

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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received **MAY 3 1985**  
date entered **MAY 15 1985**

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

## 1. Name

historic Warfield, Pratt and Howell Company Warehouse  
and or common 100 Court Avenue

## 2. Location

street & number 100 West Court Avenue  not for publication  
city, town Des Moines  vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_  
state Iowa code 019 county Des Moines Polk code 153

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Levy, Malone & Company  
street & number 534 42nd Street  
city, town Des Moines  vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Iowa 50312

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk's Office  
street & number Polk County Courthouse  
city, town Des Moines state Iowa 50304

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Court Avenue Historic Area Study has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date February 1983  federal  state  county  local  
depository for survey records Iowa SHPO  
city, town E. 12th & Grand Ave. Des Moines state Iowa 50319

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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

The Warfield-Pratt-Howell building is a good example of turn of the century warehouse construction. The building at least partly designed by a prominent Des Moines architectural firm, Proudfoot and Bird, exemplifies the use of load bearing brick pier and wall with interior wood column and girder construction technology. A matching addition, known to have been executed by Proudfoot and Bird, postdates the original by at least six years. The building occupies a prominent riverside location and serves as a visual anchor for the potential Court Avenue historic district area.

The Warfield-Pratt-Howell building is a six story brick warehouse building, square on plan (123' by 125'), having two public facades as a result of the addition, on the north and east sides, which consist of purple-blue or purple-brown face brick laid with a Flemish header course between every seven stretcher courses. Two non-public facades, the south and west, are composed of red brick with regular American bond coursing. The brick size is 3 3/4" x 2 5/8" x 8", being three courses to nine vertical inches. The building, located on a flood plain, has a half buried basement, with pierced foundation walls which open on the north and south into cribbing space area. A centered half flight of stairs leads to the first floor level. Structurally the building is supported by free standing or engaged brick piers which are in turn based upon spread footing pads. Seven free standing piers on the north facade, a combination of engaged piers and bearing wall on the east facade, and engaged piers on the remaining sides along with sixty-three heavy wooden columns support the building. The building is overbuilt in terms of its wall and pier dimensions, these exceed even the most stringent building codes then in force. The largest free standing piers measure 4 1/2' by 5' at the foundation level, and are stepped back floor by floor as the load to be borne diminishes, to 3 1/2' by 1 1/2' on the sixth floor. Similarly 20" square wood columns in the basement are reduced to 8" square columns at the top floor. The bearing walls on the west facade diminish from 40" at the base to 30" at the upper level.

The building is devoid of ornamental stone (even lacking the customary bondstones in the piers) and relies upon its brick color, broad semi-circular "Richardsonian" arches (composed of six rowlock courses) which link the piers on the sixth floor front and a corbelled brick frieze and cornice, and plain stone lintels, to break up the exterior brick faces. Two original roof top pent houses, with metal exteriors survive (scheduled to be removed). By 1915 a 25,000 gallon secondary water supply tank was centered on the roof, and for many years the firm's name was emblazoned on the east and west sides. This tower was two tiered, with a broader base topped with balcony railing. The building has a parapet wall on three sides with tile coping, a single pitch shed roof drains to the south rear.

The original building (106 to 110 West Court Avenue), five bays in width, had a central entrance. I beams with rosette design decorative patterns supported the door and window areas between first floor brick piers. Three light clerestories were between these piers and above the windows. Broad stone lintels and narrow stone sills defined the 1/1 window pairs on each floor level between the pier sets. Corbelled brick "brackets" at the cornice line level mark the springers and center points of each arch.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1901, 1909 **Builder/Architect** Proudfoot & Bird (addition 1909), Architects

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Warfield-Pratt-Howell Company building is a good example of turn of the century warehouse construction. The building at least partly designed by the noted Des Moines architectural firm Proudfoot and Bird exemplifies the use of load bearing brick piers, bearing walls, and interior wood column and girder building technology. A later addition, was executed to match the original building. The building occupies a prominent Des Moines riverside location and serves as a key visual landmark in Des Moines, and is an anchor for the historic Court Avenue area, a potential historic district.

Wilson R. Warfield and John W. Howell brought their wholesale grocery business to Des Moines in 1880 and moved to this site in 1884. William J. Pratt joined the firm in 1897, and the partnership was complete. The firm occupied a three story brick building on the corner of West Court Avenue and Water Street, the site of the addition to this building. The firm became one of the largest of its kind in the state. By 1909 the Des Moines office employed sixty five persons and the branch offices in Sioux City and Cedar Rapids an additional one hundred and thirty. According to The Midwestern in that year "All of their goods are under the pure food law. Their highest brand is the "Northwestern" and second the "Dandelion" brand. Their Northwestern brand of cigars is a specialty with them and their canned goods and cereals are leaders in the market. The members of this firm are well and favorably known all over the middle West. Their names stand for fair dealing, for integrity, for progression in business life. For this reason and because of efficient business methods, the company's business has spread all over Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, North and South Dakota and Minnesota, with good prospects of adding other states in the near future."

In 1901-<sup>1</sup> the six story five bay building was constructed to the west of the earlier building. The building was pictured in The Midwestern (November 1906), and both buildings appear in that same source as late as March 1908. The addition was constructed in 1909.<sup>2</sup> By 1920 the building had an 18 ton ice machine in its basement and the third floor contained a fruit room.

Later occupants of the building included Western Grocery Company after 1935, C. C. Taft Company (1938), Luthe Hardware Company (1940) and L. H. Kurtz Company (retail hardware and wholesale plumbing and heating firm). The present owners acquired the property in 1978. Historically the building was located in a developing warehousing and shipping district on the site of the original commercial center of the city. Located on a flat plain on the west bank of the Des Moines River, next to the Court Avenue bridge, the building was an early and prominent addition to the riverside skyline. In the 1880's a single railroad track on the south half of the same block as the subject building blossomed into a major marshalling yard for the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad with the construction of the Des Moines Union Freight House. A railroad service stub line was placed on the east side of this building. To the north, public buildings were constructed, the county administration building in the next block being followed by the post office building and finally the Des Moines public library on succeeding blocks. To the immediate west, an iron foundry complex was succeeded by warehousing and a garage. Today the building is on the edge of a major inner city redevelopment project, and visually anchors the potential Court Avenue historic district,

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Des Moines S.W.

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A	<u>15</u>	<u>448500</u>	<u>4603740</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 11 and 12, Block 35, Town of Fort Des Moines, now included in the City of Des Moines. Includes only subject property.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Iowa SHPO date 20 November 1984

street & number E. 12th & Grand Ave. telephone 515-281-4137

city or town Des Moines state Iowa 50319

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Alvin D. Anderson*

title Executive Director Iowa State Historical Department date 11/19/84

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date 5-15-85

*Helores Byers*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The new addition, added in 1909, added three bays on the east or river side, replacing the firm's earlier building, and the entrance was shifted two bays in that direction resulting in a left of center location. The new addition to a limited extent reflected changing building practices. The new work still relied upon load bearing walls and piers of brick and interior wood columns (of slightly reduced scale due to changed milling standards), but the foundation work clearly differed from the original. In the original building the spread footing pads were square in section measuring 5 1/2 feet, and the pads outer edges were even with the exterior wall plane. The new foundations were centered beneath their loads, and were much thinner, measuring only 2 1/2' thick, but were also broader (10' 8" square under walls, 9 1/2' under columns). Additional reinforced footings supported a second elevator and a first floor vault. Reinforcement bars measuring 3/4' and 7/8' in section were used profusely. The new addition used reinforced concrete behind stone veneer lintels to carry the load, it is not known at this time how this compared to the original construction. On the east side an additional cribbed basement area was created beneath a long railroad siding loading dock. A second public facade was created on the east side. Broad sidewalls on this facade flanked seven piers with recessed windows (2/2 sash) beneath segmental brick arches and curtain walls. These arches matched those on the main facade, but were reduced in scale. Additional front bays however exactly matched the original ones. Proudfoot and Bird planned the addition, but it is not presently known whether they did the original building. At any rate the new addition matched brick, stone and style and was sympathetic to the original work. In the completed building, offices filled the front half of the entire first floor.

The south side facade consists of six broad engaged piers which are separated by four loading dock drive up doors (with broad segmental rowlock arches) and alternating pairs of tall thin windows (1/1 sash). Above the first floor, pairs of industrial fixed sash windows (six light, with segmental brick arches) separate the piers, being vertically reduced on the uppermost floor. Similarly the west facade relies upon six full length and three partial piers for support. Fifty windows identical to those on the south side are evenly spaced, ten to a floor. Exterior fire escapes are located on the central bays of each sidewall, and two bays right of center on the south wall.

Inside the building retains an auger-shaped sliding chute which descends from the top to the first floor, and which is located in the southwest quadrant of the plan. Two elevators are extant, one of which is functional.

The building is well preserved, the roof top water tower being the only significant loss (sometime after 1940) except for the loss of historic signage, all of which was painted on the exterior at various points. Surface discolorations are the result of paint which covers some of these signs. Still extant, on the west parapet wall is found "WARFIELD, PRATT, HOWELL CO." an original sign. A similar sign was located on the upper left hand corner of that side, now reads "THE KURZ BLDG." The original firm had a sign on the first floor front. Painted corner chevrons on the east side flanked the words "LUTHE HARDWARE COMPANY" by 1940. That signage is now covered by "THE KURZ BLDG." and the same sign appears vertically on east side of the south face.

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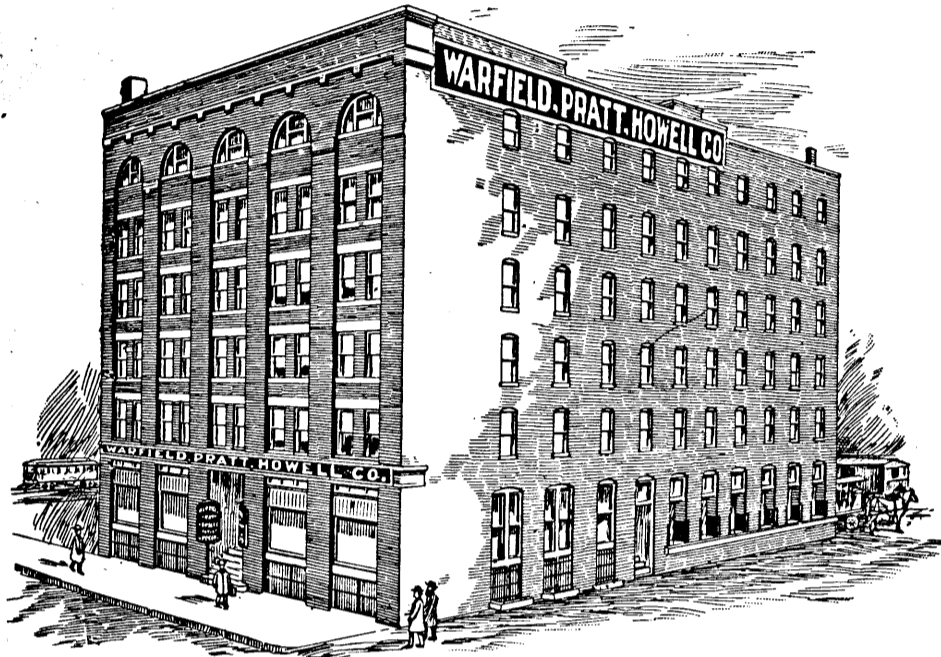
date entered

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The current owners envision the restoration of the building exterior, the replacement of the roof top pent houses, and part of the west wall and west central interior will be opened up as an atrium linkage to new construction on the immediate west side. The complex will provide office space.



Building of the Warfield-Pratt-Howell Company, Wholesale Grocers  
Corner of First Street and Court Avenue, Des Moines

The Midwestern, November 1906, page 77. Original 1901-2  
building prior to construction of 1909 addition to east or  
left-hand side.

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this building being located three blocks east of the Polk County Courthouse, the most noteworthy example of the work of Proudfoot and Bird.

<sup>1</sup> Documentation of the 1901 construction date is found in the 7 July 1901 issue of the Iowa State Register;

"Work on the construction of the new Warfield-Howell-Pratt grocery building, at the corner of First and Court Avenue, is to begin at once. Benson & Marxer of Des Moines have been awarded the contract at \$60,000, Myers & Co. bid \$65,000, Capitol City Brick & Pipe \$64,000, Charles Weitz & Sons \$62,000, and Mencke Company of Quincy, Ill., was just \$29 higher than the winning bidders. The building will be 82 x 132 feet, with a high basement and six stories, and built of brick and stone, with shelving, elevators, furniture and equipment, the building will cost about \$100,000."

Finishing work continued through January 1902. On 15 January the same source reported that Warfield-Pratt-Howell Company would soon move to their new building. "The new structure is nearly completed and interior finishing is being pushed rapidly forward." That same source on 26 January further described the new building;

"The most modern equipment for conduct of an extensive wholesale grocery business have been incorporated in the construction of the new Warfield-Pratt-Howell Grocery Company's building on First and Court Avenue. While the work has not yet been fully completed, part of the building is now occupied and the offices will be moved this week. It is undoubtedly the largest and finest building for the purpose in the state. The first floor is fitted for office and salesroom. Two hydraulic elevators are built on either side of the first floor, and a large platform scale was in place near the east end of the rear. The five upper floors will be utilized for stock and shipping rooms. Among the new facilities for handling large quantities of boxed goods is a hardwood trough, extending from the upper floor to the main floor. This trough may be used in quick transportation of articles from the sixth floor to the loading tracks. A turn is made on each floor, and this serves to check the speed with which an article descends. In all probability, the Warfield-Pratt-Howell company will be at home in their new building about February 1."

On 16 February the Iowa State Register noted that the "...Warfield-Pratt-Howell, wholesale grocery house, [valued at] \$150,000, pressed brick, fireproof..." was one of the nine largest buildings in the city.

<sup>2</sup> The date for the addition is documented by a 24 October 1909 photograph in The Register and Leader (refer to Continuation Sheet 8-3) shows the entire present building for the first time and captions same as being "One of the Season's Improvements." It further stated "The \$150,000 addition to the wholesale grocery house of the Warfield-Pratt-Howell company, First street and Court avenue, erected by Bensor & Marxer, contractors. The addition doubles the floor space of the Warfield company, and gives it one of the largest wholesale houses in the west."

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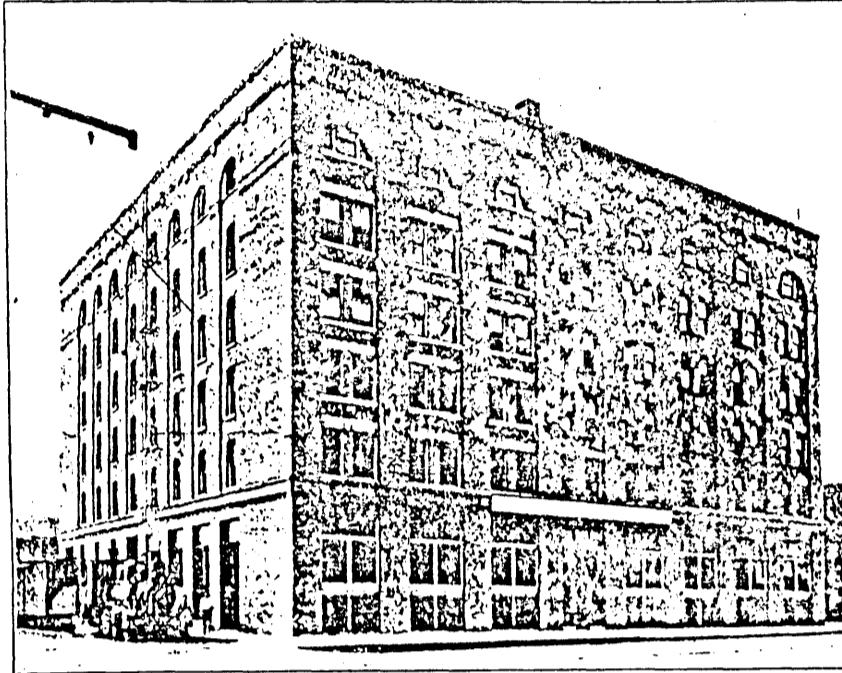
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**Warfield-Pratt-Howell Co.**

Wholesale Groceries

102-110 Court Avenue

DES MOINES, - IOWA

Wilkinson, Harry. Pictorial Souvenir of the Department of  
Public Safety and Greater Des Moines, Iowa, 1911.



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The Midwestern, November 1906, p. 77 (image, "Building of the Warfield-Pratt-Howell Company Wholesale Grocers, Corner of First Street and Court Avenue, Des Moines).  
"Warfield-Pratt-Howell Company." The Midwestern, May 1909, p. 108, 110.  
"Warfield-Pratt-Howell Company." The Midwestern, April-May 1911, pp. 69, 72.

Wilkinson, Harry. Pictorial Souvenir of the Department of Public Safety and Greater Des Moines, Iowa. 1911.

Iowa State Register; 7 July 1901, 15, 26 January, 10 February 1902.  
Register and Leader; 24 October 1909.

Des Moines Means Opportunity. Greater Des Moines Committee, 1907, p. 32.

Sanborn Insurance Maps, Des Moines, Iowa, 1884, 1901, 1920, 1920/43.

"Additions To Wholesale House For Warfield Pratt Howell Company, Des Moines, Iowa."  
Proudfoot and Bird, Architects, Des Moines, n.d.