as a chemist in a sugar company, Best came to Davenport to run the Glucose Manufacturing Company. At his death in 1926, he was remembered as the man who turned around the Glucose Manufacturing Company and built a second glucose plant in Granite City, Illinois; as president of the Davenport Foundry & Machine Company; as a director of the Citizen's National Bank; head of the School Board; and co-founder of the Davenport Crematorium. One of his obituaries specifically singled out his service as treasurer of Young & McCombs. [57]

At the department store's opening in 1909, its new building was heralded as "as fine a building as will be found in any city of this size in the country."[58] Young and McCombs enjoyed a moment as the premiere department store in Rock Island, although rising competition would follow. Reporting on the store's opening, the *Davenport Daily Times* called Young & McCombs' new facility "the Marshal (sic) Fields of the Mississippi valley."[59] While the new store may have been smaller than that famed establishment, the newspaper claimed it was "just as magnificent." Another article suggested that the opening "marked an epoch in the advancement of the city from a commercial standpoint." Subsequent investments in department store retail around downtown, including expansion of chief rival McCabe's Plunder Store at 1713 3rd Street, and S.S Kresge's arrival in the late 1910s, rendered the bombast of 1909 moot. By the 1920s, Rock Island had multiple major department stores, and McComb and Youngs struggled to stay on top.

By 1922, Young & McCombs had been taken over by the head of the store's main competitor, L. S. McCabe's. In 1923, a consortium of local businessmen calling themselves the Rock Island Department Store, Inc. bought

[54] Karen Lang Kummer, National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Peoples National Bank Building/Fries Building (National Park Service, 1999), p. 36.
[55] City of Rock Island Planning & Redevelopment Division. *History & Architecture: Downtown Rock Island* (2004: http://www.rigov.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1119; accessed October 9, 2017.) n.p.
[56] "Thousands Visit Young & M'Combs New Store," *Davenport Daily Times*, March 26, 1909, p. 10.
[57] "L.P. Best, Prominent Business Man, Dies of Pneumonia in the West," *Davenport Democrat*, March 4, 1926. 1-2; "Pioneer Business Man Passes Away at San Diego, Cal.," *Davenport Daily Times*, March 4, 1926, p. 1-2.
[58] "Grand Store Opens; Hundreds Visit It," *Davenport Times*, March 25, 1909, p. 12.
[59] "Grand Store Opens; Hundreds Visit It," *Davenport Times*, March 25, 1909, p. 12.

out the merchandise, fixtures, and lease.[60] A few months later, the group sold a controlling interest to Dubuque businessman C. F. Kurtz.[61] The Kurtz Department Store was forced into bankruptcy in 1927 and was purchased at auction by Moline residents David Brady and Abe Waxenburg.[62] Montgomery Ward opened a Davenport location in 1929,[63] and in in the 1930s the chain expanded across the river. Brady-Waxenburg moved down the street and Montgomery Ward took over the Best Buildings retail spaces.[64] The store operated as a Montgomery Ward into the mid-1970s, when it closed.[65] Office use of the building continued through the 1990s, and the building was known as the Cleaveland Building when it closed.

Summary

The Best Building remains a great example of the earliest use of reinforced concrete in Rock Island architecture, and is the city's second-oldest example. With its modern structural system, the building was one of the early buildings that introduced modern tall buildings to the city. Before the construction of the Best Building, Rock Island had built a downtown of modest-sized commercial blocks. After the Best Building's construction, the city bloomed with other modern tall buildings, and developed a downtown skyline. The building's influence on structural technology were evident in Rock Island, Moline and Davenport in following years. Today the Best Building retains its features that allow it to demonstrate its architectural significance. Rehabilitation is planned for the near future, where its exteriors would have historic fenestration largely restores, and its interiors would be finally adapted into residential use while remaining historic fabric would be retained and enhanced.

[60] "R.I. Store to be Taken Over by the Civic Clubs," *Davenport Democrat and Leader*, April 29, 1923, p. 25.
[61] "Dubuque Man Purchases Controlling Interest in Rock Island Loop Store," *Davenport Democrat and Leader,* August 16, 1923, p. 15.
[62] "Two Moliners Purchase Rock Island Store," *Davenport Democrat and Leader,* January 17, 1927, p. 15.
[63] "Montgomery Ward & Co.'s New Store opens Saturday," *Davenport Democrat and Leader*, April 4, 1929.
[64] Rock Island Classified Business Directory, 1939.
[65] "Best Building a Cornerstone of 19th Century Rock Island Business," *Quad Cities Dispatch-Argus*, September 4, 2005. http://www.qconline.com/news/local/best-building-a-cornerstone-of-th-century-rock-island-business/article_b818ab75-d77a-5ac7-b6dd-915513654b5e.html; accessed October 9, 2017.

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Best Building | Rock Island, Illinois
Name of Property | County and State

"Two Moliners Purchase Rock Island Store." *Davenport Democrat and Leader.* January 17, 1927.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
____previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

____State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
__x__ Other
Name of repository: Rock Island Public Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

Best Building | Rock Island, Illinois
Name of Property | County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.1
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	Latitude 41.511244°	Longitude -90.575744°	3	Latitude	Longitude
2	Latitude	Longitude	4	Latitude	Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property is a single parcel, described by the Rock Island County Assessor as lot 10 and west ½ lot 9 in Block 1 of Spencer and Case Addition.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This is the entirety of the lot on which the Best Building was constructed. The lot boundaries have remained the same since the time of construction.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Allen and Lynn Josse date 10 October 2017
organization Preservation Research Office telephone (314) 920-5680
street & number 3407 S. Jefferson Avenue #207 email michael@preservationresearch.com
city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63118

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

Best Building | Rock Island, Illinois
Name of Property | County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Best Building

City or Vicinity: Rock Island

County: Rock Island **State:** Illinois

Photographer: Michael Allen

Date Photographed: June 24, 2017 (1); September 2, 2016 (2-9)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 9: View toward building looking northeast.

Photo 2 of 9: View toward building looking southeast.

Photo 3 of 9: View inside of office wing lobby, toward northeast.

Photo 4 of 9: View inside of first floor showing storefront windows, looking southwest.

Photo 5 of 9: Third floor hallway showing typical current condition.

Photo 6 of 9: Department store staircase at third floor looking northeast.

Photo 7 of 9: Department store staircase at fourth floor looking southeast.

Photo 8 of 9: Elevator lobby on fourth floor, looking southeast.

Photo 9 of 9: View of third floor northwest corner area, looking northwest.

Best Building | Rock Island, Illinois
Name of Property | County and State

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 26

List of Figures
(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all document should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.

1. Location Map (central Rock Island, Illinois).
2. Site Plan, with photo locations marked.
3. West elevation drawing, 1908.
4. First floor existing plan.
5. Second floor existing plan.
6. Third floor existing plan.
7. Fourth floor existing plan.
8. Fifth floor plans existing plan.
9. Sixth floor existing plan.
10. First and second floor plans as designed.
11. Third and fourth floor plans as designed.
12. Fifth and sixth floor plans as designed.
13. Interior of building showing exposed concrete structural system.
14. Interior of building showing exposed concrete structural system.
15. Historic postcard view of the Best Building.
16. Historic photpgraph of Best Building, undated.
17. Safety Building, view toward southeast.
18. The Rock Island Bank Building, view toward the northwest.
19. The Goldman Building, view toward the northwest.
20. Rock Island Savings Bank Building/Telco Building after completion and as it stands today.
21. The Fort Armstrong Hotel as it stands today, view toward southeast.
22. A comparison of the reinforced concrete girder of Julius Kahn's patented system and cross-section of girders from Clausen & Clausen's drawings for the Best Building.

Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 1: Location Map (central Rock Island, Illinois). Source: openstreetmap.org

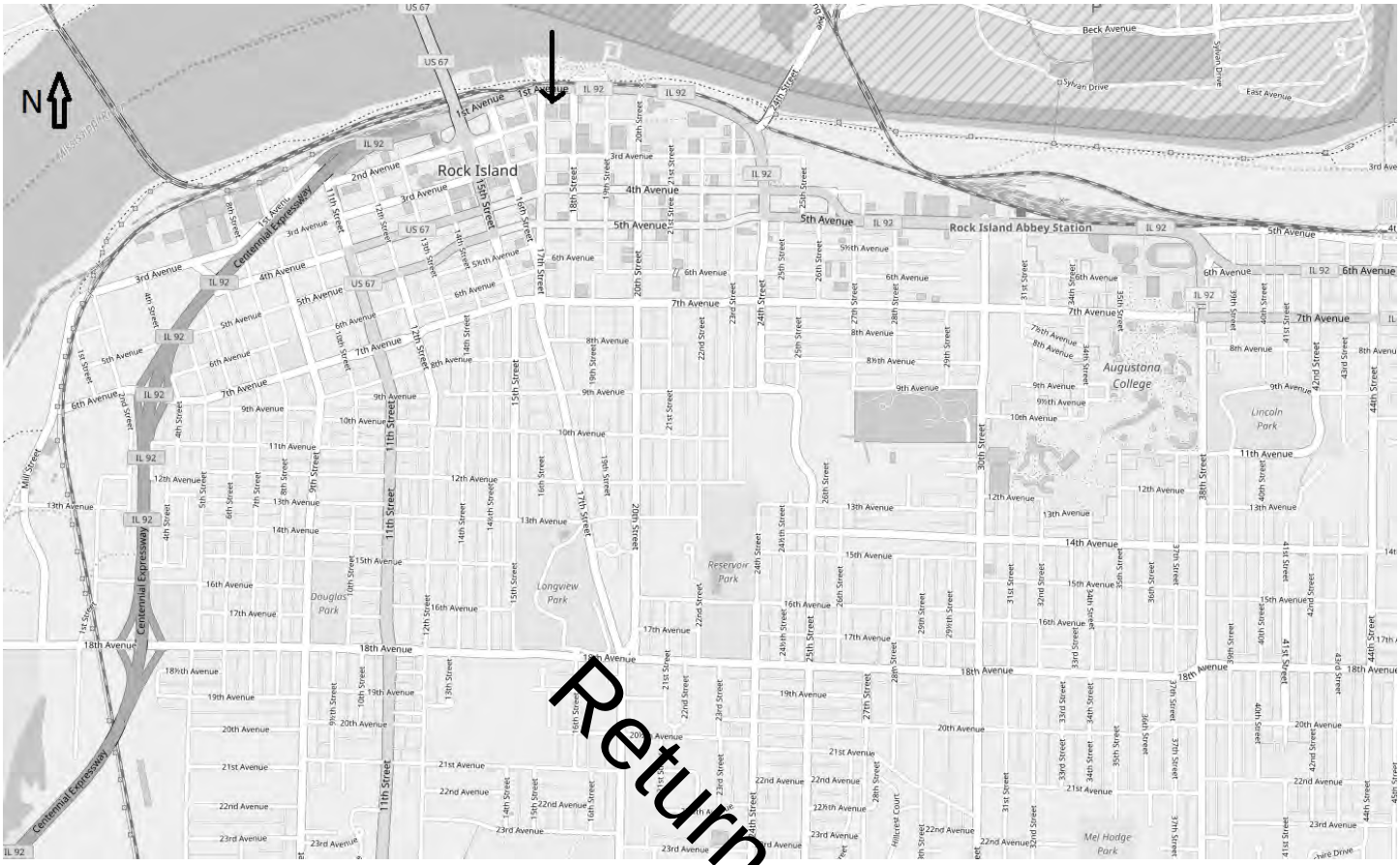


Figure 2: Site Plan, with photo locations marked. Source: Google Maps.

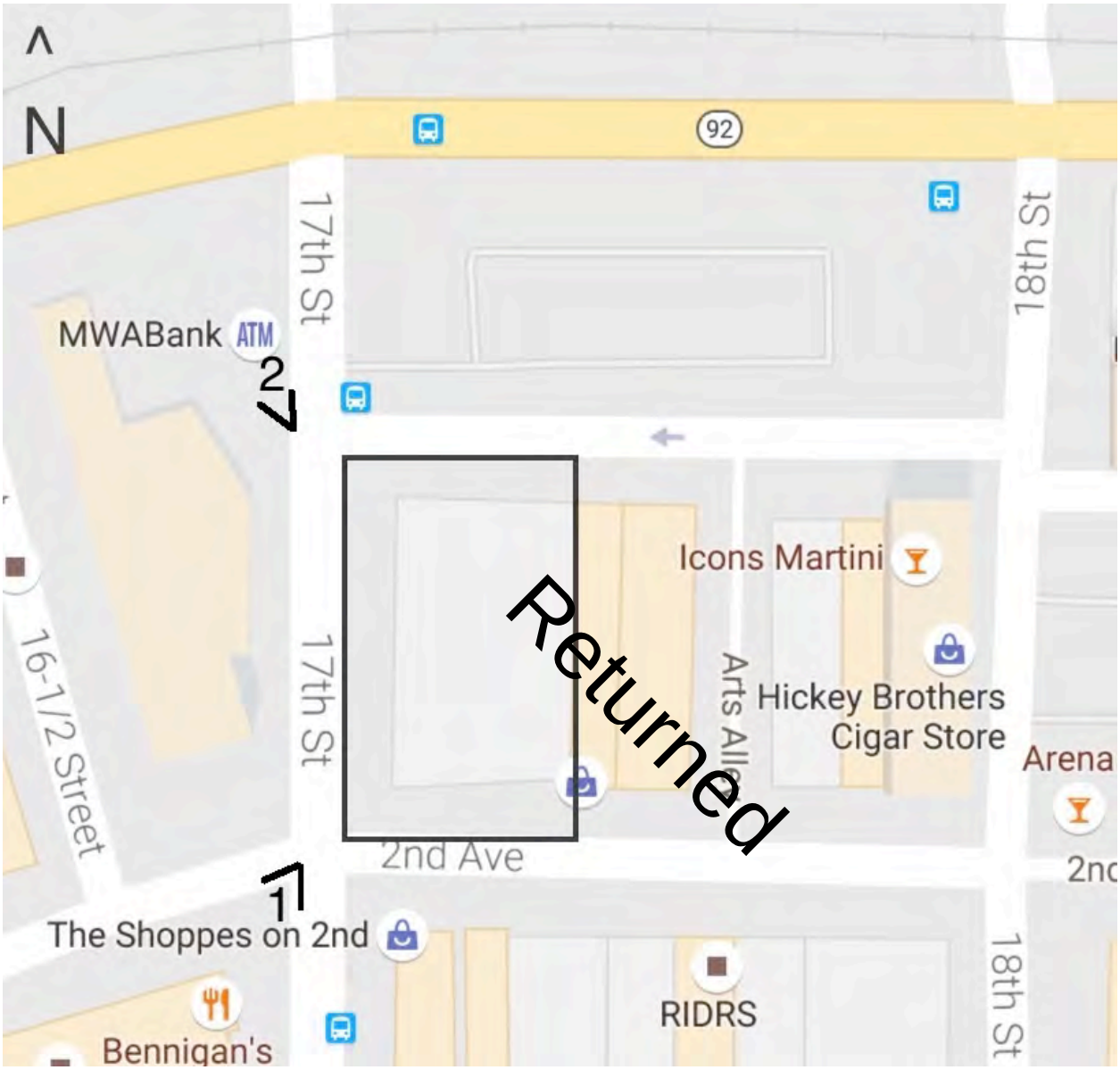
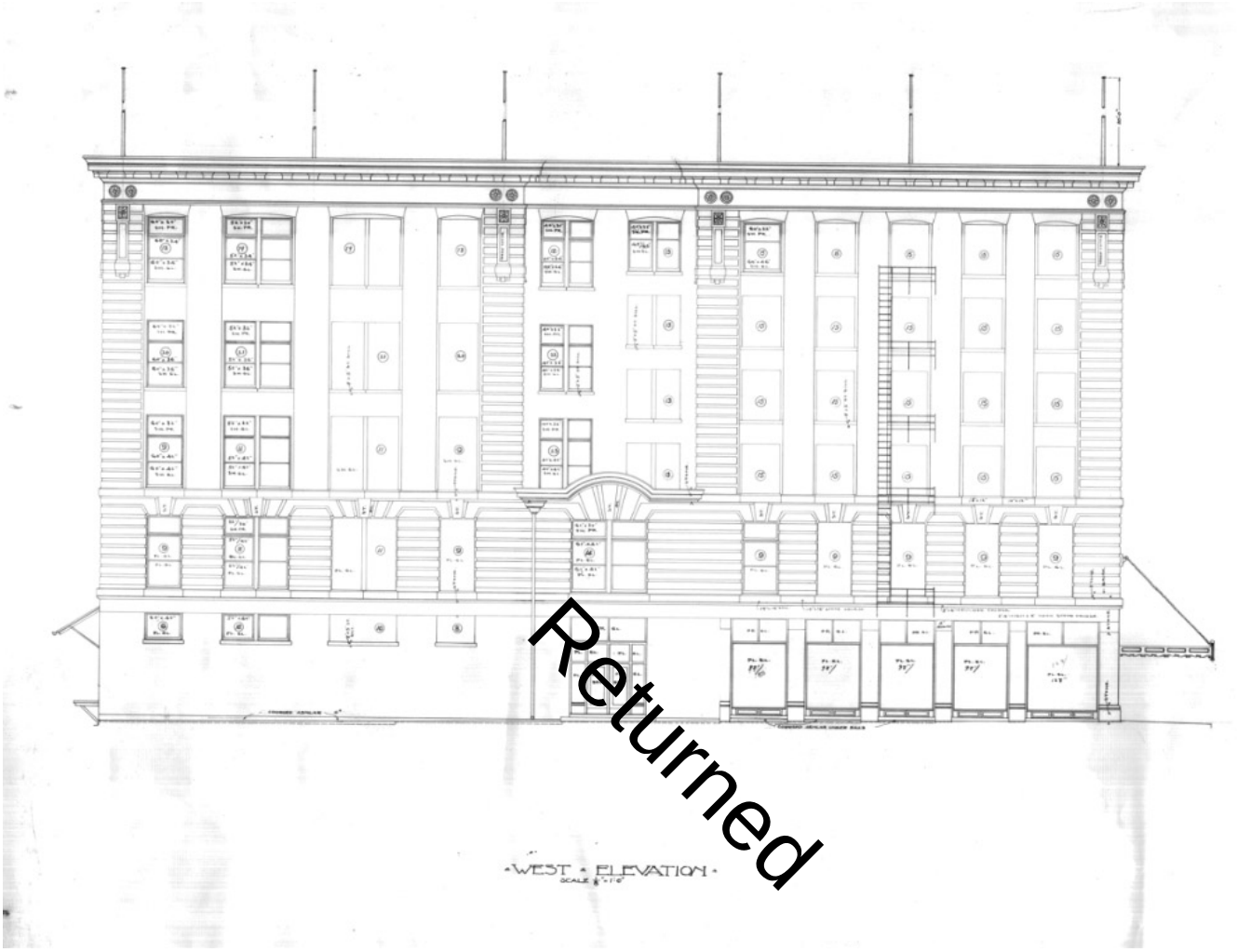
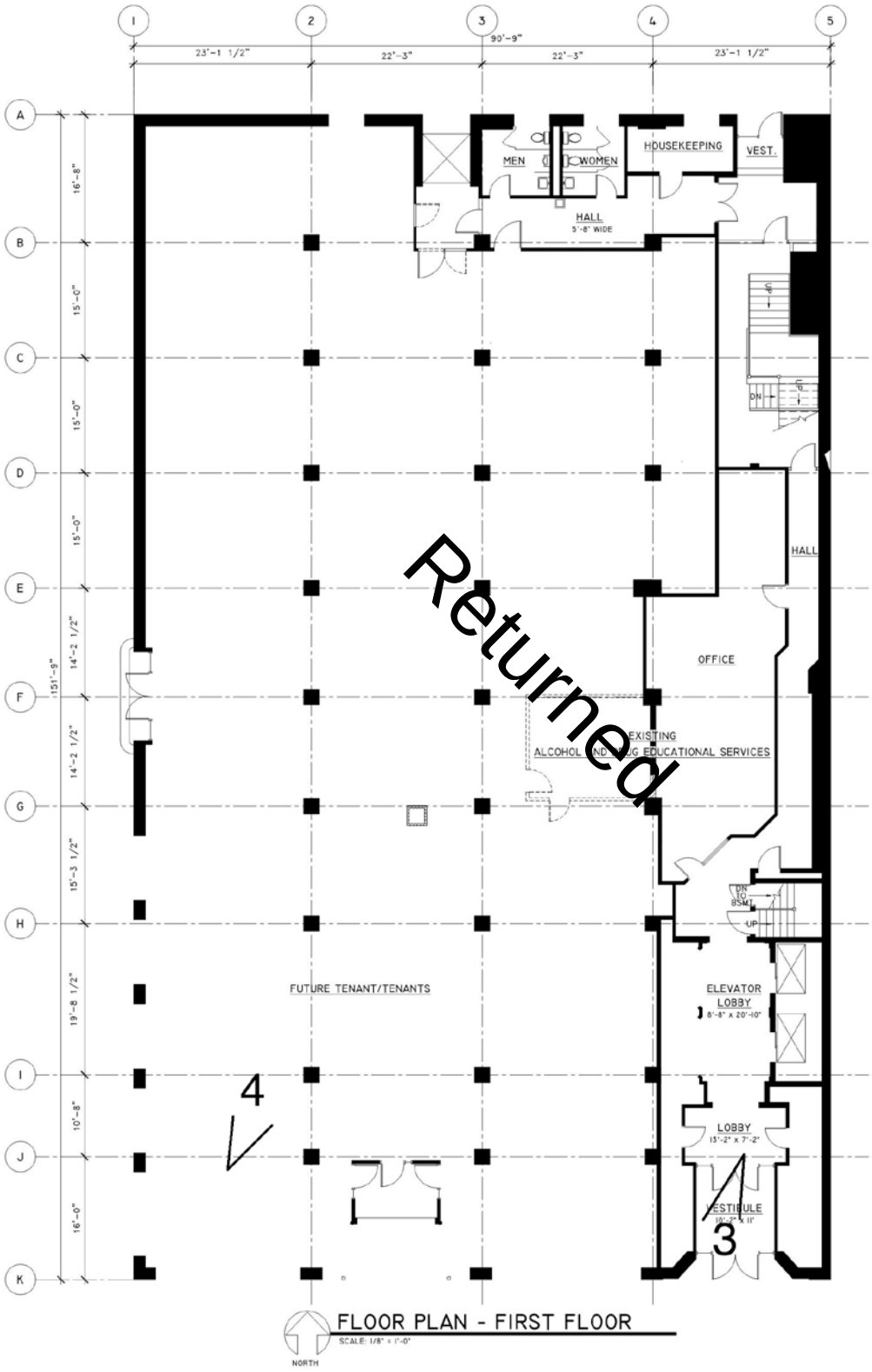


Figure 3: West elevation drawing, 1908. Source: Frederick G. Clausen Collection. Special Collections, Davenport Public Library.



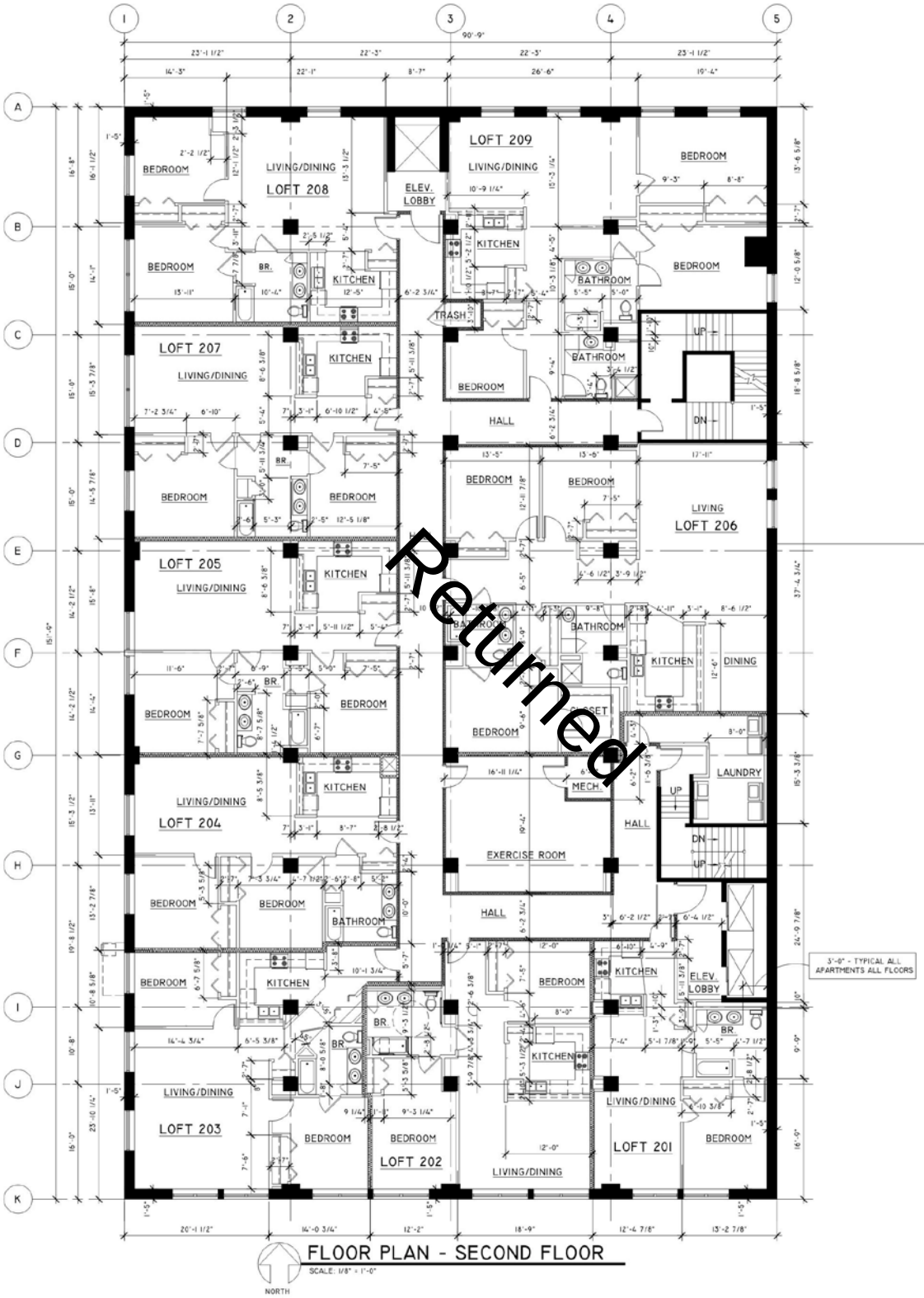
Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 4: First floor existing plan. Source: Design Build By Architects (2017).



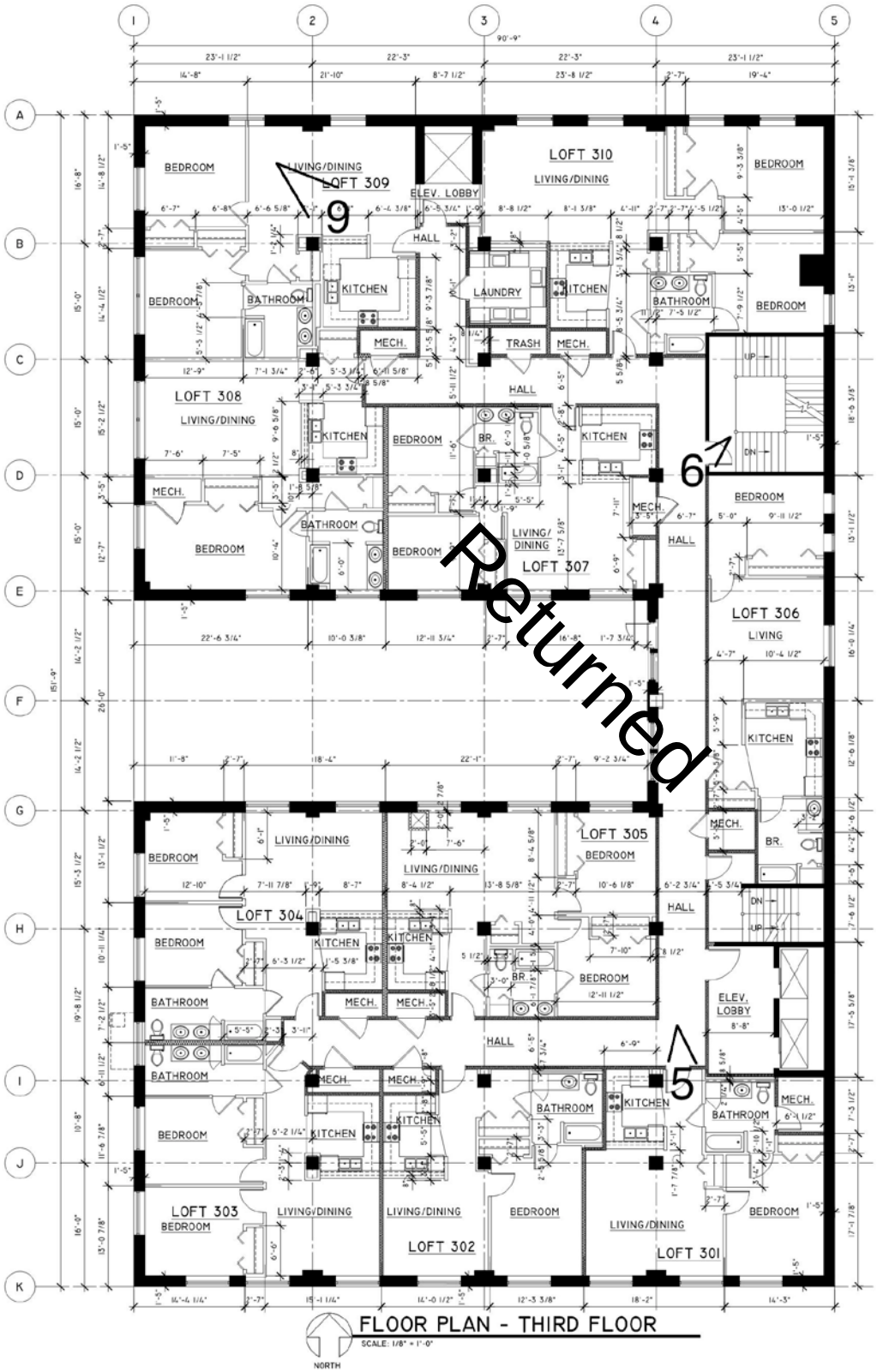
Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 5: Second floor existing plan. Source: Design Build By Architects (2017).



Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 6: Third floor existing plan. Source: Design Build By Architects (2017).



Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 7: Fourth floor existing plan. Source: Design Build By Architects (2017).

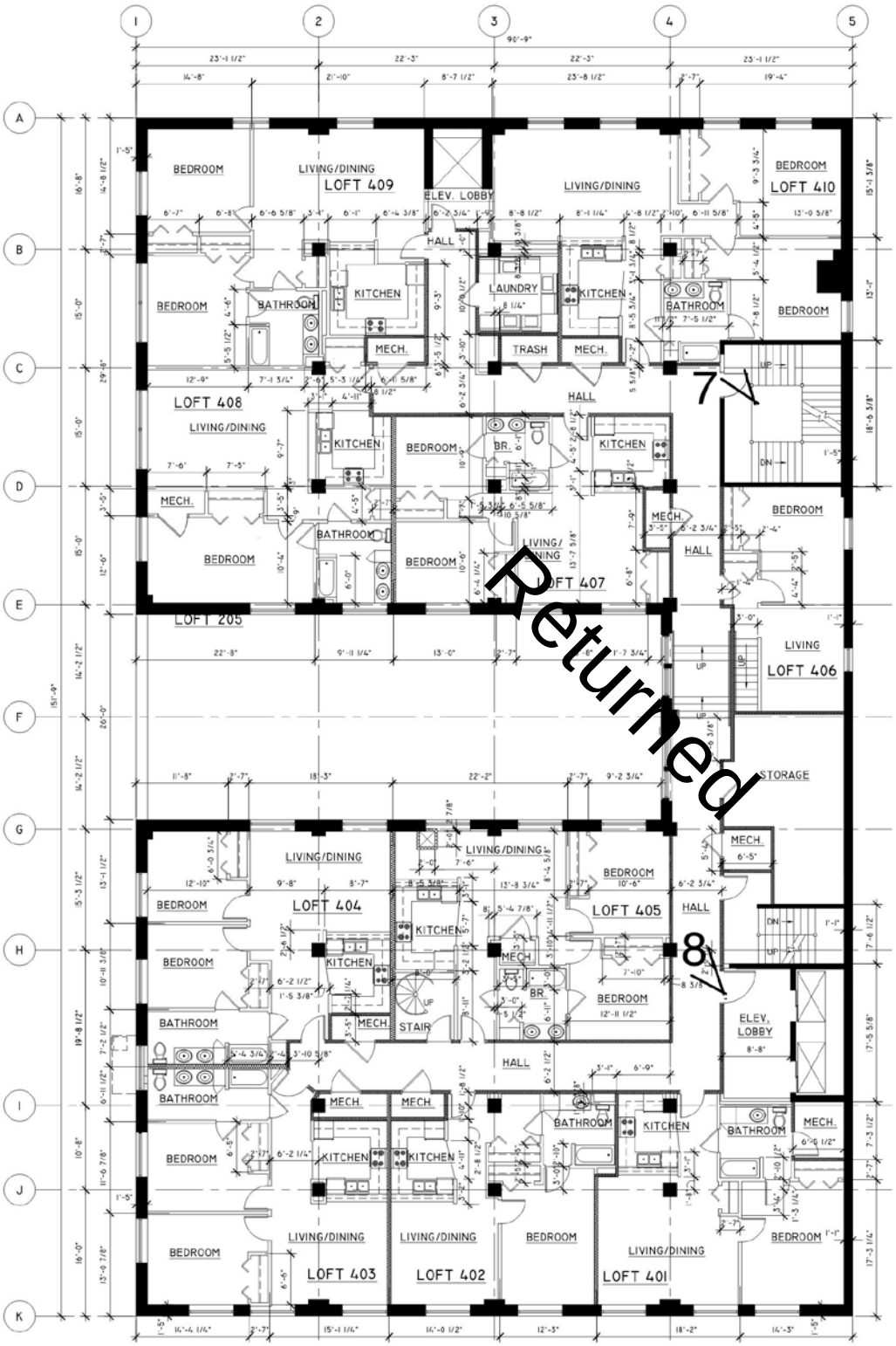
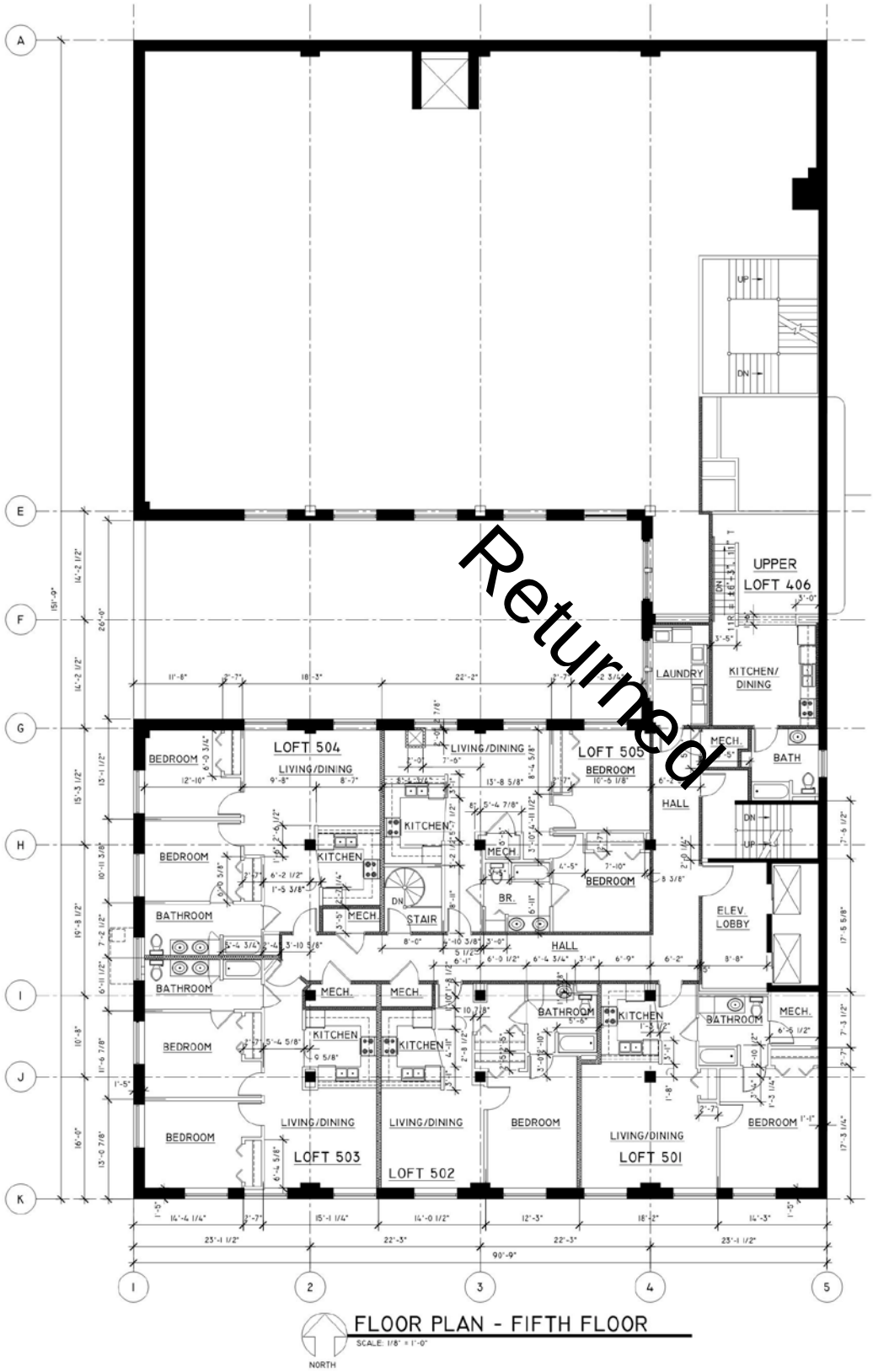
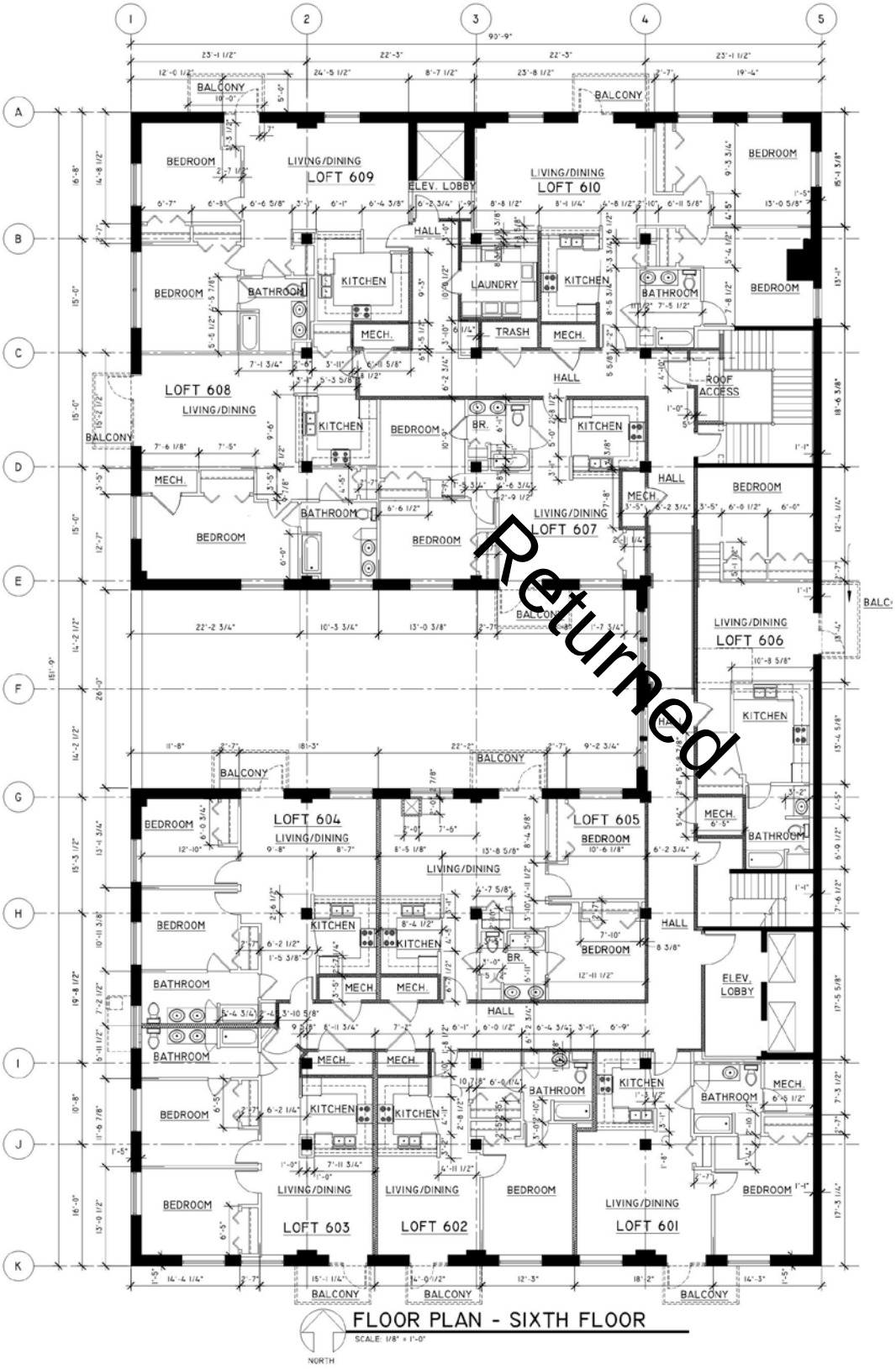


Figure 8: Fifth floor existing plan. Source: Design Build By Architects (2017).



Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 9: Sixth floor existing plan. Source: Design Build By Architects (2017).



Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 10: First and second floor plans as designed. Source: Clausen & Clausen Collection; Special Collections, Davenport Public Library.

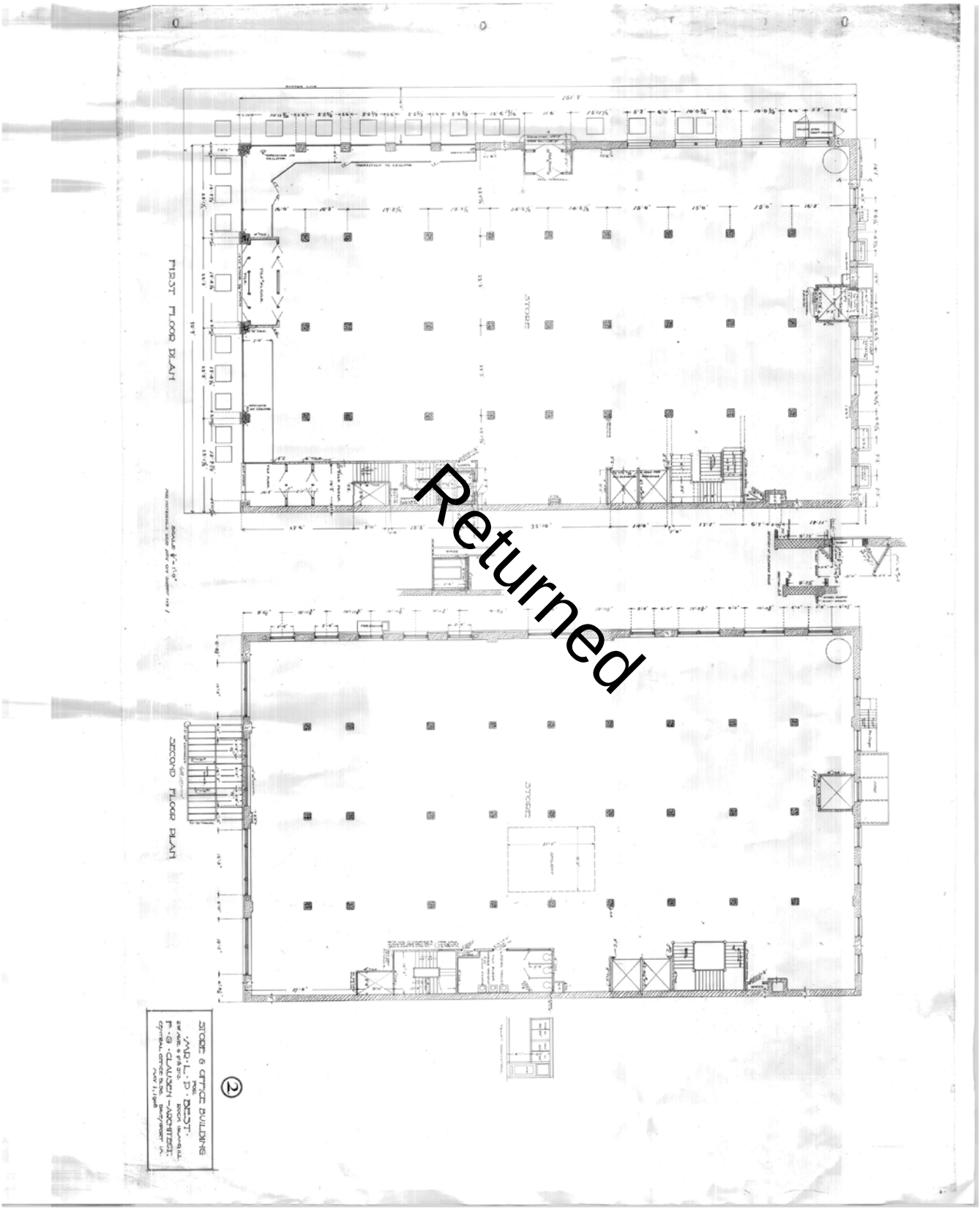


Figure 11: Third and fourth floor plans as designed. Source: Clausen & Clausen Collection; Special Collections, Davenport Public Library.

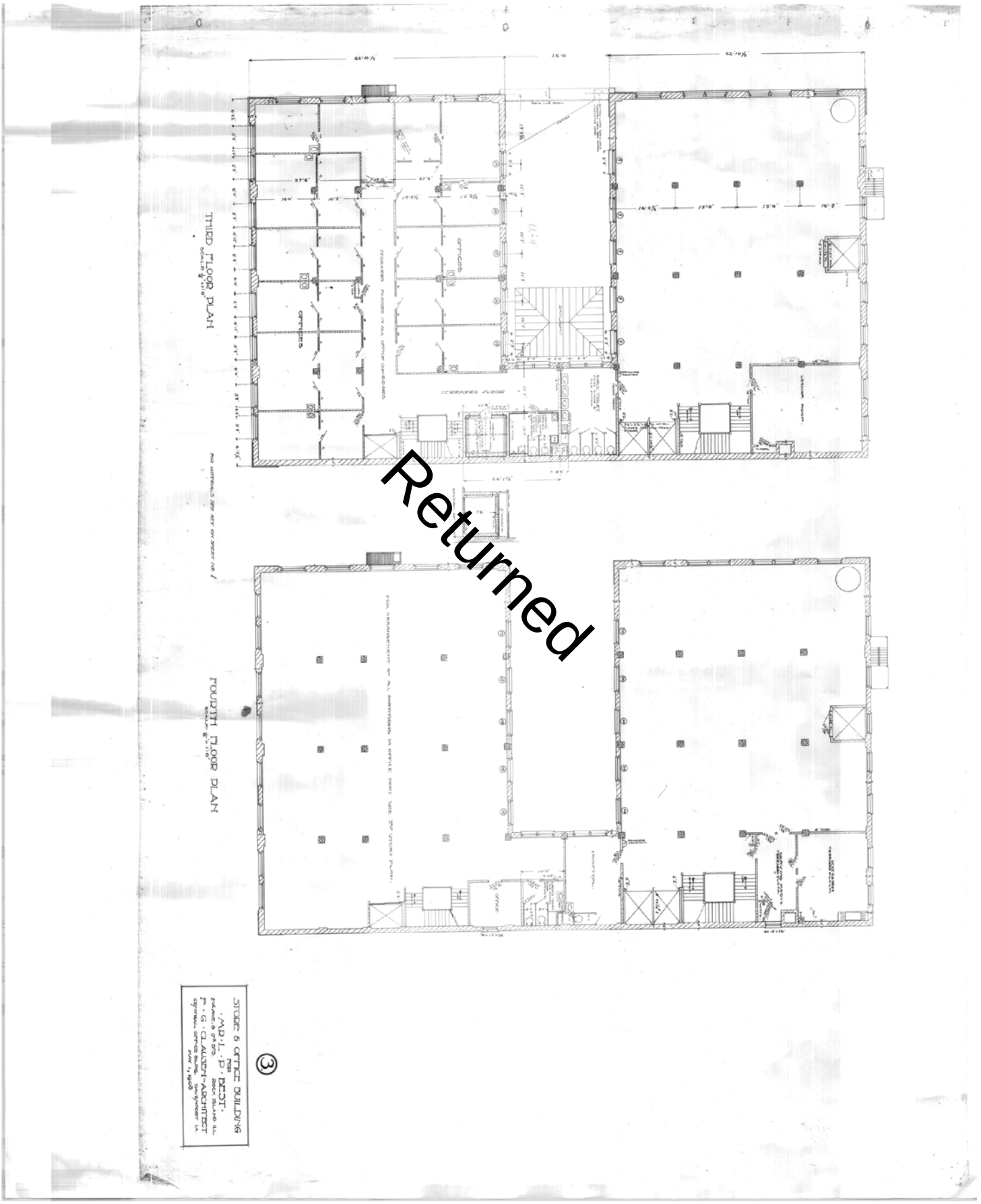


Figure 12: Fifth and sixth floor plans as designed. Source: Frederick G. Clausen Collection; Special Collections, Davenport Public Library.

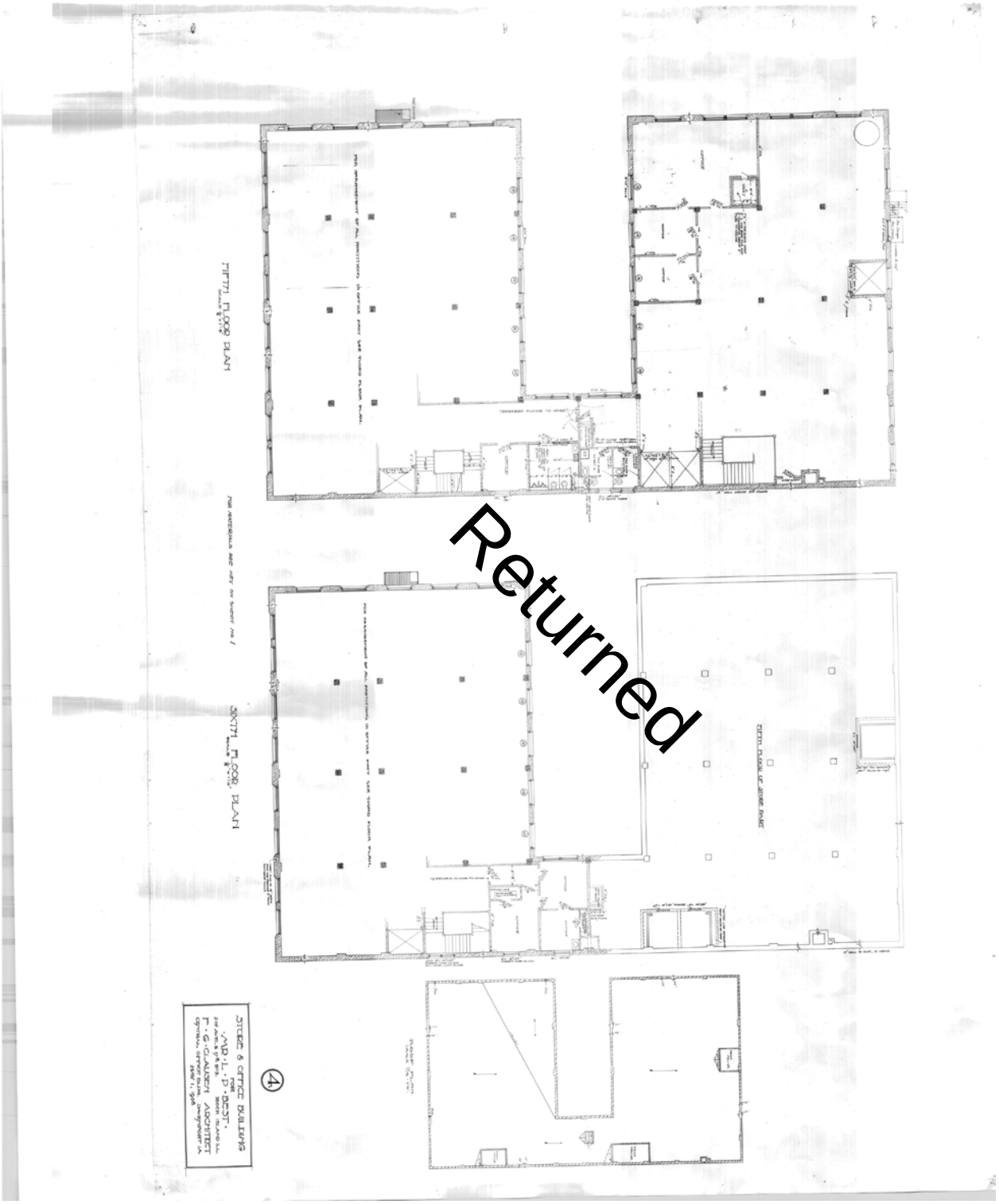


Figure 13: Interior of building showing exposed concrete structural system. Source: Michael Allen photograph taken June 20, 2016.

Figure 14: Interior of building showing exposed concrete structural system. Source: Michael Allen photograph taken June 20, 2016.

Figure 15: Historic postcard view of the Best Building. Source: Rock Island Preservation Society.

Figure 16: Historic photpgraph of Best Building, undated. Source: Rock Island Preservation Society.

Figure 17: Safety Building, view toward southeast. Source: Michael Allen photograph taken June 24, 2017.

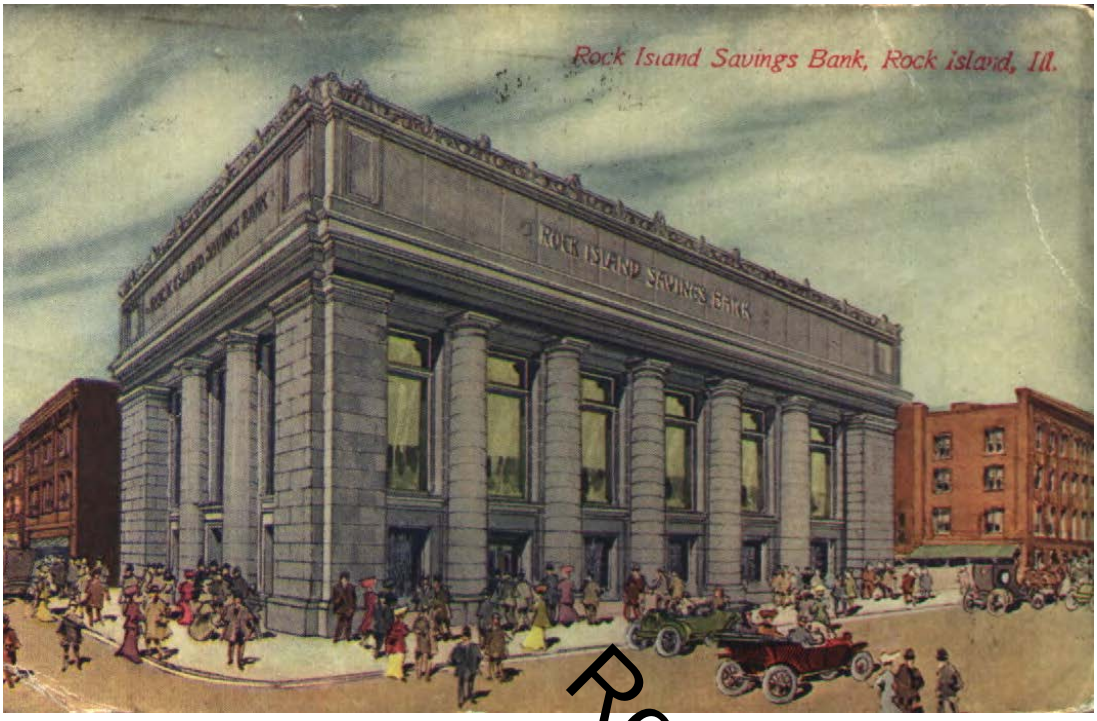
Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 18: The Rock Island Bank Building, view toward the northwest. Source: Michael Allen photograph, taken June 24, 2017.

Figure 19: The Goldman Building, view toward the northwest. Source: Michael Allen photohgraph taken June 24, 2016.

Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 20: Rock Island Savings Bank Building/Telco Building after completion and as it stands today. Sources: Rock Island Preservation Society (postcard view) and Wikipedia Commons (contemporary view).



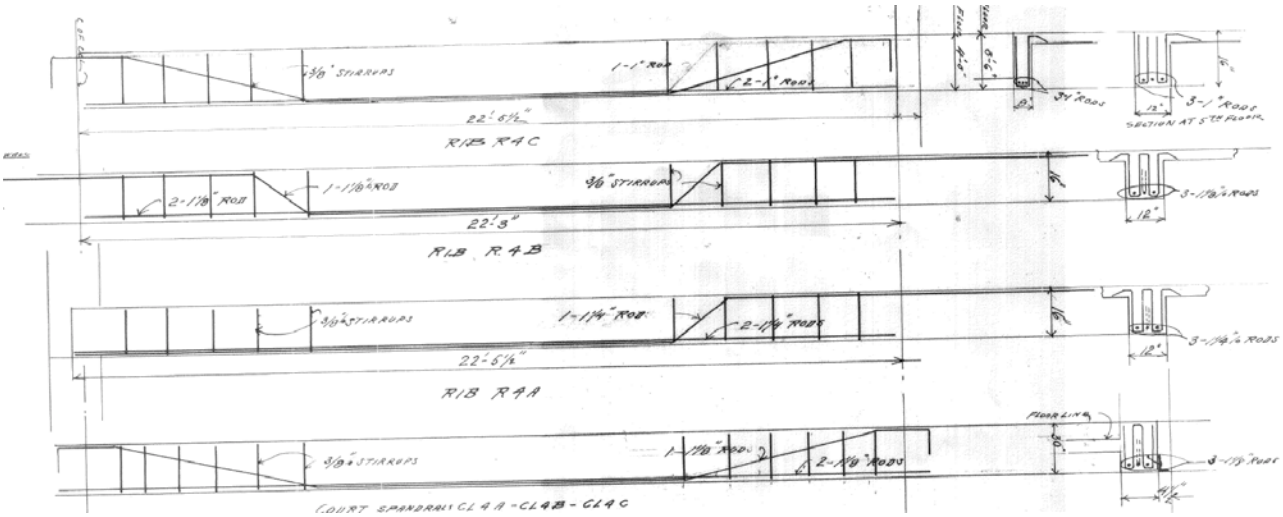
Returned

Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 21: The Fort Armstrong Hotel as it stands today, view toward southeast. Source: Brandon Bartoszek photograph on Flickr, taken July 8, 2016.

Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Figure 22: A cross-section of girders from Clausen & Clausen's drawings for the Best Building. Sources: *Structures* (online magazine, article in blibiography) and the Special Collections Davenport Public Library (1908).



Property name: Best Building
Illinois, County: Rock Island

Google Earth Map

Best Building
Rock Island (Rock Island), Illinois

Latitude: 41.511244°
Longitude: -90.575744°

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places

Comments
Evaluation/Return Sheet

Property Name: Best Building
Property Location: Rock Island, Illinois
Reference Number: 100002328
Date of Return: April 20, 2018

Reason for Return
This nomination is being returned because the conditions stated in the Part 1 approval were not followed. The Preliminary Determination of Eligibility (PDIL) stated that the property did not appear to be eligible under Criterion C and that Criterion A might be applicable. Criterion A was not addressed in the submitted documentation; Criterion C, Architecture, remained and is still considered a weak argument for significance. A convincing statement of significance is still needed.

Please call me at 202-354-2252 or send an email to barbara_wyatt@nps.gov if you have any questions.

Barbara Wyatt 4-20-18
Barbara Wyatt
National Register of Historic Places

ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL
RESOURCES

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
www.dnr.illinois.gov

Bruce Rauner, Governor
Wayne A. Rosenthal, Director

June 7, 2018

Ms. Barbara Wyatt
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Wyatt:

Enclosed is the disk that contains the true and correct copy of the National Register nomination recommended for nomination by the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council and signed by the Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer:

- **Requested corrections for the Best Building, Rock Island County, Reference # 1000002328**

Please contact me at 217/785-4324 if you need any additional information. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Andrew Heckenkamp, Coordinator
Survey and National Register program
Illinois State Historic Preservation Office
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

enclosures