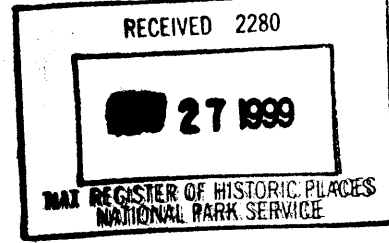


MAY 17 1999

NPS Form 10-900  
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



736

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, work processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Davidson Building

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 505 6<sup>th</sup> Street

N/A  not for publication

city or town Sioux City

N/A  vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Woodbury code 193 zip code 51101

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the national Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Tabricia Ouler King* DSHP 5-18-99  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

*[Signature]*  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action  
*Edson H. Beall* 6-25-99

Davidson Building  
Name of Property

Woodbury, IA  
County and State

**5. Classification**

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

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

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

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade/Business

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade/Business

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> and EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/  
Commercial Style

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick  
walls Brick  
roof asphalt  
other

**Narrative Description**

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

Davidson Building  
Name of Property

Woodbury, IA  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark an "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.
- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

**Architecture**

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

**Period of Significance**

1913

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

**Significant Dates**

1913

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

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

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

**Architect/Builder**

Steele, William LaBarthe

Lytle Construction Company

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

Davidson Building  
Name of Property

Woodbury, IA  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreege of Property less than one

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 Zone 14 713300 4708000 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
    Easting Northing  
2 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

Glenda Castleberry  
name/title \_\_\_\_\_  
organization SiouxLandmark date October 22, 1998  
street & number 2311 Nebraska Street telephone 712-258-4239  
city or town Sioux City state IA zip code 51104

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name I. L.D. Corporation  
street & number 505 6th Street telephone 712-2258-7558  
city or town Sioux City state IA zip code 51101

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S. C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

### 7. Narrative Description

The Davidson Building is a beautiful six-story, Chicago Style/Commercial Style office building designed with Sullivanesque ornamentation. It anchors the intersection of 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Pierce Street in the center of downtown Sioux City, Iowa. Located on the northeast corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Pierce Street, it extends 150 feet on Pierce Street and 150 feet on Sixth Street and is constructed in an "L" shape on a quarter of a city block. The building is supported by reinforced concrete columns and the outside walls facing 6<sup>th</sup> and Pierce Streets are of tan Roman style brick. On the back side of the building facing the alley, the bricks are standard size in a matching tan color.

Most unique to the building, and typically Sullivanesque, are the ornate vertical bands of cream glazed terra cotta. These vertical bands group sets of two windows from the second floor up to the sixth floor. A vertical band of Roman style brick separates the terra cotta bands. Additional terra cotta panels are richly ornamented with lineal geometric forms with stylized foliage and a solid gold initial "D" (for "Davidson") is embedded into the terra cotta under all the windows on the 6<sup>th</sup> and Pierce Streets sides. Above all the gold initial D's and intertwined in the foliage pattern are a terra cotta lion heads. Lion heads are also under the cornice in rectangular terra cotta inserts. It is unclear as to whether these lion heads represent clever symbolism or curious coincidence since the owners were religious Jewish leaders (with the last name of Davidson) and would be very familiar with the old testament story of David as the lion of Judah.

Original to the building is gold lettering spelling out "Davidson Building" which appears on the south side of the building immediately above the front entrance doors. There is also gold lettering spelling out the street names on the southwest corner of the building below the first floor windows. Also original to the building is an outside lighting system for highlighting the building at night. A Sioux City Tribune newspaper article dated two years after the building's opening states that the lights "throw a sheet of bright light down over the building, which illuminates the street to almost the brightness of daylight." Tungsten lamps are placed under the highly ornamented cornice. One is placed in each panel of terra cotta although very few of these lamps are now in working order.

This multi-story office building is highly regimented into specific zones---ground story, intermediate floors and the ornate flat roof crown. Currently, the ground floor houses mixed retail shops and offices and the upper floors have professional and commercial offices. Two original elevators still service the building and are operated by employees of the building. The elevator cages were remodeled at the same time the lobby was updated in the late 1980's. This property is one of dozens of buildings in Sioux City designed by the prominent Prairie-school architect William L. Steele designer of the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7,8 Page 2

Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

National Landmark, Woodbury County Courthouse, built 1918. Mr. Steele studied under Louis Sullivan from 1897 to 1900 and brought his knowledge of Mr. Sullivan's work to this building. The Lytle Construction Company was the builder.

### Alterations

Approximately 95% of the buildings windows have been replaced with energy efficient metal windows however, the original windows were described in the grand opening booklet as having "metal sash and window frames" on exposed sides. Because of the richly ornamented facade of this structure, the change in the widows does not negatively impair the overall beauty of this uniquely Sullivanesque design. Original windows remain on the north and east alley ends of the building and have three over three panes except the first floor does have an extra, smaller line of panes.

The first floor, street level section of the building which faces 6<sup>th</sup> and Pierce Streets has had a layer of marble applied to the exterior walls in late 1940's early 1950's. A newspaper article dated July 3, 1953 which reports of the sale of the Building to a Chicago buyer (Julius Epstein, a millionaire philanthropist) from the then owners (Arthur Sanford and Associates) stated that the building had been maintained in a "splendid way" and "during the last seven years had an extensive modernization program." The lobby has been remodeled several times which replaced the white Italian marble. An article in the Sioux City Journal dated February 24, 1991 pg. B1 notes that a the lobby was again remodeled in 1988 with oak paneling with green trim which is how it remains today.

The two original elevators are still operated by Davidson Building employees, however, the interior cages have been modernized as well as the exterior doors. All the upper level offices have had various improvements over the years in floor coverings, wall coverings and ceiling treatments. However, the original advertisements for the building in 1913 offer the customization and "subdivisions to comply with the requirements of tenants." The original staircases have not changed since 1913 and still have the original terrazzo in the halls and cream colored tile wainscoting trimmed in mahogany.

### 8. Statement of Significance

The Davidson Building is significant under Criterion C as beautiful example of Sullivanesque manner architecture. It was designed by Sioux City's master architect, William L. Steele, owned by early prominent Sioux City leaders Ben and Dave Davidson and built by one of Sioux City's leading construction firms, the Lytle Construction Company. There is no other structure in the City of Sioux City designed exclusively in this style of architecture. Its beauty continues to be impressive even after over 85 years of commercial development in the downtown area. Constructed in 1913, it was designed by Mr. Steele before he developed so many of his now famous Prairie Style structures. The Davidson

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

Building design is very similar to Chicago works he was exposed to during his training with Louis Sullivan. It was soon after the completion of the Davidson Building that Mr. Steele began numerous Prairie Style structures and completed his most famous structures (the Woodbury County Courthouse and the Everist House) in 1918. Here at the Davidson Building you can see the maturing confidence of the architect who had established his own practice in 1907 and a mere four years later was not only able to secure one of the most exciting commissions at that time but was also able to bring a most innovative style (Sullivan-esque) to the area.

### Original Owners, Ben and Dave Davidson

This building was built by Ben and Dave Davidson in 1913 at a cost of \$450,000. Ben Davidson emigrated to Sioux City from Russia in 1881-82 when Sioux City's population was approximately 7,000. He began his business by peddling tinware in Sioux City and the surrounding area. In 1883, Dave Davidson arrived and the two brothers opened a retail store in Sioux City. A younger brother, Abe, joined them a few years later. In 1884 Ben and Dave opened "B. Davidson's Bankrupt Store" (demolished) and by the late 1880's their store was named one of the best-known in the Midwest. In 1913, the year the Davidson Building opened, their store was known as the "Davidson Brothers". In 1947 Youngers Department Store purchased the Davidsons' operation then known as "Davidsons Department Store" first calling the business Younger-Davidsons. In 1969 the business name was changed to Youngers and it retains that name to this date. That building has also been demolished.

By 1893 the Davidsons were considered among Sioux City's leading businessmen. The brothers launched other ventures in addition to the Davidson Building in the early 1900's 1) Davidson Realty Company 2) Davidson Building Company 3) Davidson Day-Light Block building 4) Davidson's Court residential area and 5) the Sunset residential development area. They also were leaders of Sioux City's Jewish community.

Ben saw the need for a fashionable office building for distinguished professionals and he hired William L. Steele to design the first such office structure in the city. An early article written two years after the building was opened describes this building as the greatest show place in the city.

"It represents an investment of over half a million dollars and an unprecedented confidence in the future of the city. The Davidson building is a distinctive type of architecture and as an office building is unsurpassed in the West. It has beauty, elegance, sanitation and safety. It has every appliance known to modern construction and a superior finish, which puts it in a class by itself. It is commonly known as the Model

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

Building for Modern Men.” – Source: Sioux City Public Library, Reference Desk,  
Clipping file, Sioux City Tribune.

It was reported that when Ben and Dave decided to invest their money in the office building, they were advised by well meaning friends that that their proposed state-of-the-art building was too far advanced for the city and that a three-story building of ordinary construction would be more profitable and less expensive. The Davidsons went forward with the original plan and had professional booklets prepared highlighting its April 1, 1913 grand opening as a “Modern Fireproof Office Building”. A photocopy of the booklet is included as a part of this nomination.

### Architect William LaBarthe Steele (1875-1949)

The Davidson Building was designed by the prominent architect William L. Steele. Born in Springfield, Illinois, Steele earned his B.A. in architecture from the University of Illinois in 1896. He first learned his trade in Chicago in the office of Louis Sullivan who is the architect who created the style known as Sullivanesque. This is where he learned the principles central to the Sullivanesque manner. The most detailed discussion of his architectural training and experience prior to Sioux City is made by Arthur Francis Allen:

He next entered the office of Louis Sullivan, of Chicago, who had gained considerable note as the architect for the Chicago Auditorium, the Chicago Stock Exchange Building, the old Schiller (now the Garrick) theatre and other important buildings. W. Steele served three years [1897-1900] as draftsman in that office, and then went to the office of S. S. Beman, of Chicago, the architect who designed the Pullman building and laid out the town of Pullman. Later Mr. Steele went to Pittsburgh and spent two years [1900-01] in the office of Thomas Rodd, who was the architect for the Westinghouse people. While there the Westinghouse buildings for Manchester, England, were designed, and Mr. Steele was one of the factors in drafting the plans. Subsequently he went with Alden & Harlow, of Pittsburgh, who were drafting plans for the Carnegie Institute, in which work he took an active part. Mr. Alden, of this firm, had been a pupil of Henry H. Richardson, the first American architect to gain a national reputation. From there Mr. Steele went into the office of Sidney F. Heckert [from 1902 to 1904], also of Pittsburgh, who specialized in church architecture, and here Mr. Steele was made head draftsman. In 1904, feeling that he had made sufficient preparation, Mr. Steele came to Sioux City and for a time was associated with Wilfred W. Beach, under the firm name of Beach & Steele. <sup>1</sup>



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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

Steele arrived in Sioux City to work for Beach in 1904, and was a full partner by 1905.<sup>2</sup> In 1907 he set up an individual practice. Steele began a brief association with George B. Hilgers in 1926, and in 1928 became a partner in Kimball, Steele, and Sandham of Omaha. In 1946, he formed Steele, Sandham, and Steele with his son William La Barthe Steele, Jr. Steele was active in countless community and professional organizations, serving as president of Iowa Society of Architects and the Iowa Chapter of AM and vice president of the national AIA, and he contributed to *Architect*, *Ecclesiastical Review*, *House Beautiful*, and *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*. He died in Neillsville, Wisconsin in 1949.

### Steele's Architectural Styles:

While Steele is best known for his Prairie School designs, dozens of other structures dot Sioux City's landscape, ranging from water pumping stations and horse barns in the stockyards to monuments in local cemeteries to a host of buildings for the Catholic Church, from churches (Immaculate Conception, St. Casimir's (1915-16), and St. Michael's) to convents and rectories, to schools and a college, Trinity (all 3 buildings now razed). Major Sioux City structures in styles other than Prairie School include the National Guard Armory, the commercial-style Crane Co. Warehouse (ca. 1910; razed), the Neoclassical First National Bank (1911; razed), St. Vincent's Hospital (1916-17), the Italian Renaissance-style Woodbury County Poor Farm (1917-18), Hawkeye Truck Company factory (1918), the Italian Revival-style Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church (1925), the Tudor Revival-style North Side Branch Library (1929).

### Sullivan-esque

The Davidson Building is designed in the Sullivan-esque manner. This architecture is named after the American master architect Louis Sullivan (1856-1924). He was born in Boston in 1856 and began his architectural training at the age of sixteen in the new school of architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).<sup>11</sup> In 1874 he moved to Paris and entered the Ecole where he first began drawing floral ornamentations for buildings. Returning to America just two and a half years later, he joined Dankmar Adler in the Chicago firm of Adler and Sullivan. There in Chicago he gained his reputation for tall commercial office buildings with organic ornamentation. Ultimately Louis Sullivan influenced and taught many other architects who in turn became masters of prairie style, Chicago style and of course, Sullivan-esque such as Frank Lloyd Wright, George G. Elmslie, William G. Purcell, William Drummond and Sioux City, Iowa's William L. Steele to name a few.<sup>12</sup>

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

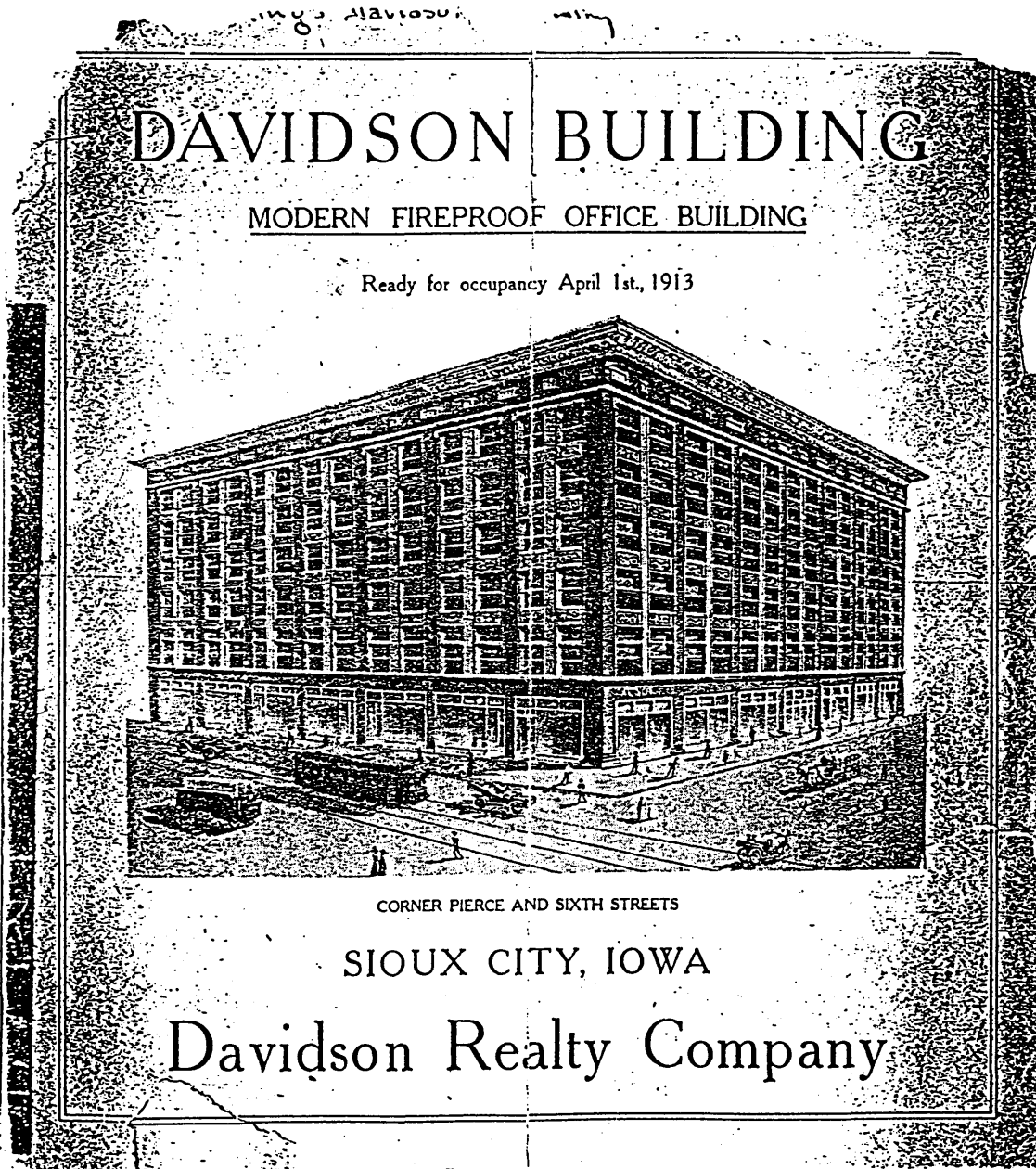
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

### Davidson Building, Grand Opening 1913

Mr. Davidson prepared a booklet for the Davidson Building's grand opening on April 1, 1913. A copy of most of the booklet is submitted as a part of this nomination. (Source: Sioux City Library, Reference Desk, Building Clippings File) The booklet also includes the original floor plans which are included here as a part of this nomination:



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

Davidson Building, Grand Opening 1913

Mr. Davidson prepared a booklet for the Davidson Building's grand opening on April 1, 1913. A copy of most of the booklet is submitted as a part of this nomination. (Source: Sioux City Library, Reference Desk, Building Clippings File) The booklet also includes the original floor plans which are included here as a part of this nomination:

DAVIDSON BUILDING

LOCATION:

This building, which is now in the course of construction, will be Sioux City's largest and finest Office Building.

It is located on the northeast corner of Pierce and Sixth Streets, in the center of Sioux City's rapidly growing retail district. The City Hall and Post Office are only a Block away.

CONSTRUCTION:

The Davidson Building is the very newest design in re-enforced concrete, being six stories in height; 150 feet on Pierce Street and 150 feet on Sixth Street.

The outside finish will be cream glazed Terra-Cotta decorated with solid gold lettering and glazed, buff colored, Roman brick. Partitions will be of plaster blocks, making the building absolutely fireproof.

The interior finish will be exceptionally beautiful. Genuine Mexican mahogany woodwork and hard maple floors will be used throughout. Metal sash and window frames will be used on exposed sides.

BUILDING:

The entire ground floor and basement will be occupied by retail stores. The second floor has been designed as an arcade for high class retail shops, which will be fitted most attractively. Large plate glass windows both outside and in corridors will be an added feature.

The fourth floor will be equipped and arranged for exclusive occupancy of Doctors and Dentists, and another floor for Lawyers.

LIGHT AND VENTILATION:

The Davidson Building has been designed for Office purposes, and embodies all modern features

calculated to make it most attractive and desirable for office use.

SERVICE:

Special attention will be given to this feature, to insure its being entirely in keeping with the character of the building and equipment.

Janitor service as near perfect as it can be made, under the supervision of a head janitor; vacuum cleaners, hot and cold water in each office, news and cigar stand, mail chute, sanitary toilet rooms, etc.

EQUIPMENT:

There will be two of the newest type high speed elevators, safe and reliable, equipped with indicating signals. A circulating system of ice cold drinking water is being installed in the corridors. Each office is provided with a lavatory of vitreous china, supplied with hot and cold water. The most efficient heating system is being installed, a two pipe vacuum system with automatic controlling device.

On each floor will be located a modern sanitary toilet room, finished in marble, with vitreous china fixtures of the highest type.

The management of the Davidson Building will be made a feature, and the wants and care of tenants will be most carefully looked after. Applications for space are now being received at the Office of Davidson Bros. store and at the Temporary office of the Building, room 4, Davidson's Auto Block. It will be to your advantage to make early application to secure the selection of a desirable location. Phone Auto 2066, and we will call and show you our very desirable space.

Respectfully submitted,

DAVIDSON REALTY COMPANY.  
Owners.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

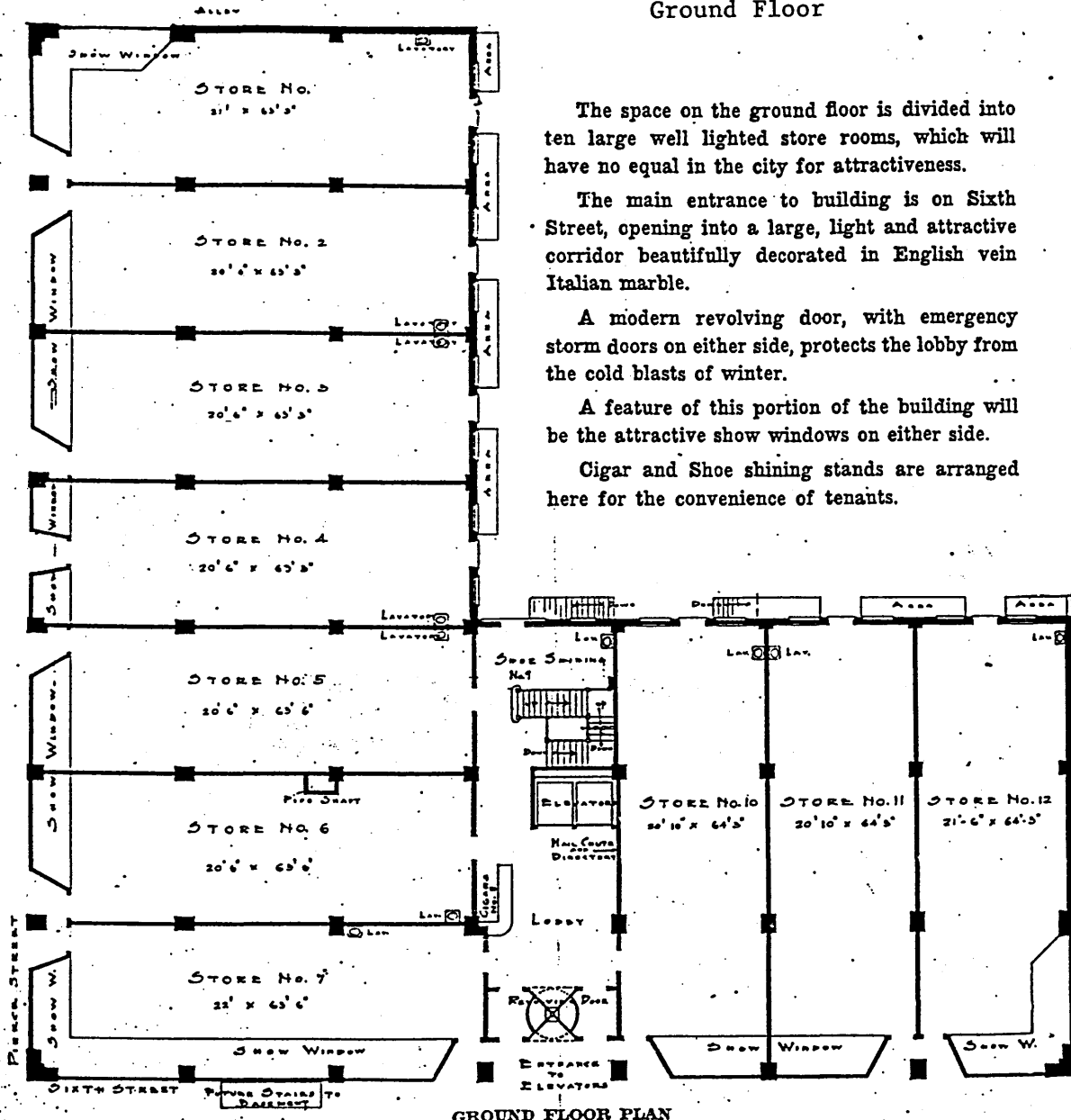
Section number 8 Page 9

Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

### Davidson Building, Grand Opening 1913

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Ground Floor



The space on the ground floor is divided into ten large well lighted store rooms, which will have no equal in the city for attractiveness.

The main entrance to building is on Sixth Street, opening into a large, light and attractive corridor beautifully decorated in English vein Italian marble.

A modern revolving door, with emergency storm doors on either side, protects the lobby from the cold blasts of winter.

A feature of this portion of the building will be the attractive show windows on either side.

Cigar and Shoe shining stands are arranged here for the convenience of tenants.

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

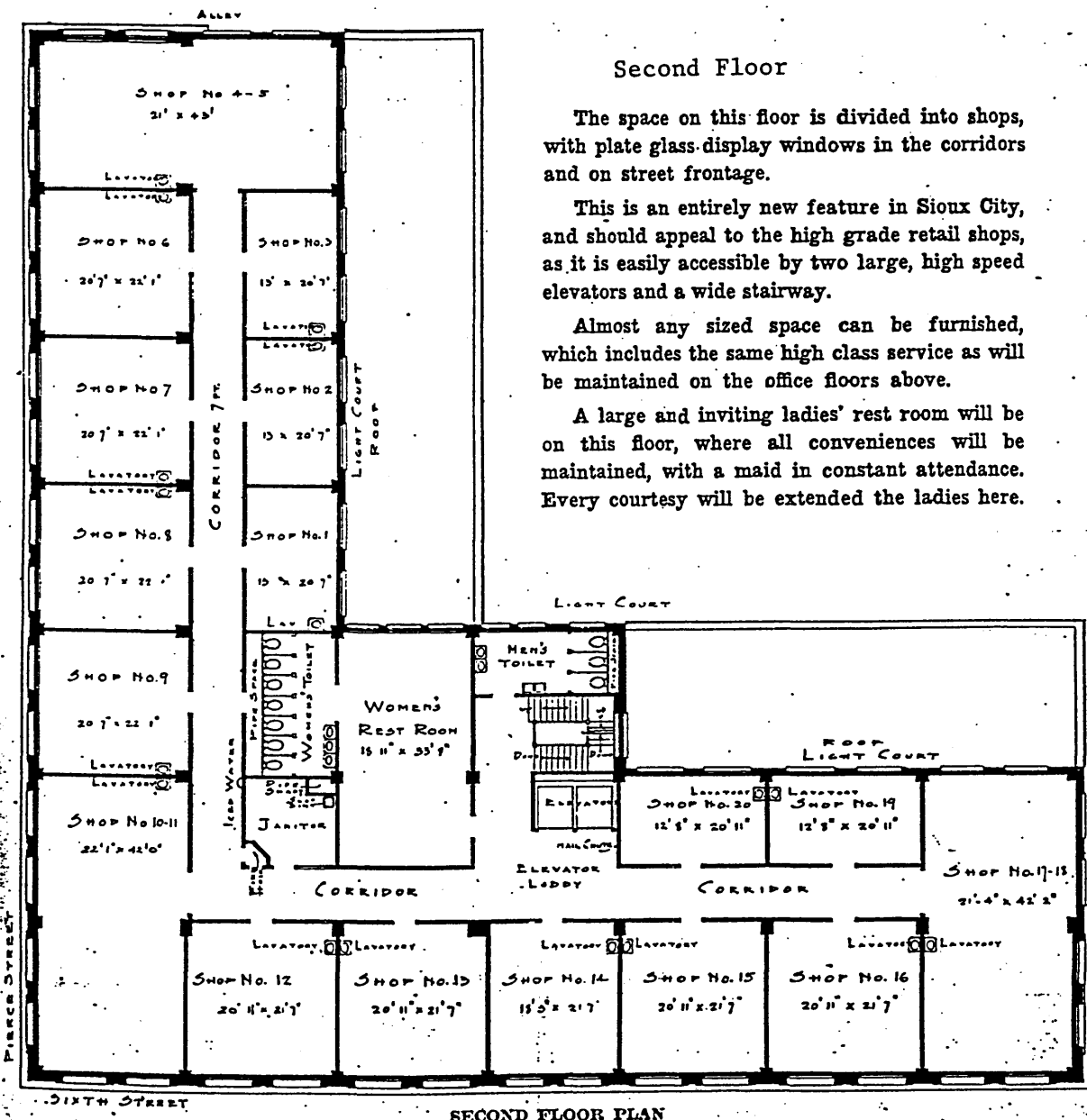
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

## Davidson Building, Grand Opening 1913

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### Second Floor

The space on this floor is divided into shops, with plate glass display windows in the corridors and on street frontage.

This is an entirely new feature in Sioux City, and should appeal to the high grade retail shops, as it is easily accessible by two large, high speed elevators and a wide stairway.

Almost any sized space can be furnished, which includes the same high class service as will be maintained on the office floors above.

A large and inviting ladies' rest room will be on this floor, where all conveniences will be maintained, with a maid in constant attendance. Every courtesy will be extended the ladies here.

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

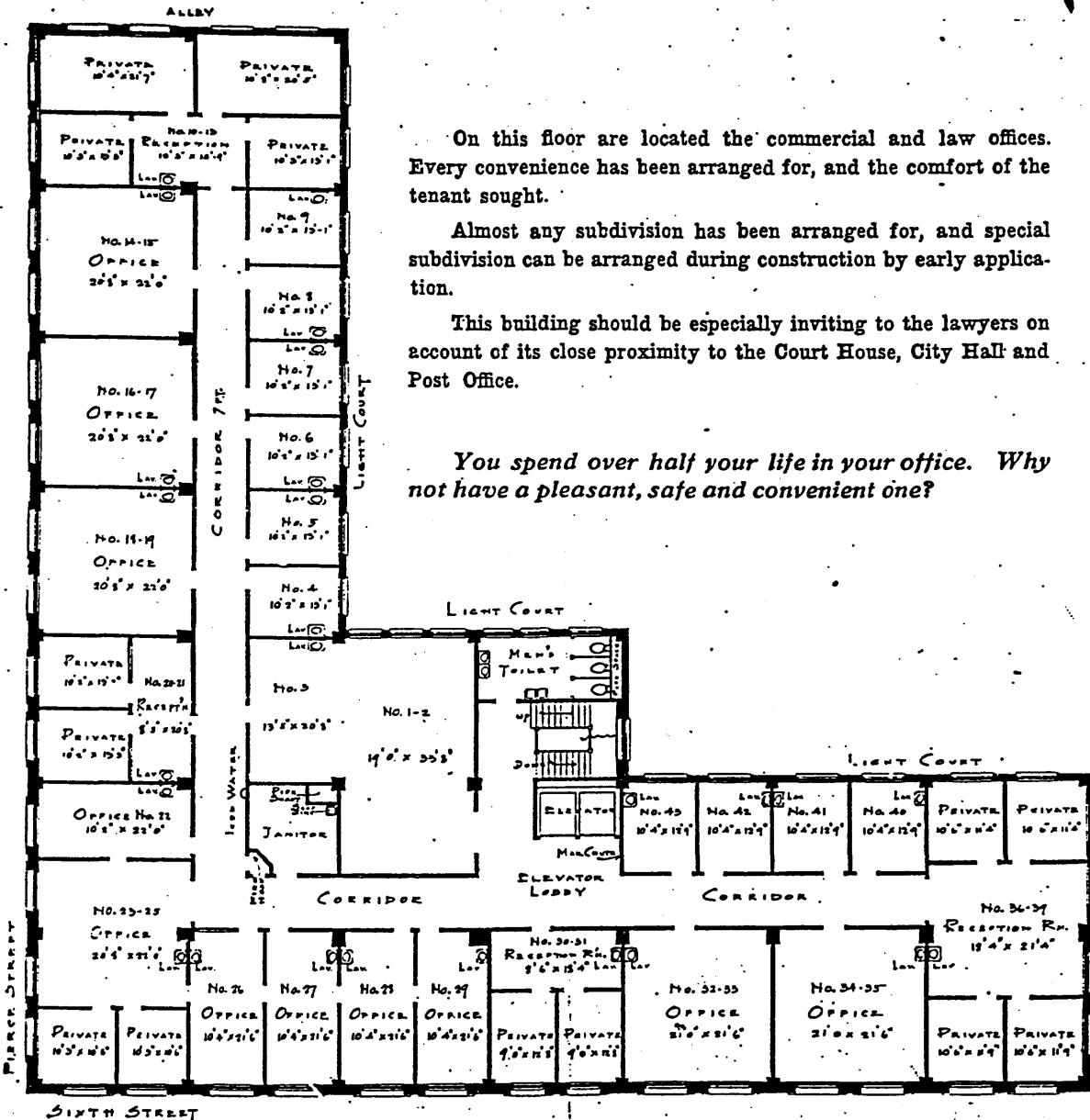
Section number 8 Page 11

Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

### Davidson Building, Grand Opening 1913

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Third Floor



On this floor are located the commercial and law offices. Every convenience has been arranged for, and the comfort of the tenant sought.

Almost any subdivision has been arranged for, and special subdivision can be arranged during construction by early application.

This building should be especially inviting to the lawyers on account of its close proximity to the Court House, City Hall and Post Office.

*You spend over half your life in your office. Why not have a pleasant, safe and convenient one?*

THIRD FLOOR PLAN

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

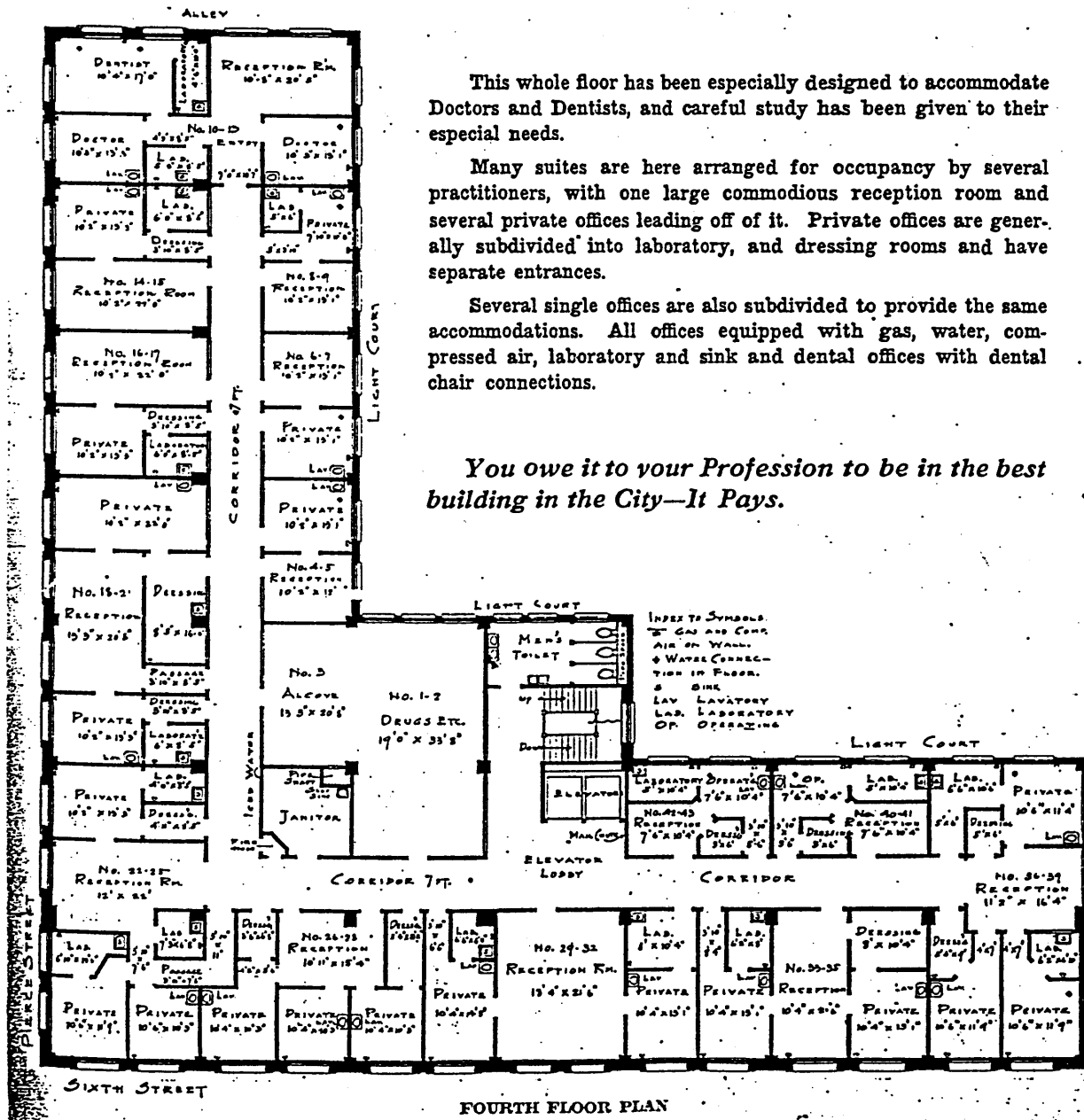
Section number 8 Page 12

Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

### Davidson Building, Grand Opening 1913

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### Fourth Floor



This whole floor has been especially designed to accommodate Doctors and Dentists, and careful study has been given to their especial needs.

Many suites are here arranged for occupancy by several practitioners, with one large commodious reception room and several private offices leading off of it. Private offices are generally subdivided into laboratory, and dressing rooms and have separate entrances.

Several single offices are also subdivided to provide the same accommodations. All offices equipped with gas, water, compressed air, laboratory and sink and dental offices with dental chair connections.

*You owe it to your Profession to be in the best building in the City—It Pays.*

FOURTH FLOOR PLAN

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

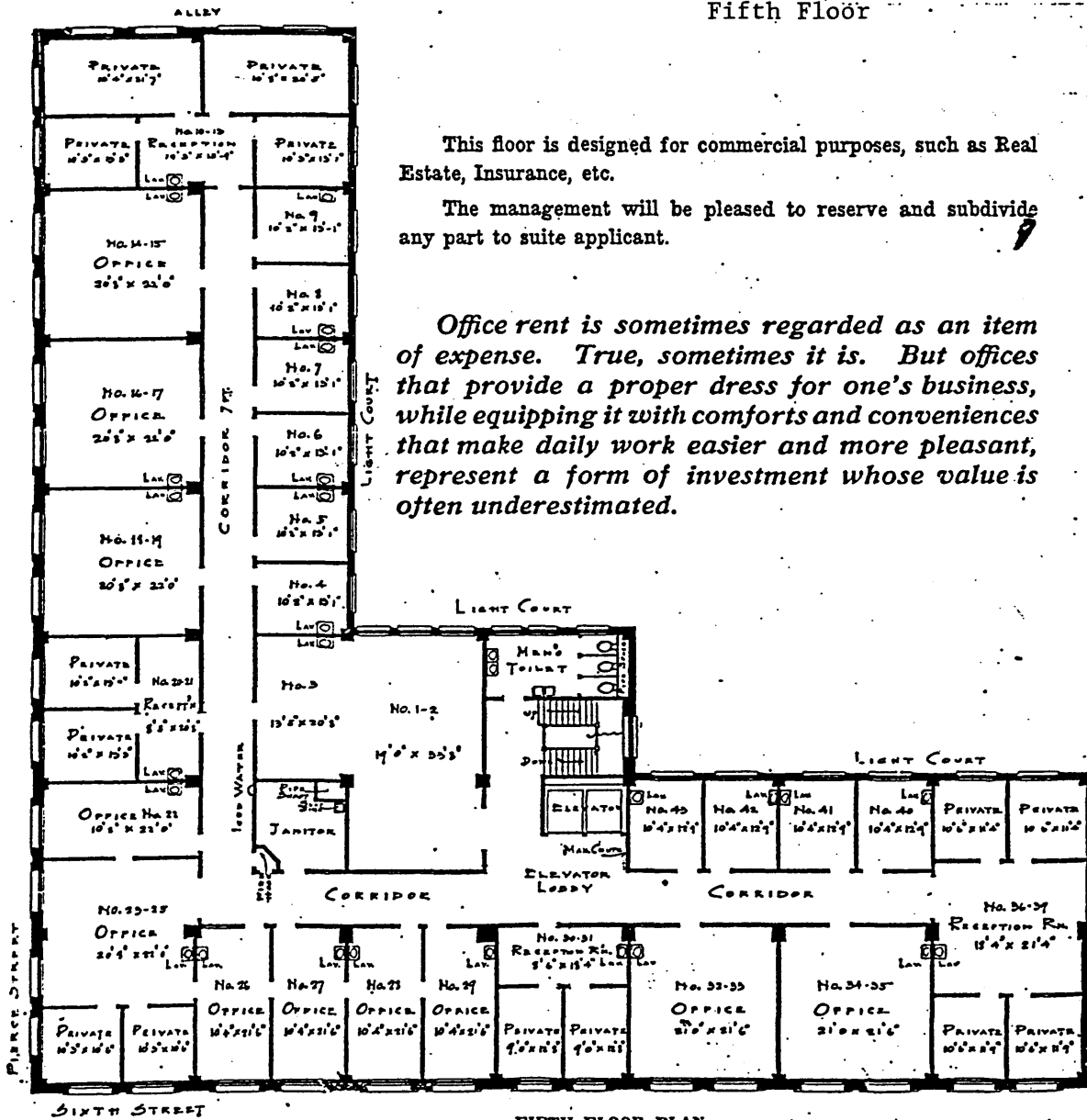
Section number 8 Page 13

Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

### Davidson Building, Grand Opening 1913

Mr. Davidson prepared a booklet for the Davidson Building's grand opening on April 1, 1913. A copy of most of the booklet is submitted as a part of this nomination. (Source: Sioux City Library, Reference Desk, Building Clippings File) The booklet also includes the original floor plans which are included here as a part of this nomination:

Fifth Floor



This floor is designed for commercial purposes, such as Real Estate, Insurance, etc.  
The management will be pleased to reserve and subdivide any part to suite applicant.

*Office rent is sometimes regarded as an item of expense. True, sometimes it is. But offices that provide a proper dress for one's business, while equipping it with comforts and conveniences that make daily work easier and more pleasant, represent a form of investment whose value is often underestimated.*

FIFTH FLOOR PLAN



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Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

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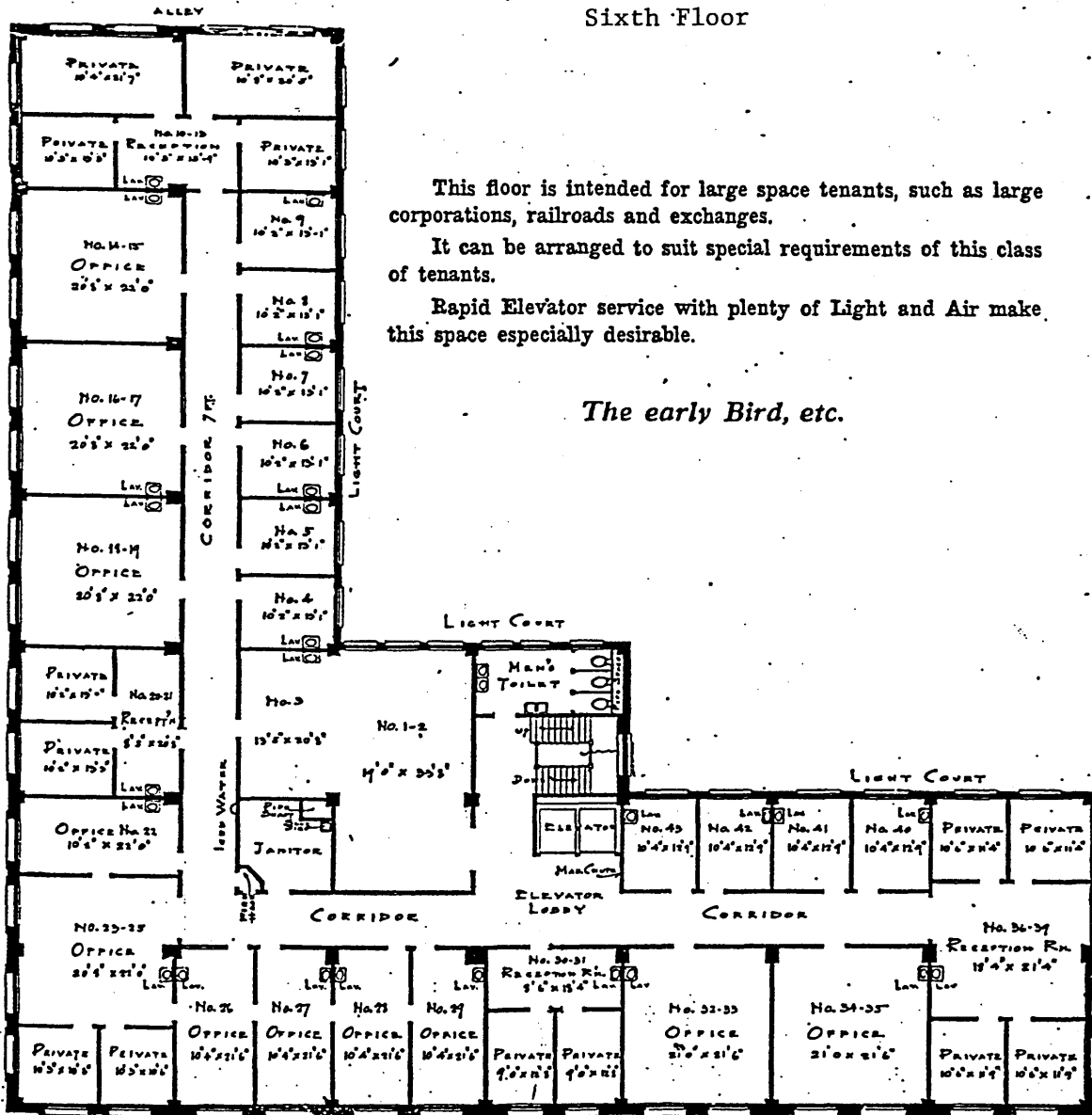
Sixth Floor

This floor is intended for large space tenants, such as large corporations, railroads and exchanges.

It can be arranged to suit special requirements of this class of tenants.

Rapid Elevator service with plenty of Light and Air make this space especially desirable.

*The early Bird, etc.*



SIXTH STREET

SIXTH FLOOR PLAN

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Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

Another interesting part of the Davidson Building's grand opening was the promotional contest held in its honor. The owners developed an essay contest asking the general public to answer the question "Why Sioux Cityans are proud of the new Davidson Building." This unique contest was developed by Ben Davidson reportedly as a way of learning just what the people thought of the building. But a review of the winning entries reveals his desire to further market his uniquely modern building. Hundreds of people wrote short articles and cash prizes were awarded. The June 1, 1913 issue of the Sioux City Journal newspaper reported the winners on page 11. Three were awarded cash: First prize, \$25.00 to Mrs. G. S. Dunlap, 1511 Park Row; Second prize, \$15.00, James J. Crowley, Security Bank Building and Third prize, \$10.00, R.R. Hamilton, Armstrong School. Following is the winning essay submitted by Mrs. Dunlap which was submitted as a poem:

For beauty, dignity and qualities rare,  
The New Davidson Building is beyond compare.  
Sioux Cityans look on this structure with pride,  
It surpasses all others; that can't be denied.

On its many good features we can't enough dwell,  
If in one hundred and fifty words, we will tell  
Of its merits. As the most important quite,  
We mention these, ventilation air, light.

The man who enjoys his evenings at home,  
Will appreciate his days in this massive dome.  
For there with light and air so free,  
his health will surely favored be.

Of all the buildings, it is the one in demand,  
For besides the sanitary features so grand,  
It has fireproof walls, a "Safety-First" measure;  
Protecting life, property, business and treasure.

This building, so complete, so "comfy," so clean,  
Is nearest perfection, of any here seen,  
The very best place for an office then,  
Is in the "Modern Building for Modern Men.

--Mrs. G. S. Dunlap, 1913

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Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

The Sunday edition of the Sioux City Journal on June 8, 1913 (two months after the opening) has a quarter page advertisement from the owners with a large photograph of the building and a large caption declaring "A Modern Building For Modern Men". It also lists 75 tenants and announces that Mr. H. H. Helmick "is to be manager of our new building and also of all real estate owned by us" and is signed "Yours sincerely, Davidson Realty Company, By Ben Davidson, President." Eleven physicians are listed as being on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor along with four dentists. Twelve "investment companies" are listed as being on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor along with fourteen attorneys. Twelve listings for insurance agents and companies are spread between the third and fifth floors. The second floor is listed as "The Arcade Shops" and had a beauty parlor, fur shop, corset shop and men's fashion shop along with "ladies' and children's rest rooms". Three stenographers are listed as being in the building and the rest of the tenants are described as "Miscellaneous". Ben Davidson and the Davidson Realty Co. show their offices at Suites 542 and 543.

### A Modern Building For Modern Men

The owners make a claim their drinking water was piped to all parts of the building via a new cooling system "apparatus" known as Addiffren-Singren machine which they claim was the first of its kind in the "territory". The plumbing "is known as the Duram system of solid vitreous fixtures and provides the latest and most improved, most sanitary construction possible. All fixtures are fastened to the piping in the wall and are not resting on the floor, making the latest and most sanitary construction possible." Their description goes on to explain that "the closets have direct pressure flush valves, instead of the old fashioned tanks." The building also advertised that it had "the most modern heating system known as the Dunham Vacuum and also automatic temperature controls making it possible to regulate the temperature to any desired warmth in any room." Air quality and the provision of the greatest amount of light repeatedly appears as a modern asset of the building. They report that "the building is wired throughout in conduit and nothing but tungsten lamps of high candle power are used. The building is also provided with a system of compressed air, which is greatly appreciated by the medical profession of which there are a great number in the building." It is reported that the patented "Kahn System" of reinforced concrete was used in the construction and was reportedly "as strictly fire-proof as any building in the country."

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Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

### Endnotes:

- 1 Arthur Francis Allen, "William LaBarthe Steele," *Northwestern Iowa: Its History and Traditions 1804-1926* (Chicago: Clarke, 1927), vol. IL pp. 1042-43.
- 2 Steele, William LaBarthe *Who Was Who in America*, vol. 2 (1950). See also *Who's Who in Iowa* (Sioux City, 1922), pg. 72.
- 3 Quoted in Mrs. Lewis Worthington Smith, "Creative Artists in Iowa," a series of articles published in the *Des Moines Sunday Register*. Undated.
- 4 *Sioux City, Iowa: An Architectural View* (Sioux City: Sioux City Art Center, 1983), pg.36.
- 5 Richard Guy Wilson and Sidney K. Robinson, *The Prairie School in Iowa* (Ames: Iowa State UP, 1977), pg24 and pg. 25.
- 6 H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School. Frank Lloyd Wright and his Midwest Contemporaries* (Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1972), pg. 298.
- 7 H. Allen Brooks, pg. 301.
- 8 Powerful Ally Joins County Effort to Have Courthouse Recognized," *Sioux City Journal* 8 December 1993, pg. A18.
- 9 Sydney LeBlanc, *The Whitney Guide to 20th Century American Architecture: 200 Key Buildings* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1993), pg. 31.
- 10 G.E. Kidder Smith, *Source Book of American Architecture: 500 Notable Buildings from the 10th Century to the Present* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), pg. 343
- 11 James F. O'Gorman, *Three American Architects*, (The University of Chicago Press, 1991) pg. 69.
- 12 Virginia & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide To American Houses*, (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1997) pg. 440.

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Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

13 John J. G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture, A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*, W. W Norton & Company, New York, pg. 65.

14 Constant R. Marks, "Charles F. Lytle," *Past and present of Sioux City and Woodbury County* (Chicago: Clarke, 1904, pg. 568 (includes a photo of Lytle).

15 *One Hundred Peeps at Sioux City: A Souvenir of the Best Town on Earth* (Sioux City: Biddison, 1911), n.p.

16 "Charles Franklin Lytle," *Iowa: its History and Its Foremost Citizens*, (Chicago: Clark, 1915), Vol. III, pg. 1015.

### 9. Bibliography

Arthur Francis Allen, "William LaBarthe Steele," *Northwestern Iowa: Its History and Traditions 1804-1926* (Chicago: Clarke, 1927), vol. IL pp. 1042-43.

John J. G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture, A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*, W. W Norton & Company, New York, pg. 65.

H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School. Frank Lloyd Wright and his Midwest Contemporaries* (Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1972), pg. 298.

*Iowa: its History and Its Foremost Citizens*, (Chicago: Clark, 1915), Vol. III, pg. 1015.

Sydney LeBlanc, *The Whitney Guide to 20th Century American Architecture: 200 Key Buildings* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1993), pg. 31.

Virginia & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide To American Houses*, (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1997) pg. 440.

James F. O'Gorman, *Three American Architects*, (The University of Chicago Press, 1991) pg. 69

*Past and present of Sioux City and Woodbury County* (Chicago: Clarke, 1904, pg. 568.

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Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

*Sioux City, Iowa: An Architectural View* (Sioux City: Sioux City Art Center, 1983), pg.36.

*Sioux City Journal* 8 December 1993, pg. A18.

*Sioux City Tribune*, n.d.

Steele, William LaBarthe *Who Was Who in America*, vol. 2 (1950).

Richard Guy Wilson and Sidney K. Robinson, *The Prairie School in Iowa* (Ames: Iowa State UP, 1977), pg24 and pg. 25.

### **10. Geographical Data**

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 6, 7 and 8, Block 3, Sioux City East Addition, Sioux City, Woodbury County, Iowa.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Davidson Building includes that portion historically associated with the property.

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Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

### Photographs

Steve Paulson was the photographer for all views and has the negatives. All photos date from August 25, 1998 and depict the Davidson Building, 505 6th Street, Sioux City, Iowa, Woodbury County. All negatives are with Steve Paulson 2420 Jackson Street, Sioux City, Iowa.

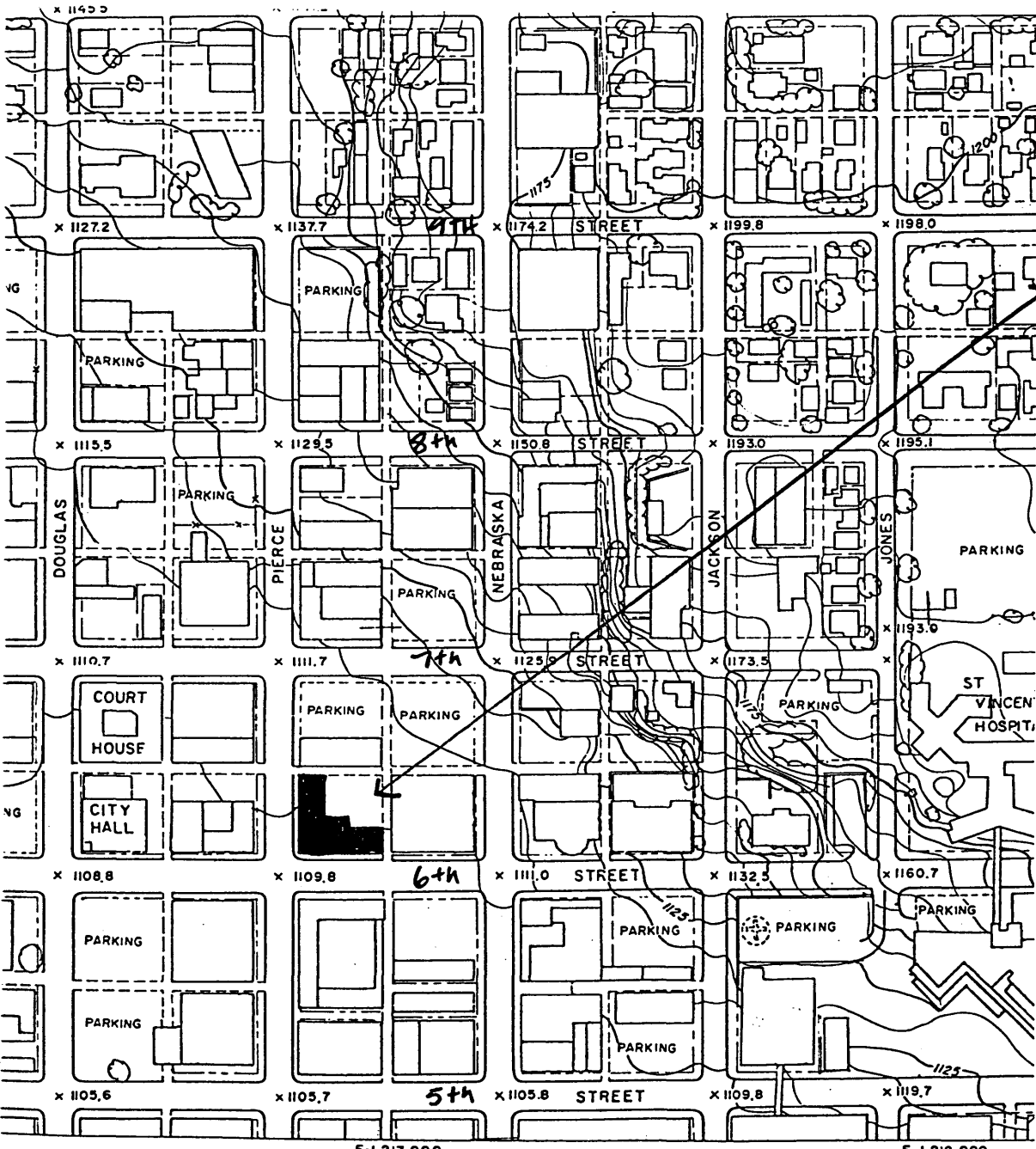
- #1 South & West Sides, camera pointing North East
- #2 Cornice --- Top Floor, South West corner--- original light sockets visible
- #3 Organic Foliage, Lions' Head and "D" for Davidson on South and West Sides
- #4 North Side, camera pointing South
- #5 Northside - NW Corner Cornice, camera pointing South
- #6 Southeast Cornice and 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors---original light sockets visible
- #7 Terra Cotta with Organic Foliage Design with "D" for Davidson with Lion's Head
- #8 Original drinking fountain
- #9 Men's Bathroom
- #10 Fire Hose Closet
- #11 Stairway
- #12 Interior Stairway
- #13 Men's Bathroom

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Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

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Davidson Building  
Woodbury County  
Sioux City,  
Iowa

Source:  
SIMPCO, 428 Ins.  
Centre, Sioux City  
Iowa  
1980

E-1,217,000

E-1,218,000



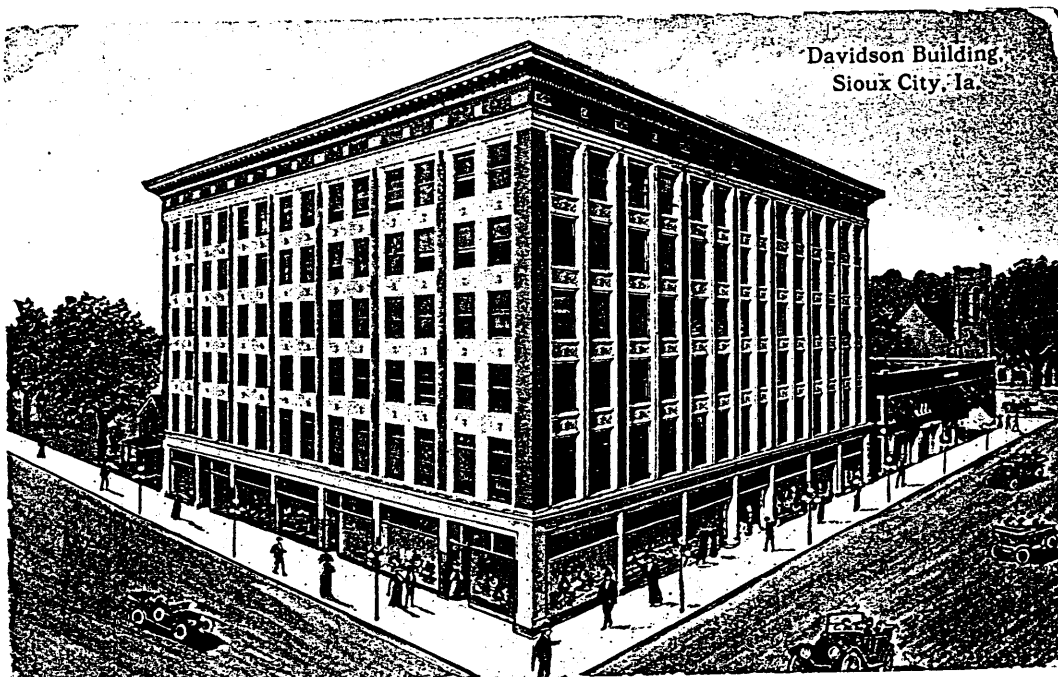
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Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

Historic Post Card --- Date: 1913



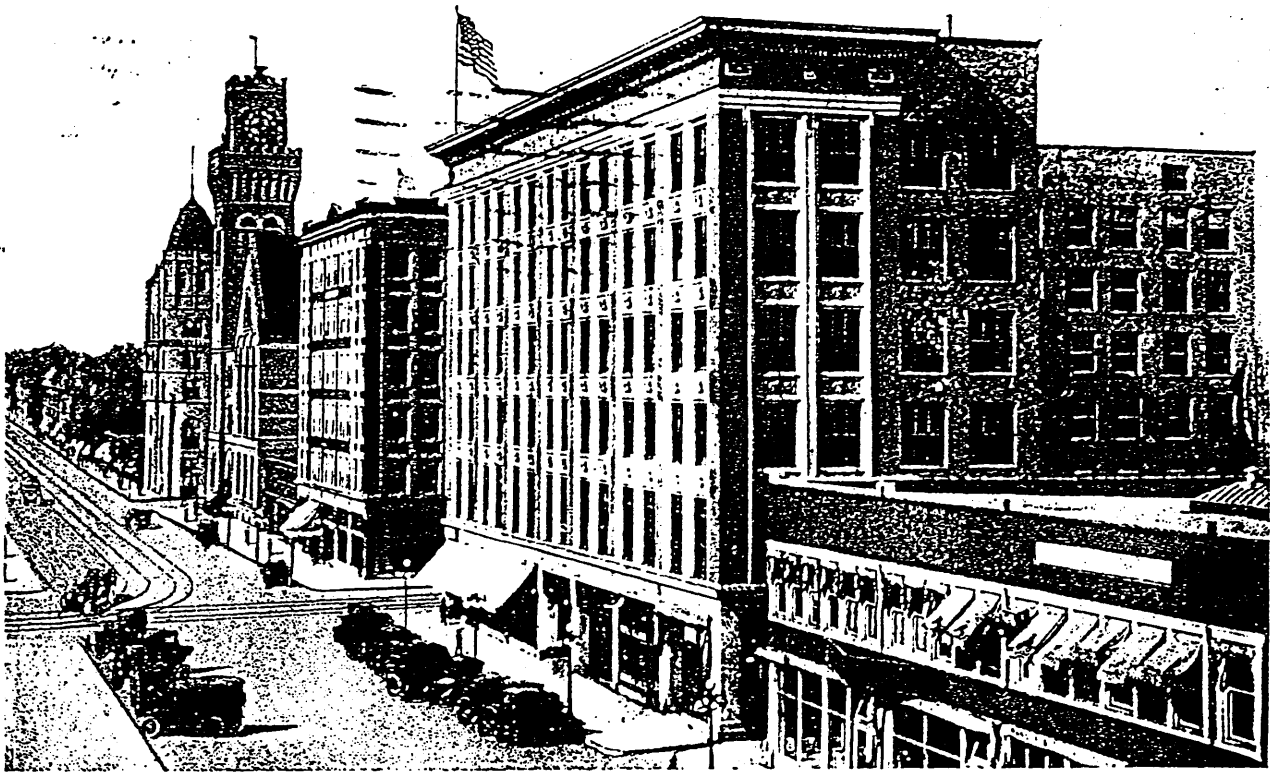
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Davidson Building  
Woodbury County, IA

Historic Post Card --- Date: 1917



DAVIDSON BUILDING, TRIMBLE BLOCK, POST OFFICE AND CITY HALL, SIXTH STREET, SIOUX CITY, IOWA.