## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms* Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

histori	ic	Majestic Bui	lding						
and/or	r common	Indiana Fa	arm Bur	eau Co-o	p Building				
2.	Loca	ation							
street	& number	47 South I	Pennsyl	vania St	reet			not for p	ublication
city, to	own	Indianapo	lis	v	icinity of	congression	al district	Sixth	
state		Indiana	code	018	county	Marion		co	de 097
3.	Clas	sificatio	n						
X b si si	istrict uilding(s) tructure	Ownership public private both Public Acquisit in process being consid		Accessib	cupied in progress ble	Present U agricul comme educat enterta govern industr militar	iture ercial ional ninment iment rial	religi scier	ite residence ious htific sportation
4.	Own	er of Pro	per	ty					
name	F.	C. Tucker Com	banv. I	nc.					
street	& number	One India			e 2500				
city, to	own	Indianapo	lis	v	icinity of		state	Indiana	46204
5.	Loca	ation of I	_ega	l Des	cripti	on	_		
courth	ouse, regi	stry of deeds, etc.	Mario	n County	, Center T	ownship Tax	Assesso	or's Offic	e
street	& number		1360	City-Cou	nty Buildi	ng	_		
city, to	own		India	napolis			state	Indiana	46204
6.	Rep	resentat	ion i	n Exi	sting	Survey	S		
title		Report for polis - Mario	n Count	у	has this pro	perty been dete	ermined el	egible?	yes <u>X</u> no
date	Septemb	er 21, 1977				federal	sta	te _X_ cour	nty <u>X</u> local
deposi	itory for su	irvey records		•		reservation g, 155 East			
city, to	wn		India	napolis			state	Indiana	46204

## 7. Description

ondition		Check one
x excellent good fair	<pre> deteriorated ruins unexposed</pre>	<u>X</u> unaltered altered

**Check one** X original site moved date .

#### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Majestic Building (Photos 1 and 2), or simply the MAJESTIC as the large letter nameplate tells us (Photo 3), is a ten-story, U-shaped Bedford, Indiana oolitic limestone and Marion, Indiana common brick office building, designed by Oscar D. Bohlen of the firm of D. H. Bohlen and Son, 95 East Washington Street, Indianapolis, Indiana, and built between 1895 and 1896 for the Indianapolis Gas Company. The building has two principle street frontages or facades. The entrance facade faces west on South Pennsylvania Street. The other faces south on East Maryland Street.

The west facade on the first floor street level has two large semicircular-arch-carved limestone entrances. The entrance to the south originally opened into the Indianapolis Gas Company offices. The north entrance on the west facade (Photo 5) led to the elevators and the ten-story open stairway. Each entrance opening has two paired engaged, smoothshafted composite order columns resting on plinth blocks which support five semicircular voussoir carved blocks. The carving of leaf, bead and reel, and egg and dart moldings is especially fine. Emerging from behind these arches are four flat pilasters terminating in unusual anti-classical carved leaf capitals. Between the pilasters are ornately carved frieze-like panels of lively, organic, intertwining leaf garlands and rosettes. The designs of the two panels are not exactly alike, however. In the center of the north entrance panel is a flaming (gas?) torch (Photo 5). The south entrance panel has a lion's The design of the leaf garlands is also different in each. Below these panels head. left and right in the triangular spandrels are the carved numbers 18 and 95 with interlacing fluttering ribbons, 1895 being the year construction of the building was begun. The semicircular arch on the south facade is identical to the north entrance arch of the west facade except that it was never used as an entrance. It was planned to be opened later if needed. The west facade originally had three large plate glass windows with seven leaded beveled glass transoms above, which opened bottom out. The four transoms to the south have the etched letter logo 🚯 . All the original plate glass has been replaced (date not determined) with aluminum-framed modern glass. On the south facade, the five original plate glass windows have been replaced (date not determined) by solid limestone panels. The first floor facades terminate in a flat metal dentil cornice.

The design of the second floor of the west facade (Photo 2), smaller in height than the first floor but also terminating in a projecting cornice molding, follows an A-B-C-B-A rhythm of fenestration. The south facade has one additional B opening to the east. and C rhythm window openings are supported by freestanding smooth shafted composite order columns. B window openings originally had a single painted vertical mullion. All the window openings on the second floor are framed by sharply carved egg and dart moldings.

Above the second floor, the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh floors form yet another vertical design unit which terminates in its own projecting cornice molding. The west facade is divided into an overall A-B-A rhythm of fenestration. Grouping A has a set of three narrow windows divided by two continuous engaged columns. Each floor level is articulated by horizontal spandrels carved with ripe fruit garland festoons and fluttering ribbon motif. The engaged columns are also carved to correspond to the spandrel decoration. The north and south A groupings of the west facade appear to be exactly alike. In fact the south A grouping is not as wide. The B rhythm window groupings of the west facade are arranged in an internal Al-Bl-Al fenestration and are slightly recessed back from the principle plane of the facade. A<sup>1</sup> grouping has two narrow vertical windows originally divided by a single engaged, smooth-shafted, composite order column resting on a simple plinth block. Each floor here is also articulated by horizontal spandrels carved with ripe fruit garland festoons and fluttering ribbon motif. The seventh floor windows of B grouping are semicircular. The central arch (Photo 3) has a scroll and leaf rosette keystone. Note that these three arches are visually supported by thin four-story pilasters and engaged Corinthian columns, the capitals of which have open vases of fruit emerging from the traditional acanthus leaves.

## 8. Significance

$ \begin{array}{c ccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	military music philosophy politics/government	religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
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Specific dates	1895-1896	Builder/Architect	D.A. Bo	ohlen &	Son	(Oscar D	. Bohle	<u>n)/Architec</u>
		menersk)	Williar	m Jungcl	aus	Company/	General	Contractor

Statement of Significance (in one p

The significance of the Majestic Building lies in its design and construction by one of Indianapolis's most prominent architectural firms, the originality behind its planning and site location, and its occupation by several major firms long important in the city's history. D. A. Bohlen and Son, founded in the mid-nineteenth century by a German immigrant, had designed many of the most important Indianapolis buildings, including the Majestic Building. This structure, erected in 1895-1896, combined the most modern engineering and construction techniques available and was located specifically to take advantage of the Indianapolis business district's projected growth. Commissioned by the Indianapolis Gas Company, the building has also been occupied at various times by D. A. Bohlen and Son, Citizens Gas Company, the offices of several railroads, and the Indiana Farm Bureau Co-op. Its close association with the City of Indianapolis and original architectural design justify inclusion of the Majestic Building on the National Register.

Diederich Bohlen, a recently arrived immigrant from Germany, founded the Indianapolis architectural firm of D. A. Bohlen and Son in 1853. After working briefly with Indiana architect Francis Costigan, Bohlen established himself with the city's large German community and began his own architectural practice. In 1884, his son, Oscar, joined the firm, and its name became D. A. Bohlen and Son. Together they designed numerous significant Indianapolis buildings including Tomlinson Hall (1885) and the City Market (1886), a National Register They established a wide-ranging reputation for outstanding design and quality building. workmanship by personally supervising all aspects of the construction of their designs, including the Majestic Building. They insisted on first-rate materials and even developed their own new formula for mortar still used in Bohlen buildings today.

After his father's death in 1890, Oscar continued the firm's high standards, and in 1895 he designed and personally supervised the construction of the Majestic Building through its completion in 1896. Bohlen combined the engineering knowledge of the early Chicago school steel skeleton frame construction with his own personal architectural detail to create an imposing and elegant office building. The Majestic Building was both Indianapolis's and Indiana's first structural steel skeleton frame building. It was Indianapolis's only high rise "skyscraper" office building until superseded by Merchant's National Bank at 11 South Meridian Street in 1912. The building was thoroughly innovative and "modern" in design as the owners and architect had intended. No expense was spared; no modern convenience overlooked. The total cost was over \$350,000. The building contracts, many of which survive in the archives of the present-day firm of Bohlen, Gibson, Meyer and Associates, were let to the most reputable Indianapolis firms, including the William P. Jungclaus Company, G. Ittenbach and Company, Clemens Vonnegut, the Keller Brothers, and many others. The interior walls used expensive fine Italian and African marble, mosaic tile flooring, and frescoed wall painting. All the door knobs bore the symbol of the Company's business, a gas derrick.

By August of 1896, the building was complete, and Bohlen published a commemorative book, The Majestic, for the building's grand opening. The text explained the planning behind the rational siting of this expensive and innovative office building two blocks from the center of Indianapolis's business activity. The rate of construction in Indianapolis in the last years of the nineteenth century was extraordinary. The publication pointed out that although Indianapolis was twentieth in the United States in population size, it was fifth in the rate of new construction. Because of this rapid growth, the

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Bohlen, Meyer, Gibson and Associates, Inc., 6435 Castleway Drive, Indianapolis, Indiana Plans, Drawings, Correspondence, Contracts, Specifications: Majestic Building.
"D. A. Bohlen and Son", <u>Indianapolis Star Magazine</u>, June 11, 1978.
"Farm Bureau Buys Pioneer Tall Building", <u>Indianapolis Star</u>, October 1, 1940. Continued

10. Geographical Data	UTM	NOT VERIFIED
Acreage of nominated property <u>Less than one a</u> Quadrangle name <u>Indianapolis</u> West, Indi UMT References	ana ACREAG	Quadrangle scale 1:24000
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Verbal boundary description and justification Donation Lands in the City of Indianapo Beginning at the southwest corner of sa Street 39 feet, thence north 85 feet, 2 List all states and counties for properties over	olis, more partic aid Lot 3, thence 2½ inches to a po	cularly described as follows: to wit e east on the north line of Maryland pint; See Continuation Sheet
state code	county	code
state code	county	code
11. Form Prepared By	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
name/title Samuel A. and Sheryl D. Rober	son	
organization Samuel A. Roberson and Associ	ates date	March 18, 1980
street & number 4611 North Pennsylvania Str	eet telei	phone (317) 283-1979
city or town Indianapolis,	state	e Indiana 46205
12. State Historic Pres	ervation O	fficer Certification
The evaluated significance of this property within the s	state is: _X_ local	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer f 665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in th according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the State Historic Preservation Officer signature (1434)	he National Register an Te Heritage Conservation	nd certify that it has been evaluated
itle Indiana State Historic Preservation	<u>,                                     </u>	date 9-26-80
For HCRS use only I hereby certify that this property is included in t	he National Register	date 11/28/80
Keeper of the National Register		date
Chief of Registration		

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Many of the architectural motifs of the west facade are used again on the south facade from the third to seventh floors, but the variations are subtle and curiously interesting. The five-story A window grouping is repeated so that the southwest corner (Photo 2) is exactly the same (three windows, two engaged columns, carved spandrels, etc.). Farther to the east, however, the facade is divided into five vertical bays or tiers of windows which are also slightly recessed back from the principle plane of the building, and then the building stops. The south facade is not symmetrical. The A grouping at the corner is not repeated! There are other obvious differences. The seventh floor semicircular windows from the west facade are rearranged using two scrollkeystone larger arches flanking one smaller plain arch. The two semicircular windows are flanked in bays 1 and 5 by flat-headed openings. The window openings below in bays 1 and 5 on the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth floors are also square, but use voussoir block lintels. Bohlen's asymmetric design for the south facade then is unusual, if not puzzling.

Back to the west entrance facade. The eight and ninth floors repeat the architect's three part A-B-A rhythm idea. The north and south A window groupings have three openings each divided by smooth-shafted, composite order, engaged columns. The eighth floor has flat window lintels -- the ninth floor has an arcade-like grouping of three semicircular openings with scrolled hood moldings. The eighth floor was visually separated from the ninth by three cornice-like moldings although only one survives. The ninth floor was visually separated from the tenth by a continuous guilloche molding, a classical motif but not often seen (Photo 3 and 10). Old photographs (Photo 1) show two corbeled balconies on the west facade at the ninth floor level (removal date not determined). Each balcony had limestone posts and superb wrought iron railings (Photo 10) similiar to the surviving iron work used on the internal open stairway. The four central B grouping of windows are separated by three smooth-shafted, engaged, composite order columns and by two fluted composite order pilasters. The columns and the pilasters together support the MAJESTIC banner (Photo 3) which has yet more festive fruit festoons and fluttering ribbons. Note the youthful cherublike torsos emerging from the acanthus leaves and volutes!

On the south facade (Photos 1 and 2), the three-part A grouping is repeated to match the west facade. To the east an A-A-B-A-A-B-A-A rhythm of engaged, fluted, composite order pilasters and smooth-shafted composite columns support a much longer MAJESTIC banner and festive fruit festoon frieze. The eighth and ninth floor design is not symmetrical either.

The tenth and final office floor, into which the firm of D. H. Bohlen moved upon completion of the construction in 1896, lies just below the attic. An A-B-A fenestration is used again on the west entrance facade (Photo 1 and 2). Window lintels are supported by short, freestanding, smooth shafted composite order columns and plain piers. Just above the MAJESTIC banner is yet another set of paired columns seen only on the first floor semicircular arch entrances! These unusual architectural features of Bohlen's design may have gone largely unnoticed by the casual passerby, but the overall impression must have been "majestic" as it still is. Note the subtle window grouping on the tenth floor of the south facade.

A more strictly, yet imaginative, classical three-part entablature of architrave, frieze, and cornice at the attic level completes the aesthetic conception of the building. Here the entablature begins with a smooth three-part architrave and large bead and reel molding followed by an operable roundel window frieze with fruit festoons and fluttering ribbons and originally (now covered over by copper sheeting of undetermined date) finished in an especially delicate cornice of fine dentils and boldly projecting modillions and corona and cyma moldings. Compare the visual differences between Photo 1 and Photo 2!

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Note also in Photo 1 that the whole entablature was once also slightly recessed back from the principle facade plane to correspond to the west and south central facade set backs.

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Finally, above the cornice the roof was capped with a strong and rigid classical balustrade which, according to the MAJESTIC publication, afforded the tenants and visitors of Indianapolis a fine perspective view, but hidden in Bass Photograph #7265 (Photo 1). The classical balustrade (Photo 2) is still extant.

The north facade, once obscured by the Scottish Rite Temple and presently obscured (1980) by the Jefferson National Life Insurance Company building, was constructed of Marion, Indiana smooth common red brick with no windows. Limestone coping at the roof line is still extant.

The east facade, also constructed of common red brick, had five bays of windows, now "bricked" in. The east facade is broken off-center by the recessed five bay deep light shaft or court. The walls of the light court are white-enameled St. Louis brick designed to reflect more light into the court offices. The first floor light court roof has a hipped roof box skylight still in place but painted over now.

Stylistically, the exterior of the Majestic Building reflects Bohlen's continued use of mixed eclectic forms, here strongly classical, yet more inventive and imaginative than the strictly correct, more grandiose Beaux-Arts architecture of McKim, Mead, and White, for example. Architecturally, the Majestic Building is certainly Bohlen's finest commercial office building. The firm of D. H. Bohlen and Son occupied four northwest rooms on the tenth floor until 1943 when they moved to 930 State Life Building. The firm survives in altered form today as Bohlen, Meyer, Gibson, and Associates, 6435 Castleway West Drive, Indianapolis.

Unlike its well preserved exterior, the Majestic's original interior has been greatly altered at various later dates, although some of the 1896 construction and materials may lie behind later plywood paneling (date not determined), above suspended ceilings (date not determined), and under carpeting (date not determined). The ten-story marble and iron newel post open well stairway at the east end of the elevator entrance hall is the best unaltered original space (Photos 13 and 14). According to the Majestic publication of 1896, the walls of the main entrance (now plywood paneled), corridors (altered with later partitions) and the stairways were all finished with English-veined Italian marble as can still be seen throughout the open well stairway. Other interior details include quarter-sawn oak, carved and paneled toilet room doors and frames with their original double\_chipped plate glass in place. Of the four original fire and burglar proof vaults, three to the first floor and one in the basement. The entrance door to the basement vault has iron trim of fluted pilasters and a broken segmental scroll with urn. A few of the specially designed Indianapolis Gas Company door knobs showing a tall gas derrick, burning geyser, and small shed outbuildings remain on their quarter-sawn oak doors. Other major original interior features (many of which may be recoverable), paraphrased from the Majestic publication of 1896, included the floor of the main entrance and rooms on the first floor, and the hallways above surfaced with mosaic tile work laid from Bohlen's designs. The walls and ceilings were frescoed in a large variety of colors and designs to avoid monotony and obtain pleasing effects. These may still survive behind the plywood paneling. Large marble slab directories were hung on the walls of the main entrance indicating owners and their office numbers and floors. And finally, no longer recoverable, some 1500 plate glass window lights ranging in size from 20 X 30 to 134 X 174 inches provided "most ample natural light" to the gross 1,108,800 cubic foot contents. In order to promote

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the "general character" of the building, the Majestic publication concluded that since there were too many examples in other American cities of successful and failure properties represented as first-class or economical in construction, every effort had been put forth to secure "First, Absolute solidity of foundation, strength of superstructure, and greatest possible immunity from damage by fire from within or without. Second, The comfort and convenience of tenants, and gratification of the public by artistic merit. With these points, as general instructions, Mr. Oscar D. Bohlen, architect, was commissioned to plan the building and supervise the detail of its construction."

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Continuation sheet

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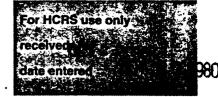
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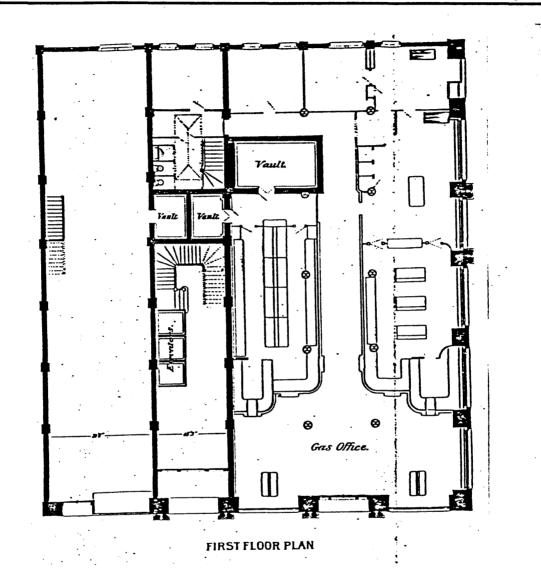


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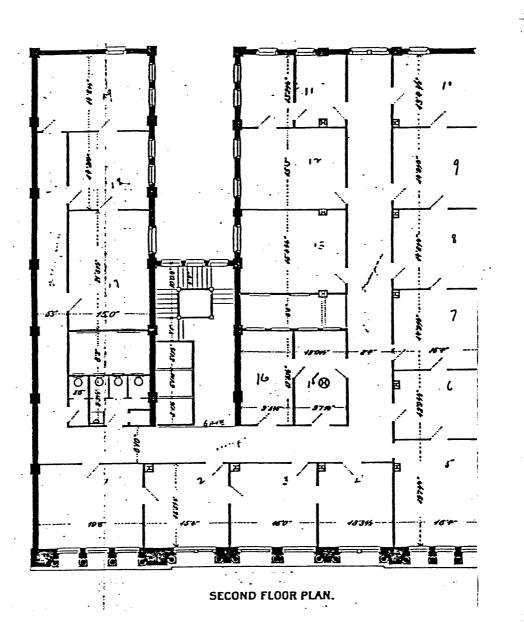


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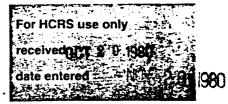
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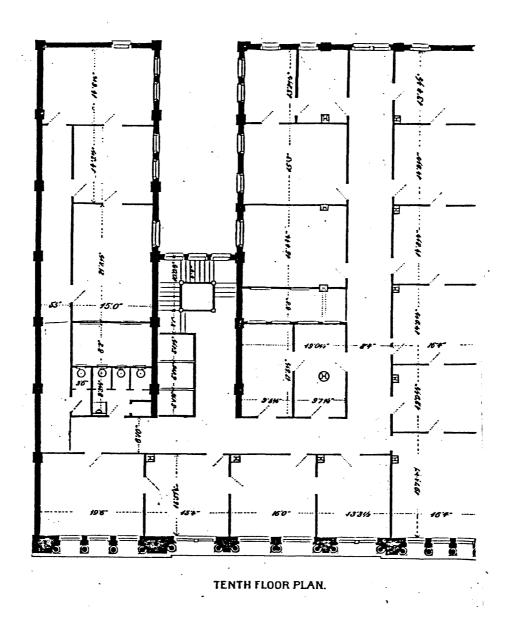


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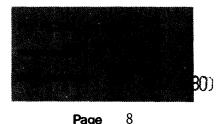
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book carefully pointed out, Indianapolis would soon need a larger business district
expanding beyond just a few blocks on Washington Street. There were definite positive
signs, the anonymous author wrote, that Indianapolis was awakening to the realization
that she was in truth a METROPOLIS! Bohlen specifically designed and situated the Majestic
Building to meet this economic awakening. Each office utilized gas and electric lights;
each had its own telephone line and steam heat. Four fire- and burglar-proof vaults
insured the preservation of the tenants' valuable documents. And finally, the Majestic
Building was intentionally constructed with as few flammable materials as possible to
provide the greatest possible immunity from fire damage both from within and from without.
The Indianapolic Configuration the foundation window light and a man of

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The Indianapolis Gas Company was the farsighted, future-minded client and owner of the Majestic Building. Originally chartered in 1851 as the Indianapolis Gaslight and Coke Company, its officers of local and state significance included, among many others, Albert Fletcher and his nephew Stoughton Fletcher, Jr. The Indianapolis Gaslight and Coke Company was purchased in 1890 by a large New York City syndicate and then merged with its then rival artifical gas company changing its name to simply the Indianapolis Gas Company, the city's largest and most important artificial gas distributor at that time.

On November 3, 1894, an older building at South Pennsylvania Street and Maryland Street shared by the Gas Company and Indiana Medical College burned. Within a month, D. A. Bohlen and Son began designing a new "majestic" office building. Plans for first a five-, and then a seven-story building were rejected. Bohlen's proposed ten-story plan finally proved satisfactory. The Gas Company decided to rebuild on the original site at Pennsylvania and Maryland, confident that Indianapolis would grow to surround the building and create the need for the "proper accommodations" of daily business. The Indianapolis Gas Company was the major occupant of the Majestic Building. It leased offices to a variety of historically significant tenants, the first of whom was the firm of D. A. Bohlen and Son who remained on the tenth floor of the building until 1943.

In 1913 the financially troubled Indianapolis Gas Company merged with Citizens Gas. The Indianapolis <u>Sun</u> newspaper waged a fierce battle against the merger. The paper charged monetary irregularities concerning a ninety-nine year lease of the Indianapolis Gas Company's properties, the most valuable of which was the Majestic Building. The <u>Sun</u> charged that the lease called for outrageously high yearly payments to the Indianapolis Gas Company's stockholders. The Indiana Public Service Commission passed the merger and Citizens Gas Company moved their offices to the Majestic Building.

While Citizens Gas Company occupied the first two floors and the tenth as well, a variety of important businesses and professionals occupied the remaining office spaces. In 1914, the New York Central Railroad Lines had their offices in the Majestic Building, most likely because of the proximity of the railyards and Union Station. During the next decade several big railroads maintained offices in the Majestic. The Big Four Railroad, for example, occupied the greater part of the building throughout the 1920s and in 1928 even considered purchasing the building.

Citizens Gas Company became a municipal utility in 1939 and the issue of the ninetynine year lease came to light again. This time it was ruled that the payments due stockholders of the old Indianapolis Gas Company were not the responsibility of the City of Indianapolis, and the lease was voided. The Majestic Building was sold shortly thereafter to the Indiana Farm Bureau Co-op. Citizens Gas Company continued to occupy the first, second, and third floors, but the Farm Bureau took over the rest of the offices. By 1958, the Farm Bureau had grown to such proportions that Citizens Gas Company's offices were removed, and the entire building was used by the Bureau, as well as the Farm Bureau Insurance Company, Indiana Grain Cooperative, and Rural Electric Cooperative, until 1978 when their offices were moved into a larger building on East Market Street. The Majestic Building has been well-maintained, but unfortunately since 1978 unoccupied.

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"Gas Company Lease Not Binding", Indianapolis Star, September 19, 1939.

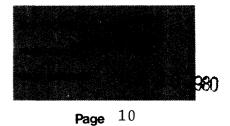
- Hyman, Max R. (ed.). <u>Hyman's Handbook of Indianapolis</u>. Indianapolis: M. R. Hyman Company, 1897.
- Hyman, Max R. (ed.). <u>Hyman's Handbook of Indianapolis</u>. Indianapolis: M. R. Hyman Company, 1909.
- Indiana Farm Bureau Employee's Newsletter. March 1, 1971 Interviews: Mary Burns, Indiana Farm Bureau Co-op. Kurt Mahrdt, F. C. Tucker Company, Inc. Francis Trotter, Bohlen, Meyer, Gibson, and Associates
- Majestic. Indianapolis: Indianapolis Gas Company, 1896.
- Morrison, Hugh. Louis Sullivan. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1935.
- Polk and Company, R. L. <u>Indianapolis City Directory</u>. Indianapolis: R. L. Polk and Company, 1896, 1898, 1900, 1910, 1913, 1914, 1920, 1928, 1941.

Scrapbook. Indianapolis: Indianapolis Gas Company, 1913.

"Suit Over 7-inch Land Strip Filed", Indianapolis Star, August 2, 1929.

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thence west 39 feet to the west line of said Lot 3, thence south on said west line 85 feet,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches to the place of beginning.

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Also lots numbered One (1), Two (2), and Three (3) in the Indianapolis Insurance Company's Subdivision of Lots 1 and 2 in Square 64 of the Donation Lands of the City of Indianapolis, the plat of which is recorded in Plat Book 3, page 101, in the offices of the Recorder of Marion County, Indiana.