

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

OMB No. 1024-0018



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 any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

other names/site number YMCA, Iowa Department for the Blind

2. Location

street & number 524 4th Street not for publication N/A
city or town Des Moines vicinity N/A
state Iowa code IA county Polk code 153 zip code 50309-2364

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant X nationally X statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara A. Mitchell
Signature of certifying official

July 28, 2009
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 commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this 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 of Keeper Date
of Action

=====

5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

_____ private
_____ public-local
_____ X public-State
_____ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

_____ X building(s)
_____ district
_____ site
_____ structure
_____ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Government</u>	Sub: <u>Government Office</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>Library</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>School</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>Education Related</u>
<u>Social</u>	<u>Civic</u>
<u>Commerce/Trade</u>	<u>Restaurant</u>
<u>Commerce/Trade</u>	<u>Specialty Store</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>Multiple Dwelling</u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Government</u>	Sub: <u>Government Office</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>Library</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>School</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>Education Related</u>
<u>Social</u>	<u>Civic</u>
<u>Commerce/Trade</u>	<u>Specialty Store</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>Multiple Dwelling</u>

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revival
Classical Revivals

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>Concrete</u>
roof	<u>Synthetics - Rubber</u>
walls	<u>Brick</u>
	<u>Stone - Limestone</u>
other	<u>Terra Cotta</u>

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

8. Statement of Significance

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

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☒ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ 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.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☒ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

☐ Social History _____
☐ Education _____
☐ Politics/Government _____

Period of Significance 1959 - 1978

Significant Dates 1959
1960
1968

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
Jernigan, Norman Kenneth

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder Proudfoot, Bird, & Rawson

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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: National Federation of the Blind, Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Iowa Department for the Blind

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>448074</u>	<u>4604379</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>					

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.)

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11. Form Prepared By

=====

name/title Shan Sasser e-mail address Shan.Sasser@blind.state.ia.us
organization Iowa Department for the Blind date _____
street & number 524 4th Street telephone 515-281-1256
city or town Des Moines state IA zip code 50309

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Additional Documentation

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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)

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Property Owner

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

name Iowa Department for the Blind
street & number 524 4th Street telephone 515-281-1333
city or town Des Moines state IA zip code 50309

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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 the 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 Project (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

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Description

Summary

The Iowa Commission for the Blind building attained statewide and national significance during Dr. Kenneth Jernigan's tenure (1958-1978) as its director.¹ Established in 1925 as the Iowa Commission for the Blind, the agency achieved departmental status in 1988. The building which houses the currently named Iowa Department for the Blind is located at 524 4th Street, on the corner of 4th Street and Watson Powell Jr. Way in the northeast section of downtown Des Moines, Iowa. The building is located on the west side of 4th street and the south side of Watson Powell. It is four blocks west of the Des Moines river. A three-story modern office building (1968), a three-story parking garage (1908), a single story medical building (1965), and a parking lot lie in close proximity to the building. The Department's multi-story building was built in 1911-1912 as a YMCA in the Classical Revival-style. The building is not uniform in height: the front portion of the building is six stories high; a middle portion that once contained a courtyard is five stories high, and the back portion of the building has three stories. As the east and north sides are in public view, being bound by sidewalks and streets, they possess decorative elements that the west and most of the south sides do not. (An alley separates the building from the parking garage on the south side; an alley also separates the building from the office building on the west side.) The arrangement, number, and style of the windows and the decorative elements used on the east and north facades convey symmetry and balance typical of Classical Revival style buildings. The property is in excellent condition. Since the mid-1960s, the building's infrastructure has been routinely updated to modern standards and to ensure compliance with building and fire codes, including replacing windows, upgrading roofing materials, and installing new heating, cooling, and ventilation systems.

Exterior

East Façade

On the east façade, the buff-color bricks are laid using a Flemish stretcher bond pattern. (Seven rows of stretcher bond appear between single rows of Flemish bond.) The middle section extends by two feet, creating a six-story rectangular bay. This bay highlights the main entrance to the building, which is the building's most striking exterior feature. The entrance is made grand not only by the projecting rectangular bay but also by the large rusticated blocks that form an archivolt surrounding the stairs and doors that lead into the building. Nine voussoir blocks create an arch at the top of entrance. The arch's soffit is decorated with a series of carved rosettes framed by inset squares. A brass wall plaque reading "Iowa Commission for the Blind 1969" is bolted to the first two blocks on the left side. Decorative elements marking the entrance are carried to the second floor. The two second floor windows that appear above the entrance have an elaborate stone frame. Two scrolled moldings appear to the left and right of the frame, giving an appearance of book-ends. A guilloche and bead-and-reel motif surround the windows. A single decorative pilaster appears between the windows. A cornice with a shield bas-relief in the center of the frieze, dentils in the cornice, and a crown molding cap the window frame.

A concrete ashlar block foundation forms a solid white base for the building. The foundation is approximately ten feet high on the south end and four feet high on the north end, reflecting the slope of 4th Street. Many decorative elements distinguish the first floor from the other floors. Nine arched windows on the first floor are slightly inset from the façade. A course of mauve-glazed stretcher bricks runs from base to base of the window arch and two courses of mauve-glazed header bond bricks follow the arch of these windows, an effect which visually connects each window. The bricks above this belt course are laid using the header bond pattern. A single stone keystone appears at the top of the window arch. A thin white stone belt course connects the keystones. Above the belt course, a section of mauve-glazed bricks laid in a soldier pattern the width of a window appears above each window. Other bricks in this section are laid in a stretcher pattern. Finally, the top of the first floor is marked by a stone belt course.

Floors two through five have twelve, double-hung windows - four windows flank each side of the bay and four windows are in the bay. Each window has a stone sill. In 1988, all windows in the building were replaced with high energy efficient double-paned units that have low-e coating and aluminum framing. The exterior trim of the new windows closely matches the trim and appearance of the original windows. Most of the windows are designed to open for life safety considerations in the event of a fire. The arched windows on the first floor, which had been bricked in, were restored at this time.

¹ Kenneth Jernigan was commonly referred to as Dr. Jernigan as an honorary title. He received three honorary doctorate degrees during his lifetime.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Very little decorative detail appears on floors two through five, with two exceptions. The first exception is the stone frame around the two second floor windows marking the entrance, as described above. A second exception is four simple square brick designs used to further mark the entrance on the third and fourth floors. Mauve-glazed brick headers define the sides of these squares, and small, white stone blocks are placed at the corners. Two of these square designs appear above the middle two windows on the third floor, and two appear above the middle two windows on the fourth floor. Simple, square modillions support the sills on each of these middle windows.

A stone belt course marks the base of the sixth floor. The twelve double-hung windows on this floor have the same appearance as the windows on floors 2 through 5. However, a vertical rectangular brick design appears between each window and window pair. These rectangles have the same design as the four smaller squares on the third and fourth floors. Mauve-glazed brick headers define the sides of the rectangle and small, white stone blocks are placed at the corners.

The roofline is marked by a stone cornice supported by scrolled corbels. The soffit is decorated with a series of inset squares. The entablature is adorned with fleurs-de-lis between each corbel and an egg-and-dart motif appears at its base. Small dentils decorate the bed-mould. A simple crown molding tops the cornice.

North Façade

The north side shows the length of the building, running approximately 132 feet in length. At about the two-thirds point, the building changes from six stories to three. The concrete ashlar block foundation continues on this side of the building. The foundation is four feet high on the east end and two feet high on the west, reflecting the slight slope of Watson Powell Jr. Way.

The first floor of the six-story portion is similar in decorative detail to the first floor on the east side. The walls are constructed of sand-color bricks laid in a Flemish stretcher bond pattern. Five arched windows are slightly inset from the façade. Courses of mauve-glazed bricks connect at the arch base and surround the window arches, visually connecting each window or window pair. The bricks above this belt course are laid using the header bond pattern. A stone keystone appears at the top of the window arch. A thin white stone belt course continuing from the east façade connects the keystones. Above the belt course, a section of mauve-glazed bricks the width of a window appears above each window. Other bricks in this section are laid in a stretcher pattern. Finally, the top of the first floor is marked by a stone belt course which continues from the east façade.

A secondary entryway appears between the fourth and fifth arched windows. This entryway is framed by stone pilasters supporting a full unadorned entablature. A wheelchair-accessible ramp leading to this entry was added in 1974 and an automatic door was installed in 1993.

A simple, square four-pane window appears west of the fifth arched window and marks the end of the six-story portion. The mauve-glazed brick belt course is temporarily interrupted by the stone sill for this window. The thin white stone belt course appears at the top of this window and ends at the terminus of the six-story portion.

The second floor has six windows: two four-pane windows flank four smaller, square four-pane windows. Each window has an unadorned stone sill. Two small rectangular vent holes appear below each of the four square windows.

The third floor has seven windows. The first window on the left (east) is a double-hung window with a stone sill. Four arched windows are next. Two courses of mauve-glazed header bond bricks follow the arch of these windows, and a stone keystone appears at the top of the window arch. (No brick or belt courses are used to connect the arch base or keystones here.) Two double-hung windows with stone sills appear to the right (west) of the arched windows.

The fourth and fifth floors have eleven windows each. These double-hung windows have a stone sill. No other adornments are used on these floors.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

The decorative detail on the sixth floor on the north façade is the same as that on the east façade. A stone belt course continuing from the east façade marks the base of the floor. Eleven double-hung windows have stone sills. A vertical rectangular brick design appears between each window, with mauve-glazed brick headers defining the sides of the rectangle and small, white stone blocks at the corners.

The roofline is marked by the same stone cornice as that on the east side.

The back, three-story portion of the building is visible on the north side. This portion of the building, which was part of the original building, does not contain windows; however, several decorative details are used to visually connect the two portions. Three large arch window openings were infilled with brick in 1970. The two courses of mauve-glazed header bond bricks that followed the arch of these windows and the keystone at the top of the arch remain. A white ashlar belt course appears below the arch of the windows. The ashlar belt course, which continues from the stone belt course that marked the top of the first floor from the six-story portion, runs the remaining length of the building. Three two-story-high rectangle designs appear above each arch. Mauve-glazed brick headers define the sides of the rectangle and small, white stone blocks are placed at the corners.

West Façade

The west side of the three-story portion of the building consists of unadorned red bricks laid in the common bond pattern. A series of drain and utility pipes run from roof to ground. Brick patterns reveal where arched windows were once present on each floor. (These windows were also infilled with brick in 1970.) Metal vent openings and security lights appear intermittently. A metal door with a hydraulic lift is at the far left (east) side. (This door leads to a shipping and receiving area that is primarily used by the library staff to transfer materials in alternative media requested and returned by patrons of the Department's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.) Next to this door, a freight elevator shaft protrudes from the wall. This elevator was installed in 1965. The brickwork on this shaft is a different shade of red and is laid in a common bond pattern. A first floor emergency exit door appears next to the shaft; a no longer used concrete loading dock extends from this door. An emergency exit door for the first floor is on the north side of the west wall. A black metal staircase leads from the door to the ground.

The west side of the six-story portion consists of unadorned red bricks laid in the common bond pattern and drain and utility pipes running along the side. Simple, double-hung windows are visible on the fifth and sixth floors. No other noteworthy features are apparent.

South Façade

The three different heights of the building are only visible on the south side of the building. A courtyard was once present on the south side of the original building, between the six-story portion and the three-story portion. An addition was built over part of this courtyard in 1925. In 1975, a five-story addition was built over the remaining courtyard. (A body was found under the courtyard area. Authorities investigated and determined the body had been there many years and probably dated back to when the building was constructed.) Because of this addition, the south side of the building has a less uniform appearance. The newer construction of this addition is evident in the brickwork, which differs both in color and design from the brickwork on the six-story and three-story portions of the building.

Decorative elements similar to those on the east and north façades appear on one-third of the six-story portion. The brickwork has the same color and pattern. Stone belt courses mark the top of the first floor and the bottom of the sixth, and the decorative stone cornice marks the roofline. The façade of the remaining two-thirds of the six-story portion consists of unadorned red bricks laid in the common bond pattern.

Due to the slope of the building site, portions of the basement wall are exposed on the south side. A large automatic door (9.5 feet wide by 6.5 feet high) that leads into the basement is near the front of the building.

The first floor of this portion has four windows: two small arched windows, one larger arched window, and one double-hung window. Two courses of header bond bricks outline the top of the arched windows. The bricks have the same color as the surrounding bricks. The second floor has four double-hung windows; floors three through six have five double hung windows. All of the windows on the south side have stone sills.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

The south façade of the building constructed in 1974-1975 consists only of red brickwork in a common bond pattern. Vents and a single security light appear on this portion of the building. An emergency exit door leading to the south stairwell in the basement is located here. Double steel doors open to an attached storage room.

The façade of the three-story portion uses the same brickwork color and pattern as the façade on the west side. An emergency exit door leading to the gym in the basement is located here. Brick patterns reveal where arched windows were once present on each floor.

Roof

Each portion of the building has a flat roof. The roof was replaced in 1960 after a building fire. Handball courts on the roof were removed at this time. In 1998, the roof of the six-story portion was replaced with synthetic rubber.

The east side of the roof can be accessed from the sixth floor via the main stairway. It offers a seating area for staff and students, complete with container gardens. A chain link safety fence surrounds this portion of the roof.

The roof of the three-story portion was replaced with synthetic rubber in 1992. Air conditioning units are located on this portion of the roof.

Interior

In 1959, the legislature appropriated money to purchase the YMCA building to house the Iowa Commission for the Blind. At that time, Dr. Jernigan requested and received \$500,000 to complete an extensive remodel of the building to accommodate the work of the agency, including the establishment of the talking book and Braille book library. The agency's first major remodel was started and completed in 1960.

Main Entry

In 1989, the steel doors at the 4th street entrance were replaced with insulated glass doors and archway. Department staff designed and built the large bent oak interior trim that duplicates the original trim at that entrance. Live steam from the boiler was used to bend the wood. An 8-step pink and white marble staircase leads to the first floor landing. White marble covers approximately half of the walls. A metal and wood hand railing divides the staircase. The entrance has a cathedral ceiling. The landing has a marble terrazzo floor.

Oak and glass double doors at the front of the landing lead into the Reception lobby on the first floor. A short hall way to the left leads to the recreation room, staff offices, and storage rooms.

Basement

The basement can be accessed from the main staircase off the reception lobby, the main passenger elevator (built in 1960), or the back hydraulic elevator. The main staircase ends at a small, enclosed landing area. The main passenger elevator and a door to several connected storage rooms are on the west side of this landing. Directly in front (north) of the stairs, a fire door leads to many rooms with a variety of functions. Proceeding through the door, the two doors on the west side lead to four connected storage and utility rooms. The room to the east of the fire door houses the Industrial Arts shop. This room is used primarily by the Department's Orientation Center. On the south side of this room, three rooms are used as office space for the teacher and storage. A large automatic door that leads into the alley and another storage room are also on the south wall of this room. A door on the west wall opens into a hallway that provides access to two storage areas, and the building shop room, the south side fire stairway and emergency exit, and another interior stairway.

Returning to the hallway, the room directly across from the fire door contains office space for the maintenance staff and a break / work room. Two doors are located on the west side of this break room. The door on the right (north) leads to the boiler room containing the mechanicals for heating and cooling the building, including a boiler and an air conditioning chiller - both of which were installed in 1965 and replaced in 1998.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

The door on the left (south) opens to the activity room (gym). Upon entering this room, a door on the left (south) leads to the original YMCA 60 x 20 foot pool. (The pool room was remodeled along with other areas in the building between 1974 - 1975.) The activity room was redesigned in fall 1990 and spring 1991 into a large combined exercise area for both men and women. New men's and women's lockers and bathrooms were built in the southwest corner of the room. A storage room and the hydraulic freight elevator are located at the back (west) of this room. An emergency exit door on the south wall leads to the alley.

First Floor

Recreation Room

A hallway to the south of the main entry landing leads to the recreation room and Orientation Center staff offices and storage rooms. The recreation room serves as a meeting and socializing area for students in the Orientation Center's residential training program. In 2004, the recreation room underwent extensive remodeling. The ceiling was raised to a height that allowed the arched windows to be once again exposed to the interior of the room. A new gypsum board ceiling was adorned with wood beams and a series of floating wood panels in coffered areas with indirect fluorescent strip lighting above. The oak trim around the arched windows matches the exterior adornments: a wood keystone appears at the top of each arch and wood trim runs from base to base of each window arch to visually connect the windows. Pendant lights were hung from the floating wood panel areas of the ceiling. Recessed wall wash can lighting was added to the entry hallway. The original marble terrazzo floor was restored in existing areas and in other areas new terrazzo tile in a pattern to mirror new wood beams in the ceiling was installed. The wood paneling on the walls was replaced with gypsum board covered in wallpaper of muted shades of beige and an oak wainscot at the bottom. Mission style furniture with cushions in tones of purple, burgundy, teal and hunter green was placed throughout the room. The large stone fireplace on the south wall was outfitted with a direct vent system. Directional lighting was installed to highlight the fireplace. All existing doors, frames and hardware were replaced, with the exception of the southwest emergency exit door which was installed in 1992.

Four offices and a kitchenette are connected to the recreation room. All of these areas were updated in the 2004 remodel. One office is located on the north side of the room; the three remaining offices are located off the west side of the room. A kitchenette was relocated to the south end of the room during the remodel. New cabinets, counter top, sink with disposal, an electric range, microwave, exhaust hood, and refrigerator were installed at this time. A wood folding partition enclosed in a pocketed area was installed. The partition conceals the kitchenette from the remainder of the space when not in use. Access to a fire stairway is on the south side of the kitchenette. A new storage area was created to store stereo and public address system equipment. A former storage area and the old kitchenette area were renovated to create a third office on the west side. A lockable coat storage area was created in the northwest corner of the room. All of the offices received new forced air systems to improve indoor air quality and remove some mold/mildew issues. They were also outfitted with new carpet, wall finishes, high efficiency lighting and a suspended acoustical ceiling. The "log cabin" office, which is the last office on the west side, retained the log veneers that adorn the walls. This office is original to the building. This type of room was a "club room", a signature room for early YMCAs.

Reception Lobby

The oak and glass double doors at the top of the main entry landing lead into the Reception lobby. This area was updated in 2005. An administrative office was removed to create a new Reception lobby with a curved counter open to the lobby on two sides. New cabinets and lockable storage were installed behind the counter. New gypsum board walls and an acoustical ceiling were installed in the area. The old reception counter was removed and converted into a small waiting area on west side of the lobby. A new entrance on the west side of the lobby was created for the Aids and Devices specialty store. The north wall was opened up to create a wider passage to improve traffic flow into the north and west sections of the first floor. The 2004 remodel was undertaken to resolve several building code issues. A special appropriation from the state legislature paid for this remodeling project.

The Aids and Devices store, staff office, and storage room are accessed from the Reception lobby. Blind Iowans can shop for and purchase a variety of specialized aids and devices, such as magnifiers, check writing guides, Braille writing devices, white canes, talking calculators, watches, clocks, Braille and large print playing cards and games, recorders, adapted sewing supplies, medical devices, and measuring devices, and much more.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

The Director's Conference room and administrative offices, including the Director's office are located in the northeast corner of the first floor. The rooms serving as the Director's conference room and office were designated as such by Dr. Jernigan. These rooms, first constructed in 1965, have remained largely unchanged since Dr. Jernigan's departure. The Director's conference room was built in 1960, and it especially retains its association with Dr. Jernigan. It is a large room with two arched windows on the north side. The room seats 40 individuals. Floor to ceiling bookshelves line every wall. The door on the east side of the conference room leads directly into the Director's office.



Figure 1: Dr. Jernigan in Director's Conference room. Photo from *Des Moines Sunday Register* article titled "Kenneth Jernigan: 'power to the blind'" by Gene Raffensperger published June 2, 1974. Original caption read: "Kenneth Jernigan, director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, sits in front of his Braille books. '...in Iowa it is possible for you as a blind man to go out and lead the same kind of life any other person leads.'"

The Director's office is large enough for a desk, computer desk and a conference table. It has an arched window on the north side and two on the east. These windows were bricked in at the time of

Dr. Jernigan's tenure. The windows were restored in 1988. The door on the east wall of the office leads to a reception area for the Director's office and to another administrative office and small storage room. A door on the west side of this reception area leads into the north hallway off the main reception area.

Proceeding down the north hallway, a storage room appears on the left at the midway point. At the end of the hallway, a door on the right leads to a large break room. The break room as it exists currently, with numerous booths and tables, vending machines, and microwave ovens, was converted in 2005. A kitchen facility is in the room to the west of the break room. Previously, a buffet style cafeteria had occupied the space since 1969. The cafeteria was open to the public and staff. Since that time, the facilities have been managed by a vendor in the Department's Business Enterprises Program. A north side door in the break room leads to the secondary exit. A stairway from this area to the basement was removed in 1993.

Another hallway extends from the end of the north hallway. This hallway leads to women's and men's restrooms, five offices, two storage rooms, and the multi-purpose room. The area containing the offices and storage rooms were part of the addition that was built over the courtyard in 1974 - 1975. In 1993, the restrooms were remodeled and expanded. The multi-purpose room was created in 1969 - 1970; the entrance to this room was widened in 1993. Access to a fire stairway and an emergency exit is in the southwest corner of the multi-purpose room. Doors on the north side of the room lead into the kitchen facility and to a shipping and receiving area in the northwest corner of this floor. Two freight elevators were added to the shipping and receiving area in 1965; one of those elevators was replaced with a hydraulic freight elevator in 1969.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

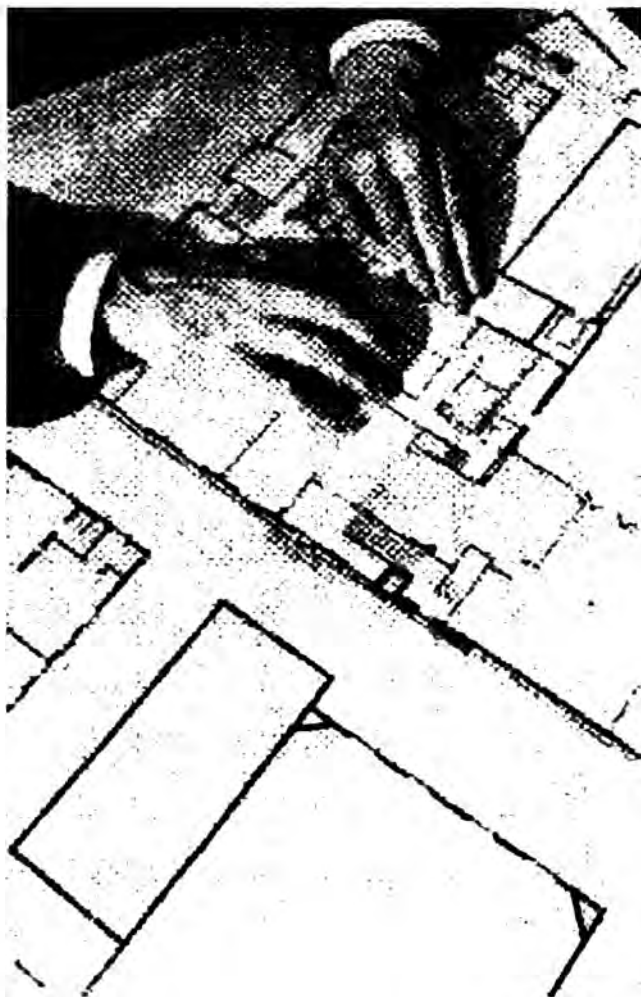


Figure 2: Photo from *Des Moines Sunday Register* article titled "Kenneth Jernigan: 'power to the blind'" by Gene Raffensperger published June 2, 1974. Original caption read: "Jernigan 'reads' blueprints Kenneth Jernigan, director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, is able to supervise an extensive remodeling of the commission's headquarters here by working from a special set of blueprints. The blueprints have Braille-like symbols he devised to enable a blind person to follow the plans."

Main Stairway

A stairway off the Reception lobby serves as the main staircase. In 1993, the main stairway and the south fire stairway were extended to the sixth floor roof. Also at this time, the steps were replaced with pink marble and the metal hand rails were raised in order to comply with building codes. The original marble terrazzo floors on the stairway landings remain.

Second Floor

The main stairway leads to an enclosed landing area on the second floor. This area also retains the original marble terrazzo floor. The main passenger elevator is on the west side of the landing area. The two doors on the north side provide access to offices and training rooms. A room off the east side of the landing is a computer room. (The first computer network system was installed in 1986.) A hallway on the south side leads to several connected rooms that serve as stack areas for the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Indeed, nearly the entire south half of the second floor holds the Library's vast collection of Braille, large print, and recorded materials, descriptive videos, and digital and cassette tape players and recorders. These stacks areas were created in 1969 - 1970. An area in the back southwest section of the stacks was remodeled in 2005 to create six cubicle offices.

The two doors on the north side of the enclosed landing lead to several work areas. Once through the doors, the Home Economics room is on the left. This room was built during the 1960 remodel. The Home Economics room is used by the Orientation Center staff to teach students to prepare their own meals and independently manage a kitchen. Originally, the room had two kitchens - a contractor was hired to build one and Orientation Center students built the second. Tasking the students with the job of building a kitchen reflected Dr. Jernigan's philosophy regarding the aptitude and attitude of blind persons. In 1985, two more kitchens were built and a dining area was established. An apartment is located off the west side of the Home Economics room. This apartment is reserved for an Orientation Center student who requires more experience living as an independent blind person.

Two offices are across the hall from the Home Economics room. Two hallways can be accessed from the space between the Home Economics room and the offices. A U-shaped hallway provides access to the Orientation Center's computer training room and four staff offices. (This area was built to this configuration in 2000.) A second hallway leads to Orientation Center classrooms, offices, and the north side stairway. In this area, teachers provide lessons to Orientation Center students on reading and writing Braille and on a variety of assistive technology.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 8

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

A hallway leads west toward the stacks area in the northwest corner, the six cubicle offices, and the hydraulic freight elevator. The stacks area in the northwest corner is unusual in that these areas actually exist between the first and second floors. (This unusual configuration was created when four levels of stacks were constructed in an area that once housed handball courts with high ceilings.) The second freight elevator can be accessed in this area.

Third Floor

The entirety of the third floor is devoted to offices for the Independent Living and Field Operations staff. A number of field staff (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Independent Living Teachers, and Technology Specialists) travel throughout the state to provide services to blind Iowans use these offices. Supervisors and support staff also have offices on this floor. A major remodel of the third floor was completed in 2009. The old layout of the rooms and hallways created a maze-like feel. The faux wood paneling, vinyl floor tiles, and drop ceilings that were installed in the 1960 remodel had to be removed in order to comply with current building and fire codes. In addition, heating, cooling, and ventilation systems throughout required updating. Many walls on this floor were moved and offices reconfigured for better flow and access to natural light from the many windows on the east and north sides of the building. The ceilings will be raised to their original height. Two large rooms on the south side of this floor will continue to serve as stacks for the Library.

Orientation Center classrooms were once located on the third floor. All were relocated to the second floor in 2007.

Fourth Floor

The fourth floor serves as the main working space for the Library staff. This floor, last remodeled in 1974 and 1975, also underwent a major remodel in 2009. As with the third floor, the faux wood paneling, vinyl floor tiles, and drop ceilings had to be removed. The heating, cooling, and ventilation systems on this floor were also updated. Several walls on this floor were moved to create office configurations that offer a better work flow and access to natural light, and the ceilings were raised to their original height.

The main stairway leads lead into a reception area. Staff offices are located throughout the north and east sides of this floor. The northwest area has a recording studio and two work rooms for staff to process returned materials for re-shelving and for packaging requested materials for mailing. (In 2006, a state of the art digital recording studio was built on the north side of this floor.) Staff and volunteers use this studio to record books for blind and visually impaired individuals in Iowa and the rest of the nation. The southwest area of the fourth floor serves as a stacks area.

Fifth and Sixth Floors

The fifth and sixth floors have staff apartments and dormitory rooms for adults enrolled in the Orientation Center. These apartments and rooms were built in 1960. In 2001, all of the rooms on the fifth and sixth floors were remodeled. A two-bedroom apartment is in the southeast corner of the fifth floor. This apartment has been reserved for the director's use since Dr. Jernigan lived there while he served as director. The remainder of the south half has three guest rooms and a women's restroom with shower facilities. The north half of this floor has eleven dormitory rooms for women and a one-bedroom staff apartment.

The sixth floor is similar in layout to the fifth floor. The south half of the building has a two-bedroom apartment for a staff person, four dormitory rooms, a storage room, and men's restroom with shower facilities. The north half has eleven dormitory rooms for men and a one-bedroom staff apartment.

Integrity

The building maintains a high degree of all seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The location and urban setting of the building have changed very little since Dr. Jernigan served as Director. The building continues to house the Iowa Department for the Blind's main administrative offices, Library, and Orientation Center. The building's original materials and design have been taken into consideration during each remodeling and maintenance project that has been completed over the years. Indeed, in many cases great effort was made to ensure that the integrity of materials and design were maintained. When the windows were replaced, windows which reflected the original design were installed. The swimming pool and

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 9

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

portions of the gymnasium that were built as part of the YMCA's construction have been maintained throughout the years and are still in use today. The director's office and conference room remain in the same location as when Dr. Jernigan held that position. (In 1988, the bricks that had enclosed the windows in the director's office were removed to comply with fire codes and improve air circulation.) A two-bedroom apartment on the fifth floor has been reserved as a residence for the director since Dr. Jernigan served as director. The workmanship of the remodeling and maintenance project has always been of the highest quality. When the 4th street entrance steel doors were replaced in 1989 with new insulated glass doors and archway, staff designed and built the large bent oak interior trim that duplicates the original trim. The marble and wrought iron railing on the main staircase as well as the terrazzo flooring in many of the main areas add to the historical character of the building.



The physical building has been well maintained throughout the years. More importantly, the integrity of feeling and association has been maintained since Dr. Jernigan's departure. Indeed, the philosophy and educational approach Dr. Jernigan advocated are reflected in the function of many of the offices and rooms. While a number of remodeling projects have been, and continue to be, undertaken, Dr. Jernigan would recognize the function of the rooms throughout the building. His philosophy of blindness and rehabilitation approach continue to form the foundation of the Department's work and to be reflected in the physical structure of the building.

Figure 3: Dr. Jernigan walking in front of Commission building, heading south on 4th Street sidewalk.

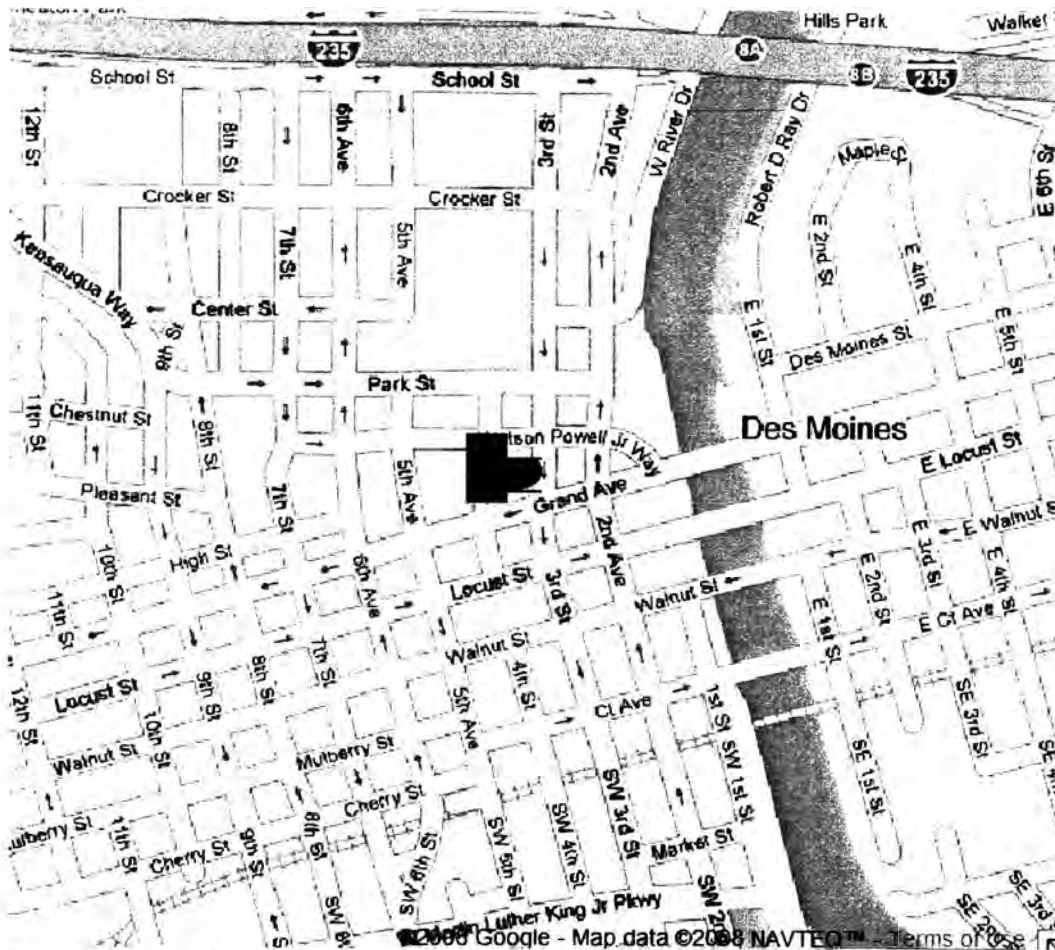
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 10

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Location Map



Source: Google Maps: <http://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&tab=wl> Date: 2008

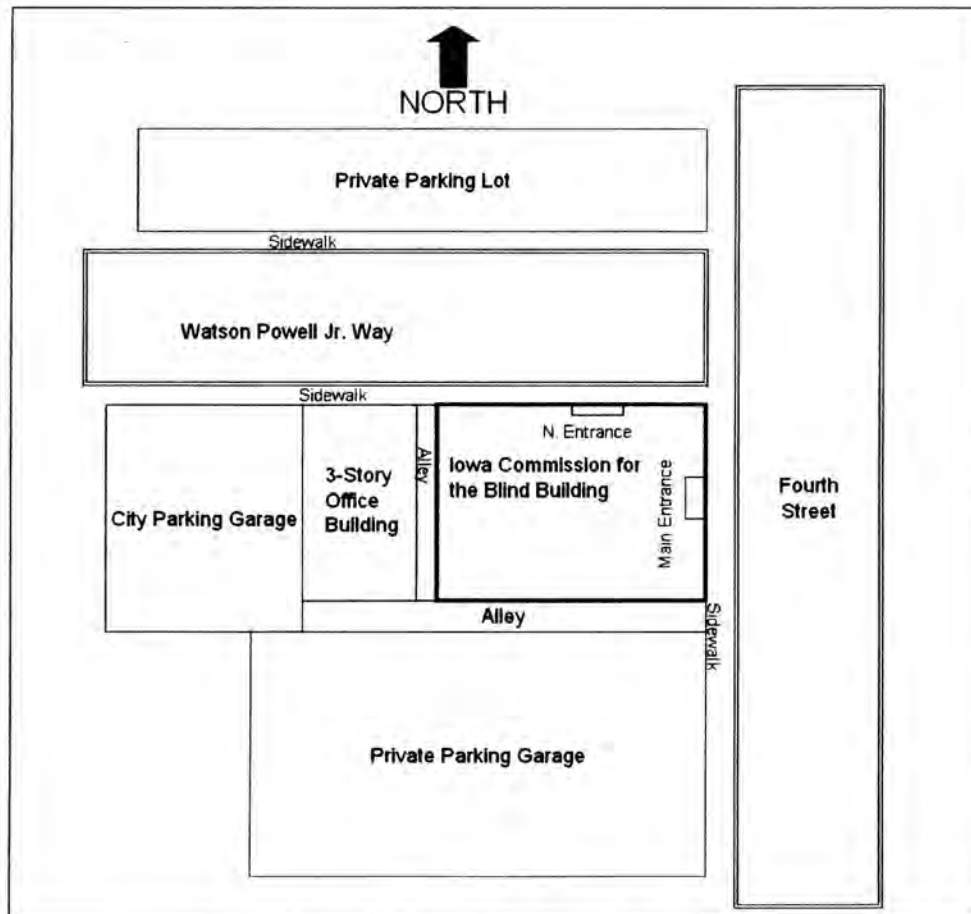
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 11

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Site Map



Site Map by Shan Sasser, 2009

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

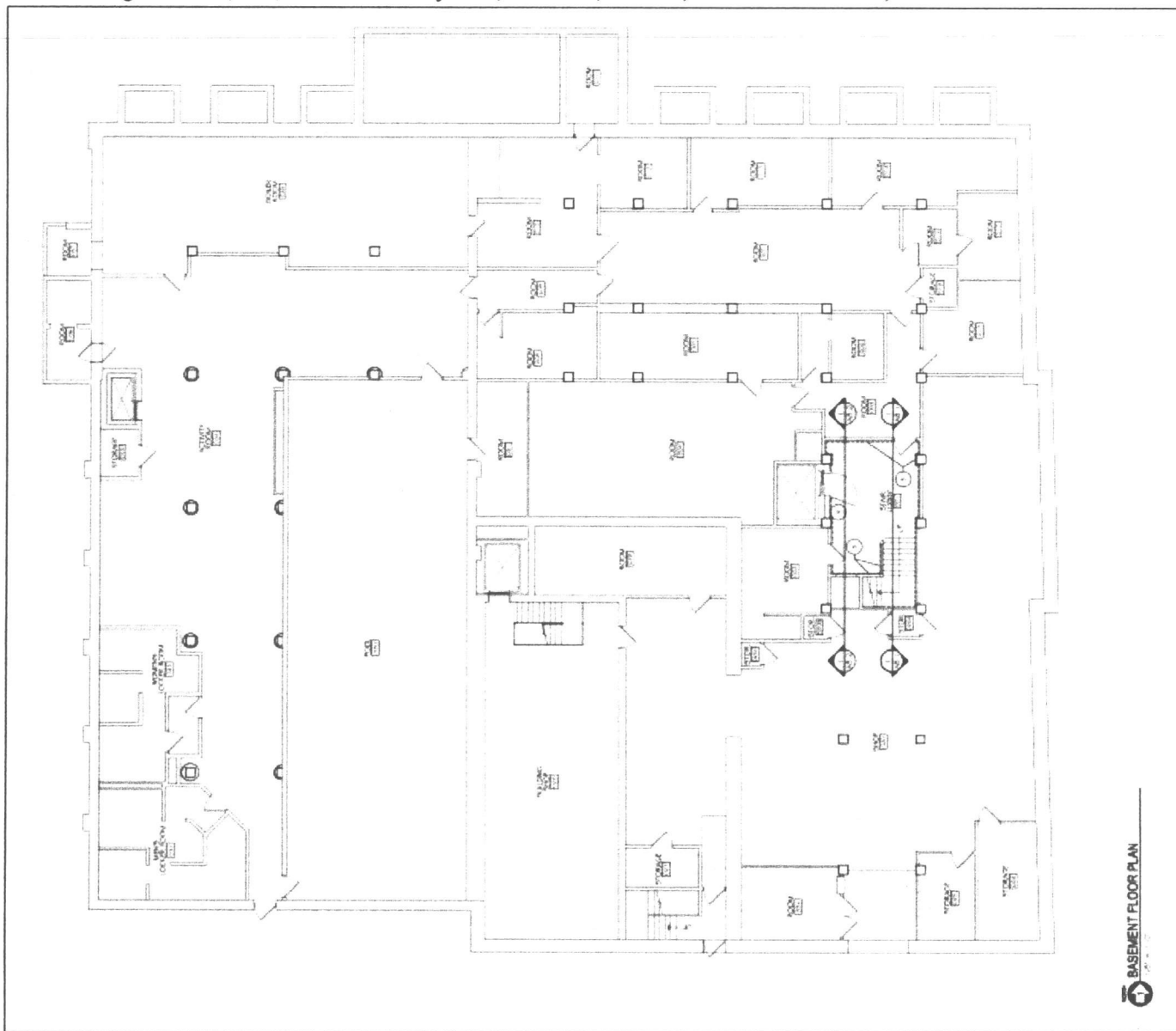
Section number 7 Page 12

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Floor Plans

Basement Floor

Source: Design Alliance, Inc.; 14225 University Ave., Suite 110; Waukee, IA. Date: June 26, 2007



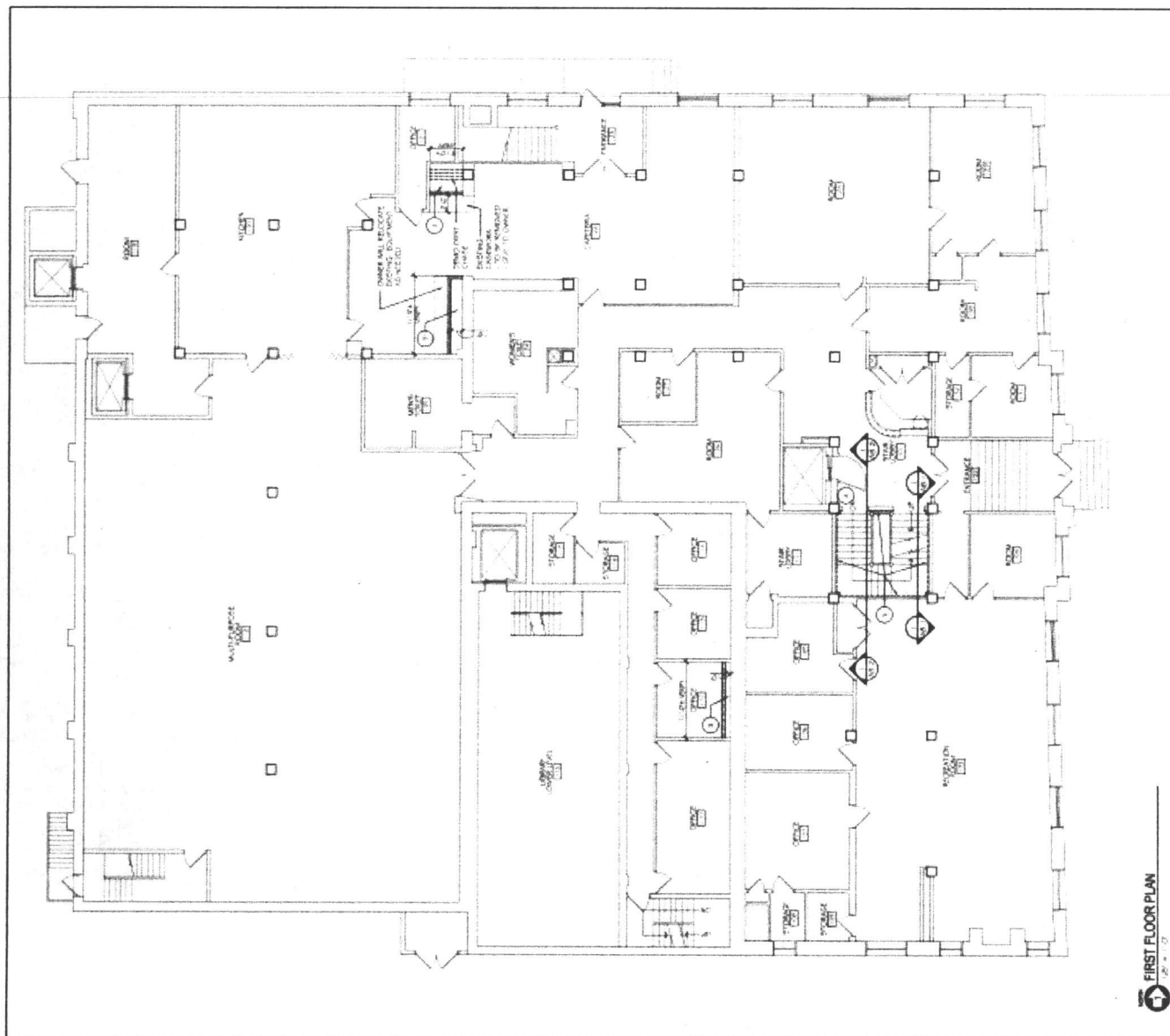
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 13

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

First Floor



Source: Design Alliance, Inc.;
14225 University Ave., Suite 110
Waukee, IA.

Date: June 26, 2007

North

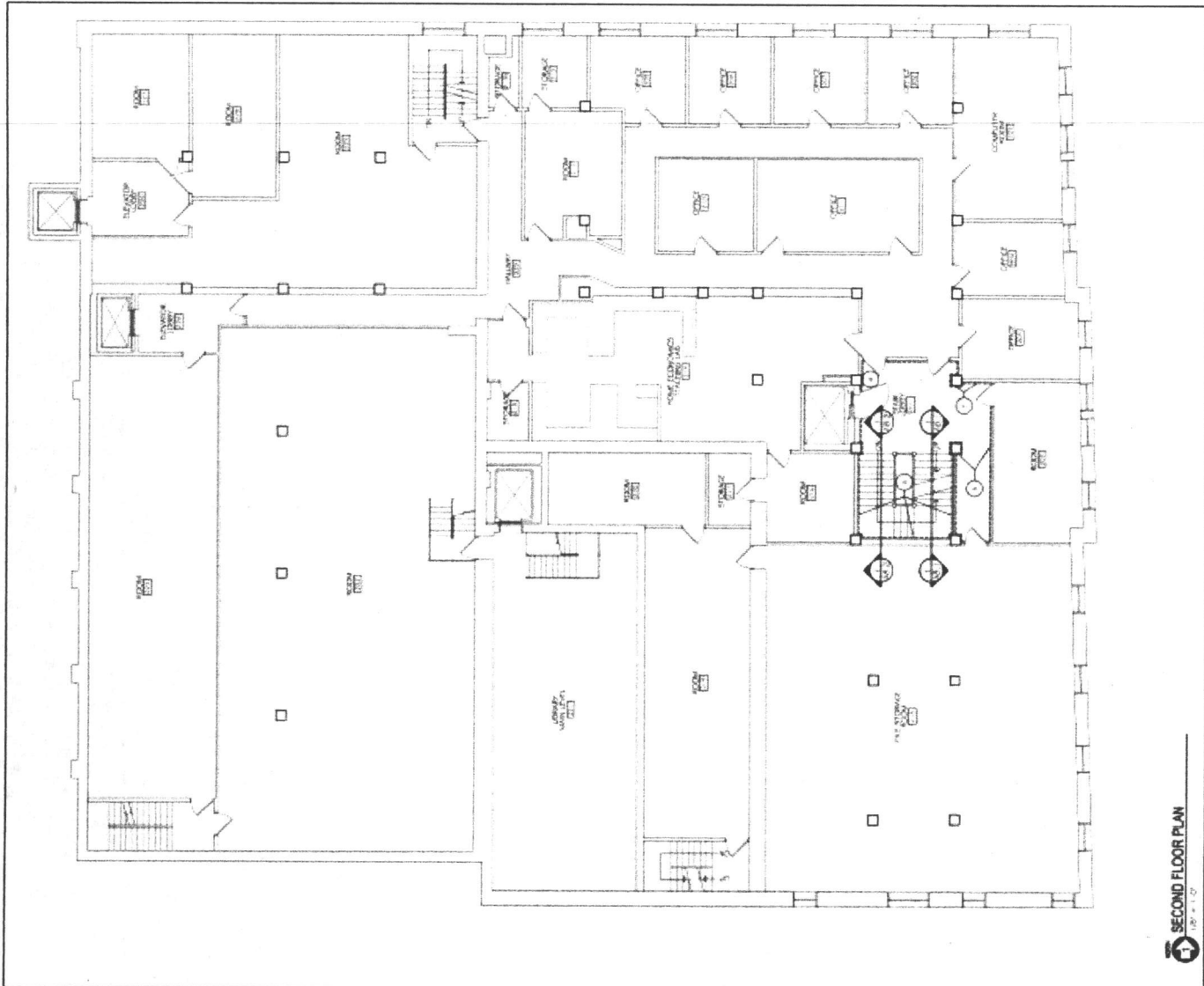
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 14

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Second Floor



Source: Design Alliance, Inc.;
14225 University Ave., Suite 110
Waukee, IA.

Date: June 26, 2007

North



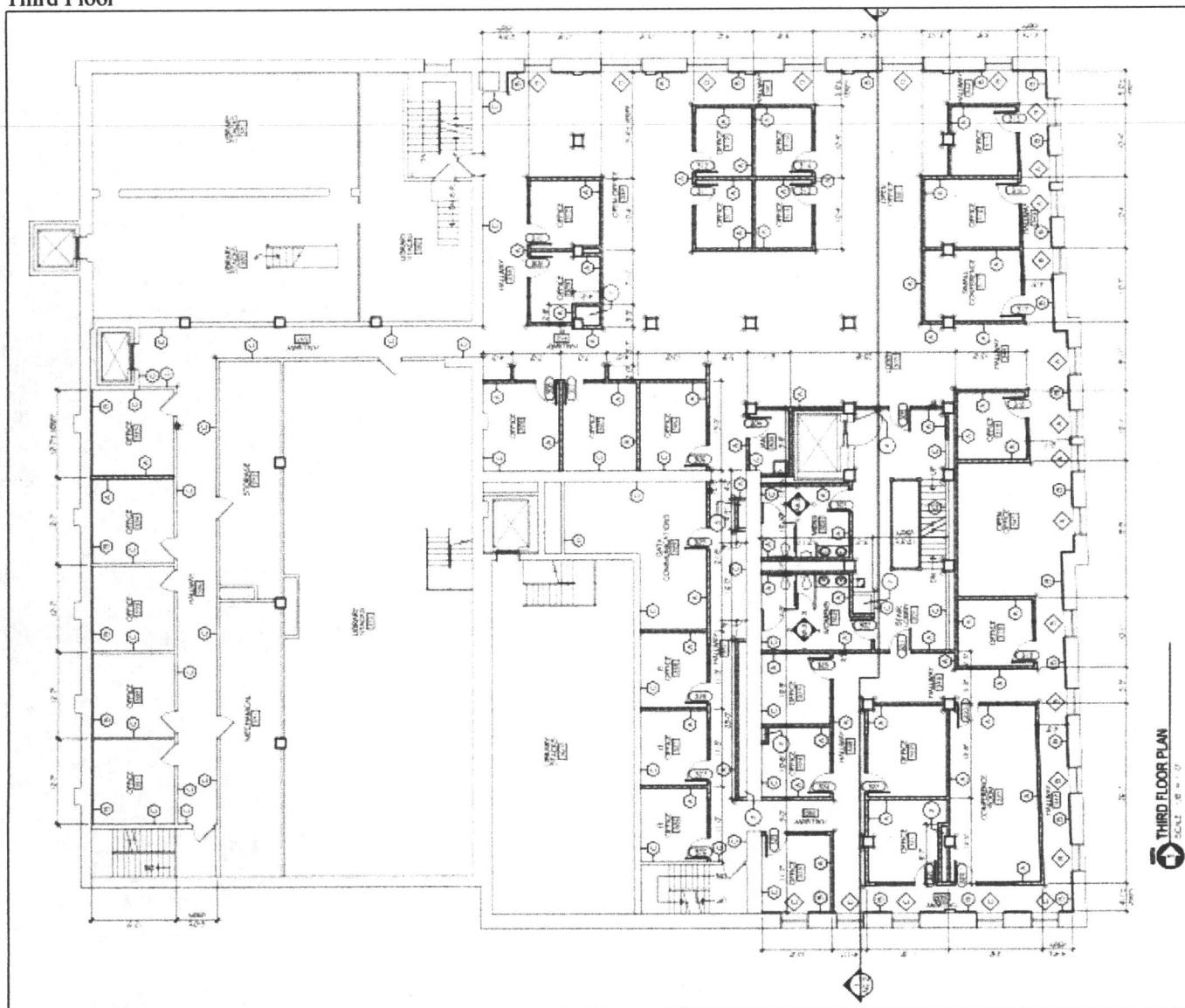
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 15

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Third Floor



Source: Design Alliance, Inc.;
14225 University Ave., Suite 110
Waukee, IA.
Date: June 26, 2007

North



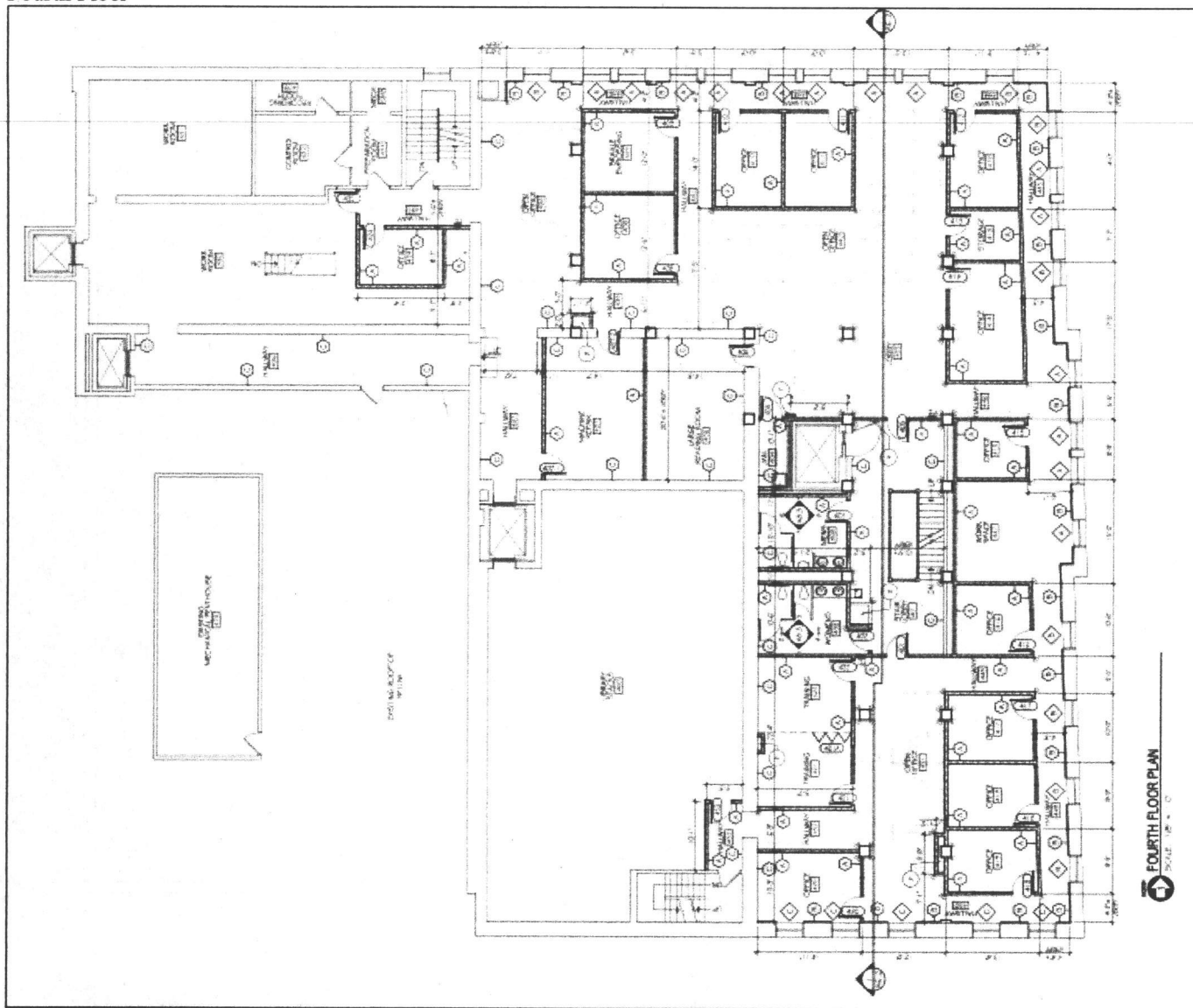
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 16

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Fourth Floor



Source: Design Alliance, Inc.;
14225 University Ave., Suite 110
Waukee, IA.

Date: June 26, 2007

North



National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

[illegible]

Date: June 26, 2007



National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

[illegible]

Date: June 26, 2007



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 19

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Significant Dates, Continued:

1967
1976
1977
1978

Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The Iowa Commission for the Blind building attained statewide and national significance under Criterion B because of its association with Dr. Kenneth Jernigan's tenure (1958-1978) as its director. While serving as the director, Dr. Jernigan became a leader of a national Civil Rights movement for individuals who are blind. Dr. Jernigan's activism, organizing, and philosophy of blindness were instrumental in changing the way blind Americans thought of themselves and the way American institutions taught and regarded individuals who are blind. Prior to his work, blind individuals were routinely marginalized in American society. They were subjected to low expectations and educational and employment opportunities that were based upon a paternalistic, care-taker approach. When Dr. Jernigan became director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind in 1958, he created a rehabilitation program that was founded on a "positive philosophy" of blindness. As written in the Commission's 1959 Annual Report, that philosophy purports that "[t]he real problem of blindness is not the lack of eyesight. The real problem is the misunderstanding and lack of information which exists. If a blind person has proper training, and if he has opportunity, blindness is only a physical nuisance." (1959 Annual Report, p. 6.) His revolutionary program focused both on independent skills training and on changing individual attitudes, instilling a sense of self-confidence and independence. Prior to his arrival as director, Iowa's agency for the blind was in disarray and ranked last among other state rehabilitation agencies for the blind.

The implementation of his program dramatically improved the opportunities for blind Iowans. Dr. Jernigan spread his philosophy and rehabilitation approach nationwide throughout the 1960s and 1970s in his many publications and speeches and through his involvement with the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). He received numerous awards for his work from national organizations and the highest levels of government, including the office of the President of the United States. The Department's building meets National Register Criterion B as it served as his home and the location where his revolutionary rehabilitation training model was first implemented and as the base from where Dr. Jernigan directed the movement. The training program and its guiding philosophy continue to be implemented in the building today.

Justification for Exceptional Importance - Significance in the Past Fifty Years

The Civil Rights movement for blind individuals in which Dr. Jernigan played a significant role was part of a larger social movement during a historically important time in American history. Dr. Jernigan's work coincided with the Civil Rights movement which sought to eradicate the discrimination in public and private life faced by African-Americans. The Civil Rights movement began in the 1950s and saw significant social and legal upheavals throughout the 1960s that led to dramatic changes throughout all facets of American life. The Civil Rights movement not only spawned the disability rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s, but led to equal rights movements by other groups that faced discrimination and repression, such as women and homosexuals. The disability rights movement utilized many of the same signature strategies of the Civil Rights movement, including protests, civil disobedience, and legal challenges. In addition, both movements culminated in federal legislation that bans discrimination: the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. As president of the NFB during this tumultuous time, Dr. Jernigan marshaled the organization's members to legally challenge discriminatory actions and to lobby for legislation that would ensure equal access to employment, such as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Dr. Jernigan's philosophical stance and uncompromising writings and speeches served as a catalyst that energized blind Americans to fight for their rights.

Building History

In 1959, the Iowa Commission for the Blind purchased the building that had been built as a YMCA. Construction of this YMCA building began in 1911 and was finished June 13, 1912. Its opening was marked by a parade with more than 1,500 persons participating. It was built to replace the YMCA building at Fourth Street and Grand Avenue, which was built 1890-91 and had become too small for the Y's activities. The YMCA featured two gymnasiums. One gym was 80 x 55 feet, and the other was 55 x 36 feet. They could be

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 20

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

opened and combined for a space of 116 X 55 feet. A running track was situated above the main gym. The YMCA also had two regulation sized handball courts, an exercise room, a 60 x 20 feet swimming pool, forty shower baths, three bowling alleys, a reading room and lobby, and a lunch room. It also had 114 dormitory rooms to accommodate 165 men. This YMCA was vacated when a new, larger YMCA, known as the Riverfront YMCA, was built in 1957 at the corner of Second Ave and Locust Street in Des Moines, IA.

The architects for the 1912 YMCA were Proudfoot, Bird, and Rawson. This regionally prominent architecture firm was founded as Proudfoot & Bird in Des Moines, Iowa in 1896 and specialized in public buildings. The firm became known as Proudfoot, Bird, and Rawson in 1910 when H.D. Rawson became a partner. They designed many important buildings throughout Iowa, including the Polk County Courthouse (Des Moines, IA), U.S. Post Office and Courthouse (Dubuque, Iowa), Abraham Lincoln High School and Theodore Roosevelt High School (Des Moines, IA), four of the five buildings on the University of Iowa campus known as the Pentacrest (Jessup Hall, Macbride Hall, Maclean Hall, and Schaeffer Hall), and many more.

The building remained the property of the YMCA until it was purchased by the Commission. Dr. Jernigan lobbied for and received funds from the Iowa State Legislature to purchase and remodel the building to serve as a proving ground for his philosophy on the rehabilitation of blind individuals.

Kenneth Jernigan - Formative Years

Kenneth Jernigan was born blind in 1926 in Detroit, Michigan. Shortly after his birth, his family moved to a farm near Beech Grove, Tennessee. Jernigan described his youth as isolated, both at home and at the Tennessee School for the Blind, which he began attending in 1933 at the age of six. At home, he was the only blind person around for miles. At school, he and the other students were kept apart from the community. He called the campus of the school a "closed ecology." His natural curiosity and voracious appetite for knowledge came through no matter. Before he learned Braille, he relied on others to read to him. "Every time I could, I got somebody to read to me. Read what? Anything-anything I could get. I would nag and pester anybody I could find to read me anything that was available-the Bible, an agriculture yearbook, a part of a newspaper, or the Sears Roebuck catalog. It didn't matter. Reading was magic. It opened up new worlds." (Jernigan, *Kenneth Jernigan: The Master, The Mission, The Movement*, p. 53.) As he became a proficient Braille reader at school, only the limitations on the availability of Braille materials prevented him from reading at will. (As Braille materials were scarce in Tennessee, school officials rationed the lending of books to the students.)

Jernigan had his first contact with a state rehabilitation agency for the blind in 1945 when he was a senior in high school. The visiting rehabilitation counselor asked what he wanted to study when he went to college. Jernigan replied he had only one area of interest, the law. The counselor indicated that the agency would not provide assistance if he chose to become a lawyer because that was not a realistic goal for someone who was blind. Pursuing a law degree without the agency's assistance was financially impossible. Instead, he enrolled in Tennessee Polytechnic Institute (TPI) where he studied Social Sciences. As the only blind student on campus, he encountered a great deal of resistance and skepticism from his professors. He had to justify his presence in each class and ask to be treated on equal terms with his peers. A biology professor confronted him stating, "You can sit in this class if you want to, but I can tell you right now that you will fail. I didn't want you here, but the dean made me take you." (Jernigan, *Kenneth Jernigan: The Master, The Mission, The Movement*, p. 75.) Again, his academic talents and natural leadership abilities prevailed. He participated in intercollegiate debates, was on the college paper's editorial staff, and was elected to serve in a number of club and class offices. The biology professor who once disregarded him became a staunch ally. Upon graduation as an "A" student, he enrolled in the graduate program at Peabody College in Nashville where he earned a Masters degree in English. He returned to Tennessee School for the Blind as an English teacher in 1949.

Throughout his early life, Jernigan was forced to fight for opportunities not seen as conceivable or appropriate for a blind individual. He had to routinely prove he deserved a place in society, not to be cast off into blind institutions or occupations. He did these things literally on his own. In 1949, he joined the Tennessee affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). During this time of his life, he began formalizing his philosophy of blindness. When he discovered the NFB, he found an organization that not only held his same beliefs regarding the worth of blind individuals, but its members actively worked to challenge misconceptions and low expectations.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 21

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

The National Federation of the Blind and the Organized Blind Movement

Jernigan's affiliation with the NFB was fortuitous for both him and the organization. The NFB was founded in 1940 by members representing organizations in California, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. The first president and ideological leader was Dr. Jacobus tenBroek.

Early efforts to form organizations of blind individuals, usually started by alumni of schools for the blind, were largely local in nature. Their self-advocacy efforts were often thwarted by school administrators and local leaders who sought to define their own agenda for the organization's mission.

The mid-twentieth century was a time when many people with disabilities were organizing to fight discrimination, including the League of the Physically Handicapped (1935), American Federation of the Physically Handicapped (1940), Cerebral Palsy Society (1946), and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (1947). The first national organizations for blind individuals to form were the American Association of Workers for the Blind (AAWB) (1905) and the American Foundation for the Blind (1921). While these organizations represented a shift toward professionalism and away from school-affiliated associations, tenBroek, Dr. Newel Perry, and others felt that these organizations represented the views and needs of the agencies that provided services to blind individuals. They sought to establish an advocacy organization that represented and consisted of blind individuals themselves. As tenBroek stated in his speech at the inaugural meeting of the NFB, "it is necessary for the blind to organize themselves and their ideas upon a national basis, so that blind men the nation over may live in physical comfort, social dignity, and spiritual self-respect." (Matson, *Walking Alone and Marching Together*, p. 5.)

The NFB was seeking to overcome institutional barriers and governmental aid programs mandated by state and federal legislation that deterred competitive employment and social integration. This legislation was the product of a society that viewed disabled individuals at best as people in need of care and treatment and at worst as individuals who are paying for sins. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, training for blind individuals largely consisted of vocational training in "blind trades" such as weaving, knitting, basketry, chair caning, and music-related (e.g., piano tuning). In turn, these trades were plied in "sheltered workshops" where wages were low and opportunities for advancement were nil.

The NFB modeled its organization, lobbying activities, and community action after the labor unions. It would become the "voice of the blind" commenting on and influencing legislative actions such as the Social Security Act amendments, the Fair Labor Standards Act, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Act.

The organization was gaining its footing as a national organization when Dr. Jernigan joined its ranks. His early experiences and the ideas and activism being promoted by the nine-year old Federation galvanized Dr. Jernigan. The organization gave him an avenue to pursue his activism and ideals. At the same time, the organization needed Dr. Jernigan's intellectual and leadership abilities. Dr. tenBroek & Dr. Perry were leaders of the NFB's organized blind movement when Dr. Jernigan became an active member. They were looking for talented individuals to spread the organization's mission and strengthen its membership. Already in 1952, Jernigan organized and attended his first national convention, which was held in Nashville and attended by 150 delegates from 31 states. These years marked the beginning of a long and fruitful association. By 1951, he was elected president of the Tennessee chapter. He became a member of the NFB's Executive Committee in 1952 and First Vice-President in 1958. In 1968, he was elected president of the NFB and served in that position until 1986, with a brief break in his tenure in 1977.

Dr. Jernigan's first steps toward social activism began when he lived in California. In 1953, he moved to Oakland, California to join the staff of the new California Orientation Center for Blind Adults run by Dr. Newel Perry. In 1954, he challenged the California school system for its refusal to hire a qualified blind teacher to teach sighted children in public schools. Soon after, he wrote to the California Supreme Court in 1956 arguing for the right of a blind man to serve on a jury. These early activities demonstrate his twin desires to fight for the rights of blind individuals to pursue their own interests according to their abilities and to change institutional attitudes toward blind individuals. These desires became the hallmark of his life's work. While he was successful in California, Jernigan began looking for an opportunity to build a program according to his philosophy. In 1958, he found that opportunity in Iowa.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 22

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

The Iowa Experiment.

"If a person must be blind, it is better to be blind in Iowa than in any other place in the nation or the world! This statement sums up the story of the Iowa Commission for the Blind; and more pertinently, of its Director, Kenneth Jernigan. That narrative is much more than a success story. It is the story of high aspiration magnificently accomplished - of an impossible dream become reality."

Harold Russell, Chairman of the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, in presenting a special citation to Dr. Jernigan from the President of the United States in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the advancement of blind individuals (1968).

When Dr. Jernigan arrived in Iowa in 1958 Mr. Russell's statement regarding Iowa's blind population would have been ludicrous. The Iowa Commission for the Blind ranked last among all state agencies providing rehabilitation services to blind individuals. Like many other programs, Iowa's rehabilitation program was based upon the medical model. In this model, individuals with disabilities are seen as people whose physical deformities require correction and that limitations are inherent because of those physical conditions. This model limited the employment and skills training opportunities for blind individuals. Indeed, outside of the sheltered workshops, blind persons were considered unemployable.

Jernigan's philosophy and rehabilitation approach were based on the "social" model of disability. In this view, individuals who are blind are a minority in society and faced discrimination because of their blindness. Basing rehabilitation programs on corrective or restorative activities, which were hallmarks of the medical model, would not bring social equality. Instead, blind individuals and society at large needed to acknowledge that individuals with disabilities, including those who are blind, simply utilized different means to accomplish daily tasks. Blind individuals had the same right to educational and employment opportunities as sighted individuals. They had the right to participate in all civic and social functions. This philosophical approach was a radical one in mid-twentieth century America. Many of those agencies, public and private, whose purpose was to assist blind individuals attain self-sufficiency, did not take this view. In a story reminiscent of Dr. Jernigan's experience, Iowa Commissioner Ethyl Holmes wrote the following in a 1943 letter to Percy Bordwell of the Dean's Office at the University of Iowa's College of Law: "Yes, I do know the difficulties that many of the blind law graduates have encountered and personally, I have not encouraged blind persons entering that field." Ms. Holmes was responding to Mr. Bordwell's request for assistance in placing a blind law student, who had received the highest score among his peers who took the bar exam.

Dr. Jernigan's impact in Iowa was immediate. One of Dr. Jernigan's first acts as Director was to find a new location for the agency. He was appalled at the space in which staff were currently working, located in a government owned building called the Amos Hiatt School. A total of eight staff were housed in three rooms. No private room for meeting with clients was available. The 1959 Commission's annual report offered the following description of the Director's office:

It is furnished with antiquated chairs and tables that are castoffs from other state agencies and has a make-shift bookcase and an old discarded magazine rack as the only filing cabinets. These are so inadequate that materials are stacked in the corners in knee-high piles and also on the top of the bookcase. On the door of the Director's office are printed these words: "Child Welfare: Private." (1959 Annual Report, p. 7)

The physical state of the offices reflected the effectiveness of the agency at that time. In 1957, only twelve blind persons were placed in employment, many of them in sheltered workshops. Individuals participating in the blind vendors program were earning an average of \$105 a month. The agency had a list of 4,000 blind Iowans, many of whom were in need of services. A staff of five professionals and three clerical personnel and a limited budget were to meet these needs.

To remedy this situation, he began designing his new rehabilitation program and set about finding a new location to implement it. Dr. Jernigan lobbied the state legislature for funds to purchase the downtown Des Moines YMCA building to serve as the new location for

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 23

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

the agency. In 1959, the legislature appropriated \$300,000 to buy the building. Soon after, Dr. Jernigan requested and received an additional \$500,000 to complete an extensive remodel of the building. With these funds, he could physically shape the building to reflect his training approach and the program he envisioned. His revolutionary program focused both on independent skills training and on instilling a sense of self-confidence and independence. He also encouraged agency clients to participate in consumer organizations and civil actions. His effort became known as the "Iowa Experiment."

In this new approach, vocational services would emphasize an individual's preference in employment and education. Rather than directing a person into "acceptable" jobs, clients would be encouraged and supported in their chosen employment path. Skills training would emphasize independence and alternative techniques.

Dr. Jernigan's vocational approach was based on the belief that "with proper training and opportunity the average blind person can do the average job in the average place of business and do it as well as a sighted person similarly situated." (Jernigan, *Kenneth Jernigan: The Master, The Mission, The Movement*, p.15.) He also believed that training alone was not enough. Attitudes and expectations had to be addressed as well. As he stated in a speech given in 1980:

"I believe that we as blind people are capable of competing on terms of real equality with others in jobs. I believe that the reason we have not done so in the past is that society has custodialized us and held us down. But I believe also that this has not happened because society has wanted to be vicious or unkind or mean. It is because people have taken for granted that that's the way blind people are, that blind persons can't be expected to do this or that kind of thing.

Furthermore, I believe that since we are part of society, we have accepted the public views about us and have done a great deal to reinforce those views." (Jernigan, *Kenneth Jernigan: The Master, The Mission, The Movement*, p. 58.)

After the Second World War, a number of orientation and rehabilitation centers for blind adults were being established. However, Iowa had no such facility. Dr. Jernigan saw the new building a perfect site for an adult Orientation and Adjustment Center. This residential training center focused on independent travel using the long white cane, industrial arts (initially for men only), home economics (initially for women only) and physical exercise, for which the YMCA's pool and gymnasium were well suited. A class that focused on "personal adjustment and attitudes about blindness" was meant to help students overcome feelings of helplessness that over-protective family members and others unintentionally instilled.

Another important, unique trait of this program was his belief that the "complex distinctions which are often made between those who have partial sight and those who are totally blind, between those who have been blind from childhood and those who have become blind as adults are largely meaningless." (Jernigan, "A Definition of Blindness," p.7.) Based on that belief, all individuals who attended the Center received the same training program, using sleep shades and a long white cane, regardless of their diagnosed visual acuity or perception. This approach ensured, and continues to do so, that all students gain the same level of confidence in their skills and attitude.

The new building was also large enough to accommodate a new talking book and Braille book library. Dr. Jernigan was committed to developing the largest and best library in the nation. In 1960, the library holdings were designated by the Library of Congress as a regional library to serve blind Iowans. By 1967, the agency's library had become the largest of its kind in the world. For this distinction, Dr. Jernigan received the American Library Association's Francis Joseph Campbell Award for outstanding accomplishments for providing library services to the blind. Today, the Department's Library continues to house the largest collection of Braille books in the world. In 2000, the library circulated its eight-millionth book.

He also sought to expand operations and increase the earnings of blind Iowans who operated cafeterias and vending sites in the state as part of the Business Enterprises Program. This program was instituted in Iowa through the federal Randolph-Sheppard Act, which was enacted in 1936. This law directed public agencies to give preference to blind vendors in the operation of vending facilities on public property. The first food service site in Iowa to open under this legislation was in 1939 in Sioux City. When Dr. Jernigan became director, twelve vending sites were in operation, with vendors earning average of \$100 per month - the smallest average in the nation.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 24

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

The effectiveness of his approach became apparent by the end of 1959, one full fiscal year after Dr. Jernigan's arrival. Twenty-six blind individuals were placed in employment, with 20 of those in competitive employment. A blind vendor's average monthly earnings rose to \$120. He received a \$125,000 increase to the agency's budget and had hired a staff of thirteen professionals and six clerical personnel.

In 1959, the first blind Iowan was hired as a teacher in a public school in Coralville, Iowa. That same year, the adult Orientation and Adjustment Center opened with three students and two teachers. (The Orientation Center expanded to a residential program in 1961 once the agency had the capacity and facility to implement it.)

When Dr. Jernigan left the Iowa Department for the Blind in 1978, it had a staff of over 120, offices established in Sioux City, Waterloo and Cedar Rapids, and thousands of Iowans were being served by the agency. Twenty-seven vending facilities were established throughout the state, including the cafeteria that opened in the building in 1969, with an average annual income to blind vendors of \$10,200. Upon Jernigan's resignation, Governor Robert Ray wrote, "You brought with you a determination to share your positive attitude toward life and your knowledge and experience that sightless people could have meaningful and confident lives. You made them realize that they too can work and read and play, and they can have families and contribute to the well-being of others every bit as much as other people, and enjoy it."

Legacy

While reflecting on changes in the rehabilitation field, Dr. Fred Schroeder argued that "Dr. Jernigan's move to Iowa heralded the beginning of a revolution--the rebellion of the blind against the established rehabilitation system, the seizing of power from the hands of others, and the beginning of self-determination." (Schroeder, "The Altering Characteristics of Rehabilitation: The Perspective of Half a Century.") Dr. Jernigan's "Iowa Experiment" to improve the vocational rehabilitation programs was only part of his story. Equally important was his challenge to the prevailing views of society toward blind individuals. Jernigan's success was due to his political acumen, inspirational writings, and fiery oratory. In his many speeches and writings as president of the NFB he confronted and questioned the stereotypes of individuals who are blind: unable to travel independently, excel at handicraft artistry, natural musical abilities, enhanced senses of hearing and touch. He challenged rehabilitation and social service professionals and blind individuals themselves to respect the individuality of blind persons and their right to participate in all aspects of society.

His actions in the fight for the rights of blind individuals took many forms. As president of the NFB, he guided that organization's efforts in the 1970s and 1980s to allow sheltered-workshop workers to unionize and to pass legislation in several states that require blind children be evaluated for and taught Braille in public schools. Under his leadership, the NFB advocated for changes to the federal Vocational Rehabilitation Act that would allow clients of VR programs to direct their own rehabilitation plans based on informed choice and change the VR program's eligibility standards to prevent VR agencies from excluding those with significant disabilities, including blindness, on the belief that they were too disabled to benefit from VR services. These important amendments were included in the 1992 reauthorization of the Act. He led a successful effort in the 1980s to reverse the U.S. Department of State's policy on prohibiting blind individuals from working in the diplomatic services. He also challenged the U.S. commercial airlines policy that prevented blind passengers from keeping their canes at their seats, in which he was successful, and the policy of preventing blind passengers from sitting in an exit row.

In 1978, Dr. Jernigan left Iowa and moved to Baltimore, Maryland where he became the executive director of the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults. At that time, he helped establish the National Center for the Blind as the NFB headquarters in Baltimore. In his continued capacity as the NFB president, he established the International Braille and Technology Center dedicated to research and promotion of Braille literacy and non-visual access technology. He also created NEWSLINE, a free audio-based newspaper service for all blind and visually impaired persons in the United States. In 2004, the NFB Jernigan Institute was established. The mission of the Institute is to lead "the quest to understand the real problems of blindness and to develop innovative education, technologies, products and services that help the world's blind to achieve independence." Today, the NFB has more than 50,000 members and affiliate chapters in all 50 states and in the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 25

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

His importance to blind individuals nationwide and his impact on American society is revealed by the awards, appointments, and recognition he received from national public and private organizations. In 1968, Dr. Jernigan was acknowledged with a special citation from President Lyndon Johnson for his outstanding contributions to the advancement of blind individuals. President Gerald Ford appointed Dr. Jernigan to serve as special advisor to the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals in 1976 and on Library and Information Services in 1977. He received a U.S. Department of Labor award for significant contributions to the American worker. He was a member of the National Advisory Committee on Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, was a special consultant on Services for the Blind (appointed by the Federal Commissioner of Rehabilitation), and was an advisor on museum programs for blind visitors to the Smithsonian Institution. He received honorary doctorate degrees in the Humanities from Coe College (Cedar Rapids, Iowa) and Drake University (Des Moines, IA). Seton Hall University (Newark, New Jersey) awarded him an honorary Doctor of Law degree. In 1998, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), an agency of the United States Department of Education.

Dr. Jernigan died in October 1998. However, his impact continues to this day. Many of those Iowans who received training at the Department's Orientation Center during his tenure have gone on to leadership positions in other states. One graduate (Joanne Wilson) was appointed by President George W. Bush to serve as the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in the U.S. Department of Education in 2001. In recent years, many other state vocational rehabilitation agencies have adopted the Iowa model including New Mexico, Louisiana, Nebraska, and Hawaii. Further the positive philosophy of blindness that he championed throughout his life continues to have a profound impact on the lives of blind individuals and guides public and private agencies in the services they provide to blind Americans.

Upon his death, Euclid Herie, then president of the World Blind Union, reflected that "Dr. Jernigan influenced the lives of blind persons throughout the world for more than a half-century. He fought for their inclusion in education, employment and culture. His name will be remembered alongside Louis Braille as one of the most influential leaders in the blindness movement." (Imhoff. "Kenneth Jernigan, 71, Advocate for the Blind" 5B.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 26

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 27

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 28

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 29

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 13 of the new YMCA plat, an official plat of N 126 feet of E 152 feet of lot 10, an official plat of NW ¼ of SE ¼ of Sec. 4, TWP. 78, Rge. 24

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Iowa Commission for the Blind building.

Iowa Commission for the Blind Photographs

All photographs were taken by Karen Schweitzer on 7/17/2008. The digital photos are stored on CD-R Number 149. The photographs were printed with Epson Ultrachrome ink on Epson Premium Glossy photo paper by iMAGING SOLUTIONS.

1. Outside: East and North Side of Building. Camera is facing southwest.
2. Outside: South Side of Building. Camera is facing northwest.
3. Outside: West Side of Building. Camera is facing north.
4. Reception Lobby. Camera is facing northwest.
5. Recreation Room. Camera is facing south.
6. Recreation Room. Camera is facing south.
7. Break Room. Camera is facing northeast.
8. Director's Conference Room. Camera is facing southeast.
9. Director's Office. Camera is facing northeast.
10. Director's Office Reception Room. Camera is facing south.

CLG NATIONAL REGISTER REVIEW

CLG Name Des Moines Date of Public Meeting 1/21/09

Property Name Iowa Commission for the Blind, 524 - 4th Street, Des Moines, Polk County

1. For Historic Preservation Commission:

- ☒ Recommendation of National Register eligibility
☐ Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature Susan Holderness Date 1/21/09

Print Name Susan Holderness

Title Chair, Historic Commission

Reason(s) for recommendation:

Concur with the findings in the nomination.

2. For Chief Elected Local Official:

- ☒ Recommendation of National Register eligibility
☐ Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature T.M. Franklin Cownie Date 2/2/09

Print Name T.M. Franklin Cownie

Title Mayor

Reason(s) for recommendation:

3. Professional Evaluation:

- ☒ Recommendation of National Register eligibility
☐ Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature Ralph J. Christian Date 2/9/09

Print Name RALPH J CHRISTIAN

Title HISTORIAN, HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Reason(s) for recommendation:

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Iowa Comission for the Blind Building
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Polk

DATE RECEIVED: 8/05/09 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/24/09
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/08/09 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/18/09
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 09000714

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ ACCEPT ✓ RETURN ___ REJECT 9/18/2009 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The nomination does not provide sufficient justification on the national significance of the "Iowa Experiment" and therefore Dr. Norman Jernigan's national significance in instituting the "positive philosophy" of blindness as a national educational policy.

RECOM./CRITERIA Return - Patrick Andrews

REVIEWER Turkiga L. Lowe DISCIPLINE HISTORIAN

TELEPHONE 202-354-2266 DATE 9/18/2009

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

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



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:
(2280)

National Register of Historic Places Evaluation/Return Sheet

Property Name: Iowa Commission for the Blind Building (Polk County, IA)
Reference Number: 09000714

Reason for Return:

The Iowa Commission for the Blind Building in Polk County, Iowa is being returned for the following substantive reasons.

Overall, the nomination does a good job of illustrating Dr. Jernigan's individual significance in the history of rehabilitation programs for the blind in Iowa and his association with the Iowa Commission for the Blind Building from 1959 to 1978. While we have no doubt that the nomination reaches the level of state significance under Criteria B-Social History, Education, and Politics and Government, in order to evaluate this nomination within a national context, additional documentation is needed to address the issues below.

The nomination does not provide sufficient information on the national significance of the "Iowa Experiment" and therefore Dr. Jernigan's leadership in instituting his "positive philosophy" as a national education policy. The documentation could do this by providing a comparative framework to other education models for the blind instituted during the period of significance, comparing their results, and the extent of their current use.

The nomination also does not sufficiently describe Dr. Jernigan's national "activism" and "organizing" and how these activities led to accomplishment of the national political goals of the blind during his tenure at the Iowa Commission. Did Dr. Jernigan have a role in passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973? If so, what were some of his activities in support of the legislation? What policy debates were undertaken by the various conferences and committees on which he served during the 1970s? What changes in national rehabilitation policy were implemented due to his involvement and what was the result of these changes within other state rehabilitation programs?

The National Register strongly encourages re-submittal of the nomination with the additional documentation. If the re-submitted nomination can provide justification for national significance, the Iowa Commission for the Blind building may be assessed for its potential for National Historic Landmark nomination.

Turkiya Lowe, Historian
National Register of Historic Places
202-354-2266
9/18/2009

420



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in 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 any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

other names/site number YMCA, Iowa Department for the Blind

2. Location

street & number 524 4th Street not for publication N/A
city or town Des Moines vicinity N/A
state Iowa code IA county Polk code 153 zip code 50309-2364

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally X statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara A. Mitchell DSHPO
Signature of certifying official

May 18, 2010
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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this 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): _____

Patricia Andrews
Signature of Keeper

7/1/2010
Date
of Action

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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Government</u>	Sub: <u>Government Office</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>Library</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>School</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>Education Related</u>
<u>Social</u>	<u>Civic</u>
<u>Commerce/Trade</u>	<u>Restaurant</u>
<u>Commerce/Trade</u>	<u>Specialty Store</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>Multiple Dwelling</u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Government</u>	Sub: <u>Government Office</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>Library</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>School</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>Education Related</u>
<u>Social</u>	<u>Civic</u>
<u>Commerce/Trade</u>	<u>Specialty Store</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>Multiple Dwelling</u>

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revival

Classical Revivals

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>Concrete</u>
roof	<u>Synthetics - Rubber</u>
walls	<u>Brick</u>
	<u>Stone - Limestone</u>
other	<u>Terra Cotta</u>

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Description

Summary

The Iowa Commission for the Blind building attained statewide significance during Dr. Kenneth Jernigan's tenure (1958-1978) as its director.¹ Established in 1925 as the Iowa Commission for the Blind, the agency achieved departmental status in 1988. The building which houses the currently named Iowa Department for the Blind is located at 524 4th Street, on the corner of 4th Street and Watson Powell Jr. Way in the northeast section of downtown Des Moines, Iowa. The building is located on the west side of 4th street and the south side of Watson Powell. It is four blocks west of the Des Moines river. A three-story modern office building (1968), a three-story parking garage (1908), a single story medical building (1965), and a parking lot lie in close proximity to the building. The Department's multi-story building was built in 1911-1912 as a YMCA in the Classical Revival-style. The building is not uniform in height: the front portion of the building is six stories high; a middle portion that once contained a courtyard is five stories high, and the back portion of the building has three stories. As the east and north sides are in public view, being bound by sidewalks and streets, they possess decorative elements that the west and most of the south sides do not. (An alley separates the building from the parking garage on the south side; an alley also separates the building from the office building on the west side.) The arrangement, number, and style of the windows and the decorative elements used on the east and north facades convey symmetry and balance typical of Classical Revival style buildings. The property is in excellent condition. Since the mid-1960s, the building's infrastructure has been routinely updated to modern standards and to ensure compliance with building and fire codes, including replacing windows, upgrading roofing materials, and installing new heating, cooling, and ventilation systems.

Exterior

East Façade

On the east façade, the buff-color bricks are laid using a Flemish stretcher bond pattern. (Seven rows of stretcher bond appear between single rows of Flemish bond.) The middle section extends by two feet, creating a six-story rectangular bay. This bay highlights the main entrance to the building, which is the building's most striking exterior feature. The entrance is made grand not only by the projecting rectangular bay but also by the large rusticated blocks that form an archivolt surrounding the stairs and doors that lead into the building. Nine voussoir blocks create an arch at the top of entrance. The arch's soffit is decorated with a series of carved rosettes framed by inset squares. A brass wall plaque reading "Iowa Commission for the Blind 1969" is bolted to the first two blocks on the left side. Decorative elements marking the entrance are carried to the second floor. The two second floor windows that appear above the entrance have an elaborate stone frame. Two scrolled moldings appear to the left and right of the frame, giving an appearance of book-ends. A guilloche and bead-and-reel motif surround the windows. A single decorative pilaster appears between the windows. A cornice with a shield bas-relief in the center of the frieze, dentils in the cornice, and a crown molding cap the window frame.

A concrete ashlar block foundation forms a solid white base for the building. The foundation is approximately ten feet high on the south end and four feet high on the north end, reflecting the slope of 4th Street. Many decorative elements distinguish the first floor from the other floors. Nine arched windows on the first floor are slightly inset from the façade. A course of mauve-glazed stretcher bricks runs from base to base of the window arch and two courses of mauve-glazed header bond bricks follow the arch of these windows, an effect which visually connects each window. The bricks above this belt course are laid using the header bond pattern. A single stone keystone appears at the top of the window arch. A thin white stone belt course connects the keystones. Above the belt course, a section of mauve-glazed bricks laid in a soldier pattern the width of a window appears above each window. Other bricks in this section are laid in a stretcher pattern. Finally, the top of the first floor is marked by a stone belt course.

Floors two through five have twelve, double-hung windows - four windows flank each side of the bay and four windows are in the bay. Each window has a stone sill. In 1988, all windows in the building were replaced with high energy efficient double-paned units that have low-e coating and aluminum framing. The exterior trim of the new windows closely matches the trim and appearance of the original windows. Most of the windows are designed to open for life safety considerations in the event of a fire. The arched windows on the first floor, which had been bricked in, were restored at this time.

¹ Kenneth Jernigan was commonly referred to as Dr. Jernigan as an honorary title. He received three honorary doctorate degrees during his lifetime.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Very little decorative detail appears on floors two through five, with two exceptions. The first exception is the stone frame around the two second floor windows marking the entrance, as described above. A second exception is four simple square brick designs used to further mark the entrance on the third and fourth floors. Mauve-glazed brick headers define the sides of these squares, and small, white stone blocks are placed at the corners. Two of these square designs appear above the middle two windows on the third floor, and two appear above the middle two windows on the fourth floor. Simple, square modillions support the sills on each of these middle windows.

A stone belt course marks the base of the sixth floor. The twelve double-hung windows on this floor have the same appearance as the windows on floors 2 through 5. However, a vertical rectangular brick design appears between each window and window pair. These rectangles have the same design as the four smaller squares on the third and fourth floors. Mauve-glazed brick headers define the sides of the rectangle and small, white stone blocks are placed at the corners.

The roofline is marked by a stone cornice supported by scrolled corbels. The soffit is decorated with a series of inset squares. The entablature is adorned with fleurs-de-lis between each corbel and an egg-and-dart motif appears at its base. Small dentils decorate the bed-mould. A simple crown molding tops the cornice.

North Façade

The north side shows the length of the building, running approximately 132 feet in length. At about the two-thirds point, the building changes from six stories to three. The concrete ashlar block foundation continues on this side of the building. The foundation is four feet high on the east end and two feet high on the west, reflecting the slight slope of Watson Powell Jr. Way.

The first floor of the six-story portion is similar in decorative detail to the first floor on the east side. The walls are constructed of sand-color bricks laid in a Flemish stretcher bond pattern. Five arched windows are slightly inset from the façade. Courses of mauve-glazed bricks connect at the arch base and surround the window arches, visually connecting each window or window pair. The bricks above this belt course are laid using the header bond pattern. A stone keystone appears at the top of the window arch. A thin white stone belt course continuing from the east façade connects the keystones. Above the belt course, a section of mauve-glazed bricks the width of a window appears above each window. Other bricks in this section are laid in a stretcher pattern. Finally, the top of the first floor is marked by a stone belt course which continues from the east façade.

A secondary entryway appears between the fourth and fifth arched windows. This entryway is framed by stone pilasters supporting a full unadorned entablature. A wheelchair-accessible ramp leading to this entry was added in 1974 and an automatic door was installed in 1993.

A simple, square four-pane window appears west of the fifth arched window and marks the end of the six-story portion. The mauve-glazed brick belt course is temporarily interrupted by the stone sill for this window. The thin white stone belt course appears at the top of this window and ends at the terminus of the six-story portion.

The second floor has six windows: two four-pane windows flank four smaller, square four-pane windows. Each window has an unadorned stone sill. Two small rectangular vent holes appear below each of the four square windows.

The third floor has seven windows. The first window on the left (east) is a double-hung window with a stone sill. Four arched windows are next. Two courses of mauve-glazed header bond bricks follow the arch of these windows, and a stone keystone appears at the top of the window arch. (No brick or belt courses are used to connect the arch base or keystones here.) Two double-hung windows with stone sills appear to the right (west) of the arched windows.

The fourth and fifth floors have eleven windows each. These double-hung windows have a stone sill. No other adornments are used on these floors.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

The decorative detail on the sixth floor on the north façade is the same as that on the east façade. A stone belt course continuing from the east façade marks the base of the floor. Eleven double-hung windows have stone sills. A vertical rectangular brick design appears between each window, with mauve-glazed brick headers defining the sides of the rectangle and small, white stone blocks at the corners.

The roofline is marked by the same stone cornice as that on the east side.

The back, three-story portion of the building is visible on the north side. This portion of the building, which was part of the original building, does not contain windows; however, several decorative details are used to visually connect the two portions. Three large arch window openings were infilled with brick in 1970. The two courses of mauve-glazed header bond bricks that followed the arch of these windows and the keystone at the top of the arch remain. A white ashlar belt course appears below the arch of the windows. The ashlar belt course, which continues from the stone belt course that marked the top of the first floor from the six-story portion, runs the remaining length of the building. Three two-story-high rectangle designs appear above each arch. Mauve-glazed brick headers define the sides of the rectangle and small, white stone blocks are placed at the corners.

West Façade

The west side of the three-story portion of the building consists of unadorned red bricks laid in the common bond pattern. A series of drain and utility pipes run from roof to ground. Brick patterns reveal where arched windows were once present on each floor. (These windows were also infilled with brick in 1970.) Metal vent openings and security lights appear intermittently. A metal door with a hydraulic lift is at the far left (east) side. (This door leads to a shipping and receiving area that is primarily used by the library staff to transfer materials in alternative media requested and returned by patrons of the Department's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.) Next to this door, a freight elevator shaft protrudes from the wall. This elevator was installed in 1965. The brickwork on this shaft is a different shade of red and is laid in a common bond pattern. A first floor emergency exit door appears next to the shaft; a no longer used concrete loading dock extends from this door. An emergency exit door for the first floor is on the north side of the west wall. A black metal staircase leads from the door to the ground.

The west side of the six-story portion consists of unadorned red bricks laid in the common bond pattern and drain and utility pipes running along the side. Simple, double-hung windows are visible on the fifth and sixth floors. No other noteworthy features are apparent.

South Façade

The three different heights of the building are only visible on the south side of the building. A courtyard was once present on the south side of the original building, between the six-story portion and the three-story portion. An addition was built over part of this courtyard in 1925. In 1975, a five-story addition was built over the remaining courtyard. (A body was found under the courtyard area. Authorities investigated and determined the body had been there many years and probably dated back to when the building was constructed.) Because of this addition, the south side of the building has a less uniform appearance. The newer construction of this addition is evident in the brickwork, which differs both in color and design from the brickwork on the six-story and three-story portions of the building.

Decorative elements similar to those on the east and north façades appear on one-third of the six-story portion. The brickwork has the same color and pattern. Stone belt courses mark the top of the first floor and the bottom of the sixth, and the decorative stone cornice marks the roofline. The façade of the remaining two-thirds of the six-story portion consists of unadorned red bricks laid in the common bond pattern.

Due to the slope of the building site, portions of the basement wall are exposed on the south side. A large automatic door (9.5 feet wide by 6.5 feet high) that leads into the basement is near the front of the building.

The first floor of this portion has four windows: two small arched windows, one larger arched window, and one double-hung window. Two courses of header bond bricks outline the top of the arched windows. The bricks have the same color as the surrounding bricks. The second floor has four double-hung windows; floors three through six have five double hung windows. All of the windows on the south side have stone sills.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

The south façade of the building constructed in 1974-1975 consists only of red brickwork in a common bond pattern. Vents and a single security light appear on this portion of the building. An emergency exit door leading to the south stairwell in the basement is located here. Double steel doors open to an attached storage room.

The façade of the three-story portion uses the same brickwork color and pattern as the façade on the west side. An emergency exit door leading to the gym in the basement is located here. Brick patterns reveal where arched windows were once present on each floor.

Roof

Each portion of the building has a flat roof. The roof was replaced in 1960 after a building fire. Handball courts on the roof were removed at this time. In 1998, the roof of the six-story portion was replaced with synthetic rubber.

The east side of the roof can be accessed from the sixth floor via the main stairway. It offers a seating area for staff and students, complete with container gardens. A chain link safety fence surrounds this portion of the roof.

The roof of the three-story portion was replaced with synthetic rubber in 1992. Air conditioning units are located on this portion of the roof.

Interior

In 1959, the legislature appropriated money to purchase the YMCA building to house the Iowa Commission for the Blind. At that time, Dr. Jernigan requested and received \$500,000 to complete an extensive remodel of the building to accommodate the work of the agency, including the establishment of the talking book and Braille book library. The agency's first major remodel was started and completed in 1960.

Main Entry

In 1989, the steel doors at the 4th street entrance were replaced with insulated glass doors and archway. Department staff designed and built the large bent oak interior trim that duplicates the original trim at that entrance. Live steam from the boiler was used to bend the wood. An 8-step pink and white marble staircase leads to the first floor landing. White marble covers approximately half of the walls. A metal and wood hand railing divides the staircase. The entrance has a cathedral ceiling. The landing has a marble terrazzo floor.

Oak and glass double doors at the front of the landing lead into the Reception lobby on the first floor. A short hall way to the left leads to the recreation room, staff offices, and storage rooms.

Basement

The basement can be accessed from the main staircase off the reception lobby, the main passenger elevator (built in 1960), or the back hydraulic elevator. The main staircase ends at a small, enclosed landing area. The main passenger elevator and a door to several connected storage rooms are on the west side of this landing. Directly in front (north) of the stairs, a fire door leads to many rooms with a variety of functions. Proceeding through the door, the two doors on the west side lead to four connected storage and utility rooms. The room to the east of the fire door houses the Industrial Arts shop. This room is used primarily by the Department's Orientation Center. On the south side of this room, three rooms are used as office space for the teacher and storage. A large automatic door that leads into the alley and another storage room are also on the south wall of this room. A door on the west wall opens into a hallway that provides access to two storage areas, and the building shop room, the south side fire stairway and emergency exit, and another interior stairway.

Returning to the hallway, the room directly across from the fire door contains office space for the maintenance staff and a break / work room. Two doors are located on the west side of this break room. The door on the right (north) leads to the boiler room containing the mechanicals for heating and cooling the building, including a boiler and an air conditioning chiller - both of which were installed in 1965 and replaced in 1998.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

The door on the left (south) opens to the activity room (gym). Upon entering this room, a door on the left (south) leads to the original YMCA 60 x 20 foot pool. (The pool room was remodeled along with other areas in the building between 1974 - 1975.) The activity room was redesigned in fall 1990 and spring 1991 into a large combined exercise area for both men and women. New men's and women's lockers and bathrooms were built in the southwest corner of the room. A storage room and the hydraulic freight elevator are located at the back (west) of this room. An emergency exit door on the south wall leads to the alley.

First Floor

Recreation Room

A hallway to the south of the main entry landing leads to the recreation room and Orientation Center staff offices and storage rooms. The recreation room serves as a meeting and socializing area for students in the Orientation Center's residential training program. In 2004, the recreation room underwent extensive remodeling. The ceiling was raised to a height that allowed the arched windows to be once again exposed to the interior of the room. A new gypsum board ceiling was adorned with wood beams and a series of floating wood panels in coffered areas with indirect fluorescent strip lighting above. The oak trim around the arched windows matches the exterior adornments: a wood keystone appears at the top of each arch and wood trim runs from base to base of each window arch to visually connect the windows. Pendant lights were hung from the floating wood panel areas of the ceiling. Recessed wall wash can lighting was added to the entry hallway. The original marble terrazzo floor was restored in existing areas and in other areas new terrazzo tile in a pattern to mirror new wood beams in the ceiling was installed. The wood paneling on the walls was replaced with gypsum board covered in wallpaper of muted shades of beige and an oak wainscot at the bottom. Mission style furniture with cushions in tones of purple, burgundy, teal and hunter green was placed throughout the room. The large stone fireplace on the south wall was outfitted with a direct vent system. Directional lighting was installed to highlight the fireplace. All existing doors, frames and hardware were replaced, with the exception of the southwest emergency exit door which was installed in 1992.

Four offices and a kitchenette are connected to the recreation room. All of these areas were updated in the 2004 remodel. One office is located on the north side of the room; the three remaining offices are located off the west side of the room. A kitchenette was relocated to the south end of the room during the remodel. New cabinets, counter top, sink with disposal, an electric range, microwave, exhaust hood, and refrigerator were installed at this time. A wood folding partition enclosed in a pocketed area was installed. The partition conceals the kitchenette from the remainder of the space when not in use. Access to a fire stairway is on the south side of the kitchenette. A new storage area was created to store stereo and public address system equipment. A former storage area and the old kitchenette area were renovated to create a third office on the west side. A lockable coat storage area was created in the northwest corner of the room. All of the offices received new forced air systems to improve indoor air quality and remove some mold/mildew issues. They were also outfitted with new carpet, wall finishes, high efficiency lighting and a suspended acoustical ceiling. The "log cabin" office, which is the last office on the west side, retained the log veneers that adorn the walls. This office is original to the building. This type of room was a "club room", a signature room for early YMCAs.

Reception Lobby

The oak and glass double doors at the top of the main entry landing lead into the Reception lobby. This area was updated in 2005. An administrative office was removed to create a new Reception lobby with a curved counter open to the lobby on two sides. New cabinets and lockable storage were installed behind the counter. New gypsum board walls and an acoustical ceiling were installed in the area. The old reception counter was removed and converted into a small waiting area on west side of the lobby. A new entrance on the west side of the lobby was created for the Aids and Devices specialty store. The north wall was opened up to create a wider passage to improve traffic flow into the north and west sections of the first floor. The 2004 remodel was undertaken to resolve several building code issues. A special appropriation from the state legislature paid for this remodeling project.

The Aids and Devices store, staff office, and storage room are accessed from the Reception lobby. Blind Iowans can shop for and purchase a variety of specialized aids and devices, such as magnifiers, check writing guides, Braille writing devices, white canes, talking calculators, watches, clocks, Braille and large print playing cards and games, recorders, adapted sewing supplies, medical devices, and measuring devices, and much more.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

The Director's Conference room and administrative offices, including the Director's office are located in the northeast corner of the first floor. The rooms serving as the Director's conference room and office were designated as such by Dr. Jernigan. These rooms, first constructed in 1965, have remained largely unchanged since Dr. Jernigan's departure. The Director's conference room was built in 1960, and it especially retains its association with Dr. Jernigan. It is a large room with two arched windows on the north side. The room seats 40 individuals. Floor to ceiling bookshelves line every wall. The door on the east side of the conference room leads directly into the Director's office.

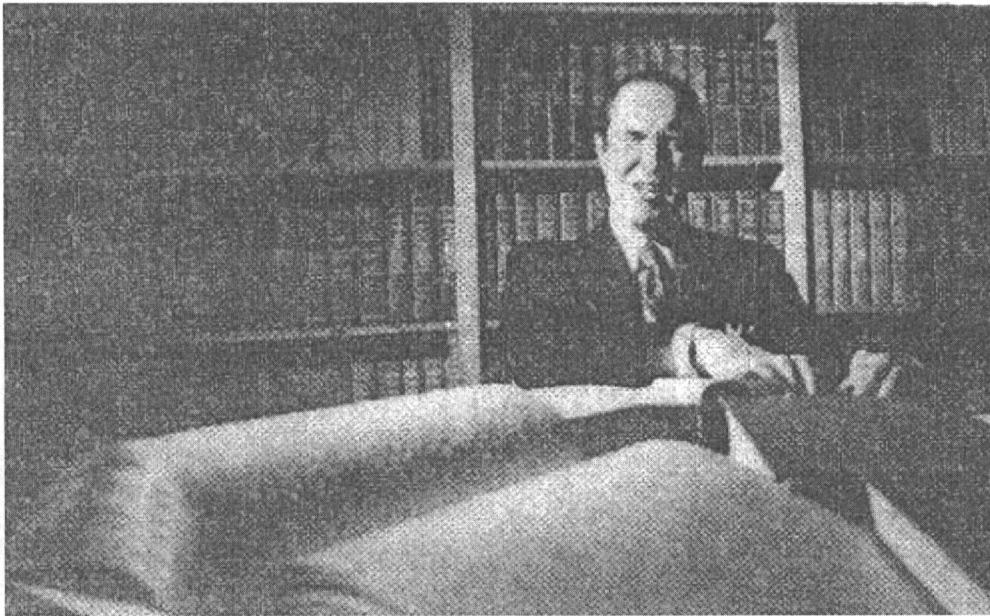


Figure 1: Dr. Jernigan in Director's Conference room. Photo from *Des Moines Sunday Register* article titled "Kenneth Jernigan: 'power to the blind'" by Gene Raffensperger published June 2, 1974. Original caption read: "Kenneth Jernigan, director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, sits in front of his Braille books. '...in Iowa it is possible for you as a blind man to go out and lead the same kind of life any other person leads.'"

The Director's office is large enough for a desk, computer desk and a conference table. It has an arched window on the north side and two on the east. These windows were bricked in at the time of

Dr. Jernigan's tenure. The windows were restored in 1988. The door on the east wall of the office leads to a reception area for the Director's office and to another administrative office and small storage room. A door on the west side of this reception area leads into the north hallway off the main reception area.

Proceeding down the north hallway, a storage room appears on the left at the midway point. At the end of the hallway, a door on the right leads to a large break room. The break room as it exists currently, with numerous booths and tables, vending machines, and microwave ovens, was converted in 2005. A kitchen facility is in the room to the west of the break room. Previously, a buffet style cafeteria had occupied the space since 1969. The cafeteria was open to the public and staff. Since that time, the facilities have been managed by a vendor in the Department's Business Enterprises Program. A north side door in the break room leads to the secondary exit. A stairway from this area to the basement was removed in 1993.

Another hallway extends from the end of the north hallway. This hallway leads to women's and men's restrooms, five offices, two storage rooms, and the multi-purpose room. The area containing the offices and storage rooms were part of the addition that was built over the courtyard in 1974 - 1975. In 1993, the restrooms were remodeled and expanded. The multi-purpose room was created in 1969 - 1970; the entrance to this room was widened in 1993. Access to a fire stairway and an emergency exit is in the southwest corner of the multi-purpose room. Doors on the north side of the room lead into the kitchen facility and to a shipping and receiving area in the northwest corner of this floor. Two freight elevators were added to the shipping and receiving area in 1965; one of those elevators was replaced with a hydraulic freight elevator in 1969.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

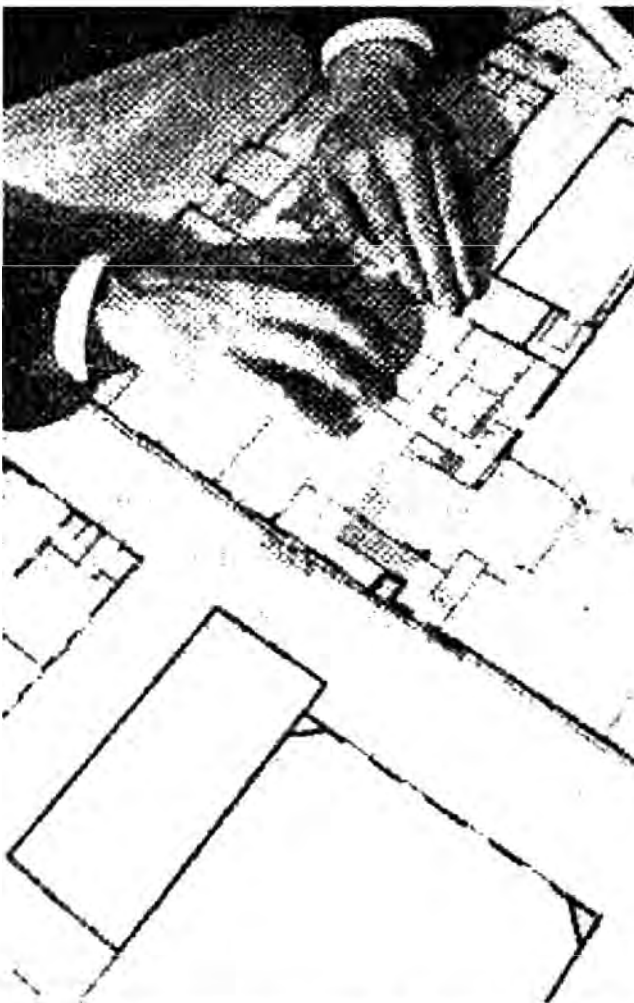


Figure 2: Photo from *Des Moines Sunday Register* article titled "Kenneth Jernigan: 'power to the blind'" by Gene Raffensperger published June 2, 1974. Original caption read: "Jernigan 'reads' blueprints Kenneth Jernigan, director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, is able to supervise an extensive remodeling of the commission's headquarters here by working from a special set of blueprints. The blueprints have Braille-like symbols he devised to enable a blind person to follow the plans."

Main Stairway

A stairway off the Reception lobby serves as the main staircase. In 1993, the main stairway and the south fire stairway were extended to the sixth floor roof. Also at this time, the steps were replaced with pink marble and the metal hand rails were raised in order to comply with building codes. The original marble terrazzo floors on the stairway landings remain.

Second Floor

The main stairway leads to an enclosed landing area on the second floor. This area also retains the original marble terrazzo floor. The main passenger elevator is on the west side of the landing area. The two doors on the north side provide access to offices and training rooms. A room off the east side of the landing is a computer room. (The first computer network system was installed in 1986.) A hallway on the south side leads to several connected rooms that serve as stack areas for the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Indeed, nearly the entire south half of the second floor holds the Library's vast collection of Braille, large print, and recorded materials, descriptive videos, and digital and cassette tape players and recorders. These stacks areas were created in 1969 - 1970. An area in the back southwest section of the stacks was remodeled in 2005 to create six cubicle offices.

The two doors on the north side of the enclosed landing lead to several work areas. Once through the doors, the Home Economics room is on the left. This room was built during the 1960 remodel. The Home Economics room is used by the Orientation Center staff to teach students to prepare their own meals and independently manage a kitchen. Originally, the room had two kitchens - a contractor was hired to build one and Orientation Center students built the second. Tasking the students with the job of building a kitchen reflected Dr. Jernigan's philosophy regarding the aptitude and attitude of blind persons. In 1985, two more kitchens were built and a dining area was established. An apartment is located off the west side of the Home Economics room. This apartment is reserved for an Orientation Center student who requires more experience living as an independent blind person.

Two offices are across the hall from the Home Economics room. Two hallways can be accessed from the space between the Home Economics room and the offices. A U-shaped hallway provides access to the Orientation Center's computer training room and four staff offices. (This area was built to this configuration in 2000.) A second hallway leads to Orientation Center classrooms, offices, and the north side stairway. In this area, teachers provide lessons to Orientation Center students on reading and writing Braille and on a variety of assistive technology.

A hallway leads west toward the stacks area in the northwest corner, the six cubicle offices, and the hydraulic freight elevator. The stacks area in the northwest corner is unusual in that these areas actually exist between the first and second floors. (This unusual configuration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 8

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

was created when four levels of stacks were constructed in an area that once housed handball courts with high ceilings.) The second freight elevator can be accessed in this area.

Third Floor

The entirety of the third floor is devoted to offices for the Independent Living and Field Operations staff. A number of field staff (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Independent Living Teachers, and Technology Specialists) travel throughout the state to provide services to blind Iowans use these offices. Supervisors and support staff also have offices on this floor. A major remodel of the third floor was completed in 2009. The old layout of the rooms and hallways created a maze-like feel. The faux wood paneling, vinyl floor tiles, and drop ceilings that were installed in the 1960 remodel had to be removed in order to comply with current building and fire codes. In addition, heating, cooling, and ventilation systems throughout required updating. Many walls on this floor were moved and offices reconfigured for better flow and access to natural light from the many windows on the east and north sides of the building. The ceilings will be raised to their original height. Two large rooms on the south side of this floor will continue to serve as stacks for the Library.

Orientation Center classrooms were once located on the third floor. All were relocated to the second floor in 2007.

Fourth Floor

The fourth floor serves as the main working space for the Library staff. This floor, last remodeled in 1974 and 1975, also underwent a major remodel in 2009. As with the third floor, the faux wood paneling, vinyl floor tiles, and drop ceilings had to be removed. The heating, cooling, and ventilation systems on this floor were also updated. Several walls on this floor were moved to create office configurations that offer a better work flow and access to natural light, and the ceilings were raised to their original height.

The main stairway leads lead into a reception area. Staff offices are located throughout the north and east sides of this floor. The northwest area has a recording studio and two work rooms for staff to process returned materials for re-shelving and for packaging requested materials for mailing. (In 2006, a state of the art digital recording studio was built on the north side of this floor.) Staff and volunteers use this studio to record books for blind and visually impaired individuals in Iowa and the rest of the nation. The southwest area of the fourth floor serves as a stacks area.

Fifth and Sixth Floors

The fifth and sixth floors have staff apartments and dormitory rooms for adults enrolled in the Orientation Center. These apartments and rooms were built in 1960. In 2001, all of the rooms on the fifth and sixth floors were remodeled. A two-bedroom apartment is in the southeast corner of the fifth floor. This apartment has been reserved for the director's use since Dr. Jernigan lived there while he served as director. The remainder of the south half has three guest rooms and a women's restroom with shower facilities. The north half of this floor has eleven dormitory rooms for women and a one-bedroom staff apartment.

The sixth floor is similar in layout to the fifth floor. The south half of the building has a two-bedroom apartment for a staff person, four dormitory rooms, a storage room, and men's restroom with shower facilities. The north half has eleven dormitory rooms for men and a one-bedroom staff apartment.

Integrity

The building maintains a high degree of all seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The location and urban setting of the building have changed very little since Dr. Jernigan served as Director. The building continues to house the Iowa Department for the Blind's main administrative offices, Library, and Orientation Center. The building's original materials and design have been taken into consideration during each remodeling and maintenance project that has been completed over the years. Indeed, in many cases great effort was made to ensure that the integrity of materials and design were maintained. When the windows were replaced, windows which reflected the original design were installed. The swimming pool and portions of the gymnasium that were built as part of the YMCA's construction have been maintained throughout the years and are still in use today. The director's office and conference room remain in the same location as when Dr. Jernigan held that position. (In 1988, the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 9

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

bricks that had enclosed the windows in the director's office were removed to comply with fire codes and improve air circulation.) A two-bedroom apartment on the fifth floor has been reserved as a residence for the director since Dr. Jernigan served as director. The workmanship of the remodeling and maintenance project has always been of the highest quality. When the 4th street entrance steel doors were replaced in 1989 with new insulated glass doors and archway, staff designed and built the large bent oak interior trim that duplicates the original trim. The marble and wrought iron railing on the main staircase as well as the terrazzo flooring in many of the main areas add to the historical character of the building.



The physical building has been well maintained throughout the years. More importantly, the integrity of feeling and association has been maintained since Dr. Jernigan's departure. Indeed, the philosophy and educational approach Dr. Jernigan advocated are reflected in the function of many of the offices and rooms. While a number of remodeling projects have been, and continue to be, undertaken, Dr. Jernigan would recognize the function of the rooms throughout the building. His philosophy of blindness and rehabilitation approach continue to form the foundation of the Department's work and to be reflected in the physical structure of the building.

Figure 3: Dr. Jernigan walking in front of Commission building, heading south on 4th Street sidewalk.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

A detailed street map of Des Moines, Iowa, showing a grid of streets including School St, Center St, Grand Ave, and Locust St. A black square marker is placed on Grand Ave near the intersection with Locust St. The map also shows the Des Moines River and surrounding areas like Hills Park and Walker.

Source: Google Maps: <http://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&tab=wl> Date: 2008

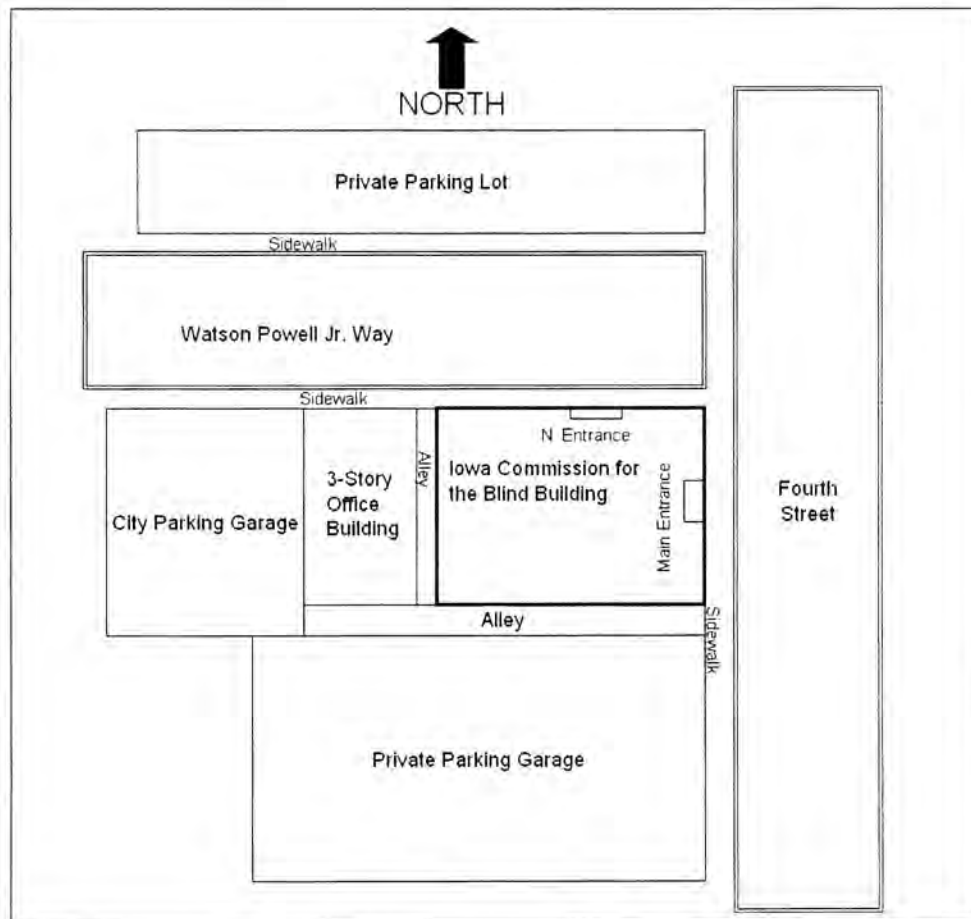
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 11

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Site Map



Site Map by Shan Sasser, 2009

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

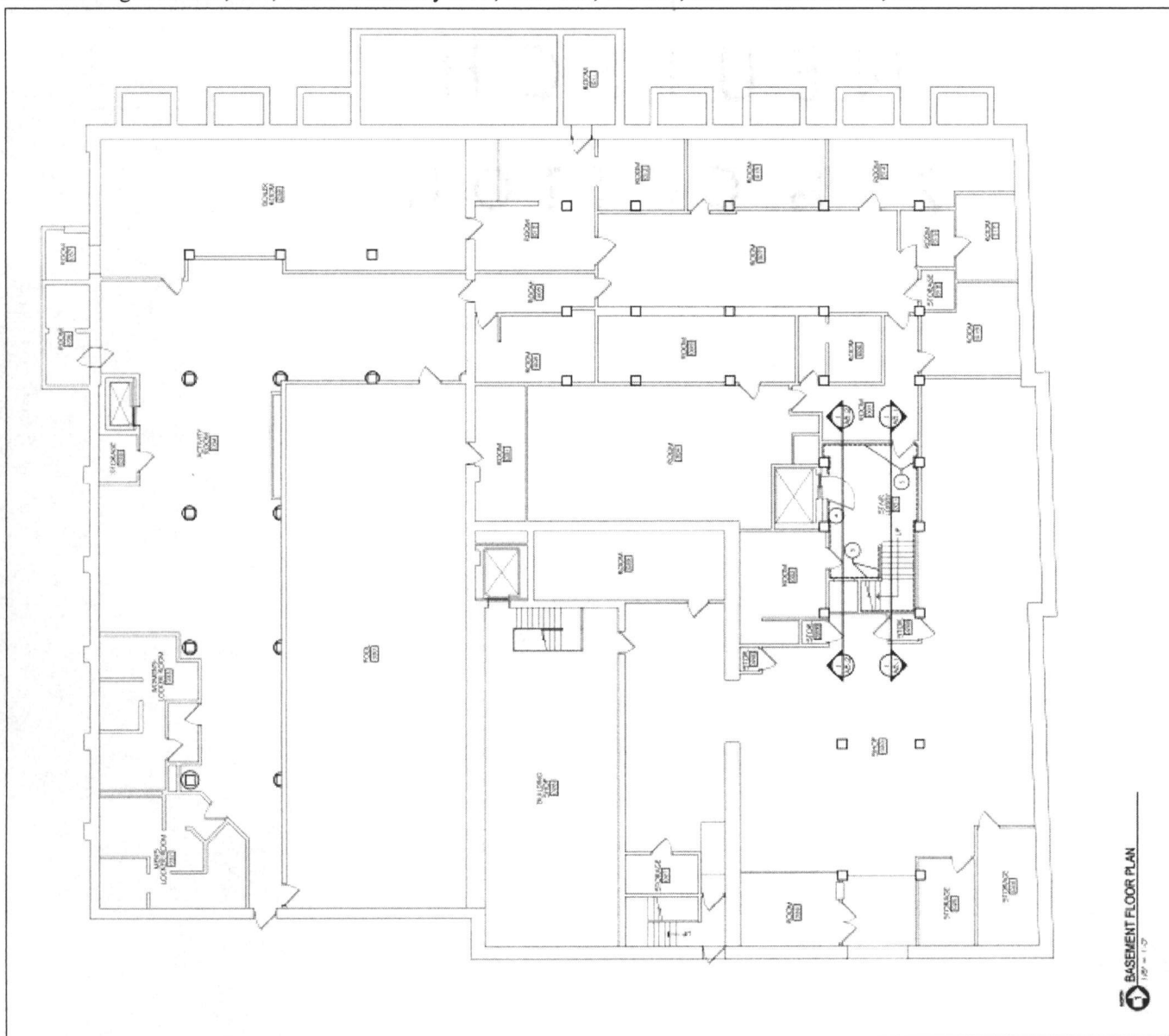
Section number 7 Page 12

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Floor Plans

Basement Floor

Source: Design Alliance, Inc.; 14225 University Ave., Suite 110; Waukee, IA. Date: June 26, 2007



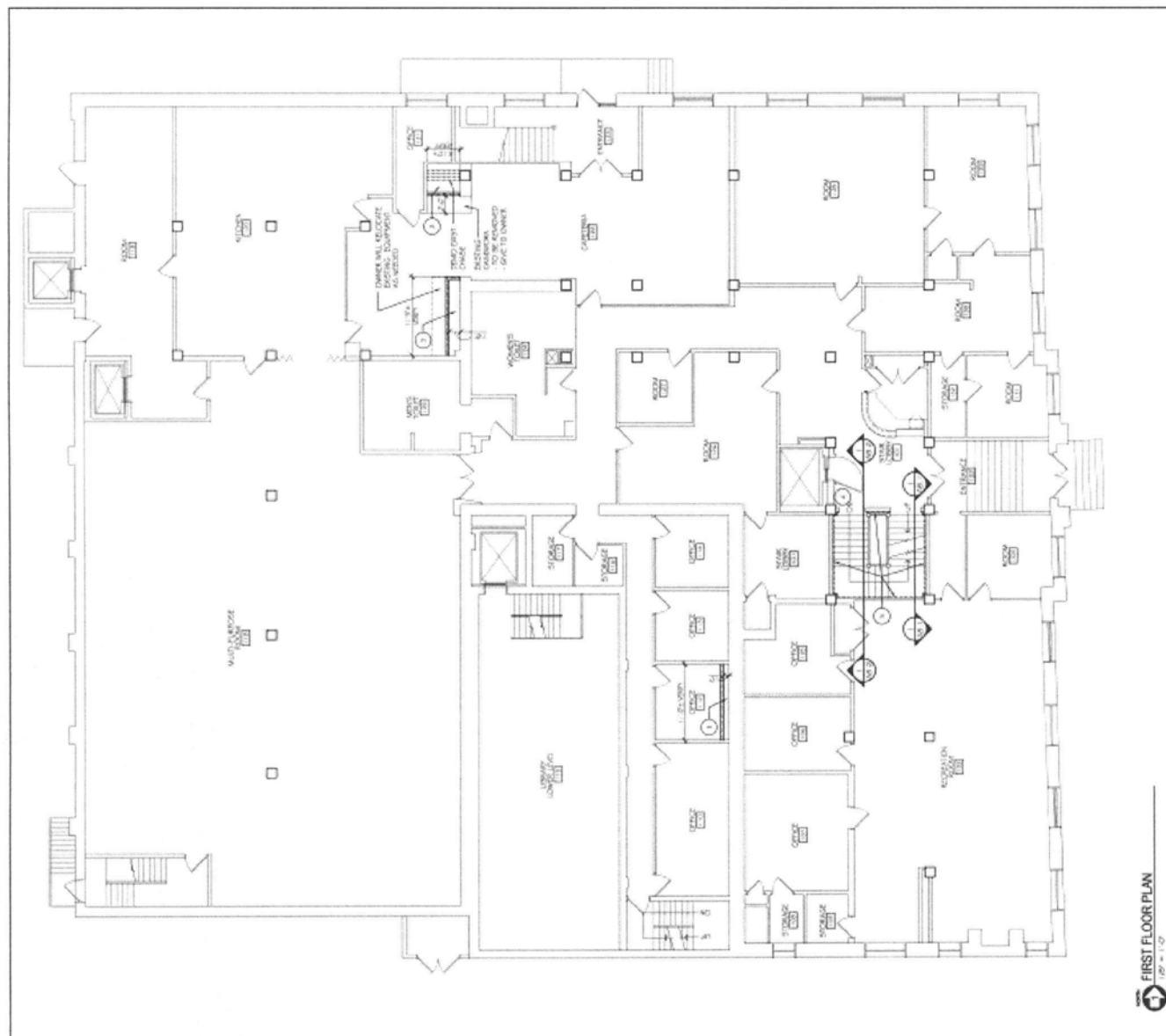
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 13

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

First Floor



Source: Design Alliance, Inc.;
14225 University Ave., Suite 110
Waukee, IA.

Date: June 26, 2007

North



National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Architectural floor plan of the second floor. The plan shows a central corridor (CORRIDOR) with multiple stairwells (STAIRS) and elevators (ELEVATOR). Various rooms are labeled, including OFFICE, CONFERENCE, and STORAGE. The layout is symmetrical around the central corridor.

h

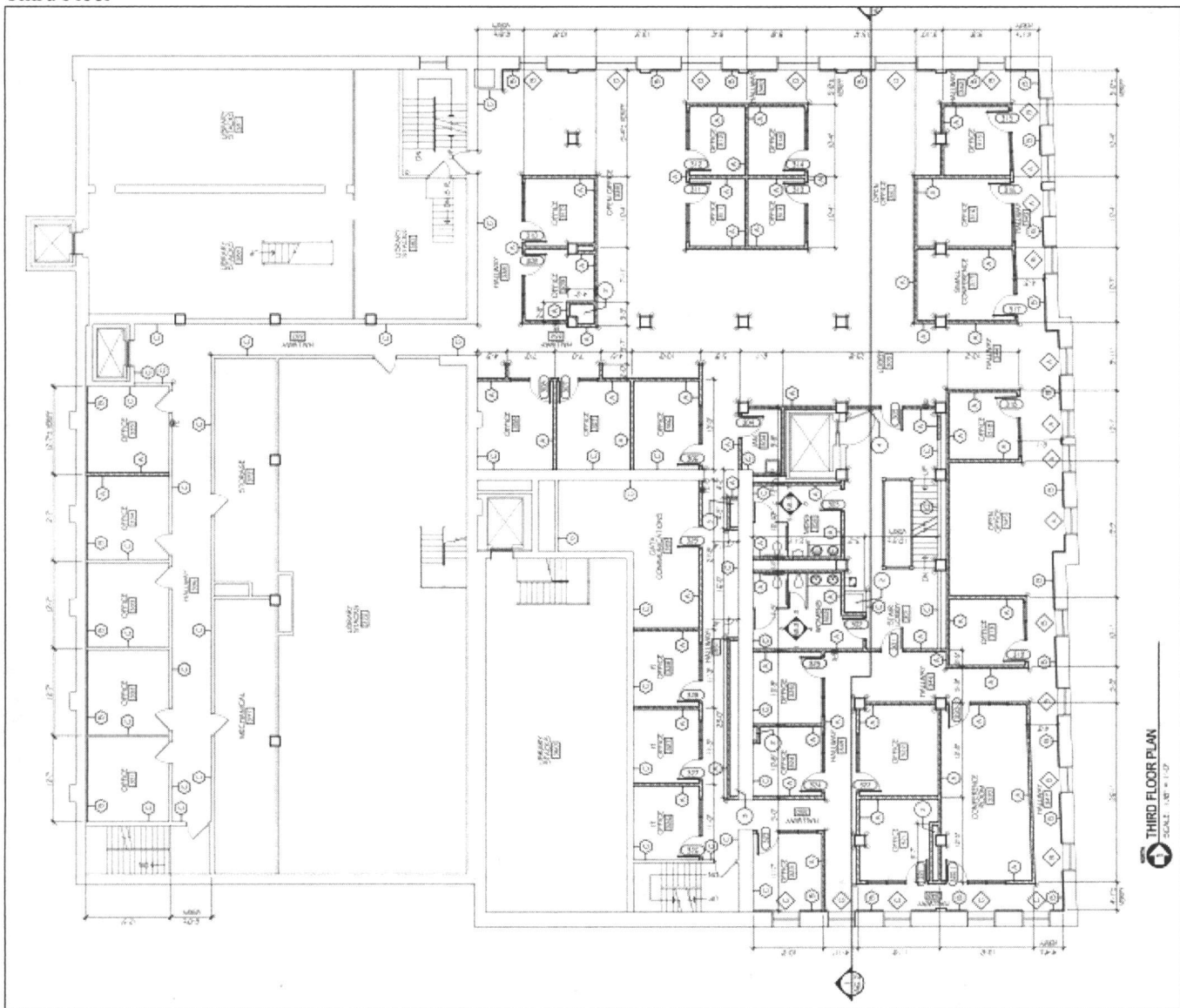
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 15

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Third Floor



Source: Design Alliance, Inc.;
14225 University Ave., Suite 110
Waukee, IA.

Date: June 26, 2007

North



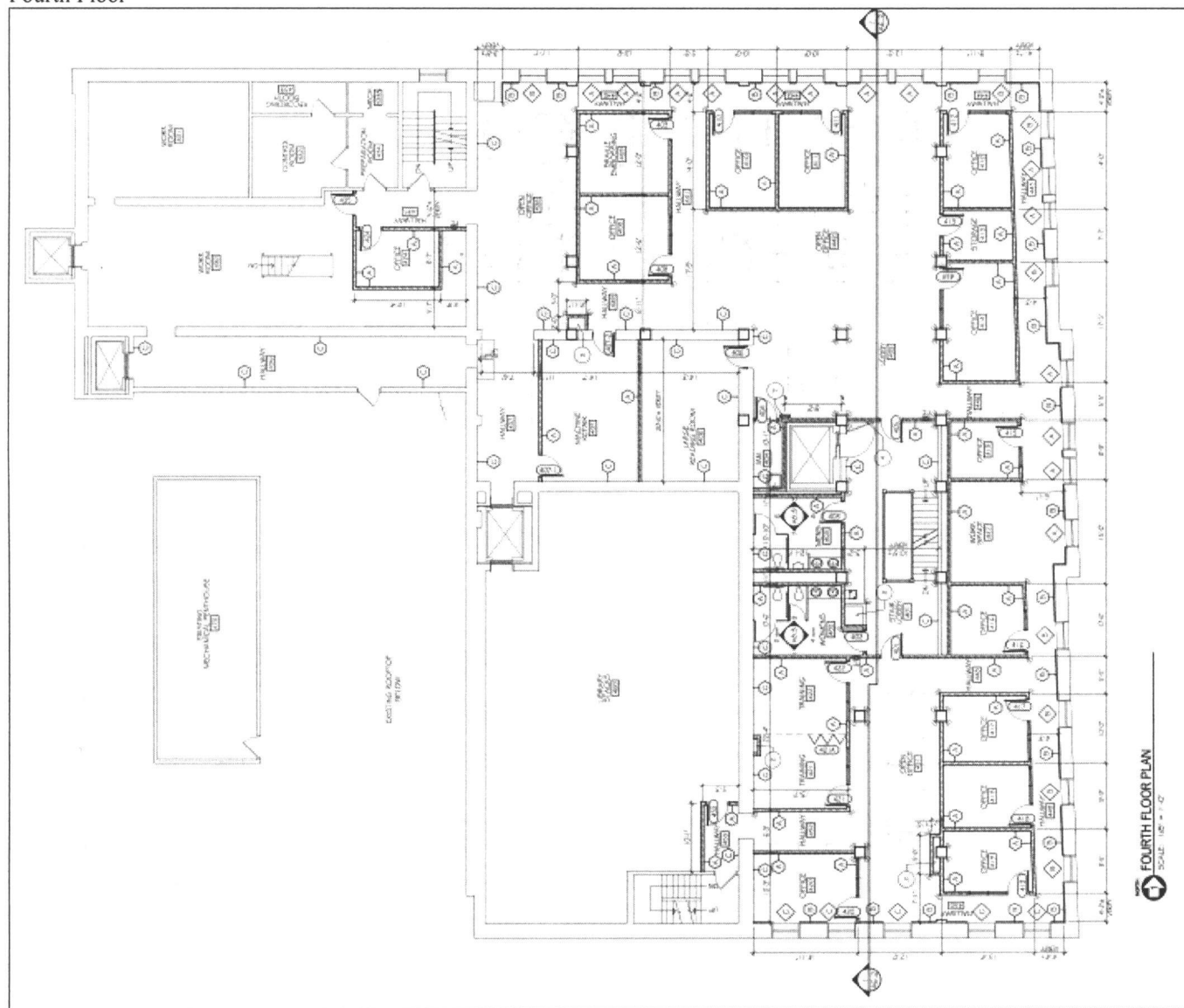
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 16

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Fourth Floor



Source: Design Alliance, Inc.;
14225 University Ave., Suite 110
Waukee, IA.
Date: June 26, 2007

North



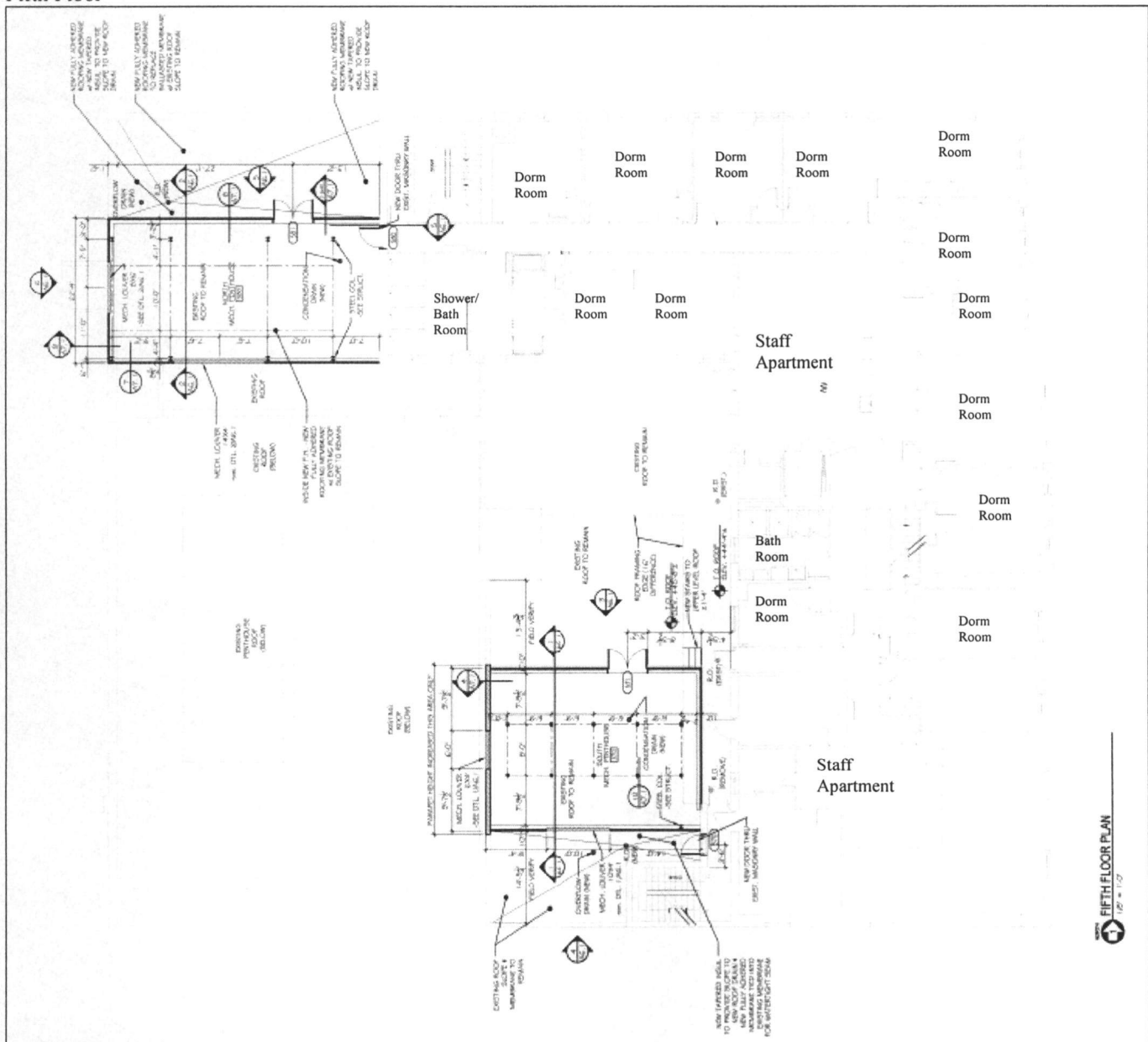
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 17

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Fifth Floor



Source: Design Alliance, Inc.;
14225 University Ave., Suite 110
Waukee, IA.

Date: June 26, 2007

North

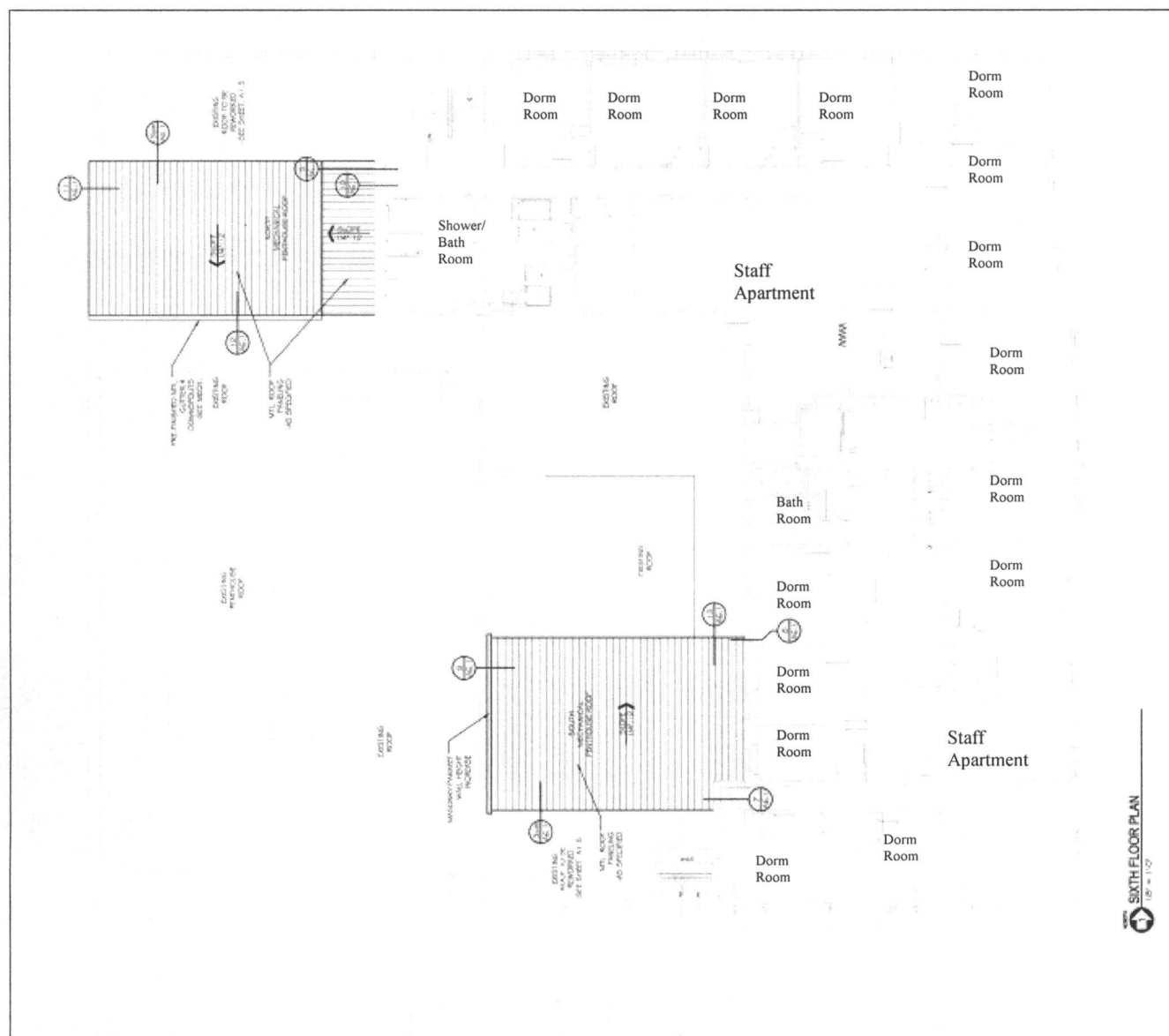


FIFTH FLOOR PLAN
1/2" = 1'-0"

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Sixth Floor



Date: June 26, 2007

North



SIXTH FLOOR PLAN

8. Statement of Significance

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

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☒ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ 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.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☒ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

☐ Social History _____
☐ Education _____
☐ Politics/Government _____

Period of Significance 1959 - 1978

Significant Dates 1959
1960
1968

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
Jernigan, Norman Kenneth

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder Proudfoot, Bird, & Rawson

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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: National Federation of the Blind, Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Iowa Department for the Blind

=====

10. Geographical Data

=====

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	448074	4604379	3	—	—
2	—	—	—	4	—	—
<u> </u> 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.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 19

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Significant Dates, Continued:

1967
1976
1977
1978

Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The Iowa Commission for the Blind building attained statewide under Criterion B because of its association with Dr. Kenneth Jernigan's tenure (1958-1978) as its director. While serving as the director, Dr. Jernigan became a leader of a Civil Rights movement for individuals who are blind. Dr. Jernigan's activism, organizing, and philosophy of blindness were instrumental in changing the way blind Iowans thought of themselves and the way Iowa institutions taught and regarded individuals who are blind. Prior to his work, blind individuals were routinely marginalized in society. They were subjected to low expectations and educational and employment opportunities that were based upon a paternalistic, care-taker approach. When Dr. Jernigan became director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind in 1958, he created a rehabilitation program that was founded on a "positive philosophy" of blindness. As written in the Commission's 1959 Annual Report, that philosophy purports that "[t]he real problem of blindness is not the lack of eyesight. The real problem is the misunderstanding and lack of information which exists. If a blind person has proper training, and if he has opportunity, blindness is only a physical nuisance." (1959 Annual Report, p. 6.) His revolutionary program focused both on independent skills training and on changing individual attitudes, instilling a sense of self-confidence and independence. Prior to his arrival as director, Iowa's agency for the blind was in disarray and ranked last among other state rehabilitation agencies for the blind.

The implementation of his program dramatically improved the opportunities for blind Iowans. Dr. Jernigan spread his philosophy and rehabilitation approach throughout the 1960s and 1970s in his many publications and speeches and through his involvement with the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). He received numerous awards for his work from national organizations and the highest levels of government, including the office of the President of the United States. The Department's building meets National Register Criterion B as it served as his home and the location where his revolutionary rehabilitation training model was first implemented and as the base from where Dr. Jernigan directed the movement. The training program and its guiding philosophy continue to be implemented in the building today.

Justification for Exceptional Importance - Significance in the Past Fifty Years

The Civil Rights movement for blind individuals in which Dr. Jernigan played a significant role was part of a larger social movement during a historically important time in American history. Dr. Jernigan's work coincided with the Civil Rights movement which sought to eradicate the discrimination in public and private life faced by African-Americans. The Civil Rights movement began in the 1950s and saw significant social and legal upheavals throughout the 1960s that led to dramatic changes throughout all facets of American life. The Civil Rights movement not only spawned the disability rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s, but led to equal rights movements by other groups that faced discrimination and repression, such as women and homosexuals. The disability rights movement utilized many of the same signature strategies of the Civil Rights movement, including protests, civil disobedience, and legal challenges. In addition, both movements culminated in federal legislation that bans discrimination: the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. As president of the NFB during this tumultuous time, Dr. Jernigan marshaled the organization's members to legally challenge discriminatory actions and to lobby for legislation that would ensure equal access to employment, such as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Dr. Jernigan's philosophical stance and uncompromising writings and speeches served as a catalyst that energized blind Iowans to fight for their rights.

Building History

In 1959, the Iowa Commission for the Blind purchased the building that had been built as a YMCA. Construction of this YMCA building began in 1911 and was finished June 13, 1912. Its opening was marked by a parade with more than 1,500 persons participating. It was built to replace the YMCA building at Fourth Street and Grand Avenue, which was built 1890-91 and had become too small for the Y's activities. The YMCA featured two gymnasiums. One gym was 80 x 55 feet, and the other was 55 x 36 feet. They could be

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 20

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

opened and combined for a space of 116 X 55 feet. A running track was situated above the main gym. The YMCA also had two regulation sized handball courts, an exercise room, a 60 x 20 feet swimming pool, forty shower baths, three bowling alleys, a reading room and lobby, and a lunch room. It also had 114 dormitory rooms to accommodate 165 men. This YMCA was vacated when a new, larger YMCA, known as the Riverfront YMCA, was built in 1957 at the corner of Second Ave and Locust Street in Des Moines, IA.

The architects for the 1912 YMCA were Proudfoot, Bird, and Rawson. This regionally prominent architecture firm was founded as Proudfoot & Bird in Des Moines, Iowa in 1896 and specialized in public buildings. The firm became known as Proudfoot, Bird, and Rawson in 1910 when H.D. Rawson became a partner. They designed many important buildings throughout Iowa, including the Polk County Courthouse (Des Moines, IA), U.S. Post Office and Courthouse (Dubuque, Iowa), Abraham Lincoln High School and Theodore Roosevelt High School (Des Moines, IA), four of the five buildings on the University of Iowa campus known as the Pentacrest (Jessup Hall, Macbride Hall, Maclean Hall, and Schaeffer Hall), and many more.

The building remained the property of the YMCA until it was purchased by the Commission. Dr. Jernigan lobbied for and received funds from the Iowa State Legislature to purchase and remodel the building to serve as a proving ground for his philosophy on the rehabilitation of blind individuals.

Kenneth Jernigan - Formative Years

Kenneth Jernigan was born blind in 1926 in Detroit, Michigan. Shortly after his birth, his family moved to a farm near Beech Grove, Tennessee. Jernigan described his youth as isolated, both at home and at the Tennessee School for the Blind, which he began attending in 1933 at the age of six. At home, he was the only blind person around for miles. At school, he and the other students were kept apart from the community. He called the campus of the school a "closed ecology." His natural curiosity and voracious appetite for knowledge came through no matter. Before he learned Braille, he relied on others to read to him. "Every time I could, I got somebody to read to me. Read what? Anything-anything I could get. I would nag and pester anybody I could find to read me anything that was available-the Bible, an agriculture yearbook, a part of a newspaper, or the Sears Roebuck catalog. It didn't matter. Reading was magic. It opened up new worlds." (Jernigan, *Kenneth Jernigan: The Master, The Mission, The Movement*, p. 53.) As he became a proficient Braille reader at school, only the limitations on the availability of Braille materials prevented him from reading at will. (As Braille materials were scarce in Tennessee, school officials rationed the lending of books to the students.)

Jernigan had his first contact with a state rehabilitation agency for the blind in 1945 when he was a senior in high school. The visiting rehabilitation counselor asked what he wanted to study when he went to college. Jernigan replied he had only one area of interest, the law. The counselor indicated that the agency would not provide assistance if he chose to become a lawyer because that was not a realistic goal for someone who was blind. Pursuing a law degree without the agency's assistance was financially impossible. Instead, he enrolled in Tennessee Polytechnic Institute (TPI) where he studied Social Sciences. As the only blind student on campus, he encountered a great deal of resistance and skepticism from his professors. He had to justify his presence in each class and ask to be treated on equal terms with his peers. A biology professor confronted him stating, "You can sit in this class if you want to, but I can tell you right now that you will fail. I didn't want you here, but the dean made me take you." (Jernigan, *Kenneth Jernigan: The Master, The Mission, The Movement*, p. 75.) Again, his academic talents and natural leadership abilities prevailed. He participated in intercollegiate debates, was on the college paper's editorial staff, and was elected to serve in a number of club and class offices. The biology professor who once disregarded him became a staunch ally. Upon graduation as an "A" student, he enrolled in the graduate program at Peabody College in Nashville where he earned a Masters degree in English. He returned to Tennessee School for the Blind as an English teacher in 1949.

Throughout his early life, Jernigan was forced to fight for opportunities not seen as conceivable or appropriate for a blind individual. He had to routinely prove he deserved a place in society, not to be cast off into blind institutions or occupations. He did these things literally on his own. In 1949, he joined the Tennessee affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). During this time of his life, he began formalizing his philosophy of blindness. When he discovered the NFB, he found an organization that not only held his same beliefs regarding the worth of blind individuals, but its members actively worked to challenge misconceptions and low expectations.

The National Federation of the Blind and the Organized Blind Movement

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 21

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Jernigan's affiliation with the NFB was fortuitous for both him and the organization. The NFB was founded in 1940 by members representing organizations in California, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. The first president and ideological leader was Dr. Jacobus tenBroeck.

Early efforts to form organizations of blind individuals, usually started by alumni of schools for the blind, were largely local in nature. Their self-advocacy efforts were often thwarted by school administrators and local leaders who sought to define their own agenda for the organization's mission.

The mid-twentieth century was a time when many people with disabilities were organizing to fight discrimination, including the League of the Physically Handicapped (1935), American Federation of the Physically Handicapped (1940), Cerebral Palsy Society (1946), and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (1947). The first national organizations for blind individuals to form were the American Association of Workers for the Blind (AAWB) (1905) and the American Foundation for the Blind (1921). While these organizations represented a shift toward professionalism and away from school-affiliated associations, tenBroeck, Dr. Newel Perry, and others felt that these organizations represented the views and needs of the agencies that provided services to blind individuals. They sought to establish an advocacy organization that represented and consisted of blind individuals themselves. As tenBroeck stated in his speech at the inaugural meeting of the NFB, "it is necessary for the blind to organize themselves and their ideas upon a national basis, so that blind men the nation over may live in physical comfort, social dignity, and spiritual self-respect." (Matson, *Walking Alone and Marching Together*, p. 5.)

The NFB was seeking to overcome institutional barriers and governmental aid programs mandated by state and federal legislation that deterred competitive employment and social integration. This legislation was the product of a society that viewed disabled individuals at best as people in need of care and treatment and at worst as individuals who are paying for sins. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, training for blind individuals largely consisted of vocational training in "blind trades" such as weaving, knitting, basketry, chair caning, and music-related (e.g., piano tuning). In turn, these trades were plied in "sheltered workshops" where wages were low and opportunities for advancement were nil.

The NFB modeled its organization, lobbying activities, and community action after the labor unions. It would become the "voice of the blind" commenting on and influencing legislative actions such as the Social Security Act amendments, the Fair Labor Standards Act, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Act.

The organization was gaining its footing as a national organization when Dr. Jernigan joined its ranks. His early experiences and the ideas and activism being promoted by the nine-year old Federation galvanized Dr. Jernigan. The organization gave him an avenue to pursue his activism and ideals. At the same time, the organization needed Dr. Jernigan's intellectual and leadership abilities. Dr. tenBroeck & Dr. Perry were leaders of the NFB's organized blind movement when Dr. Jernigan became an active member. They were looking for talented individuals to spread the organization's mission and strengthen its membership. Already in 1952, Jernigan organized and attended his first national convention, which was held in Nashville and attended by 150 delegates from 31 states. These years marked the beginning of a long and fruitful association. By 1951, he was elected president of the Tennessee chapter. He became a member of the NFB's Executive Committee in 1952 and First Vice-President in 1958. In 1968, he was elected president of the NFB and served in that position until 1986, with a brief break in his tenure in 1977.

Dr. Jernigan's first steps toward social activism began when he lived in California. In 1953, he moved to Oakland, California to join the staff of the new California Orientation Center for Blind Adults run by Dr. Newel Perry. In 1954, he challenged the California school system for its refusal to hire a qualified blind teacher to teach sighted children in public schools. Soon after, he wrote to the California Supreme Court in 1956 arguing for the right of a blind man to serve on a jury. These early activities demonstrate his twin desires to fight for the rights of blind individuals to pursue their own interests according to their abilities and to change institutional attitudes toward blind individuals. These desires became the hallmark of his life's work. While he was successful in California, Jernigan began looking for an opportunity to build a program according to his philosophy. In 1958, he found that opportunity in Iowa.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 22

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

The Iowa Experiment.

"If a person must be blind, it is better to be blind in Iowa than in any other place in the nation or the world! This statement sums up the story of the Iowa Commission for the Blind; and more pertinently, of its Director, Kenneth Jernigan. That narrative is much more than a success story. It is the story of high aspiration magnificently accomplished - of an impossible dream become reality."

Harold Russell, Chairman of the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, in presenting a special citation to Dr. Jernigan from the President of the United States in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the advancement of blind individuals (1968).

When Dr. Jernigan arrived in Iowa in 1958 Mr. Russell's statement regarding Iowa's blind population would have been ludicrous. The Iowa Commission for the Blind ranked last among all state agencies providing rehabilitation services to blind individuals. Like many other programs, Iowa's rehabilitation program was based upon the medical model. In this model, individuals with disabilities are seen as people whose physical deformities require correction and that limitations are inherent because of those physical conditions. This model limited the employment and skills training opportunities for blind individuals. Indeed, outside of the sheltered workshops, blind persons were considered unemployable.

Jernigan's philosophy and rehabilitation approach were based on the "social" model of disability. In this view, individuals who are blind are a minority in society and faced discrimination because of their blindness. Basing rehabilitation programs on corrective or restorative activities, which were hallmarks of the medical model, would not bring social equality. Instead, blind individuals and society at large needed to acknowledge that individuals with disabilities, including those who are blind, simply utilized different means to accomplish daily tasks. Blind individuals had the same right to educational and employment opportunities as sighted individuals. They had the right to participate in all civic and social functions. This philosophical approach was a radical one in mid-twentieth century America. Many of those agencies, public and private, whose purpose was to assist blind individuals attain self-sufficiency, did not take this view. In a story reminiscent of Dr. Jernigan's experience, Iowa Commissioner Ethyl Holmes wrote the following in a 1943 letter to Percy Bordwell of the Dean's Office at the University of Iowa's College of Law: "Yes, I do know the difficulties that many of the blind law graduates have encountered and personally, I have not encouraged blind persons entering that field." Ms. Holmes was responding to Mr. Bordwell's request for assistance in placing a blind law student, who had received the highest score among his peers who took the bar exam.

Dr. Jernigan's impact in Iowa was immediate. One of Dr. Jernigan's first acts as Director was to find a new location for the agency. He was appalled at the space in which staff were currently working, located in a government owned building called the Amos Hiatt School. A total of eight staff were housed in three rooms. No private room for meeting with clients was available. The 1959 Commission's annual report offered the following description of the Director's office:

It is furnished with antiquated chairs and tables that are castoffs from other state agencies and has a make-shift bookcase and an old discarded magazine rack as the only filing cabinets. These are so inadequate that materials are stacked in the corners in knee-high piles and also on the top of the bookcase. On the door of the Director's office are printed these words: "Child Welfare: Private." (1959 Annual Report, p. 7)

The physical state of the offices reflected the effectiveness of the agency at that time. In 1957, only twelve blind persons were placed in employment, many of them in sheltered workshops. Individuals participating in the blind vendors program were earning an average of \$105 a month. The agency had a list of 4,000 blind Iowans, many of whom were in need of services. A staff of five professionals and three clerical personnel and a limited budget were to meet these needs.

To remedy this situation, he began designing his new rehabilitation program and set about finding a new location to implement it. Dr. Jernigan lobbied the state legislature for funds to purchase the downtown Des Moines YMCA building to serve as the new location for the agency. In 1959, the legislature appropriated \$300,000 to buy the building. Soon after, Dr. Jernigan requested and received an

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 23

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

additional \$500,000 to complete an extensive remodel of the building. With these funds, he could physically shape the building to reflect his training approach and the program he envisioned. His revolutionary program focused both on independent skills training and on instilling a sense of self-confidence and independence. He also encouraged agency clients to participate in consumer organizations and civil actions. His effort became known as the "Iowa Experiment."

In this new approach, vocational services would emphasize an individual's preference in employment and education. Rather than directing a person into "acceptable" jobs, clients would be encouraged and supported in their chosen employment path. Skills training would emphasize independence and alternative techniques.

Dr. Jernigan's vocational approach was based on the belief that "with proper training and opportunity the average blind person can do the average job in the average place of business and do it as well as a sighted person similarly situated." (Jernigan, *Kenneth Jernigan: The Master, The Mission, The Movement*, p.15.) He also believed that training alone was not enough. Attitudes and expectations had to be addressed as well. As he stated in a speech given in 1980:

"I believe that we as blind people are capable of competing on terms of real equality with others in jobs. I believe that the reason we have not done so in the past is that society has custodialized us and held us down. But I believe also that this has not happened because society has wanted to be vicious or unkind or mean. It is because people have taken for granted that that's the way blind people are, that blind persons can't be expected to do this or that kind of thing.

Furthermore, I believe that since we are part of society, we have accepted the public views about us and have done a great deal to reinforce those views." (Jernigan, *Kenneth Jernigan: The Master, The Mission, The Movement*, p. 58.)

After the Second World War, a number of orientation and rehabilitation centers for blind adults were being established. However, Iowa had no such facility. Dr. Jernigan saw the new building a perfect site for an adult Orientation and Adjustment Center. This residential training center focused on independent travel using the long white cane, industrial arts (initially for men only), home economics (initially for women only) and physical exercise, for which the YMCA's pool and gymnasium were well suited. A class that focused on "personal adjustment and attitudes about blindness" was meant to help students overcome feelings of helplessness that over-protective family members and others unintentionally instilled.

Another important, unique trait of this program was his belief that the "complex distinctions which are often made between those who have partial sight and those who are totally blind, between those who have been blind from childhood and those who have become blind as adults are largely meaningless." (Jernigan, "A Definition of Blindness," p.7.) Based on that belief, all individuals who attended the Center received the same training program, using sleep shades and a long white cane, regardless of their diagnosed visual acuity or perception. This approach ensured, and continues to do so, that all students gain the same level of confidence in their skills and attitude.

The new building was also large enough to accommodate a new talking book and Braille book library. Dr. Jernigan was committed to developing the largest and best library in the nation. In 1960, the library holdings were designated by the Library of Congress as a regional library to serve blind Iowans. By 1967, the agency's library had become the largest of its kind in the world. For this distinction, Dr. Jernigan received the American Library Association's Francis Joseph Campbell Award for outstanding accomplishments for providing library services to the blind. Today, the Department's Library continues to house the largest collection of Braille books in the world. In 2000, the library circulated its eight-millionth book.

He also sought to expand operations and increase the earnings of blind Iowans who operated cafeterias and vending sites in the state as part of the Business Enterprises Program. This program was instituted in Iowa through the federal Randolph-Sheppard Act, which was enacted in 1936. This law directed public agencies to give preference to blind vendors in the operation of vending facilities on public property. The first food service site in Iowa to open under this legislation was in 1939 in Sioux City. When Dr. Jernigan became director, twelve vending sites were in operation, with vendors earning average of \$100 per month - the smallest average in the nation.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 24

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

The effectiveness of his approach became apparent by the end of 1959, one full fiscal year after Dr. Jernigan's arrival. Twenty-six blind individuals were placed in employment, with 20 of those in competitive employment. A blind vendor's average monthly earnings rose to \$120. He received a \$125,000 increase to the agency's budget and had hired a staff of thirteen professionals and six clerical personnel.

In 1959, the first blind Iowan was hired as a teacher in a public school in Coralville, Iowa. That same year, the adult Orientation and Adjustment Center opened with three students and two teachers. (The Orientation Center expanded to a residential program in 1961 once the agency had the capacity and facility to implement it.)

When Dr. Jernigan left the Iowa Department for the Blind in 1978, it had a staff of over 120, offices established in Sioux City, Waterloo and Cedar Rapids, and thousands of Iowans were being served by the agency. Twenty-seven vending facilities were established throughout the state, including the cafeteria that opened in the building in 1969, with an average annual income to blind vendors of \$10,200. Upon Jernigan's resignation, Governor Robert Ray wrote, "You brought with you a determination to share your positive attitude toward life and your knowledge and experience that sightless people could have meaningful and confident lives. You made them realize that they too can work and read and play, and they can have families and contribute to the well-being of others every bit as much as other people, and enjoy it."

Legacy

Dr. Jernigan's impact on the lives of Iowans who are blind is evident. Therefore, the property and its association with Dr. Jernigan have statewide importance during this period of Iowa's history. With additional research, Dr. Jernigan's national significance and the nominated property can be more fully assessed. As Dr. Fred Schroeder stated when reflecting on changes in the rehabilitation field, "Dr. Jernigan's move to Iowa heralded the beginning of a revolution--the rebellion of the blind against the established rehabilitation system, the seizing of power from the hands of others, and the beginning of self-determination." (Schroeder, "The Altering Characteristics of Rehabilitation: The Perspective of Half a Century.") Dr. Jernigan's "Iowa Experiment" to improve Iowa's vocational rehabilitation program was only part of his story. Equally important was his challenge to the prevailing views of society toward blind individuals. Jernigan's success was due to his political acumen, inspirational writings, and fiery oratory. In his many speeches and writings as president of the NFB he confronted and questioned the stereotypes of individuals who are blind: unable to travel independently, excel at handicraft artistry, natural musical abilities, enhanced senses of hearing and touch. He challenged rehabilitation and social service professionals and blind individuals themselves to respect the individuality of blind persons and their right to participate in all aspects of society.

His actions in the fight for the rights of blind individuals took many forms. As president of the NFB, he guided that organization's efforts in the 1970s and 1980s to allow sheltered-workshop workers to unionize and to pass legislation in several states that require blind children be evaluated for and taught Braille in public schools. Under his leadership, the NFB advocated for changes to the federal Vocational Rehabilitation Act that would allow clients of VR programs to direct their own rehabilitation plans based on informed choice and change the VR program's eligibility standards to prevent VR agencies from excluding those with significant disabilities, including blindness, on the belief that they were too disabled to benefit for VR services. These important amendments were included in the 1992 reauthorization of the Act. He led a successful effort in the 1980s to reverse the U.S. Department of State's policy on prohibiting blind individuals from working in the diplomatic services. He also challenged the U.S. commercial airlines policy that prevented blind passengers from keeping their canes at their seats, in which he was successful, and the policy of preventing blind passengers from sitting in an exit row.

In 1978, Dr. Jernigan left Iowa and moved to Baltimore, Maryland where he became the executive director of the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults. At that time, he helped establish the National Center for the Blind as the NFB headquarters in Baltimore. In his continued capacity as the NFB president, he established the International Braille and Technology Center dedicated to research and promotion of Braille literacy and non-visual access technology. He also created NEWSLINE, a free audio-based newspaper service for all blind and visually impaired persons in the United States. In 2004, the NFB Jernigan Institute was established. The mission of the Institute is to lead "the quest to understand the real problems of blindness and to develop innovative education, technologies, products

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 25

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

and services that help the world's blind to achieve independence." Today, the NFB has more than 50,000 members and affiliate chapters in all 50 states and in the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

His importance to blind individuals and his impact on American society is shown by the awards, appointments, and recognition he received from national public and private organizations. In 1968, Dr. Jernigan was acknowledged with a special citation from President Lyndon Johnson for his outstanding contributions to the advancement of blind individuals. President Gerald Ford appointed Dr. Jernigan to serve as special advisor to the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals in 1976 and on Library and Information Services in 1977. He received a U.S. Department of Labor award for significant contributions to the American worker. He was a member of the National Advisory Committee on Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, was a special consultant on Services for the Blind (appointed by the Federal Commissioner of Rehabilitation), and was an advisor on museum programs for blind visitors to the Smithsonian Institution. He received honorary doctorate degrees in the Humanities from Coe College (Cedar Rapids, Iowa) and Drake University (Des Moines, IA). Seton Hall University (Newark, New Jersey) awarded him an honorary Doctor of Law degree. In 1998, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), an agency of the United States Department of Education.

Dr. Jernigan died in October 1998. However, his impact continues to this day. Many of those Iowans who received training at the Department's Orientation Center during his tenure have gone on to leadership positions in other states. One graduate (Joanne Wilson) was appointed by President George W. Bush to serve as the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in the U.S. Department of Education in 2001. In recent years, many other state vocational rehabilitation agencies have adopted the Iowa model including New Mexico, Louisiana, Nebraska, and Hawaii. Further the positive philosophy of blindness that he championed throughout his life continues to have a profound impact on the lives of blind Iowans and guides Iowa's public and private agencies in the services they provide to them.

Upon his death, Euclid Herie, then president of the World Blind Union, reflected that "Dr. Jernigan influenced the lives of blind persons throughout the world for more than a half-century. He fought for their inclusion in education, employment and culture. His name will be remembered alongside Louis Braille as one of the most influential leaders in the blindness movement." (Imhoff. "Kenneth Jernigan, 71, Advocate for the Blind" 5B.) Further research on Dr. Jernigan's life, in particular his role in the organized blind movement, is currently being conducted. When complete, that additional research may demonstrate his nationwide impact on American society.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 26

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 27

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 28

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 29

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, Polk County, Iowa

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 13 of the new YMCA plat, an official plat of N 126 feet of E 152 feet of lot 10, an official plat of NW ¼ of SE ¼ of Sec. 4, TWP. 78, Rge. 24

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Iowa Commission for the Blind building.

Iowa Commission for the Blind Photographs

All photographs were taken by Karen Schweitzer on 7/17/2008. The digital photos are stored on CD-R Number 149. The photographs were printed with Epson Ultrachrome ink on Epson Premium Glossy photo paper by iMAGING SOLUTIONS.

1. Outside: East and North Side of Building. Camera is facing southwest.
2. Outside: South Side of Building. Camera is facing northwest.
3. Outside: West Side of Building. Camera is facing north.
4. Reception Lobby. Camera is facing northwest.
5. Recreation Room. Camera is facing south.
6. Recreation Room. Camera is facing south.
7. Break Room. Camera is facing northeast.
8. Director's Conference Room. Camera is facing southeast.
9. Director's Office. Camera is facing northeast.
10. Director's Office Reception Room. Camera is facing south.

=====

11. Form Prepared By

=====

name/title Shan Sasser e-mail address Shan.Sasser@blind.state.ia.us
organization Iowa Department for the Blind date _____
street & number 524 4th Street telephone 515-281-1256
city or town Des Moines state IA zip code 50309

=====

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Iowa Department for the Blind
street & number 524 4th Street telephone 515-281-1333
city or town Des Moines state IA zip code 50309

=====

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Polk

DATE RECEIVED: 5/20/10

DATE OF 16TH DAY:

DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

DATE OF PENDING LIST:

DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/04/10

REFERENCE NUMBER: 09000714

DETAILED EVALUATION:

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 7/1/2010 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The Iowa Commission for the Blind Building is listed in the National Register under Criteria B-Significant Person for its association with Dr. Kenneth Jernigan and his role in creating and implementing the "positive philosophy" of blindness that improved opportunities for blind Iowans. The building is listed at the state level of significance with Criteria Consideration G (less than 50 years).

RECOM./CRITERIA AcceptREVIEWER Turkiya LoweDISCIPLINE HISTORIANTELEPHONE 354-2266DATE 6-28-10

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

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Iowa Commission for the Blind Building (Amendment to Document National Significance)

other names/site number YMCA, Iowa Department for the Blind (NRIS 09000714)

2. Location

street & number 524 4th Street

☐ not for publication

city or town Des Moines

☐ vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Polk code 153 zip code 50309-2364

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

 X national statewide local

Barbara Mitchell/DSHPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

July 12, 2011
Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 X entered in the National Register

 determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain):

by Barbara Wyatt
Signature of the Keeper

9-6-11
Date of Action

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gregory R. Mathis and Shan Sasser

organization The 106 Group, Ltd., Iowa Department for the Blind

date June 20, 2011

street & number 370 Selby Ave. 524 4th St.

telephone (651) 290-0977, (515) 281-1256

city or town St. Paul Des Moines

state MN, IA zip code 55102, 50309

e-mail _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner:

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

name Iowa Department for the Blind

street & number 524 4th Street

telephone (515) 281-1333

city or town Des Moines

state IA zip code 50309-2364

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 1**PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT**

The Iowa Commission for the Blind Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 1, 2010 for its association with Dr. Kenneth Jernigan, the director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind between 1959 and 1978. The 2010 documentation addresses the statewide significance of Dr. Jernigan in the State of Iowa under Criterion B within the areas of education, social history, and politics/government. The purpose of this amendment to the 2010 registration form is to provide additional documentation related to the national significance of Dr. Kenneth Jernigan under Criterion B, within the areas of education, social history, and politics/government.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS

Criteria Consideration G: Properties That Have Achieved Significance within the Last Fifty Years: A civil rights movement for blind individuals, and one in which Kenneth Jernigan played a significant role, was part of a larger social movement during a historically important time in American history. Dr. Jernigan's work coincided with a broader civil rights movement, which sought to eradicate the discrimination in public and private life faced by African-Americans as well as other minorities. The Modern Civil Rights Movement began in the 1950s and saw significant social and legal upheavals throughout the 1960s that led to dramatic changes throughout all facets of American life. The Civil Rights Movement not only spawned the disability rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s, but also led to equal rights movements by other groups that faced discrimination and repression, such as women and homosexuals. The disability rights movement utilized many of the same signature strategies of the Civil Rights Movement, including protests, civil disobedience, and legal challenges. In addition, both movements culminated in federal legislation that bans discrimination: the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. As president of the National Federation for the Blind (NFB) during this tumultuous time, Kenneth Jernigan marshaled the organization's members to legally challenge discriminatory actions and to lobby for legislation that would ensure equal access to employment, such as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Dr. Jernigan's philosophical stance and uncompromising writings and speeches served as a catalyst that energized not only blind Iowans, but also blind people across the United States, to fight for their civil rights. As such, the Iowa Commission for the Blind building meets Criteria Consideration G for the portion of the period of significance between 1961 and 1978.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**Summary Paragraph**

The Iowa Commission for the Blind Building is significant at the national level under National Register Criterion B, in the areas of education, social history and politics/government, for its association with Kenneth Jernigan during the period 1959-1978. Dr. Jernigan became director of the Commission in 1958 and worked to acquire a former YMCA building for use as the Iowa Commission for the Blind in 1959. Kenneth Jernigan both lived and worked in the building from 1959 until 1978. Dr. Jernigan was the first blind individual in the nation to lead a state agency for the blind and during his tenure as director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, in which he lived and worked in the building, he made significant and long-lasting contributions for the betterment of blind

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

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 2

Americans. Building on the work of Newell Perry and Jacobus tenBroek, Jernigan sought to correct long held, common social misconceptions about blindness and beliefs that blindness was a debilitating condition that led to inferior mental capacity. Instead, he cast blindness in a positive light, as a common characteristic that could be overcome by proper adjustment and learning alternative techniques that would allow blind people to do things as well as, or better than those with sight. In the area of education, Dr. Jernigan is significant for having developed and implemented a revolutionary, new model for rehabilitating the blind at the Iowa Commission for the Blind. Known as "structured discovery," this highly successful model produced graduates who were more independent, in terms of mobility and self-confidence, and better equipped to pursue their dreams than students enrolled in prevailing training programs of the time. Reflecting its success, within a matter of years, rehabilitation programs across the United States and around the world copied this model and it has become the prevalent national model for rehabilitation programs for the blind to the present day. In the areas of social history and politics/government, Kenneth Jernigan was a social and governmental reformer who was the leading force in efforts to establish civil rights for the blind. His contributions were both as an activist and as a national expert on blindness. He was instrumental in organizing the blind in their efforts to achieve equality. He also influenced and shaped national policy discussions, and worked with Congressional leaders to enact a number of specific national laws and policies that provide equal rights and equal opportunity for the blind. The period of significance for the Iowa Department for the Blind building begins in 1959, the year the Commission acquired the building, and concludes in 1978, the year Dr. Jernigan resigned as director of the Commission and moved to Baltimore. After his move to Maryland, Jernigan remained a leader in the organized blind movement and continued to fight for the rights of blind Americans until his death in October 1998.

Narrative Description**BLINDNESS IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY*****Public Perceptions of the Blind***

The national contributions of Dr. Kenneth Jernigan were made within a context of commonly held societal beliefs about disability and blindness in the United States. These beliefs heavily influenced society's views towards and treatment of the blind.

As a group, the blind are both similar and unique among the disabled. The common link between the blind and other disabled groups has been the challenge of proving their capacity.¹ For thousands of years, those with disabilities, including the blind, have experienced discrimination. In American history, disabled citizens, including blind individuals, were seen as pitiable and in need of protection by charity organizations, discriminated against by employers, and castigated as beggars through local ordinances.² The challenge for the blind has not been just to prove that they are capable of leading independent lives, but they must also overcome social beliefs about blindness, such as perceptions of them having super-sensory insights while simultaneously

¹ Fleischer and Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*. 2001, p. 14.

² Susan M. Schweik. *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public*. 2009.

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

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 3

being needy and dependent, and incapable of making rational decisions.

Many beliefs and attitudes towards blindness in the United States are largely based on Western society's emphasis on sight as the primary sense and the corresponding fear that sighted persons have of what life would be like without it.³ Although these beliefs stem from long-held societal misunderstandings and misconceptions of blindness; nevertheless, over time they came to be accepted as "truth" by society.⁴ As a result, the actual abilities of the blind were overshadowed by the fear of blindness by those with eyesight. This led to blindness being perceived by society as a "learned social role that is largely developed through ordinary processes of social learning."⁵ Since many of the beliefs about blindness are socially ascribed, rather than based upon the actual capabilities of blind individuals, they were often considered inferior in both intellect and aptitude. These negative attitudes towards blindness influenced the work of many social scientists, which hindered their ability to study blindness strictly from a scientific perspective. This cultural bias is evident in the work of many blindness "experts" through most of the twentieth century, which resulted in studies that perpetuated negative views towards blindness.

In his seminal 1930 book, *The World of the Blind: A Psychological Study*, Pierre Villey notes that the "blind are victims of ignorance of the public concerning their real condition."⁶ He observes that:

In nearly all minds, the word *blind* evokes the same pitiful and wrongful image. Behind those sightless eyes and face without animation, the idea is to suppose that everything is dulled, the intelligence, the will, the sensations, and the faculties of the very soul are numbed and as it were, stupefied. And then, accustomed as those who see are to do nothing without using their eyes, it seems to them very naturally, that if they lose their eyesight, they would be incapable of an activity, and that their very thoughts would cease to flow through their minds. (p. 14, emphasis in the original).

These negative views towards the blind were perpetuated by contemporaries of Dr. Jernigan through the mid-twentieth century and supported by the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB). The AFB, founded by sighted advocates and educators in the field of blindness in 1921 in an effort to legitimize themselves, sought to "coordinate a wide range of efforts—research, education, lobbying—affecting the blind" and, although it had little input from blind persons, "viewed itself as voice for the blind and the national authority on blindness."⁷ In his 1958 book, *A Psychiatrist Works with Blindness*, a book whose views were supported by the AFB, Richard Choden writes:

The individual who acquires a handicap in essence becomes a different person from his former self. In blindness, his eyes are the least part of the person that is affected. Mainly, the inner

³ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007.

⁴ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 14.

⁵ Robert A. Scott. *The Making of Blind Men: A Study of Adult Socialization*. 1969.

⁶ Pierre Villey. *The World of the Blind: A Psychological Study*. 1930, p. 14.

⁷ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 24.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 4

person is altered. His aspirations, his interpersonal relationships, his body image, his concept of self and of his relationship to the physical world are strongly affected, if not completely changed.

And it is basic to any rehabilitation or readjustment toward the utilization of his potentials that he recognized this change in self (p. 52).

Choden also describes how "it is of paramount importance to acquaint the newly blind with things blind people can do, both in terms of leisure and vocational activities."⁸ The emphasis here was not on the enabling the blind to reach their full personal potential, but rather on teaching the blind a limited set of activities that those with eyesight thought the blind could do based on what society believed were limited mental capabilities.

Rehabilitation Programs for the Blind and Sheltered Workshops

Blindness is a somewhat unique disability. Unlike many disabilities related to physical or mental limitations, blindness is due to the loss of one of the senses. Aside from paralysis, which is mostly a physical disability that results in the loss of touch, the only other disability that is commonly associated with the loss of a sense is deafness. Therefore, orientation and mobility programs for the deaf can provide a comparative framework for similar programs for the blind.

In the nineteenth century, as training programs for the blind and deaf were being developed, a regressive movement in education was also occurring that would have negative consequences for both groups. Instead of developing programs that would encourage training to enable the blind and deaf to reach their true potential, programs were developed to train both groups how to conform to societal views of each. The main difference between challenges faced by the blind and deaf were that the blind have had to prove their capabilities while the deaf have had to prove their humanity.⁹ This fundamental difference in societal beliefs about each group also resulted in the development of very different types of rehabilitation programs for the blind and deaf. Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, rehabilitation programs for the deaf sought to make deaf people function as if they were not deaf, while at the same time society assumed that accommodations had to be made for the blind.¹⁰

For the deaf, the increased use of sign language during the early nineteenth century enabled deaf people to achieve success, enabling them to become more integrated into society. However, the regressive movement sought to ban the teaching of sign language in schools and force the teaching of oralism, which led to setbacks for the deaf in the late nineteenth century. Since oralism promoted teaching the deaf to speak and lip-read, at best the deaf still operated in a different language from the majority, resulting in increased isolation and further segregation.¹¹

While educational approaches to deafness focused on ignoring the disability, public and private institutions

⁸ Richard L. Choden. *A Psychiatrist Works with Blindness*. 1958, p. 27.

⁹ Fleischer and Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*. 2001, p. 14.

¹⁰ Fleischer and Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*. 2001, p. 19.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 5

focused on creating special accommodations for the blind. Some of these accommodations were liberating, such as the acceptance of Braille as the uniform code for reading material in 1932 and cane travel in the 1940s and 1950s, others were quite limiting and enduring, such as those related to vocational training. The blind were considered unemployable in the general workforce, so early efforts to make them productive members of society led to the development of "sheltered workshops" in the 1840s. Sheltered workshops were separate occupation-oriented facilities where the blind could "earn a living." The intent of these facilities was to "foster a sense of self-respect and self-reliance in the blind workers, not to provide a profit for the institutions" that operated them.¹² While these workshops provided a means for some blind persons to earn a living, critics argued that sheltered workshops isolated and exploited workers by paying low wages and kept them from being integrated into society.¹³ Sheltered workshops were a mainstay of vocational placement for many years. The 1938 Wagner-O'Day Act reinforced their legitimacy by requiring the federal government to purchase certain items from these workshops. The federal Fair Labor Standards Act exempted workshops managers from paying minimum wage as workers employed there were considered "substandard", maintaining low productivity due to their disability. When first enacted, no wage floor was defined, leading to widespread exploitation of blind workers.¹⁴ As reported in the June 1960 issue of the *Braille Monitor*, 85 of the 100 workshops employing blind individuals had minimum wage exemptions, with average wages of 53 cents per hour and as low as 10 cent per hour, well below the prevailing wages of the day.¹⁵

Early Influences on Blind Rehabilitation Programs

No national model or system for rehabilitating the blind existed prior to the 1940s. State institutions regulated financial assistance to blind individuals through Aid to the Blind and welfare programs.¹⁶ Schools for the blind focused on arts and humanities education, as well as manual trades and handicrafts, such as broom making, rug weaving, and caning. Employment opportunities were restricted to a limited number of industrial homes or workshops around the country, most of which were funded through a mixture of state funds and private donations, or jobs in blind schools. Very few resources were available to those who experienced blindness as adults due to accident, injury, or disease.¹⁷

Many of the local organizations that formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused on blindness prevention or on charitable activities. The first national organizations for the blind were the American Association of Instructors for the Blind (AAIB) (1871) and the American Association of Workers for the Blind (AAWB) (1905). The most widely known early organization for the blind was the AFB, formed in 1921 in Vinton, Iowa by the AAWB.¹⁸ The formation of the AFB was the product of a movement by both the AAWB

¹² Fleischer and Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*. 2001, p. 19-20.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ William G. Whittaker. "Treatment of Workers with Disabilities Under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act," *Federal Publications*. Congressional Research Services Report for Congress: Paper 209 (February 9, 2005).

¹⁵ Floyd Matson. "House Minimum Wage Hearings," *Braille Monitor* (June 1960), p. 19.

¹⁶ Over the years these programs were incorporated into the Social Security Act.

¹⁷ S.M. Green. "The Technical Training And Industrial Employment Of The Blind In The United States," *Outlook for the Blind* (October 1908).

¹⁸ Helen Keller was perhaps the most famous member of the AFB.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 6

and the AAIB toward professionalism in the field and study of blindness.

As blindness advocates and educators became professionalized in the first half of the twentieth century, their approach was influenced by studies done by several key figures, many of whom were supported by the AFB. Among the leading publications on blindness in the first half of the century, and one supported by the AFB, was *From Homer to Helen Keller: A Social and Educational Study of Blindness*, written in 1932 by Richard French, a noted figure in the field of blindness. French was a lecturer in Education at the University of California and later the principal at the California School for the Blind. In his book, French states, "the degree of blindness will in many cases be a major factor in determining the possibilities of intellectual attainment and the social and economic possibilities as well."¹⁹ In summary, French believed a direct relationship existed between the potential of the blind to attain success and the amount of sight they still possessed. This book encouraged training programs to focus on teaching the blind to rely on their remaining sight, rather than developing skills to overcome their limitations. With its backing by the AFB, few professionals questioned this approach.

Another influential work on programs for the blind was *The Blind in School and Society*, written by a blind psychologist named Thomas Cutsforth in 1933. In his book, later published in an expanded form by the AFB in 1951, he looked at blindness from a psychological perspective. While Cutsforth acknowledged that society's prevalent negative attitude about the blind was a significant part of the problem, rather than addressing it, he instead focused on reinforcing them by describing what he perceived to be inappropriate responses by the blind. To this end, Cutsforth perpetuated a number of popular misconceptions by asserting that the blind have "both a personality problem and a social problem."²⁰ Cutsforth's professional, scientific conclusion was that "the blind are abnormal, society is treating them unjustly" and, therefore, his advice to the blind was that they should "graciously expect the attitudes of the majority, try to fit in as best as possible, and not expect society's attitudes to change."²¹ It is this perspective that provided a framework for the development of many rehabilitation programs for the blind in the first half of the twentieth century.

Divergent Perspectives towards Blindness and the Rise of the National Federation for the Blind

An ideological dispute among those in the blindness community, both sighted and blind, began to emerge during the early twentieth century. The formation of the AFB in 1921 represented not only a shift away from charity-based or school-affiliated associations, but also one toward professionalism. Dr. Jacobus tenBroek, Dr. Newel Perry, and others in the years leading up to World War II, however, felt these professional organizations represented the views and needs of the blind service agencies rather than the actual needs of the blind. Therefore, they sought to establish an advocacy organization that represented and consisted of blind individuals themselves. In response, the NFB was founded in 1940 by members representing organizations from California, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. The first president and ideological leader was Dr. tenBroek. As tenBroek stated in his speech at the inaugural meeting of the NFB, "it is necessary for the blind to organize themselves and their ideas upon a national basis, so that blind men the nation over may live in

¹⁹ R.S. French. *From Homer to Helen Keller: A Social and Educational Study of Blindness*. 1932, p. 4.

²⁰ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 30.

²¹ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 32.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 7

physical comfort, social dignity, and spiritual self-respect.”²² The NFB soon developed an ideology that was considered radically different from the views of professionals and other enculturated blind individuals, one based on a positive view of blindness. This fundamental view would finally come to a head after World War II and methods for rehabilitation programs were more fully developed.

THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II

The 1940s were a watershed period in the development of rehabilitation programs for the blind. This was due to the growing role of national organizations focused on blindness and new legislation, which affected the vocational services for blind individuals. The first federally mandated vocational rehabilitation programs focused on services to physically disabled veterans only. In 1920, the Smith-Fess Act expanded vocational programs to include civilians with physical disabilities. However, blind individuals were excluded from these federal and state programs, as it was felt they would not benefit from the services. This Act required periodic reauthorization of the vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs. VR programs became permanent with the passage of the Social Security Act in 1935.²³

World War II forced the nation to find ways for the blind to contribute to the war effort and to rehabilitate soldiers blinded during the war. First, the United States Congress passed the Barden-LaFollette Act in 1943, which included amendments to the Smith Fess Act of 1920. The Barden-LaFollette Acts made funds available to states to provide vocational rehabilitation services to the blind to the extent necessary to achieve vocational rehabilitation.²⁴ The goal of this legislation was first, to enable the blind to contribute to wartime production and second, to help them become employable after the war. As a result, more than thirty state rehabilitation programs were established. Since no national model for the rehabilitation of blind individuals existed, state programs were left to their own devices to develop and implement such programs. The success of these programs was varied and debatable; a national model was needed.

The Military's Response to Blindness and Its Impact on Rehabilitation Programs

With growing numbers of blinded casualties during World War II, in May 1943, several months prior to the passage of the Barden-LaFollette Act, the War Department authorized two hospitals to treat the blinded soldiers. Valley Forge Hospital, located in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, was one of those hospitals. Facing increasing numbers of blinded soldiers and limited staff, the hospital had to devise a plan to rehabilitate these soldiers. Seeing an opportunity to boost their own programs, a number of leading civilian figures in the field of blindness refused to help the hospital with its efforts. Instead, they “were holding out for a war blind program outside the Army.”²⁵ Many of the leading civilians had divergent opinions on a number of issues, including the role of acuity

²² Floyd W. Matson. *Walking Alone and Marching Together: A History of the Organized Blind Movement in the United States, 1940-1990*. 1990, p. 5.

²³ Bruno D'Alonzo; Gerard Giordano; Wayne Oyenque. “Vocational Rehabilitation: The First 50 Years,” *American Rehabilitation* 21 (3-4) (1995). p. 43.

²⁴ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 87.

²⁵ C.W. Bledsoe. “Resistance,” *The New Outlook for the Blind*, 46. (November 1952), p. 247.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 8

in rehabilitation, consumer involvement, training methods, professionalism and professional standards. For example, the NFB started to challenge many of the ideological beliefs of the AFB. Recognizing the considerable infighting between the various groups in the field of blindness the Surgeon General instead authorized Valley Forge Hospital to develop its own rehabilitation program.²⁶ This program, later refined at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Hines, Illinois in the mid-1940s, became the prevailing model for orientation and mobility (O&M) programs in the United States.^{27, 28} The program was based on the belief that the first thing a blind person needed to know was how to get around, and once mobility was achieved, "all other rehabilitation needs would fall into place".²⁹ This O&M model was based on three key components: the use of a (aluminum) cane as a mobility tool, a systematic curriculum to teach its use, and sighted instructors to ensure the safety of the students.³⁰

Reaction to the Hines Model

The NFB, many blind individuals, and the majority of civilian workers in the blindness field, rejected all of the O&M components developed at Valley Forge and Hines. However, the reasons for their opposition varied. The many sighted advocates and educators, as well as many blind persons, opposed the use of canes, largely due to the social stigma associated with them. Use of canes was discouraged in sheltered workshops and schools where the blind were encouraged to get around by becoming familiar with their surroundings, so many individuals associated with these facilities believed there was no need for white canes.³¹ The NFB disagreed with the Hines model because it sought to "professionalize" O&M and focused on teaching limitations. The NFB also disagreed with others in the blindness field because sheltered workshops and schools for the blind are relatively confined places that blind persons could become familiar with over time and learn to get around without a cane; however, this limited the blind to these places. The NFB, sought to teach empowerment and independence that would allow the blind the freedom to pursue independent lives.

Nationalization of the Hines Model

Despite efforts of the Veterans Administration to distance itself from blindness groups and their infighting, the Hines Hospital quickly became the de facto national model for O&M programs and rehabilitation programs around the country as state programs sought to incorporate O&M training into their vocational rehabilitation processes. Although the Hines Hospital was not set up to provide widespread training to states, state rehabilitation programs clamored for even partial access. Without full training, state programs were inconsistent and often inadequate in their abilities. Seeking to legitimize their professionalism and gain credibility, during the late 1940s, many leaders in the field of blindness collaborated to develop a model for state programs that closely

²⁶ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 69.

²⁷ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 3.

²⁸ It is important to note that O&M training is currently seen as only one aspect of vocational rehabilitation; however, this development is important because it elicited a debate about professionalism and who is qualified to teach the blind.

²⁹ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 68, 71.

³⁰ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 68, 72.

³¹ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 70-71.

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

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 9

matched the Hines program. They also set standards of training for mobility instructors and placement personnel. Although blind instructors were originally allowed, standards ultimately mandated sighted instructors with graduate degrees, leading to the development of specialized graduate programs at colleges and universities to meet these requirements.

REHABILITATION PROGRAMS FOR THE BLIND IN THE 1950s

As previously discussed, during the 1940s standards were established, mostly by sighted persons, for vocational rehabilitation programs for the blind. In addition, the O&M field was professionalized by requiring sighted instructors with graduate degrees. The NFB, which was attempting to dispel negative attitudes towards the blind and prove their capabilities, opposed these actions. This resulted in a major schism in the blindness profession.

Conflicting Views of Blindness and O&M

At the start of the 1950s, within the field of blindness two diametrically opposed beliefs about blindness and how it affects a person existed, resulting in radically different approaches to O&M and larger rehabilitation programs. The first view, which became the prevailing view during the 1940s and 1950s, was a "socially limiting or deficit view" or "medical model" of blindness.³² Many O&M professionals trained in college programs and some blind persons embraced this view. In the medical model, individuals with disabilities were seen as people whose physical deformities require correction and that limitations are inherent because of those physical conditions. Individuals are seen as "patients" who require assistance from qualified professionals.³³

As previously noted, a number of state rehabilitation programs for the blind were established across the country following the passage of the Barden-Lafollette of 1943. These programs were based on the medical model, believing that blindness was as much a mental and social condition as a personal characteristic. Most of these programs were modeled after the Hines program and taught the use of an aluminum cane for mobility. With the support of the AFB, these programs focused on forcing the blind to acknowledge and accept their limitations and place in society, and often to encourage reliance on any remaining sight they may have. They also used a patient based, medical model approach, where doctors and instructors told the patient what was best rather than giving the blind person a voice. In addition, these programs required sighted instructors with graduate degrees in the field, and later, certification.³⁴ Despite widespread opposition by the NFB, and others sharing its views, to this approach for rehabilitating the blind, the burden was on them to prove another viable method for rehabilitating the blind that allowed them to become effective members of society.

The second view of blindness, which is based on ideas developed by Newell Perry, had a "positive" view about blindness and focused on social empowerment.³⁵ Also known as the "social model of disability," this model was the one embraced by the NFB and its members, including Kenneth Jernigan, and by many professionals, both

³² Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 4.

³³ Susan M. Schweik. *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public*. 2009, p. 299.

³⁴ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 3.

³⁵ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 10

blind and sighted.³⁶ In this view, individuals who are blind are seen as a minority in society who faced discrimination because of their blindness. The NFB and supporters of this model believed that rehabilitation programs based on corrective or restorative activities, which were hallmarks of the medical model, would not bring social equality. Instead, they believed that blind individuals and society-at-large needed to acknowledge that individuals with disabilities, including those who are blind, simply utilized different means to accomplish daily tasks. It was their belief that blind individuals had the same right to educational and employment opportunities as sighted individuals, as well as the right to participate in all civic and social functions. This philosophical approach was a radical one in mid-twentieth century America.

A New Model for O&M

The diverging views of blindness led to many other disagreements between the members of the NFB and the entrenchment in the blindness profession, which all came to a head in the 1950s. In ensuing years, the NFB ideology, which was based on the social model of disability, shaped its arguments about the role of acuity in rehabilitation, consumer involvement, professionalism and professional standards, and the type and need for accommodations in its disputes with blindness professionals and its activism in state and federal legislation. The NFB believed that the blind people best understood the needs and challenges of the blind, so they should be given the opportunity to teach other blind people. This led to what would become a long-standing dispute with many in the blindness profession, including the AFB and the leaders of many privately operated rehabilitation programs, who sought to legitimize themselves through professionalization. One of the first, and long-lasting, issues of dispute between the NFB and the other blindness organizations centered on professional standards and qualifications of those who provided education and training to blind individuals.

Kenneth Jernigan and the Iowa Experiment

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, NFB president Jacobus tenBroek was trying to figure out a way to spread the NFB philosophy, which promoted self-respect, dignity, confidence, and first-class citizenship, across the nation.³⁷ As Kenneth Jernigan rose through the ranks of the NFB in the early 1950s, becoming a member of its executive committee in 1952, Dr. tenBroek found an intelligent, willing partner to collaborate with on this effort. Their first plan was to have Jernigan run for Congress. Their plan was to find a seat that Jernigan might conceivably win. As a capable politician and the only blind person serving in congress, Jernigan would then be able to work on laws that would promote greater opportunities for the blind.³⁸ Instead, an accidental meeting between Kenneth Jernigan and a board member of the Iowa Commission for the Blind on an airplane led to an offer for Jernigan to become the commission's director in Iowa. After a 1957 study revealed that Iowa had the worst program for the blind in the nation, as evidenced by few jobs created and little training for its clients, the State of Iowa was looking for a new leader to improve its program.³⁹ Since Iowa had the worst program for the blind in the nation, Jernigan figured that only the direction the Commission had to go was up. Moreover, it provided an

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ James Gashel. Telephone interview with Greg Mathis and Shan Sasser, May 20, 2011.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Iowa Commission for the Blind. *1964 Annual Report of the Iowa Commission for the Blind*. 1965.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 11

opportunity to prove what the NFB was attempting to promote in regards to the rehabilitation of blind people.⁴⁰

The idea for what is now known as the structured discovery model for O&M, the platform on which the Iowa Experiment is based, was first conceived in California in the early 1950s, when Dr. Jernigan was a teacher at the California Orientation Center for Blind Adults.⁴¹ In his book *Freedom for the Blind: The Secret is Empowerment*, J.H. Omvig (2002) describes how the model for the Iowa Experiment was conceived:

...tenBroek and other early leaders of the Federation soon developed a vast body of knowledge—a true understanding of the nature of blindness and the real social and economic problems faced by blind people...these TRUTHS which they discovered and developed became known as the “Federation Philosophy.”

Those early leaders of the Federation also understood that, if educational or VR programs were ever to be of any real use to the blind, those programs would have to be aimed at helping blind customers change their attitudes about their own blindness. The customers, themselves, would have to come to understand emotionally as well as intellectually that it is respectable to be blind and that the properly trained blind person can have a normal, happy, productive and satisfying life. If these attitudinal adjustments could be made as part of an educational or VR processes, the teaching and learning of the simple skills of blindness would be readily available.⁴²

Omvig goes on to note how professional educators and rehabilitators of the day did not understand this, regulating this philosophy as a mere “pie in the sky” fantasy. Believing that:

...most state programs were not only useless, but often harmful to their blind customers, tenBroek and Jernigan devised a plan. They needed to conduct an “EXPERIMENT.” They decided that Kenneth Jernigan should get himself hired in some state as the Director of services for the blind. Then he could infuse the Federation’s ideas in every facet of the state service program. Either the Federation was right, or it was wrong—either the philosophy would work in the day-to-day setting of a VR agency for the blind, or it wouldn’t.

The appointment of Dr. Kenneth Jernigan as the Director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind in 1958 was a mutually beneficial opportunity for the State of Iowa and the NFB. Jacobus tenBroek and Kenneth Jernigan saw the Iowa program as an opportunity to test their experiment and the State of Iowa had little to lose if the experiment failed and a lot to gain if it succeeded.

The appointment of Dr. Jernigan as the Director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind was a watershed moment in the blind movement for several reasons. First, it marked the first time in history that a blind person had been

⁴⁰ James Gashel. Telephone interview with Greg Mathis and Shan Sasser, May 20, 2011.

⁴¹ James Nyman. “Discovering the Structure of Structured Discovery,” *The Nebraska Independent: News from Blind Nebraska: Points of View* 1 (2008), p. 1.

⁴² James H. Omvig. *Freedom for the Blind: The Secret is Empowerment*, 2002, p. 23-24. Emphasis added by author.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 12

given the opportunity led a state rehabilitation program for the blind, giving the blind a chance to demonstrate their capabilities. Second, it provided the NFB with an opportunity to test their philosophy and new method of rehabilitation for the blind, which would spark monumental, ongoing debates in the O&M profession. Until this time, the Federation philosophy remained just an idea and the debate about what was best for blind people had largely been limited to philosophical debate. Dr. Jernigan's appointment was met with concern by many professionals in the field of blindness. NFB President Jacobus tenBroek addressed concerns about the organization's role in the program in a 1958 issue of the *Braille Monitor* where he wrote:

It presupposes that the organized blind are on one side of the line and the agencies are on the other. It presupposes that the function of agencies is to rule and that of the blind is to obey. It presupposes that the blind are unprofessional; that the agencies know what is best for the blind and that the blind should accept it without question; that the agencies are custodians and caretakers and that the blind are wards and charitable beneficiaries; that the agencies are the interpreters of the blind to the sighted community and that the blind are incapable of speaking for themselves; that the agencies exist because the blind are not full-fledged citizens with the right to compete for a home or a job and to discharge the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship. These are basic fallacies.⁴³

The Iowa Model, as implemented by Dr. Jernigan, came to be known as the consumer-based approach within the O&M profession. Unlike the model developed at Hines Hospital, where the blind were treated as "patients," the Iowa Model was more like a school where students were treated as competent individuals responsible for their own actions and allowed to pursue their interests, rather than being told what they could do. The former YMCA that the Iowa Commission for the Blind acquired in 1959, where Kenneth Jernigan both lived and worked, was remodeled and outfitted with rooms and facilities that reflected his approach.⁴⁴

The Iowa Model was based on the belief that blindness is a characteristic, not a disability, and, if properly taught alternative techniques, the blind could do many of the same tasks as those with eyesight. The program curriculum focused on "personal adjustment and attitudes about blindness" so students could build confidence in themselves, thereby allowing them to more easily learn new skills. The program emphasized learning alternative skills of blindness (cane travel, Braille, etc.). The program also used a new type of cane that was better for echolocation. This type of cane, which came to be known as the Iowa cane, was made of fiberglass and had a metal tip at the end.⁴⁵ Another important and unique principle of the Iowa Experiment was the belief that the "complex distinctions which are often made between those who have partial sight and those who are totally blind, between those who have been blind from childhood and those who have become blind as adults are largely meaningless."⁴⁶ Jernigan believed that if the wide variations in sight were ignored, and all students were

⁴³ Jacobus tenBroek. Federation Leader Appointed Director of Iowa Commission for the Blind. *Braille Monitor* 2 (April 1958), p. 1-4.

⁴⁴ The design and function of the Iowa Commission for the Blind building and how it manifests the Iowa Model is fully documented in the 2010 National Register documentation by Shan Sasser and, therefore, is not duplicated in this amendment.

⁴⁵ Ronald J. Ferguson. *The Blind Need Not Apply*. 2007, p. 117.

⁴⁶ Kenneth Jernigan. "A Definition of Blindness," *Future Reflections* 24 (3). 2005, p. 7.

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

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 13

provided training that taught alternative skills that did not require any vision, they would ultimately be more successful in routine tasks in their daily lives. Based on that belief, all individuals who attended the Commission's training program received the same training, using sleep shades and a long white cane, regardless of their diagnosed visual acuity or perception. This approach ensured that all students gained the same level of confidence in their skills and attitude.

Unlike other programs of the day, which often trained the blind for jobs in sheltered workshops, the Iowa program encouraged its students to seek employment or career opportunities beyond their families, communities, and own expectations about their abilities. The programs implemented by Dr. Jernigan were designed to push students to question their own assumptions about their capabilities by giving them the opportunity to participate in many activities that were not normally considered to be achievable by the blind, such as water-skiing, gardening, and woodworking. The overarching goal was to instill self-confidence and allow students to believe that it is acceptable to be blind.

The Lasting Legacy of the Iowa Experiment

Kenneth Jernigan and Jacobus tenBroek collaboratively developed the philosophy behind the Iowa Experiment (later known as the Iowa Model). However, Dr. Jernigan was the one who implemented it, refined it, and is largely responsible for its success in Iowa and for promoting it across the nation. Kenneth Jernigan successfully testified before legislatures around the country, from Minnesota to South Carolina, to establish similar programs, leading to the widespread implementation of the Iowa Model across the nation. He further insured the success of these programs by hand picking many of his students to take leadership positions in these organizations, including helping his students become directors of state programs, in states such as Washington, Idaho, and Nevada.

By the time Dr. Jernigan became Director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind in 1958, he had had several years to refine his principles and methods. This fact, combined with the full support the NFB and of a state eager to improve its program, Dr. Jernigan was able to quickly implement his revolutionary program in Iowa almost overnight. As a direct result of Dr. Jernigan's strong leadership skills and the revolutionary new approach to rehabilitation that emphasized confidence building and independence, successful results came quickly. This success is demonstrated by the fact that in a period of three short years after the Iowa Model was first implemented, between 1958 and 1961, employment of the blind in Iowa had risen 350 percent. This number continued to grow, increasing 550 percent by 1966 and 750 percent by 1968, reaching record levels. Correspondingly, the number of blind on public assistance decreased substantially during this period. After steady growth through the mid-1950s, the number of blind on public assistance peaked at nearly 1,500 in 1958. By 1961, this number had dropped to approximately 1,410, a decrease of 5.7 percent, and by 22.5 percent to 1,160 in 1964.⁴⁷ Within a period of only six years, Dr. Jernigan transformed the worst state program for the blind in the nation into the best, and one that became a model for many other programs across the United States and around the world.

⁴⁷ Iowa Commission for the Blind. 1964 and 1968 Annual Reports of the Iowa Commission for the Blind.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 14

Due to Dr. Jernigan's personal efforts and those of the NFB to promote the success of the Iowa Experiment, the blind community and the blind rehabilitation programs nationwide were able to learn about the experiment and monitor its steady stream of achievements and resultant success stories. While the model was at odds with most state rehabilitation programs of the day because it sought to give the blind the skills they needed to live independently, integrate into society, and pursue their dreams rather than confining them to life dependent on social services; it was embraced by the blind. Despite opposition by some professions in the O&M field, few were able to deny the success of the Iowa Experiment. In 1960, Dr. Jernigan won a national award for his pioneering effort, giving him and the program further credibility. By 1966, the transformation that had taken place in Iowa was often referred to as a "miracle" and the Iowa program was recognized as being "one of the best, if not the finest, in the world" by Donald Overbeay, one of the nation's leading educators of the blind.⁴⁸

Based on its rampant success, the Iowa program was soon the envy of the nation and the world. Observers from across the country and around the world flocked to Iowa to learn about the Iowa Model so they could institute similar programs. In 1964 alone, individuals from 12 different nations came to Iowa to learn about its program.⁴⁹ Observers came from as far away as Australia, Ceylon, Korea, Malaysia, and Pakistan. In reference to the Iowa Model, an observer from Ceylon noted that, "it is the high water mark for the rehabilitation of the blind in America. It would be a great service of this country if at least one blind person from each foreign country could spend some time here." An observer from Pakistan stated that, "it is the philosophy that prevails here that we must adopt."⁵⁰

By the mid-1960s, state rehabilitation programs from around the nation began to adopt the Iowa Model, or components of it. In 1965, South Carolina became the first state to fully remodel its rehabilitation program based on the Iowa Model.⁵¹ Other states soon followed suit, with Nevada implementing a similar model later in 1965, Massachusetts in 1966, and Idaho and West Virginia in 1967. By 1968, California, Kentucky, and New York had also remodeled their programs based on the Iowa Model, although the exact year is unclear.⁵² Nebraska and Washington also adopted the Iowa Model for their state rehabilitation programs for the blind. Dr. Jernigan often traveled to different states to make the case for his approach, even speaking before state legislatures. The NFB also developed its own private rehabilitation centers based on the Iowa Model. Some of the states with NFB operated facilities, but no separate state rehabilitation facilities for the blind included Louisiana, Colorado, and Minnesota. Other non-NFB, non-state run facilities also based their programs on the Iowa Model, including one in Baltimore, Maryland.

Due to the pioneering efforts of Kenneth Jernigan, the Iowa Experiment has had profound and long lasting impacts on the lives of blind Americans. Through the efforts of Kenneth Jernigan, the Iowa Experiment proved to be the superior model for the rehabilitation of the blind across the United States and around the world. This is demonstrated by the fact that, of the 24 states that still have separate blind state VR agencies, approximately half

⁴⁸ Des Moines Register. Iowa's Program for Blind Called One of World's Best. *Des Moines Sunday Register* April 17, 1966.

⁴⁹ Iowa Commission for the Blind. *1968 Annual Report of the Iowa Commission for the Blind*. 1969.

⁵⁰ Iowa Commission for the Blind. *1964 Annual Report of the Iowa Commission for the Blind*. 1965.

⁵¹ Iowa Commission for the Blind. *1968 Annual Report of the Iowa Commission for the Blind*. 1969.

⁵² James H. Omvig. *The Blindness Revolution: Jernigan in His Own Words*. 2005, p. 460.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 15

are known to be based on the Iowa Model. When NFB-operated facilities are also considered, many of which are located in states without separate state programs for the blind, the majority of blind rehabilitation programs in the United States now utilize the Iowa Model. Therefore, the philosophy implemented in Iowa between 1958 and 1978, continues to affect the lives of thousands of blind Americans across the United States. The training provided in these programs has allowed countless blind individuals to build their self-confidence, achieve greater personal success, and more fully integrate into society, while also dispelling the many long held social misconceptions about blindness.

CIVIL RIGHTS OF THE BLIND

Equally important to his work as an educator, are Dr. Kenneth Jernigan's contributions to the nation in the areas of social history and politics/government through his advocacy and national policy work as president of the NFB between 1968 and 1977. Much of what Kenneth Jernigan accomplished, through his activism and success with the Iowa Experiment, is closely related to the growing Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the mid to late twentieth century.

By the time Jernigan became president of the NFB, the Iowa Model was gaining widespread acceptance across the nation and blind people were becoming increasingly independent and mobile. Jernigan then turned his attention to attaining equal rights for the blind. In a 1997 speech at the NFB national convention, Jernigan described how he saw this effort take shape under his leadership. As Jernigan saw it, the history of the organized blind (referring to the NFB) was divided into four stages. The first was "to find enough food to keep body and soul together."⁵³ The second stage, after poverty had been reduced, was to find jobs, and many blind individuals found jobs during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Jernigan stated that, while they were "not always according to our capacity and not always with equal pay," they were jobs.⁵⁴ Jernigan went on to describe the third stage of the movement, stating:

Call it civil rights. After a person has satisfied hunger and found a job, there is still something else—the search for self-esteem and equal treatment—the yearning to belong and participate—to be part of the family and the broader community. And for us, as for other minorities, there was only one way to get there—confrontation. The status quo always fights change.

Many people think that civil rights and integration are the same thing. They aren't. The concept of civil rights precedes integration and is a necessary precursor to it. As used in the late twentieth century, the term civil rights (although some will deny it) always means force—an in-your-face attitude by the minority, laws that make somebody do this or that, picketing, marches in the street, court cases, and much else. And we have done those things, all of them. We had to.⁵⁵

⁵³ Kenneth Jernigan. "The Day After Civil Rights," *Braille Monitor* 40(8) (August/September 1997). Delivered before the National Convention of the Federation of the Blind, July 1997.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 16

Jernigan saw the efforts to attain civil rights for the blind as a prelude to the fourth stage of the organized blind (NFB) movement, which was freedom. He saw the fourth stage as a "day after civil rights."⁵⁶ He believed that there must be this fourth stage, "otherwise, the first three stages (satisfying hunger, finding jobs, and getting civil rights) have been in vain."⁵⁷ He viewed "the laws, the court cases, the confrontations, the jobs, and even the satisfying of hunger" as not the prime focus of the blind, but rather the "foundation on which to build."⁵⁸

In his quest to attain equal rights for the blind, Jernigan drew heavily from the strategies and tactics utilized by African Americans in their quest for civil rights in the years leading up to and during which he made his contributions. Jernigan was one of, if not the first, person to refer to the push for the civil rights of the blind as a "movement."⁵⁹ He often referred to the blind as an "emerging minority," and efforts to circumvent blind rights as bigotry.⁶⁰ In order to understand the significance of these contributions, a basic understanding of where they fit into the Civil Rights Movement is required.

Civil Rights in America

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States spans a 200-year period beginning with Thomas Jefferson's penning of the Declaration of Independence, which states "all men are created equal," and extends through 1976 to include the "growing civil rights movements of several minority groups in the dozen years following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964."⁶¹ The significance of the Civil Rights Movement is described in the national historic context *Civil Rights in the United States: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* (NPS 2008). Within this context, there are seven themes. The national significance achieved by the Iowa Commission for the Blind building for its association with Dr. Kenneth Jernigan falls primarily within the context of *The Second Revolution, 1964-1976*. However, to fully understand these contributions, an understanding of the previous period, *The Modern Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1964*, is required.

As a property associated with the expanding Civil Rights Movement, the legacy of the Iowa Commission for the Blind building continues beyond the identified themes within the context of Civil Rights in America, reflecting the continued struggle for disabled Americans to gain equal protection under the law. The result of this ongoing effort was the passage of several pieces of key legislation for people with disabilities, and culminating with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, which extended the "powers, remedies, and procedures" of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to disabled Americans by prohibiting discrimination in employment, public

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ James Gashel. Telephone interview with Greg Mathis and Shan Sasser, May 20, 2011.

⁶⁰ James Gashel. Telephone interview with Greg Mathis and Shan Sasser, May 20, 2011; Kenneth Jernigan. "NAC: Response to Bigotry," *Braille Monitor* (August 1972):377.

⁶¹ National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. *Civil Rights in the United States: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*. 2008, p. 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 17

accommodations, and other matters.⁶²

The birth of the modern Civil Rights Movement, between 1941 and 1954, was a direct result of the nation's response to World War II. In order to win the war, many minorities, such as African Americans, were given the opportunity, or were conscripted to serve the country in new ways, giving them equal stature in many, but not all respects. Military units were integrated and discrimination was banned in defense industries. However, many groups, such as Japanese Americans living on the West Coast experienced increased discrimination and even incarceration.⁶³

After the war, many minority groups were emboldened by their honorable service to the nation during the war. As a result, there was increased social pressure to end segregation. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, funded largely by white sympathizers, launched new legal cases to end segregation, culminating in the Supreme Court's landmark 1954 ruling in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, considered to be the birth of the modern Civil Rights Movement.⁶⁴

The Modern Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1964

The decade that embodies the modern Civil Rights Movement is a period when:

...black demonstrations swept the country seeking constitutional equality at the national level, as well as an end to Massive Resistance (state and local government-supported opposition to school desegregation) in the South. Presidential executive orders, the passage of two Civil Rights Acts, and the federal government's first military enforcement of civil rights brought an end to de jure segregation. The success of this movement inspired other minorities to employ similar tactics.⁶⁵

While the civil rights gained by various groups was mixed, with some gaining ground and others losing ground, a number of key events took place that laid the groundwork for rights for the disabled. The first was the passage by the United States Congress of the Civil Rights Act, which created the independent United States Commission on Civil Rights. Although limited to fact-finding, the reports prepared by the Commission helped frame the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and provided the Commission with greater authority.⁶⁶ This period in the Civil Rights Movement culminated with the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act in 1964. This act is:

⁶² National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. *Civil Rights in the United States: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*. 2008, p. ii.

⁶³ National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. *Civil Rights in the United States: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*. 2008, p. 14.

⁶⁴ National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. *Civil Rights in the United States: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*. 2008, p. 14-15.

⁶⁵ National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. *Civil Rights in the United States: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*. 2008, p. 17.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 18

Considered the most comprehensive civil rights legislation in U.S. history, the act granted the federal government strong enforcement powers in the area of civil rights. It prohibited tactics to limit voting; guaranteed racial and religious minorities equal access to public accommodations; outlawed job discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; continued the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; and established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.⁶⁷

Although disabilities were not specifically addressed by the Act, it laid the groundwork for the advancement of civil rights for the disabled, including the blind, in ensuing years.

The Second Revolution, 1964-1976

After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the United States Commission on Civil Rights

...struggled with an agenda rapidly expanding in scope, complexity, and controversy. The Commission's work took on a national rather than a regional focus and concentrated on affirmative action and federal enforcement efforts. As impressive gains were made in African American civil rights, the Commission addressed claims from an expanding array of newly mobilized social movements and civil rights constituencies for similar protections and remedies.⁶⁸

The equal employment and other economic-opportunity features that were included in the legislation had a significant effect on minority groups. The concept and practice of "affirmative action" resulted in substantial gains for minority groups, but also instilled recurring backlash. During this period, the executive branch of the federal government also sought to develop a federal contract workforce that reflected the minority and gender makeup of the labor pool.⁶⁹

Kenneth Jernigan and the Blindness Movement

While the Civil Rights Act of 1964 "guaranteed racial and religious minorities equal access to public accommodations" and "outlawed job discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin," the act did not specifically address persons with disabilities.⁷⁰ In response, starting in the mid-1960s, disability groups, including the blind, sought equal protection and accommodation. It is within this broader effort that Kenneth Jernigan made significant contributions to the nation for the betterment of the blind.

Kenneth Jernigan provided perspective for his efforts to achieve civil rights for the blind in a 1976 film made for

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Hugh Davis Graham. "The Civil Rights Commission: The First 40 Years," *Civil Rights Journal* (Fall 1997): 7.

⁶⁹ National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. *Civil Rights in the United States: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*. 2008, p. 20-21.

⁷⁰ National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. *Civil Rights in the United States: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*. 2008, p. 17.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 19

blind Kentuckians. The film aired on television stations in Kentucky and was later shown around the country. In this film, Jernigan described the situation he saw the blind facing, saying, "I think that to understand what we here at the Commission for the Blind are doing, you've got to see the blind as a minority. Since, from the time of childhood, all of us are conditioned to believe that, to be blind means necessarily to be less capable than others. Blindness means inferiority. Now, we've got to help the person undo that kind of conditioning."⁷¹

Since the early twentieth century, the blind sought equal protection and public accommodation for themselves. However, negative beliefs about the blind, as well as misunderstandings and misconceptions about their abilities, hampered their efforts. While the establishment of the AFB in 1921 could have served as an opportunity, the number of sighted individuals who were involved in this organization overwhelmed the blind and overtook the direction of the organization, often resulting in actions that were counterproductive for the blind. The creation of the NFB in 1940, whose membership was comprised of blind individuals, represented the first effort by the organized blind to have a true say in matters involving themselves, and to push for their rights, public accommodation, and social reform.

As previously discussed, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, NFB's first president, Jacobus tenBroek, tried to figure out a way to spread the NFB philosophy across the nation.⁷² Dr. tenBroek, was a philosophical leader, having long advocated for rights for the blind and equal accommodation and, largely, developed the NFB ideology. However, the NFB needed an implementer to succeed at implementing social change. Kenneth Jernigan fit this bill.

Kenneth Jernigan is the person most responsible for implementing the philosophical ideas of the NFB, first through a rehabilitation program in Iowa, and later through organizing and leading efforts of the NFB and its members to advocate for the enactment of a number of laws for the betterment of the blind. These laws gave the blind their civil rights, including equal opportunity and public accommodation.⁷³ Without the organizational and intellectual leadership of Kenneth Jernigan, many of the ideals developed by Dr. tenBroek that now benefit blind Americans may never have become reality.

The experiences of Kenneth Jernigan as a blind child and young adult had a profound influence on his beliefs about blindness. His negative interactions with public institutions, and the positive philosophy he encountered in studying with Jacobus tenBroek in California, led Kenneth Jernigan to develop what many at the time would have considered extreme a view about blindness, which drove him in his quest to change societal beliefs about blindness and improve opportunities for the blind. Dr. Jernigan was a visionary and many of his philosophical beliefs about blindness were contrary to those commonly held by society at the time. They could be characterized as an educated reaction to societal prejudices and misunderstandings about blindness. Holding true to his beliefs, Kenneth Jernigan dedicated his life to enlightening others, and changing long held beliefs about blindness for the betterment of the blind.

⁷¹ *We Know Who We Are*, Film, written by Rhoden Streeter (Alfred Shands Production, 1976).

⁷² James Gashel. Telephone interview with Greg Mathis and Shan Sasser, May 20, 2011.

⁷³ Kenneth Jernigan. "The Day After Civil Rights," *Braille Monitor* 40(8) (August/September 1997). Delivered before the National Convention of the Federation of the Blind, July 1997.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 20

Much of what Kenneth Jernigan accomplished in the area of civil rights for the blind was due to his skills as an organizer and advocate. As president of the NFB, he established goals and priorities for the organization and directed the legislative agenda for its staff in Washington, DC. As president of the NFB, he nearly singlehandedly "determined the organization's general principles and specific agendas."⁷⁴ As a leader, Kenneth Jernigan left little to doubt and he was careful and calculated in his approach to challenges. He utilized techniques used by African Americans in the years leading up to the Civil Rights Act, to organize NFB membership to advocate for their rights. Kenneth Jernigan also became adept at working within the political arena, collaborating with politicians to promote causes for the blind. To this end, he was well known for regularly inviting political leaders to dinner to lobby and discuss matters related to the blind.

When Kenneth Jernigan became Director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, the fate of the NFB philosophy, including its desire to attain civil rights of the blind, was placed in his hands. If Jernigan had failed in Iowa, the NFB's social model of disability would have been dealt a great setback, as there would have been proof for others in the blindness profession that the blind were inferior and not qualified to teach. This would have resulted in the continuation of the medical model as the prevailing model for rehabilitation of the blind, while also hindering efforts for equality.

With overwhelming success of the Iowa Experiment, Kenneth Jernigan gained a great amount of credibility within the blind community and beyond, both in Iowa and across the nation. He subsequently focused on touting the Iowa Model, encouraging states across the country to create state vocational rehabilitation programs for the blind based on the Iowa model. Building on this success, he started to advocate for civil rights for the blind, first in Iowa where he led efforts to enact legislation that provided more rights for the blind, and then on a national level after becoming president of the NFB in 1968 upon the death of Jacobus tenBroek.

During his tenure as Director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, Kenneth Jernigan successfully championed political efforts for the betterment of the blind. His major accomplishments include obtaining funding to acquire and rehabilitate a former YMCA for use by the Iowa Commission for the Blind, getting funding to expand the Commission's programs and to establish the largest library for the blind in the world. He also spearheaded the effort to enact a Model White Cane Law in Iowa, the first in the nation, and one copied by other states around the nation.⁷⁵ His other crowning achievement was the State's Civil Rights Act, enacted by the Iowa Legislature in 1971.⁷⁶ Dr. Jernigan played an instrumental role in pushing for this piece of legislation, the second such law in the nation, which protected the rights of disabled persons, including the blind, and included criminal and civil penalties for violations.⁷⁷

By 1966, Kenneth Jernigan was starting to work on a national stage. On February 18th of that year, he reported that he was being considered for a position in President Lyndon Johnson's new War on Poverty initiative.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Fleischer and Zames, *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*, 2001, p. 24.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ State of Iowa Commission for the Blind, *1972 Annual Report*, 1973.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ James Omvig, *The Blindness Revolution: Jernigan in His Own Words*, 2005, p. 403.

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

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 21

Although he remained in Iowa, he continued to have an increasing national influence. Upon becoming president of the NFB in 1968 after the death of Jacobus tenBroek, Jernigan's influence grew since he was now not only a respected expert on blindness, but also the leader of a special interest group that was trying to gain the attention of federal policy makers. During his presidency of the NFB, his philosophy permeated the NFB organization. While some of his critics described the NFB as "authoritarian" and even "tyrannical,"⁷⁹ Jernigan considered himself the "general in charge" who was responsible for rallying and directing his "troops."⁸⁰ Despite what critics have said, Jernigan was successful in gaining civil rights for the blind.

Before further discussing Kenneth Jernigan's contributions to specific national policies while he lived in Iowa, a couple observations are needed. First, the involvement of Kenneth Jernigan in pushing for and shaping national policies for the blind within the broader Disability Rights Movement was framed by his staunch belief that the needs of the blind are unique from other groups of disabled persons. As such, with rare exception, Kenneth Jernigan was reluctant to allow the NFB to get involved with the broader disability movement due to concerns that the unique needs and challenges would be lost. Instead, he typically focused NFB advocacy efforts solely on issues related to blindness.⁸¹ Second, from the early days of the NFB, the organization maintained a small office in Washington, DC to advocate for NFB interests. While Jernigan was president of the NFB, John Nagle staffed this office through 1973, followed by later Jim Gashel. While Nagle and Gashel were responsible for working the political system in Washington, DC, the direction for these efforts came from the president of the NFB, Kenneth Jernigan.⁸² In addition, while Jernigan was responsible to the members of the NFB, he was not afraid to wait to take action and did what was necessary as long as it adhered to the direction of the NFB membership.⁸³ Therefore, while Kenneth Jernigan may not have directly lobbied legislatures in person, he did push his agenda through the NFB legislative staff that were fulfilling his orders, and by writing letters and making telephone calls to policy makers.

Marches on Washington

One of the reasons Jernigan was so successful as a leader and instigator of social change was due to his awareness of the need to utilize the NFB membership to achieve his legislative aims. He also understood the importance of maintaining a cohesive message. Jernigan routinely sent letters to state NFB leaders directing them to pursue specific activities, such as having local members contact their federal legislators to support proposed changes to the Social Security Act related to disability insurance for the blind.⁸⁴ In 1973, Jernigan instituted leadership-training seminars two to three times each year for NFB members. Jernigan was concerned that as the NFB membership grew across the country "individual leaders in various parts of the country [would become] isolated from one another and working in different directions, thus sowing the seeds of future discord."

⁷⁹ Fleischer and Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*. 2001, p. 24, 25.

⁸⁰ Fleischer and Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*. 2001, p. 24, 25; James Gashel. Telephone interview with Greg Mathis and Shan Sasser, May 20, 2011.

⁸¹ Fleischer and Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*. 2001, p. 24.

⁸² James Gashel. Telephone interview with Greg Mathis and Shan Sasser, May 20, 2011.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 22

Attendees learned about the organizational structure, history and philosophy of the NFB's work, and legislation affecting blind Americans all with the aim of ensuring that the NFB "remained a disciplined body of Federationists."⁸⁵ Jernigan also saw the need to move away from the model of relying on one legislative aid (Nagle) to utilizing marches, which were popular in the 1960s and 1970s, to get legislative attention. Starting in 1973, Dr. Jernigan organized the NFB's first annual March on Washington, where federationists from around the nation were to gather and speak to their federal legislators about specific issues. Jernigan acted as a "general-in-charge" for these marches and took responsibility for rallying the troops (NFB members).⁸⁶ To prepare members for their meetings with their congressional delegations, Jernigan prepared a booklet with fact sheets on the issues.⁸⁷ This ensured that issues were addressed in a consistent and comprehensive manner. The first march was to oppose the use of federal funds to support the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped (NAC). The NAC was seeking to accredit and set standards for agencies serving the blind, including sighted instructors with college degrees, that programs based on the Iowa Model, could never have met. It was also consistently denying "consumers of services for the blind any meaningful representation."⁸⁸ In each subsequent year a different issue was addressed. The March on Washington efforts were later renamed the "Washington Seminar" to reflect the passing popularity of marches.⁸⁹ In addition to the weekly communications and seminars, many of Kenneth Jernigan's efforts for influencing and shaping national policy were laid out in his speeches at the annual national convention of the NFB. These speeches outlined issues at hand, principles, and the organization's agenda. Moreover, his speeches served as a rallying cry for the troops, encouraging members to push for their civil rights, to debunk social stereotypes, and to advocate for the causes set forth by the NFB. In 1968, his first address to the conference, he outlined his vision when he closed by paraphrasing the inaugural address of President John F. Kennedy, stating:

Let the word go out from this place and this moment that the torch has been passed to a new generation of blind Americans, a generation born in this century and fully belonging to it, a generation committed to the belief that all men (seeing or blind) are capable of independence and self-direction, of attaining equality and pursuing happiness in their own way, of serving each other and helping themselves—of walking alone and marching together.⁹⁰

This statement indicates his desire to push for equal rights and urges NFB membership to remain united in its stance. The following year, Jernigan was more forceful and direct when he said "and the time is now. Our revolution will not wait, and it will succeed but only if we take the lead and take the risks. It is for us to persuade, to participate, to persevere, and to prevail, and prevail we will. The time is now and the challenge is

⁸⁵ Floyd W. Matson. *Walking Alone and Marching Together: A History of the Organized Blind Movement in the United States, 1940-1990*. 1990.

⁸⁶ James Gashel. Telephone interview with Greg Mathis and Shan Sasser, May 20, 2011.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Kenneth Jernigan. "NAC—Unfair to the Blind," *Braille Monitor* (February 1973), p. 127.

⁸⁹ Floyd W. Matson. *Walking Alone and Marching Together: A History of the Organized Blind Movement in the United States, 1940-1990*. 1990; James Gashel. Telephone interview with Greg Mathis and Shan Sasser, May 20, 2011.

⁹⁰ Kenneth Jernigan. *Blindness—Milestones and Millstones. Blindness: Handicap or Characteristic*. Delivered before the National Convention of the Federation of the Blind, July 1968.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 23

real. I ask you, with all that the question implies: Will you join me on the barricades?"⁹¹ Jernigan's fiery and poignant speeches rallied members of the NFB and incited thousands of members to attend protests and demonstrations to push for their civil rights and to work the political arena to advocate for their goals of achieving equality and social acceptance.

Kenneth Jernigan's Contributions to National Policies for the Blind

While the Civil Rights Act of 1964 "guaranteed racial and religious minorities equal access to public accommodations" and "outlawed job discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin", the act did not specifically address persons with disabilities.⁹² In response, starting in the mid-1960s, disability groups, including the blind, sought to attain equal protection and accommodation. It is within this broader effort that Kenneth Jernigan made significant contributions to the nation for the betterment of the blind.

Kenneth Jernigan believed that the blind, provided they were properly educated, could do anything a sighted person could do, if they were given a chance and proper accommodation. Therefore, his goal was push forward legislation that would ensure that the blind were given an opportunity to prove themselves. James Gashel notes that Jernigan believed that laws would be required to give the blind a chance, but once they had this opportunity and succeeded, the laws would no longer be necessary.⁹³

The ultimate goal of Kenneth Jernigan was to have the Civil Rights Act of 1964 amended to include disabled persons, including the blind.⁹⁴ However, he used whatever venue available to improve the rights of the blind and gain public accommodation.

United States Rehabilitation Act of 1973

As disability groups, including the blind, fought to gain equal rights and public accommodation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Congress attempted to take on the cause. To the frustration of disability activists, Congress failed to garner enough support within its ranks in 1972 to approve amendments to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include a provision for persons with disabilities.⁹⁵ Congress did however, in late 1972, and again in early 1973, approve a rehabilitation act to address the vocational, as well as many of the social and medical needs of the disabled, but both acts were vetoed by President Richard Nixon. President Nixon vetoed both acts due to costs and concerns that they went beyond vocational objectives and established a medical and social welfare program with a number of new categorical programs.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Floyd W. Matson. *Walking Alone and Marching Together: A History of the Organized Blind Movement in the United States, 1940-1990*. 1990.

⁹² National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. *Civil Rights in the United States: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*. 2008, p. 17.

⁹³ James Gashel. Telephone interview with Greg Mathis and Shan Sasser, May 20, 2011.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Fleischer and Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*. 2001, p. 50.

⁹⁶ Fleischer and Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*. 2001, p. 49.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 24

In May 1973, frustrated disability groups, including members of the NFB, held demonstrations at the United States Capitol during meetings of the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped to urge passage of the legislation. Disabled groups continued to advocate and lobby for their rights and in response, Congress approved what was thought to be a "watered down" version of the rehabilitation act in the fall. President Nixon signed this act into law on September 26, 1973.⁹⁷ Upon its signing, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 became the first federal civil rights act and affirmative action law for persons with disabilities.

Unbeknownst to most people at the time was the role that Sections 501-504 of the new law would have in expanding the rights of disabled persons. These sections, which were adapted from Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and inserted at the end of the final draft of the bill by staff from the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, provided rights to the disabled in a manner similar to how the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 provided equal protection to persons of all race, color, religion, sex, and national origin.⁹⁸ Sections 501 and 503 require affirmative action and prohibit employment discrimination towards disabled persons by federal agencies and their contractors. Section 502 created the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board to enforce the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968. However, Section 504 had the most wide reaching impact, as it provided civil rights for disabled persons in programs receiving federal funding.⁹⁹

The involvement of Kenneth Jernigan with the Rehabilitation Act of 1972 is significant for several reasons. First, Dr. Jernigan's support of this legislation marks one of the few times when he broke his long standing policy of only lobbying for interests of the blind and collaborated with other disability groups to build a coalition to support the bill. Unlike the leaders of other disability groups who did not fully comprehend the true possibilities of this act, Kenneth Jernigan's quick support demonstrated his foresight and understanding of its potential significance. He understood how it could be used to dramatically benefit the lives of not only the blind, but all disabled persons living in the United States, which is demonstrated by the NFB's testimony at the Congressional hearings on the proposed legislation. This testimony was based on writings authored by Kenneth Jernigan in Braille Monitor in the months leading up the passage of the act.

Of particular benefit to the blind was Section 504, which states: "No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States, as defined in section 7(6), shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Reflecting Dr. Jernigan's firm grasp of the potential significance of Section 504 for providing rights and equal accommodation for the blind, Kenneth Jernigan directed the NFB's Washington lobbyist, John Nagle, to testify on this proposed section of the act. When Nagle testified before the Senate Subcommittee on the Handicapped of the Committee on Labor and Welfare, he was the only person to testify on Section 504. Nagle testified that "The provisions [Section 504]...is of major consequence to all disabled people...It establishes that because a man blind or deaf or without legs, he is not less a citizen, that his rights of citizenship are not revoked or diminished because he is disabled." Nagle further notes the legal impacts of Section 504 when he said: "it gives him [person with a disability] a legal basis for recourse to the courts that

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Fleischer and Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*. 2001, p. 50.

⁹⁹ Fleischer and Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*. 2001, p. 49.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 25

he may seek to remove needless barriers, unnecessary obstacles and unjustified barricades that impede or prevent him from functioning fully and in full equality with all others."¹⁰⁰

Jernigan was even more interested in shaping the implementing regulations of section 504, directing Gashel to connect with the agency charged with developing those regulations. As Gashel recalled, the directive

"was one sentence so you ended up with a very extensive regulation making process in the 1970s. The actual regulations to implement Section 504, and at that time, that was really the only federal civil rights law. So there was a lot done by the Office for Civil Rights of the Department of Health Education and Welfare that was the leadership agency at that point in time. And they basically had to create a legislative history as the underpinning for regulations because there was none. There was only this one little sentence tucked in at the end of the Rehabilitation Act and the question was, well what does it mean?"¹⁰¹

Kenneth Jernigan was specifically concerned that recipients of federal funding would attempt to create separate services or procedures for blind persons in order to meet the requirements of Section 504. He felt that blind individuals needed to be given the opportunity to "participate in the programs or activities that were available to anyone else."¹⁰²

After the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was signed into law, the NFB, under the direction of Kenneth Jernigan, became one of the first organizations to file a Section 501 lawsuit against the federal government for one of its members who had repeatedly passed a Foreign Service examination, but was deemed "noncompetitive" by the Foreign Service of the State Department because of his "serious lack of visual acuity."¹⁰³ The case, won by the NFB, signaled a significant advancement in the civil rights of the blind and forced the federal government to ignore long-held social beliefs about the blind and to consider the blind as equal to those with sight. This case was a crowning achievement for Kenneth Jernigan as it forced society to begin to accept his views of blindness, which was that "blindness is only a characteristic...nothing more than that" and "that the average blind person is able to perform the average job in the average career or calling provided...he is given the training and opportunity."¹⁰⁴

Randolph-Sheppard Act Amendments of 1974

The Randolph-Sheppard Act, otherwise known as the Federal Vending Stand Program, was enacted in 1936 to

¹⁰⁰ In Fleischer and Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*. 2001, p. 24, from Richard K. Scotch, *From Goodwill to Civil Rights: Transforming Federal Disability Policy* (Philadelphia, PA, Temple University Press, 1984), p. 54-55.

¹⁰¹ James Gashel. Telephone interview with Greg Mathis and Shan Sasser, May 20, 2011.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Fleischer and Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity of Confrontation*. 2001, p. 24, references to Rami Rabby's lawsuit against the Foreign Service of the State Department from interview with Rabby, October 26, 1996.

¹⁰⁴ Kenneth Jernigan. *Blindness: Handicap or Characteristic*. Delivered before the National Convention of the Federation of the Blind, Columbia, SC, July 3, 1969. In *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, October 15, 1969, p. 10, 11.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 26

provide employment opportunities in federal property. In essence, the blind were allowed to operate small stands in the lobbies of federal buildings, such as post offices and courthouses, to sell convenience items, such as candy, gum, newspapers and magazines. However, while this program provided opportunities for the blind, incomes were minimal.¹⁰⁵

In 1966, Kenneth Jernigan spurred the revision of this act. In that year, the General Services Administration (GSA) proposed to construct a new federal building in Des Moines. Jernigan saw this as an opportunity to provide a substantial number of quality jobs for the blind and sought to acquire the right for a blind vendor to operate a full service food operation in the building. His request was one of the first, if not the first attempt by a blind vendor to provide this type of service. Originally denied permission to operate the food service, but granted permission to operate a bank of vending machines, Jernigan appealed to the GSA. The GSA was resistant and offered a vending stand, but not the cafeteria; however, Jernigan remained undeterred. The GSA then posed concerns about only employing blind persons in the facility, but preferred to avoid public hearings on the matter and find an amicable solution, while portraying Jernigan as trying to derail the new building. Dr. Jernigan then sought the assistance of his close friend, United States Senator Jack Miller, and Doug MacFarland, a blind individual who worked as head of the vending stand program at the federal vocational rehabilitation agency. After Senator Miller became involved and sided with his friend, Dr. Jernigan, the GSA finally relented, with concessions that if the Iowa Commission for the Blind was granted the contract, they would agree to hire other disabled persons whenever possible. Jernigan agreed and the federal building in Des Moines became the first federal facility in the United States to have a blind food service vendor. This event paved the way for other blind groups to operate expanded concession facilities in federal facilities across the nation.¹⁰⁶ This key event ultimately led to the revisions of the Randolph-Sheppard Act to allow greater opportunities for blind people to operate businesses on government property.

In addition to instigating reforms to the act, Dr. Jernigan worked closely with then Senator Jennings Randolph, the original author of the 1936 legislation to develop the new language for the act that broadened its scope. In addition to vending stands, the revised act allowed the blind to operate full-scale cafeterias in federal facilities. The act required preference for blind organizations and for blind people in need of work, established a Committee of Blind Vendors in each state to help oversee the program in their state, and "brought an arbitration process unequalled by any other to protect the rights of people in federal programs."¹⁰⁷ In addition, the significance of these changes was that it led to the development of blind businesses ranging from small concession stands, to vending machine banks, to full service cafeterias that now employ thousands of blind individuals across the nation. It even led to partnerships with major chain restaurants. In addition to providing training and jobs that pay living wages for the blind, this program has demonstrated that the blind can operate effective and cost competitive businesses, thereby helping to debunk many common social misconceptions about the blind.

Fight for Minimum Wage: Section 14(c) of Fair Labor Standards Act and Labor Relations Board Petitions.

¹⁰⁵ James Omvig. *The Blindness Revolution: Jernigan in His Own Words* 2005, p. 416.

¹⁰⁶ James Omvig. *The Blindness Revolution: Jernigan in His Own Words*. 2005, p. 416-434.

¹⁰⁷ James Gashel. "The Advocate, the Strategist, the Diplomat," *Braille Monitor* (Aug/Sept 2007).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 27

The continued existence of sheltered workshops is due largely to provisions in section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Section 14(c) provides minimum wage exemptions to disabled workers based on the premise that such workers did not produce at the same level as non-disabled workers. The associations and organizations that ran the workshops argued that these places were training facilities and not actually employment settings, therefore justifying the minimum wage exemption. As previously discussed, when the Act was originally approved, no wage floor was defined.¹⁰⁸ As a result, wages for the blind working in sheltered workshops were paid only a fraction of the minimum wage, with an average of only 53 percent of the standard minimum wage.¹⁰⁹ Since many of the workshops were considered "work activity centers" not employment settings, blind employees were denied the right to organize, collective bargaining, worker's compensation, and unemployment insurance.

In 1965, Senator Wayne Morse introduced a proposal to amend the wage structure for disabled workers. The NFB, who had begun fighting for the elimination of this wage exemption, testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Labor hearings supporting Morse's proposal, which sought to bring moderately disabled workers up to minimum wage over a three-year period and set a 50 percent of minimum wage for severely disabled workers. Ultimately, regulations were adopted that sheltered workshops be separated from Work Activity Centers, which were considered therapeutic and had no wage floor, and that wages in sheltered employment be set at not less than 50 percent of federal minimum wage.

The debates over this proposal created long-lasting battle lines between representatives of industry, such as the Cincinnati Association for the Blind, General Council of Workshops for the Blind, and National Industries for the Blind, and representatives from the NFB. After 1966, many congressional studies, hearings, and proposals have been introduced to modify this section of the FLSA. Each time, the NFB testified to represent the interests of the blind workers. Over the years the number of workshops and, correspondingly, the number of individuals working in them have increased dramatically. Fighting the wage exemption continued to be important to the NFB under Kenneth Jernigan, arguing that blindness alone does not justify the exemption, that workshop management routinely exploited – both intentionally and unintentionally – sheltered workers, and the procedure for appealing reprimands or wage discounts placed an undue burden on the worker.¹¹⁰

After unsuccessful efforts to amend this legislation, Kenneth Jernigan devised a new tactic in the mid-1970s to ensure that blind individuals working in these settings achieved minimum wage. As these workshops had been cast as training facilities instead of employment settings the provisions in the National Labor Relations Act, such as the right to organize in unions and to collective bargain, had been ruled as not applicable. Jernigan sought alliances with unions to petition the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to reverse this view. Kenneth Jernigan assigned Jim Omvig, who previously worked as an attorney with the NLRB, the task of organizing blind workers in sheltered shops. The first effort was to organize workers at the Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind. Together, the NFB and the Communication Workers of America petitioned the NLRB and won. Next, the NFB

¹⁰⁸ William G. Whittaker. "Treatment of Workers with Disabilities Under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act," *Federal Publications*. Congressional Research Services Report for Congress: Paper 209 (February 9, 2005).

¹⁰⁹ Floyd Matson, "House Minimum Wage Hearings," *Braille Monitor* (June 1960), p. 19.

¹¹⁰ William G. Whittaker. "Treatment of Workers with Disabilities Under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act," *Federal Publications*. (February 9, 2005)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 28

petitioned the board to recognize the workshop at the Cincinnati Association for the Blind and the Houston Lighthouse for the Blind as an employment setting, and again won. As a result, workers in these facilities were allowed to join the union and bargain for better wages.¹¹¹ These efforts have resulted in substantially increased wages for the blind working in these facilities and led to increased wages in similar facilities around the nation. In addition, they established a course for future amendments to the Rehabilitation Act in 1998 that now prevent state vocational rehabilitation agencies from considering placements in sheltered shops as successful outcomes, thus providing a disincentive for these types of placements.

Contributions to Other Federal Legislation

In addition to his instrumental roles in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Randolph-Sheppard Act Amendments of 1974, Dr. Kenneth Jernigan played a role, although to varying degrees, in revising a number of other national policies while he was in Iowa. In particular was Section 904 of the Education Act amendments of 1972, which states:

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of blindness or severely impaired vision, be denied admission in any course of study by a recipient of Federal financial assistance for any education program or activity, but nothing herein shall be construed to require any such institution to provide any special services to such person because of his blindness or visual impairment.

Jernigan emphasized the omission of a requirement for special services. He did not want educators defining the accommodations the student felt he or she needed. Kenneth Jernigan believed that "you let us in and we can figure out how to get on in the world, what we need is the door is broken down."¹¹²

Other pieces of legislation include various amendments made to the Social Security Act in 1958, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1965, 1972, and 1977. A number of these amendments increased and extended compensation for the blind and disabled. From the beginning of the Social Security Disability Insurance program, the Social Security Administration tied earnings to its definition of disability. If a person with an impairment was able to work and achieve a specified amount in earnings, he was not considered disabled and thus ineligible for the program and its benefits. The NFB took the stance that earnings are not related to whether a person is disabled. Throughout the 1960s and beyond, the NFB worked with members of Congress to remove the earnings limits for individuals who met the statutory definition of blindness. While such a proposal passed the Senate seven times, it did not pass the House of Representatives. Yet, the NFB was successful with the 1977 amendments in linking the blindness earnings limit to the retirement earnings limit that existed at the time. This was achieved largely due to the ability of Kenneth Jernigan to organize NFB membership to convey their interests to their Congressional delegations and through personal communications with policy makers. The approval of this amendment was significant because it provided for a statutory earnings limit for the blind, which was not something the Social Security Administration could remove by regulation.¹¹³ This change was of paramount importance to the blind

¹¹¹ James Gashel. Telephone interview with Greg Mathis and Shan Sasser, May 20, 2011.

¹¹² James Gashel. Telephone interview with Greg Mathis and Shan Sasser, May 20, 2011.

¹¹³ James Gashel. The Advocate, the Strategist, the Diplomat. *Braille Monitor* (Aug/Sept 2007).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 29

because by law the earnings limit to blind persons was raised and provided for annual increases to the earnings limit so the blind could maintain their standard of living through earned wages rather than being forced into poverty and dependence due to low earnings limits that did not keep pace with inflation. Non-blind disabled individuals receiving Social Security disability do not have this mandated increase to the earnings limit for eligibility. Therefore, this unique benefit for the blind are directly related to the efforts of Kenneth Jernigan.

Beyond Legislation

Kenneth Jernigan made substantial contributions to the Federal government and the nation as a consultant to Federal agencies, through his involvement with a various panels and committees, and by leading efforts of the NFB membership to influence Congress on funding of programs for the blind. The Federal Commissioner of Rehabilitation appointed him to serve as a special consultant for Services for the Blind. He was an advisor on museum programs for the Smithsonian Institution, to improve the experiences of blind visitors. He was appointed to the National Advisory Committee on Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. President Gerald Ford appointed Dr. Jernigan to serve as special advisor to the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals in 1976 and on Library and Information Services in 1977. This position even included a one-on-one session with President Ford. These appointments reflect Dr. Jernigan's long standing commitment to learning for the blind. Beginning in Iowa and continuing until the end of his career, Dr. Jernigan was a leader in the development of library policies for the blind. Having created the largest collection of publications for the blind in Iowa, he gained the admiration and respect of the library community. In 1967, he was awarded the Francis Campbell Citation from the American Library Association for his outstanding accomplishments for providing library services to the blind.¹¹⁴ He later helped establish national policies for libraries to accommodate the blind. Three years later, in 1970, he was appointed to the advisory commission for the National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults, which was established under the 1968 amendments to the vocational education act to serve deaf-blind children.¹¹⁵

Beyond leading efforts to enhance wages and benefits for the blind through revisions to federal laws as described above, Kenneth Jernigan successfully led NFB membership in its efforts to end federal funding for the NAC. As briefly discussed previously, during the early 1970s NAC was attempting to set standards for agencies serving the blind, including requiring sighted instructors with college degrees, and mandate accreditation for agencies. All of this was being done with little input from the blind or the NFB. If successful in its efforts, NAC would have established standards that would have been impossible for rehabilitation programs base on the Iowa Model to meet and would have ultimately led to the elimination of programs based on the positive, consumer based model for rehabilitating the blind. However, the NFB membership, under the direction of Kenneth Jernigan successfully pushed Congress to eliminate funding for NAC, thereby curtailing the efforts of NAC and ensuring the future of consumer based rehabilitation programs for the blind.

The contributions of Dr. Kenneth Jernigan to American society are further demonstrated by his many national awards and honors. In 1968, Dr. Jernigan was honored with a special citation from President Lyndon Johnson for

¹¹⁴ Des Moines Register, Imaginative Leadership. *Des Moines Register*, June 18, 1967:18.

¹¹⁵ Cedar Rapids Gazette. National Center Names Jernigan to Advisor Post. *Cedar Rapids Gazette* (July 23, 1970).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 30

his outstanding contributions to the advancement of blind individuals. He received a United States Department of Labor award for significant contributions to the American worker. In 1998, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), an agency of the United States Department of Education. Dr. Jernigan also received several honorary doctorate degrees from colleges around the country, including Coe College and Drake University in Iowa, and Seton Hall University in Newark, New Jersey.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF KENNETH JERNIGAN AFTER 1978

Kenneth Jernigan resigned his post as president of the NFB in 1977 due to health reasons. Given increasing questions about potential conflicts between his advocacy efforts and responsibilities as Director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, Jernigan resigned from that post in 1978 and moved to Baltimore, Maryland, where he remained a leader in the organized blind movement. He became the executive director of the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults. At that time, he helped establish the National Center for the Blind as the NFB headquarters in Baltimore and was re-elected president of the NFB in 1979, holding that position until 1986. In his continued capacity as the NFB president, he established the International Braille and Technology Center dedicated to research and promotion of Braille literacy and non-visual access technology. He also created NEWSLINE, a free audio-based newspaper service for all blind and visually impaired persons in the United States. In 2004, the NFB Jernigan Institute was established. The mission of the Institute is to lead "the quest to understand the real problems of blindness and to develop innovative education, technologies, products and services that help the world's blind to achieve independence." Dr. Jernigan continued to fight for the rights of blind Americans until his death in October 1998, including advocating for the passage of the American with Disabilities Act in 1990.

CONCLUSION

Kenneth Jernigan made significant and long-lasting contributions to the nation for the betterment of blind Americans in the areas of education, social history, and politics/government during the period 1959 to 1978. As an educator and social/governmental reformer, Dr. Kenneth Jernigan's accomplishments focused on promoting an alternative, positive view of blindness and a new rehabilitation model based on his belief that "blindness is only a characteristic... nothing more or less than that... it is nothing more special, or more peculiar, or more terrible than that suggests."¹¹⁶ He believed that if the nature of blindness was accepted and understood to be "a characteristic—a normal characteristic like hundreds of other characteristics with which each of us must live," society would better understand the real needs of the blind.¹¹⁷ Moreover, he believed that, as a characteristic, "blindness has no more importance than any of a hundred other characteristics; and that the average blind person is able to perform the average job in the average career or calling, provided (and this is a large provision) he is

¹¹⁶ Kenneth Jernigan. *Blindness: Handicap or Characteristic*. Delivered before the National Convention of the Federation of the Blind, Columbia, SC, July 3, 1969. In *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, October 15, 1969, p. 10.

¹¹⁷ Kenneth Jernigan. *Blindness: Handicap or Characteristic*. Delivered before the National Convention of the Federation of the Blind, Columbia, SC, July 3, 1969. In *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, October 15, 1969, p. 11.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 31

given the training and opportunity."¹¹⁸ This view was at odds with long held societal beliefs about the blind, which viewed the blind as inferior and mentally challenged; their lives were often destined to be lived as wards of the state with no potential for anything more. Kenneth Jernigan challenged these beliefs and, through his life's achievements, proved that the blind could accomplish great things.

As Director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, Dr. Kenneth Jernigan introduced a revolutionary, highly successful new model for the rehabilitation of the blind. The model he introduced in Iowa resulted in graduates who had greater mobility, increased self-confidence, and who were better equipped to obtain jobs upon completion of the program compared to other vocational rehabilitation models of the time. He also oversaw the acquisition and conversion of a former YMCA in Des Moines to house the Iowa Commission for the Blind.¹¹⁹ In less than a decade, Dr. Jernigan was able to transform what was recognized as the worst rehabilitation program for the blind in the United States into what was widely hailed as the best. As a result, it would serve as a model for other rehabilitation programs across the nation and be emulated by programs around the world. Moreover, it remains the prevailing model for rehabilitation programs for the blind in the United States more than 50 years later.

The significant contributions of Kenneth Jernigan extend well beyond the innovative rehabilitation model he developed for the blind. Dr. Jernigan is significant in the areas of social history and politics/government for the important role he played in the Civil Rights Movement for the blind. This included serving as the leading organizer and motivational leader for the blind, as well as being a key figure in the development of national policies and programs, many of which remain the foundation of blind rights today and provide opportunities for both social and economic equality. As leader of the NFB, his stirring speeches and writings instilled confidence in members and motivated them to advocate for their civil rights, seek equal opportunities, and disprove common societal misconceptions about blindness. He played an important role in adding Section 904 to the Education Act amendments of 1972 to provide equal access for the blind. He successfully advocated for the landmark Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which provided civil rights for the disabled. He spearheaded efforts to amend the Randolph-Sheppard Act in 1974 to provide greater opportunities for the blind to operate businesses at federal facilities, and even had a hand in drafting the legislation. Jernigan pushed for several amendments to the Social Security Act, including key revisions in 1977 that ensured the blind would maintain their eligibility to receive Social Security benefits regardless of their work history and that their benefits would be adjusted to keep pace with inflation, so the blind would not be forced into a life of destitution. He also influenced amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act, to ensure that the blind receive fair wages. Beyond his legislative accomplishment, Dr. Jernigan served on, and was a special consultant to, many federal commissions that had a role in shaping federal policies, such as national policies for accommodating the blind in libraries and museums.

In conclusion, Dr. Kenneth Jernigan made many long-lasting and far-reaching contributions to American society for the betterment of the blind through efforts to promote empowerment, training, and social and economic

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ A discussion of the significance of the physical layout of the Iowa Commission for Blind building as the physical manifestation of the Iowa Model is included in the 2010 National Register documentation by Shan Sasser and is therefore not duplicated in this amendment.

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

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 32

opportunities for blind Americans during the period between 1959 and 1978, the period in which he was associated with the Iowa Commission for the Blind building. The Iowa Commission for the Blind building is where Kenneth Jernigan both lived and worked. As such, it, more than any other property associated with Kenneth Jernigan, best represents his many contributions to the nation. This property is where he successfully implemented his revolutionary and highly successful new model for rehabilitation for the blind and it is where observers came from around the United States and the world to learn firsthand about the model so they could implement similar programs. The interior layout and design of the building is the manifestation of this model, designed specifically for this purpose and use. The building is where Dr. Jernigan also directed national efforts to promote civil rights for the blind, resulting in the granting of these rights under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Lastly, the Iowa Commission for the Blind building is where Kenneth Jernigan initiated efforts to change other national policies, such as the Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1974, several revisions of the Social Security Act in the 1960s and 1970s, and amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 9 Page 33

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Name of Property
Polk, IA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 9 Page 34

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Name of Property

Polk, IA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 9 Page 35

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY NAME: Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Polk

DATE RECEIVED: 7.22.11
8/05/09
DATE OF 16TH DAY:
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/20/09
9.6.11

REFERENCE NUMBER: 09000714

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT ☐ DATE
The amendment to the Iowa Commission for the Blind Building National Register nomination makes a convincing case for the National level of significance of the property, the period of significance of 1959 and 1978, and the national importance of the work of Kenneth Jernigan.

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RECOM./CRITERIA

REVIEWER

B. Wyatt

DISCIPLINE

Historian

TELEPHONE

202-354-2252

DATE

9-6-11

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

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



1 Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Polk County, Iowa

0001.tif



2 Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Polk County, Iowa
0002.tif



3 Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Polk County, Iowa
0003.tif



4 Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Polk County, Iowa
0004.tif



5 Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Polk County, ~~IA~~ Iowa

0005.tif



6 Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Polk County, Iowa

0006.tif



7 Iowa Commission for the Blind Building

Polk County, Iowa

0007.tif



Iowa Commission for the Blind
Polk County, Iowa
#8

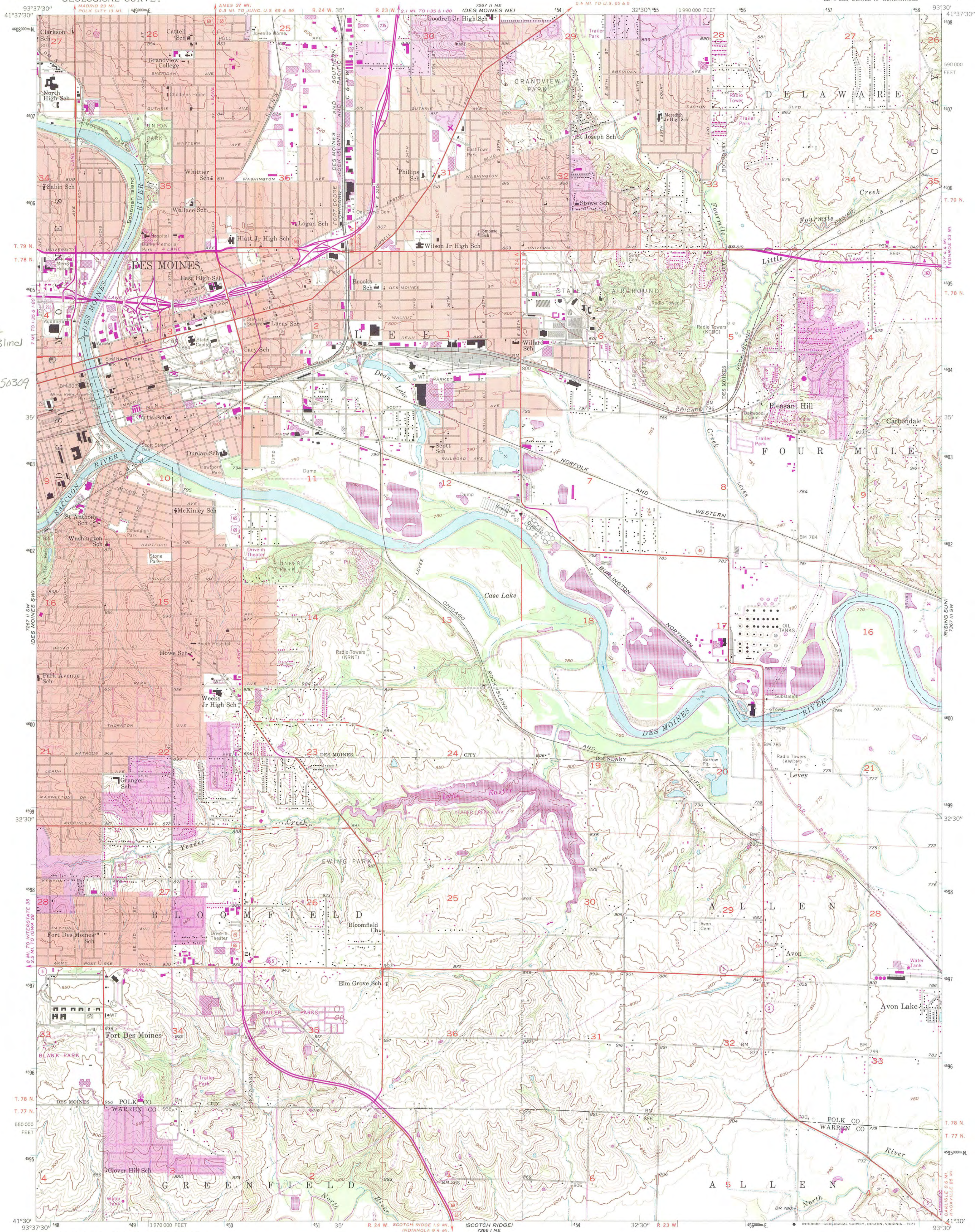


9 Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Polk County, Iowa
0009.tif



10 Iowa Commission for the Blind Building
Polk County, Iowa

0010.tif



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
in cooperation with Polk County and City of Des Moines

Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Iowa Geodetic Survey

Topography from aerial photographs by Kelsh plotter

Aerial photographs taken 1956. Field check 1956

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum

10,000-foot grid based on Iowa coordinate system, south zone

1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,

zone 15, shown in blue

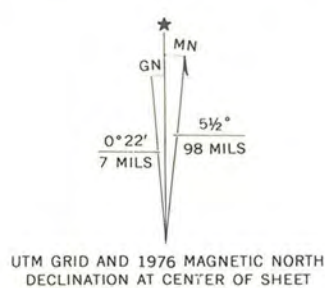
Red tint indicates areas in which only

landmark buildings are shown

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs

taken 1967, 1971, and 1976. This information not field checked

Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



SCALE 1:24,000
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

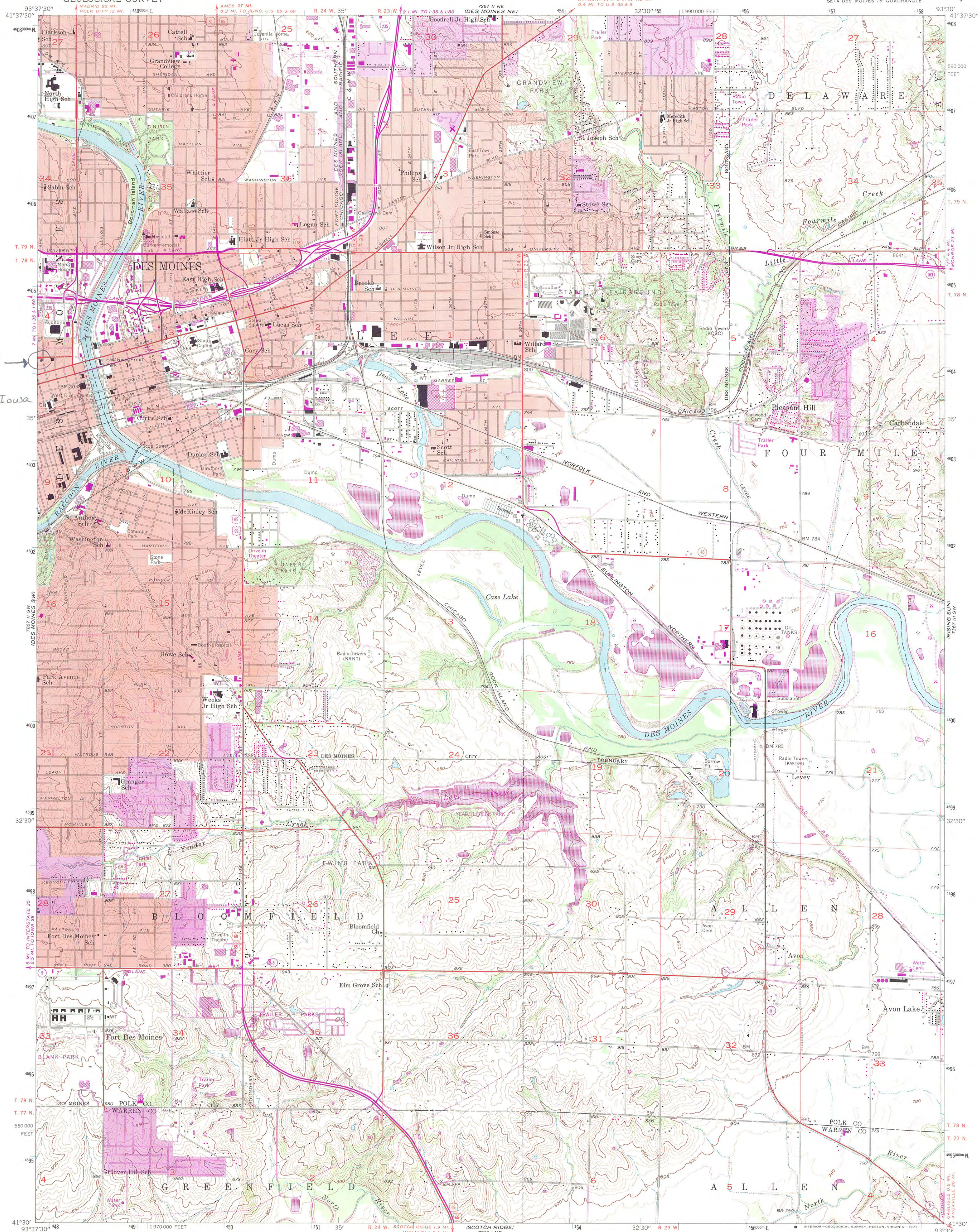
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
AND BY THE IOWA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



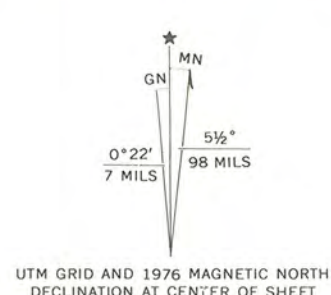
ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
Interstate Route ——— U. S. Route ——— State Route ———

DES MOINES SE, IOWA
SE 1/4 DES MOINES 15' QUADRANGLE
N4130—W9330/7.5

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



Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
in cooperation with Polk County and City of Des Moines
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Iowa Geodetic Survey
Topography from aerial photographs by Kelsh plotters
Aerial photographs taken 1956. Field check 1956
Polyconic projection, 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Iowa coordinate system, south zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
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CLG NATIONAL REGISTER REVIEW

FEB 06 2009

CLG Name Des Moines Date of Public Meeting 1/21/09Property Name Iowa Commission for the Blind, 524 - 4th Street, Des Moines, Polk County

1. For Historic Preservation Commission:

- ☒ Recommendation of National Register eligibility
☐ Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature Susan Holderness Date 1/21/09Print Name Susan HoldernessTitle Chair, Historic Commission

Reason(s) for recommendation:

Concur with the findings in the nomination.

2. For Chief Elected Local Official:

- ☒ Recommendation of National Register eligibility
☐ Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature T.M. Franklin Cownie Date 2/2/09Print Name T.M. Franklin CownieTitle Mayor

Reason(s) for recommendation:

3. Professional Evaluation:

- ☒ Recommendation of National Register eligibility
☐ Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature Ralph J. Christian Date 2/9/09Print Name RALPH J CHRISTIANTitle HISTORIAN, HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Reason(s) for recommendation:

July 28, 2009

J. Paul Loether, Chief
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye Street, N.W.-- 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

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

- Iowa Commission of the Blind Building, 524 4th Street, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Foster Hill
Tax Incentive Programs Manager/
National Register Coordinator

STATE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY of
IOWA

A Division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs



February 3, 2010

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

Dear Mr Loether:

Enclosed is a revised nomination that was returned to us due to technical problems. Staff has worked with the applicant to satisfy the NPS reviewers concerns. We request that the nomination be reviewed once again and, if acceptable listed.

- Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, 524 4th Street, Des Moines, Polk County

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Foster Hill, Tax Incentive Programs Manager/
National Register Coordinator



May 18, 2010

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

Dear Ms. Shull:

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

- Osceola Masonic Block, 101-103 South Main Street, Osceola, Clarke County, Iowa
 - Iowa Commission for the Blind Building, 524 4th Street, Des Moines, Polk County
- This nomination is being resubmitted after removing the case for national significance and revising the nomination to only local and statewide significance. Preparer hopes to amend the nomination later to national significance.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Foster Hill
Tax Incentive Programs Manager/
National Register Coordinator

Iowa Comm. For the Blind (Resub) 6-28-10
Des Moines, Polk Co., IA

Level of Sig: State

Contrib: 1 Bldg. (Honorary)

A. of Sig: Crit. B - Dr. Norman Kenneth Jennigan

Consideration: G - Less than 50 yrs rule

P. of Sig: 1959-1978 ; 1959 1968 (Given Presidential Citation
Elected Pres. of NFB)
1960 (Remodeled by Jennigan)

* Photo 3 original(?)
Windows bricked in on west side of building, 1970

sect 7 pg 1 - All windows replaced 1988.

- 1965 Elevator Added

pg. 4 - 1960 First Remodel under Jennigan

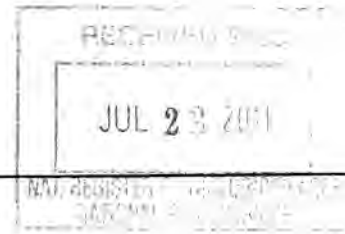
pg. 3 - 1975 Five-story addition built over former 1925
courtyard.

Sec 8, pg. 19 The Iowa Bldg was Jennigan's office & residence
during the P. of Sig.

- Leader of the Civil Rights Movement for ~~at~~ blind individuals.
- Created / implemented the "Positive Philosophy" of Blindness
- Dramatically improved rehabilitation services and employment opportunities for Iowa's blind community thru the "Iowa Experiment."

Criteria Consideration G: Jennigan as a leader of the
Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s & 1970s whose
impact on the ^{blind rights} movement justifies exceptionality.

Recommended for NR Listing under Crit. B with Consideration G.



July 19, 2011

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

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed is an amendment for the following nomination:

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building (Amendment to Document National Significance), 524 4th Street, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa

Enclosed is a re-submittal of the following returned nomination:

Surf Ballroom, 460 North Shore Drive, Clear lake, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Sincerely,

Barbara Mitchell
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer