

56-2325



United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Nomination 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 Hippee Building

other names/site number Hippee-Polk Building; Southern Surety Building; Savings & Loan Bldg; Midland Building

2. Location

street & number 206 Sixth Avenue not for publication n/a

city or town Des Moines vicinity n/a

state Iowa code IA county Polk code 153 zip code 50309-4025

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 statewide X locally. See continuation sheet for additional comments. Signature of certifying official: [Signature] Date: 28 FEB 2018 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):

Signature of Keeper: Patrick Andrews Date of Action: 4/17/2018

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property (do not include previously listed resources in count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/

Beaux-Arts Classicism

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls BRICK

TERRA COTTA

roof

other STONE

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.)

Property is:

- 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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1913-1926

Significant Dates

1913

1914

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Sawyer & Watrous

Selden-Breck Construction Co.

Primary Location of Additional Data:

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

Name of repository:

Hippee Building
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(Enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 41.585430 | Longitude: -93.624576 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Alexa McDowell, Architectural Historian email akaymcd@hotmail.com

organization AKAY Consulting date 02/13/2018

street & number 4252 Oakland Avenue telephone 515-491-5432

city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55407-3123

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 206 6th Avenue, LLC Attn: Todd Reed

street & number 833 W. Washington Boulevard, Floor 2 telephone 312-275-1080

city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60607

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.

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Section 7 Page 1 Property name Hippee Building
County and State Polk County, Iowa

7. Narrative Description

The Hippee Building is a 12-story, steel frame, brick and terracotta professional office building constructed in 1913. Sited on a corner lot in proximity to the 1906 Polk County Courthouse and the 1907 11-story Fleming Building, the Hippee Building contributes significantly to the visual character of its setting. The building stands as an important expression of Beaux-Arts Classicism in a commercial property, calling attention to the work of local architects, Sawyer & Watrous.

Site Description

The Hippee Building is located in Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa (Figure 1). Situated in south-central Iowa, Des Moines is the state's capital, with the population of the metropolitan area estimated at 611,549 in 2014.¹ Des Moines is bisected by the north-to-south running I-35 and the east-to-west running I-80.

The city's historic commercial center straddles the Des Moines River, which wends its way through the city from northwest to southeast. The state capitol building is located on the east side of the river, in an area that has in recent years become known as the East Village. The Hippee Building, at 206 Sixth Avenue, is sited on the opposite bank, just five blocks from the river (Figure 2). The area in which the building is located is, and was historically, commercial in composition.

Figure 1. Map of Iowa - 2017



(SOURCE: Base map, <https://www.google.com/maps>. Accessed 04/14/2017.)

The location of Des Moines, Iowa is indicated.

¹ <http://www.kcci.com/news/census-shows-rapid-growth-in-des-moines-metro-area/32027726>. Accessed 07/14/2015.

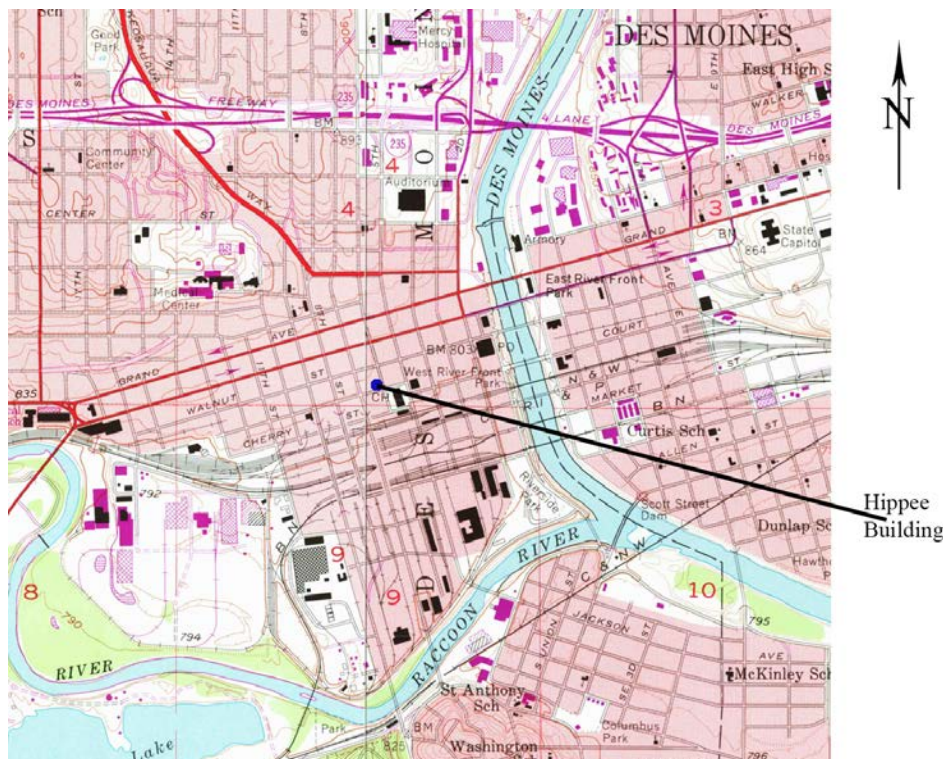
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Figure 2. USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Map - Des Moines SE & SW Quads – 1956



(SOURCE: Base map, USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Map, Des Moines SE & SW Quads, 1956.)

The location of the Hippee Building is indicated.

The Hippee Building stands on the northwest corner of the intersection of Sixth Avenue and Mulberry Street (Figure 3). The 11-story Fleming Building (1907) is to the north (separated by a narrow, truncated alleyway) and adjoined on the west by a contemporary, high-rise commercial building with a small paved drive-thru situated at the front of the parcel, between the two buildings. The Polk County Courthouse (1906) is sited southeast across the intersection of Sixth and Mulberry.

A public sidewalk runs flush to the Hippee Building on the east and the south, with primary entrance to the building made on Sixth Avenue where a lobby with elevator access is located. A separate entrance to the storefront space is located near the south end of the east elevation.

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Figure 3. Aerial Map – 2017



(SOURCE: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/319+7th+St,+Des+Moines,+IA>. Accessed 04/14/2017.)

This aerial view of Des Moines' west bank commercial area illustrates the visual character of the area in which the Hippee Building (location noted) is situated.

As the site view illustrates, the Hippee Building stands among a densely developed commercial area with buildings representing a ranging of construction eras and architectural styles (Image 1). Contemporary to the Hippee Building are the Fleming Building, located to the north, the Polk County Courthouse, located to the southeast, and the 1926, 19-story Equitable Building, which is sited 1-1/2 blocks to the north.

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Image 1. Site View



(IMAGE: AKAY Consulting, March 29, 2017.)

View looking northwest along Sixth Avenue.

Building Description

Exterior

The Hippee Building is a 12-story, steel frame structure finished in brick with terracotta ornamentation. The building is comprised of two sections, the 1913, 60- by 132-foot, 12-story tower and a 65- by 75-foot, one-story addition placed in service in 1914. The overall footprint of the ground floor and basement is L-shaped with the upper floors being rectangular in plan (Figure 4). Typical of commercial structures of the period, the building's roof is flat.

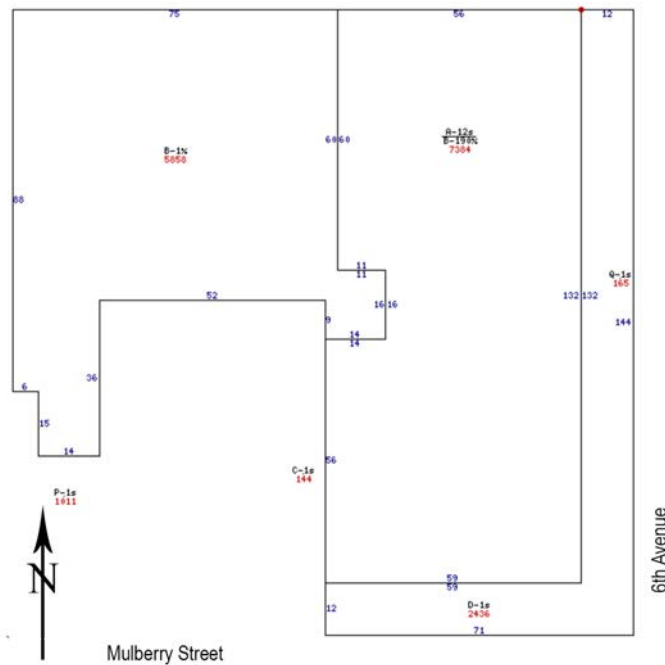
The Hippee Building's exterior is characterized by the tripartite organization of its elevations, the well-articulated rhythm of its fenestration, and its abundant use of highly ornamented classical elements in the tradition of Beaux-Arts Classicism.

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Figure 4. Plan View – 2017



(SOURCE: polkweb@assess.co.polk.ia.us. Last accessed 03/15/2017.)

Although the addition reads as such from the exterior, the interior space was and remains visually integrated.

The building's overall form is organized in three parts, an arrangement typical of 20th century commercial buildings with reference to designs coming out of Chicago (Image 2). Defined by eminent Chicago architect Louis Sullivan, the building is divided by base (storefront through the 2nd floor), shaft (upper floors), and capital (attic level and cornice). In the Hippee Building this organizational structure is underscored by the decorative elements that define its visual style as Beaux-Arts Classicism. At the base or storefront level through 2nd floor level, classically derived, engaged columns and pilasters extend the height of the storefronts through the second floor. Each of these structural elements reference classical precedents – complete with a dedicated base, shaft, and capital. The elaborate detail indicative of the Beaux-Arts is expressed in the capitals and the metopes of the entablature. The Beaux-Arts practice of introducing a central colossal element as a defining feature is expressed in the series of colossal, engaged fluted columns that flank the

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primary entrance, lending mass and order to the façade (Image 3). The shaft (body) of the building is of a light brick (perhaps intended to simulate more expensive stone typical of Beaux-Arts buildings). The shaft is articulated by advancing corner wall planes and variations in vertical members within which the fenestration is located. This rhythm is consistent at all levels and on both primary elevations.

Image 2. Exterior



(IMAGE: AKAY Consulting, March 29, 2017.)

View of the Hippee Building, south and east facades, looking northwest
across the intersection of Sixth Avenue and Mulberry Street.

The building's capital is comprised of the attic level (12th floor) and heavy cornice. The intensity of Beaux-

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Arts ornamentation is fully realized in the capital where a stepped entablature, ornate brackets, and layers of decorative details combine to create an impressive termination to the building. These details are terracotta – a material commonly used in the style due to the flexibility of its expression in form, color, and detail (Image 4).

Functionally, the storefront level is divided into four bays on the south and seven bays on the east (the center bay being the entrance). Historically, the north three bays were occupied by a single concern (Iowa Loan & Trust Co.) and the remaining storefronts housed variously 2 to 3 businesses. Today, the north bays remain part of the historic bank space, and the remaining storefronts house a single business. The openings of all storefronts remain intact, although they were retrofitted in ca.2005. The new configurations, however, retain a reasonable representation of the historic with most transom glazing intact.

The building's windows on both the primary elevation were replaced in ca.1985 by inappropriate, downsized, single-pane, tilt-out windows. Some historic windows on the west and north elevations, have been retained, though many have been boarded over.

Typical of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings, the Hippee Building's secondary (north and west) elevations utilize secondary-grade brick and lack applied decoration. A fire escape is mounted to the north elevation. Today, the north and a portion of the west elevation are painted.

Image 3. Exterior



(IMAGE: AKAY Consulting, March 29, 2017.)

Typical of the Beaux-Arts style, the Hippee Building uses colossal elements as focal points.

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Image 4. Exterior – Terracotta Cornice



(IMAGE: AKAY Consulting, March 29, 2017.)

View of the elaborate Beaux-Arts cornice.

Interior

The interior of the Hippee Building was historically (and remains today) characterized by retail space on the ground floor and office space on the upper 11 floors. Although the configuration of the storefront retail spaces has been altered, the spaces retain a sense of historic function as retail (versus office) space in their relation to the primary entrance and in the predominant use of large display windows. As noted, the Iowa Loan & Trust Co. occupied the first floor interior space situated north of the primary entrance. The former bank space stretches from the storefront on the east to the rear of the building on the west; that interior space remains largely intact. The upper stories continue to house offices, though with few if any of the original interior partitions remaining intact. A central corridor providing access to the offices historically defined the floor plan of each of the upper floors, although some of the corridors have been truncated, the basic floor plan remains intact.

As noted, primary entrance to the Hippee Building is made from Sixth Avenue. A small vestibule remains in place albeit altered from the original with a minimum of historic finishes retained. The first floor lobby

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provides access to the former banking space on the north, to the storefronts to the south, and to a rear, ca.1952 entrance on the west (Image 5). The building's four elevators – the shafts are original to the building, with the cars replaced in ca.1952 – dominate the historic lobby space. In its current condition, the lobby is in disarray, with 2005 renovation work started then stopped mid-stream. As a result, the upper walls and ceilings are exposed with temporary lighting and electrical wiring convoluting the space. The lobby retains wall finishes dating to the mid-20th century renovation, including travertine panels, carpeting, and stainless steel elevator car finishes. Original details are retained in the upper wall, where a denticulated cornice runs the perimeter of the lobby space. Also original to the lobby is the location of walls separating the south storefronts from the lobby. News articles published at the time the building was placed in service describe the connection of storefronts to the lobby via glazed openings. Although those connections have been removed, the retention of the upper wall with its cornice provides an important visual anchor to the historic configuration of the spaces.

Image 5. Interior – First Floor Lobby



(IMAGE: AKAY Consulting, March 29, 2017.)

View of the first floor lobby, looking north toward the banking space. The interior staircase is at left with four elevators marching the length that wall. The storefronts are at right, on the opposite side of the wall.

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An elegant historic iron and marble, switchback staircase remains in place adjacent to the elevators (Image 6). Historically a suspended structure, the staircase was enclosed in ca.1952 (Figure 8). Despite that alteration, however, the staircase remains a significant and central visual and functional feature of the building, rising from the lobby to the 12th floor. The staircase retains much of the historic iron structure (now partially embedded in the later enclosure), most of the marble treads, wooden handrails, and most of the marble wainscoting. Retention of historic finishes is greater on the upper floors than at the lobby level, where the visual impact of the enclosure is greatest.

Image 6. Interior – Interior Staircase



(IMAGE: AKAY Consulting, March 29, 2017.)

View of the historic staircase showing the run between the 2nd and 3rd floors, at which point the marble treads, iron structure with wooden handrails, and marble wainscoting are intact despite the introduction of a wall at left (completed for issues of fire safety).

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The commercial spaces of the ground floor can be entered from the lobby (Image 7). As noted, although these spaces have been altered, they retain their historic relationship to each other as well as a sense of their retail function due to the retention of large display windows that remain in place around the perimeter of the ground floor. What was originally two storefronts facing Mulberry Street on the south, one corner store, and two storefronts facing Sixth Avenue on the east, are now a single, L-Shaped space. The large storefront retains an interior partition separating it from the lobby – as noted, although the lower section of the wall has been altered from the historic, the upper wall with denticulated cornice remains intact. Further, the storeroom space retains its approximate 16-foot ceilings and rhythm of storefronts with large areas of glazing.

Image 7. Interior – Storefront



(IMAGE: AKAY Consulting, March 29, 2017.)

View of the storefront, looking south from near the Sixth Avenue entrance.

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The storefront bays located north of the primary entrance were configured to accommodate the original, 1914 occupant, Iowa Loan & Trust Co. The former banking space, stretching to the west from the storefronts on the east, measures 65- by 113-feet (Image 8). Although the historic fittings (e.g. teller line) have long been removed, the space retains a coffered ceiling, interior columns, and historic sense of volume. Although all of the columns have lost their historic capitals and have been sheathed in materials dating to the 1952 renovation, evidence of the original elegant details are found in the plaster capitals (in various conditions from poor to good) retained on the pilasters of the north wall. A vault at the rear of the space replaced the historic in ca.1952.

Image 8. Interior



(IMAGE: AKAY Consulting, March 29, 2017.)

View of the former banking space, looking northeast from near the rear of the room.

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The upper floors of the Hippee Building were designed for office space and, although some of the corridors have been truncated, the general layout of offices arranged around a central corridor remains intact from the original (Image 9-11). While the majority of historic finishes are camouflaged or lost entirely, targeted demolition preparatory to the historic rehabilitation has revealed retention of wood floors in former office spaces and hexagonal tile covering the corridor floors adjacent to the elevators. The retention of a significant amount of marble wainscoting in the corridors (concentrated around the elevator lobbies) results in a good sense of the historic character, which is further elevated by the apparent retention of tile floors. The interior staircase and 12-story mail chute are also retained and contribute significantly to the understanding of historic character.

Image 9. Interior – 5th Floor Corridor



(IMAGE: AKAY Consulting, March 29, 2017.)

View of the 5th floor corridor, looking south.

The 5th and 12th floor corridor finishes are the most intact of all upper floors, with marble panels retained for the most part. It should be noted, though, that mismatched panels stand as evidence that the marble panels have been rearranged in order to accommodate the relocation of doors to the offices spaces. Such alterations are typical of large office buildings where occupants change regularly and office spaces are renovated and rearranged to accommodate new tenants.

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Image 10. Interior – 4th Floor Corridor



(IMAGE: AKAY Consulting, March 29, 2017.)

View of the 4th floor corridor, looking north.

While the 4th floor corridor retains the historic mail chute and remnants of the marble finishes (see baseboard), most of the marble wainscoting has been replaced by wood paneling. It worth noting that the historic terrazzo flooring may well be retained beneath the non-historic carpeting.

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Image 11. Interior – 7th Floor Corridor



(IMAGE: AKAY Consulting, March 29, 2017.)

View of the 7th floor corridor, looking north.

The 7th floor corridor also retains the historic mail chute as well as some marble wainscoting with entrances to the offices relocated and stylistically updated.

Despite the passage of 113 years, the Hippee Building remains a viable commercial resource in the Des Moines central business district. The building remains an important representative of Beaux Arts Classicism expressed in a commercial “skyscraper.”

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Statement of Integrity

On the whole, the Hippee Building retains a good level of historic integrity specific to the period of significance.

Regarding integrity of location, the property remains on its original location. As a result, *historic integrity of location is very good.*

From the time of its construction in 1913, the Hippee Building has been part of the evolution of the Des Moines downtown commercial area. Changes in the buildings in the immediate vicinity have altered the setting during the life of the Hippee Building, but the resource remains situated within the context of the larger commercial district, resulting in a *high level of integrity as it relates to setting.*

Regarding integrity of association, while the composition and density of the commercial district has evolved in the many years since the building's construction, the property's functional composition, which during the entirety of its period of significance was a cross-section of retail, banking, and office space, remains intact, holding the property in a solid business position within the commercial downtown and accounting for the retention of a *high degree of integrity as it relates to historic association.*

Regarding *integrity of design on the exterior*, the Hippee Building retains the dominant elements that define its character as a 20th century commercial building. The 1913-14 form, including footprint and roof shape, is retained with minimal intervention – only the small glazed corridor and coffee drive-through on the west stand as alterations of the historic form. As an example of an early 20th century skyscraper, retention of its full height along with the technology that allowed for its construction (structural steel and elevators) contribute to integrity of design. Of particular importance related to style-defining features is the overall expression of the façade, which has not been altered. As built, the building facades (south and east) utilized a three-part organization: base, shaft, and capital, which remain intact. Finally, those elements that most clearly express Beaux-Arts Classicism - namely the highly ornate cornice, colossal columns, classically derived structural elements, and sense of monumentality – are retained, resulting in a *very good level of historic integrity as it relates to design.*

The ca.2005 alteration of the storefront level negatively impacts integrity of design specific to the building's exterior visual character. However, the alterations respected historic proportions and retained the majority of the transom glazing thus minimizing the adverse visual and direct impact. Replacement of the historic windows on the upper levels of the primary elevations presents the greatest negative impact as it relates to integrity of design and materials specific to the exterior. Despite the adverse impact, the building's character as a 20th century skyscraper in the Beaux-Arts style remains intact due to the retention of features that define it as such.

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Regarding *integrity of design on the interior*, the *Hippee Building* retains a generally fair level of historic integrity. Although the floor plans on the upper floors have been altered, they retain their overall historic configuration with a central corridor providing access to the perimeter offices; the central core with elevators and ornate staircase are also retained through the building. The reconfiguration of the office spaces themselves is considered acceptable given the longstanding practice of refitting spaces to accommodate the regular turnover over tenants – such alterations are typical of professional office buildings of all eras.

Alteration of the first floor retail space presents an adverse impact to integrity of design on the building's interior. Many retail enterprises have come and gone in the years since the building was placed in service and with each turnover remodeling erased more and more of the original ground floor spaces. It is important to note it is widely accepted that, due to the nature of the retail sector, interior spaces and storefronts are commonly altered to accommodate the needs specific to the business. As a result, the diminished integrity of the *Hippee Building's* ground level retail spaces is to be expected. Today, the integrity of design on the ground level is tied to the retention of large display windows, sense of volume, location within the building, and functional relationship to the street and other spaces in the building. Further, the infill of the historic storefront, while detrimental to the historic integrity as it relates to design, materials, and workmanship, retains a very good sense of the historic organization and storefront function, thereby minimizing the adverse visual impact.

As it relates to *integrity of materials*, the *exterior of the Hippee Building* retains a generally very good level of historic integrity. The historic masonry, which is a dominant character-defining element, remains intact including the brick and terracotta. Despite the introduction of replacement windows, the individual stone headers and sills remain intact, as do the various decorative stone elements employed across the primary facades.

Regarding *integrity of materials on the interior*, the building retains a fair level of historic integrity. The nearly wholesale loss of historic finishes such as millwork, flooring (some may exist beneath later finishes), and plaster on the building's upper floors is unfortunate and impacts integrity. However, the retention of the central staircase, areas of marble wainscoting, and coffering in the bank space are significant visual elements that help balance the loss in other, less publically visible areas.

With these various aspects of historic integrity intact, a sense of time and place is retained resulting in a *good level of integrity of feeling*.

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FUTURE PLANS

The historic rehabilitation of the Hippee Building is currently in the planning stages. The property will be converted for use as a hotel with guest rooms on the upper stories and lobby, restaurant, and bar located in the storefronts. The historic rehabilitation would utilize State and Federal historic tax credits, with all work undertaken following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Historic Rehabilitation.

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8. Statement of Significance

The 1913 Hippee Building, so named for Des Moines businessman George B. Hippee, is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The building is locally significant in association with the history of commerce, specifically as it relates to the contributions made to the city's residential development by the building's part owner and 11-year occupant, the Iowa Loan & Trust Co. The Hippee Building is also eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The resource is locally significant as an example of Beaux-Arts Classical architecture in a "fireproof" commercial building of the skyscraper form and as a representative of the work of the Des Moines architectural firm of Sawyer & Watrous.

The Period of Significance for the Hippee Building is 1913-1926, the period embracing the year the building was placed in service and the final year it housed its most significant occupant, the Iowa Loan & Trust Company. The period represents that which best illustrates its significance under both Criterion A and Criterion C. The Significant Dates are 1913, the year the building was placed in service, and 1914, the year in which the banking space for the Iowa Loan & Trust Company was completed and the company assumed occupancy.

Specific to significance under Criterion A in association with the history of commerce, the Iowa Loan & Trust Co. served Des Moines from its incorporation in 1872 through its closing on December 20, 1926. Due to its size, longevity, and rather high profile end, the Iowa Loan & Trust Company was the city's best-known loan and trust company.² Entering the scene at a time of great development in the state, Iowa Loan & Trust is inseparable from that early period of growth. Initially, the company acted as a local agent for eastern businesses interested in investing in Iowa farmland. In that role, Iowa Loan & Trust placed mortgages on area farms and then resold the mortgages to the eastern investors. The services of the company expanded in subsequent years to include significant investment in suburban development. In the city specifically, the company's investment in real estate provided an important boost to the physical development of Des Moines as the "City of Homes."³

The Iowa Loan & Trust Co. had a dedicated real estate department focused on assisting Des Moines residents buy their own home. To that end, the company was a leader in subdividing and developing suburban property. In 1922 the company stated that they had laid out "some fifty or sixty different additions comprising around 8,000 separate home sites" on 3,000-acres of land situated in various locations adjacent to the city.⁴ To make purchase of a lot manageable for buyers, the company established "the easy payment plan" which consisted of small monthly payments "suited to their means." Commonly, the payment plan required a \$1 down payment, and a \$1 weekly, interest free payment plan. The company noted that the 1920

² Barbara Beving Long, "Des Moines Center of Iowa: Survey of Historic Sites, 1982: 40.

³ Ibid., 41.

⁴ Full page advertisement, "A Half Century of Growth and Prosperity," *The Des Moines Register*, February 12, 1922: 9.

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census placed Des Moines first in the nation as a city of homes, with 51.5% of citizens being homeowners. The Iowa Loan & Trust Co. took special pride in the role it played in that achievement.⁵

Despite efforts made by other local banks and by the Des Moines Clearing House Association to take-over the bank and avoid closure, Iowa Loan and Trust closed on December 20, 1926. Discussions of a take-over ended when it was disclosed that the bank had guaranteed payment of an excess of \$3-million of mortgages sold in the east, a liability too large to overcome. The bank closure marked the beginning of a long and complicated process of liquidation and partial restoration of assets to depositors. The process was beset by a contentious lawsuit alleging conflict of interest that resulted in the closure. Ultimately, depositors received 90 to 95-percent of their deposits, though the process was not completed until early in 1928.⁶

While the impact of the Iowa Loan & Trust Company on Des Moines residential expansion is apparent, the long-term impact of the bank's failure on the Des Moines real estate market is unclear. However, in the months immediately following the closure, other local banks and mortgage companies were actively marketing their real estate services including the sale of large-scale residential developments.

Specific to its significance under Criterion C, the Hippee Building presents a commercial version of Beaux-Arts Classicism, with the style's character-defining features – applied atop the Chicago Commercial form of base, shaft, and capital – apparent. The building employs a light-colored masonry with terracotta details, monumental scale, articulated symmetry, classically derived features such as fluted columns and fully articulated entablature, lavish ornamentation (in this case concentrated at the base and the capital), and the colossal columns that stand as a central component of the composition. The style defining elements were carried into the interior where a variety of Italian marbles and terrazzo floors adorned the modern, 20th century professional office building.

Further, the Hippee Building represents the early 20th century interest in constructing “fireproof” buildings. Previously plagued by significant material loss to fire, Des Moines developers, like those in cities across the country, were looking for alternative building materials for the purpose of preventing fire. Technological developments such as steel frame construction, terra cotta tile, brick, and concrete became increasingly available to developers in the early years of the 20th century. The 11-story Fleming Building (1907), located immediately north of the Hippee Building, was one of the first in Iowa and likely the first in the city to employ steel frame construction for that very purpose.⁷ Constructed just five years later, the Hippee Building was hailed as “absolutely fireproof.” Although an exaggeration, the construction methods used to erect the Hippee Building certainly went a long way toward diminishing the likelihood that a fire would destroy it. The building featured a steel frame structure with the I-beam form of its vertical members filled with terra

⁵ Full page advertisement, “A Half Century of Growth and Prosperity,” *The Des Moines Register*, February 12, 1922: 9.

⁶ “Half Million in Bank Dividends To Be Paid Soon,” *Des Moines Tribune*, November 22, 1927: 1.

⁷ Sommer Reece, “Fleming Building,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2001: 3.

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cotta block, brick and terra cotta perimeter walls, terra cotta tile partition walls, and poured concrete floors. The only flammable materials used in construction of the building were finishes: maple floors and oak millwork. In this manner, the Hippee Building, while not “absolutely fireproof,” was as fire retardant as was possible at the time.

The Hippee Building is also representative of the early 20th century trend of “skyscraper” construction. Prevalent in cities where land values encouraged increasing building heights, the skyscraper came into play as technology made them possible. The introduction of steel frame construction and the perfection of the elevator were key components in the rising popularity of skyscrapers in American cities. During the first quarter of the 20th century, Des Moines saw the construction of the 6-story Flynn Building (1906), the 11-story Fleming Building (1907), the 10-story Hubbell Building (1913), the 12-story Hippee Building (1913), and the 19-story Equitable Life Building (1924). The construction of these buildings (and others of the type and period) represents a significant shift in both construction practices and physical landscape in the Des Moines downtown commercial area.

With its large and varied design portfolio, the Des Moines architectural firm of Sawyer & Watrous made a significant impact on the city’s built environment. Included in their list of designs are the former Za-Ga-Zig Shrine Temple, the Main Power Station for the Des Moines Electric Company, Logan School, the Crane building (NRHP), and many residences designed for the city’s elite. However, it is widely noted that the Hippee Building represents the firm’s most fully realized design.

Historic Background: Development and Context

Downtown Des Moines developed gradually from just north of the old Fort Des Moines near the Des Moines River on the southeast, moving toward the north and the west. Like most cities, Des Moines experienced its share of commercial loss to fire, which was minimized by the advent of fire retardant technologies that came into common play shortly after the turn of the 20th century. As late as 1923, when the Insurance Exchange Building was going up at Grand and 5th Avenue, expansion of the financial and commercial district remained anchored north of Grand between Fourth and Sixth Streets.⁸

Typical of the development of downtown commercial areas, Des Moines developed in a piecemeal fashion with buildings of various sizes, styles, and materials rising to suit the requirements of a specific commercial interest. Demolition of earlier buildings to allow for the construction of newer, only added to the disparity in appearance overtime. As a result, the visual composition of the downtown lacks an overall continuity. As pointed out by historian Patricia Eckhardt, for many years the downtown lacked zoning restrictions to regulate development. The result was often the side-by-side construction of both functionally and

⁸ Patricia A. Eckhardt, Ph.D., “Des Moines’ Commercial Architecture, 1876-1937: Historic Context and Survey of Sites,” Prepared for City of Des Moines Planning and Zoning, 1995: 5.

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architecturally unrelated properties, which as public historian William C. Page put it, was a “patchwork quilt pattern of mixed land use” and of the visual character that resulted.⁹

With its patchwork character, the downtown lacked, for many years, a main street or any specific point of focus. Early fire insurance maps record a spread out downtown commercial area absent a unifying corridor around which the downtown settled. Some small nodes of concentrated business did develop including around the corner of Third Street and Court Avenue.¹⁰ However, by 1910 construction in the vicinity of the new Polk County Courthouse (1906) was creating a commercial node of major buildings along Sixth Street and on Walnut near Sixth Avenue.¹¹ Significant among them were the 11-story Fleming Building (1907) at Walnut and Sixth Avenue; the 10-story Hubbell Building (1913) built three blocks to the west at Ninth and Walnut; the 19-story Equitable Building (1924) at Sixth and Locust; and, in 1913, the 12-story Hippee Building.

Construction and Early Occupation of the Hippee Building

Under the auspices of Des Moines businessman George B. Hippee, the Hippee Building was under construction in 1912 and placed in service in 1913. The building was situated in a prominent location in the heart of the commercial district with banking and commercial enterprises, railway connections, and the Polk County Courthouse all within a couple of blocks. The building rose on the site formerly occupied by “the old waiting room” of the Des Moines Street Railway Company, which bankrupted in 1911.¹² Demolition of the former waiting room began in June 1912.¹³ The 12-story, “thoroughly modern” and “absolutely fireproof” Hippee Building was constructed at a cost of \$450,000.¹⁴

The newly completed Hippee Building was placed in service in July of 1913 (Figure 5). The building was not yet fully occupied when *The Des Moines Register* ran a multi-page spread about the new 12-story building, which the paper espoused as “Iowa’s Tallest Skyscraper.”¹⁵ Although not fully occupied, the building’s occupant demographic was firmly established by the first to locate offices there. In mid-March of 1913 it was reported that the building’s offices were 75-percent leased. Special note was made that a number of insurance companies had committed to moving their offices to the new building.¹⁶ With final touches on

⁹ Ibid. and William C. Page, “The State of Iowa Historical Recordation of the Laura T. and Albert L. West House,” prepared for the Des Moines Metropolitan Transit Authority, October 1994: 5.

¹⁰ Full page advertisement, “A Half Century of Growth and Prosperity,” *The Des Moines Register*, February 12, 1922: 9.

¹¹ Eckhardt, 6.

¹² Patricia Eckhardt, “Hippee Building,” Iowa Site Inventory Form, November 26, 1990: 3.

¹³ “The Hippee Building is Absolutely Fireproof,” *The Register and Leader*, July 20, 1913: 2 and Sanborn Company Fire Insurance Map, 1901.

¹⁴ “The Hippee Building is Absolutely Fireproof,” *The Register and Leader*, July 20, 1913: 2 and “New Hippee Building is Iowa’s Tallest Skyscraper,” *The Register and Leader*, July 20, 1913: Hippee Building Section, Builders and Occupants.

¹⁵ “New Hippee Building is Iowa’s Tallest Skyscraper,” *The Register and Leader*, July 20, 1913: Hippee Building Section, Builders and Occupants.

¹⁶ “Most of Hippee Bldg. is Leased,” *The Des Moines Daily News*, March 17, 1913: 1.

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the interior being completed, occupants were beginning to move in by the end of June.¹⁷

The upper floors of the Hippee Building were occupied by a cross-section of professionals, with particular concentrations of insurance companies and or independent agents, attorneys, and doctors/dentists. In fact, the 1913 news article indicates that spaces were especially fitted to accommodate medical professionals and city directories document that the doctors' and dentists' offices were consistently located on the 5th and 6th floors. City directories indicate that from the building's opening through ca.1922, the entire 11th floor was occupied by the Royal Union Mutual Life Insurance Co.¹⁸

The ground floor accommodated five storefronts – three fronting 6th Avenue on the east (all south of the lobby entrance) and two fronting Mulberry on the south. Although only the storefront on the corner was occupied at the time the building was placed in service; that soon changed; by 1915, the ground floor storerooms were fully occupied.

Figure 5. Hippee Building – 1913



(SOURCE: AKAY Consulting Postcard Collection)

The Hippee Building storefront level was historically occupied by a variety of retailers, one longtime tenant being the Strotz-Staff Co., a cigar store, which occupied the southeast corner. Upper stories housed a cross-section of professionals, with a particular concentration of doctors located on the 5th and 6th floors.

¹⁷ "Few Vacant Rooms in New Hippee Building: Tenants Already Moving Into Office Structure," *The Des Moines Register*, June 30, 1913: 5.

¹⁸ City Directory, various years.

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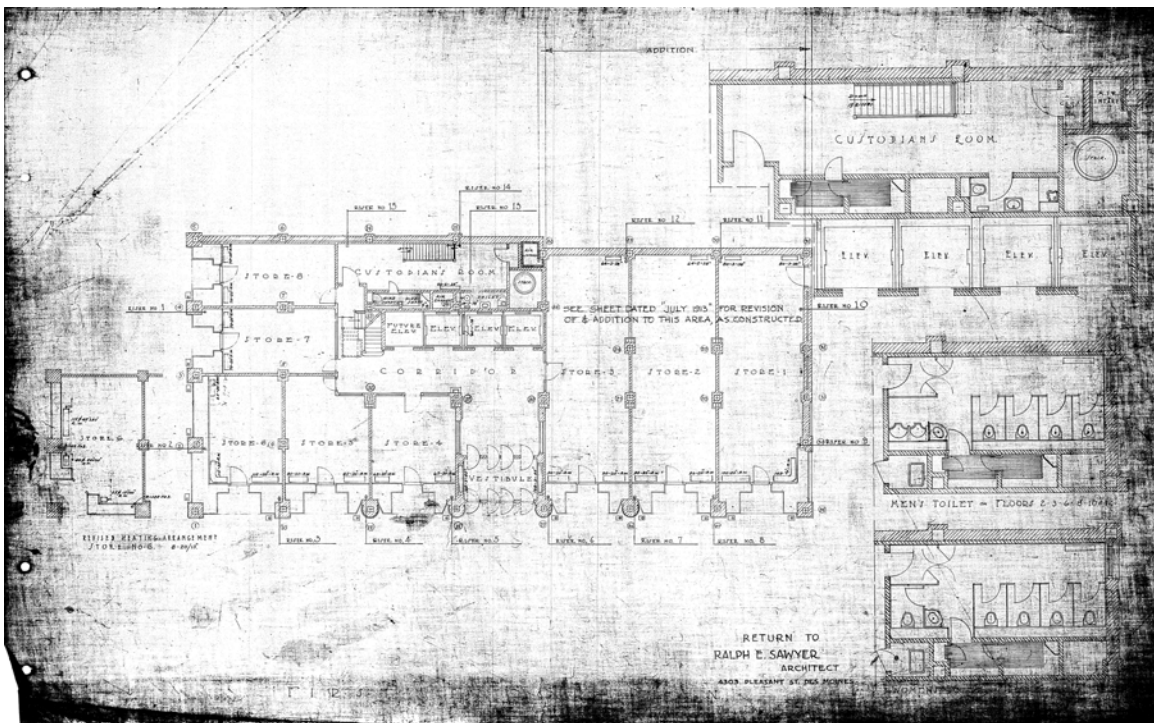
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The north 65-feet of the building's ground floor remained under construction in 1913, with a one-story addition being made to the west wall of the 12-story tower (Figure 6). The entire space – stretching from the storefronts on the east to the rear of the addition on the west – was being fitted for its pending, and long-term occupant, the Iowa Loan and Trust Company.¹⁹ Although described in local news accounts as “part owner” of the building, the details of the company’s proprietary relationship with George B. Hippee is not fully known.

Figure 6. Design Plan – First Floor - 1912



(Historic plans courtesy of property owner.)

The 1912 first floor plan notes the planned expansion of the first floor to the west.

The first floor banking space comprised a 65- by 110-foot room that accommodated an 18- by 110-foot “lobby” with a marble floor, and gray Convent Siena marble walls with a ceiling of “combination art and

¹⁹ “Most of Hippee Bldg. is Leased,” *The Des Moines Daily News*, March 17, 1913: 1.

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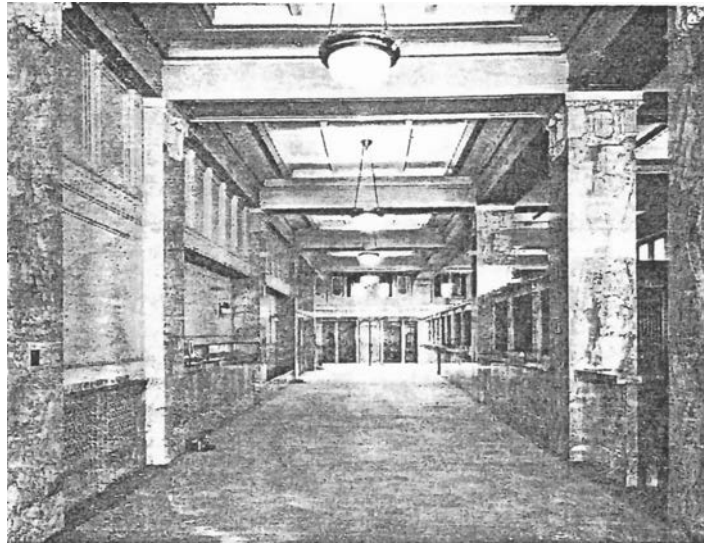
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ground glass skylights.”²¹ The bank located a 54-foot long vault at the rear (west) end of the space with the director’s room situated at mezzanine level above the vault space. The various business offices of the bank lined the north side of the space, stretching from the storefront on the east to the vault on the west. The offices were finished in “English bog oak” and were “heavily carpeted.”²²

The historic image below provides a good indication of the appearance of the banking space, with the teller line running along a portion of the length of the room within a line of columns (Figure 7). The marble finishes and coffered ceiling created a rich and elegant character. We also know from narrative descriptions that a ladies room, a grouping of tables for those accessing deposit boxes, and a meeting room were located in the banking space as well. The vault was located at the west end of the room, which is likely seen here in the back.²³

Figure 7. Iowa Loan & Trust Company Bank – 1916



(SOURCE: *Des Moines, Iowa Spokesman*, 1916.)

This 1916 image documents the ornate and elegant interior of the banking space.

²¹ Convent Siena marble refers to the place where the marble was quarried – the property of the Italian convent of Monteranti. For a number of years in the early 20th century, Siena marble was the most popular foreign marble – its durability, rich color, and pattern of veining accounting for its demand. Convent Siena marble was desired for its deep, warm yellow ground with deep purple to black veining. This according to, “The Siena Marble Quarries,” *Stone Magazine Review*, Vol. 3 (Stone Magazine Review Publishing Co., 1912).

²² According to <https://en.wikipedia.org>, bog oak, (aka bog-wood, abonos and morta), is a material from trees that have been buried in peat bogs and preserved from decay by the acidic and anaerobic bog conditions. Natural staining and variation in color as well as the direction of growth rings define its appearance. Due to its rarity, bog-wood is considered among some of the world’s most expensive tropical hardwoods.

²³ “Trust Company in its New Quarters,” *The Des Moines Register*, March 15, 1914: 16.

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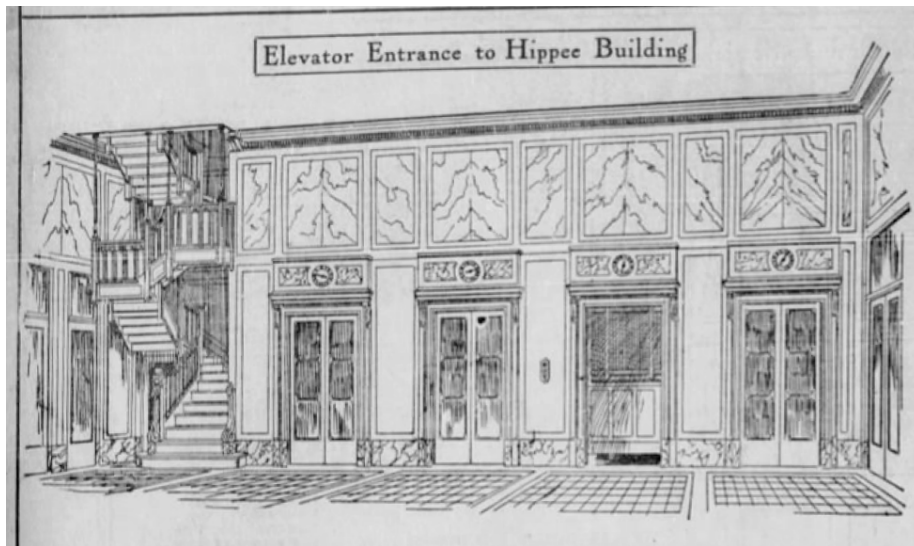
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Iowa Loan and Trust Company was organized in the state of Iowa on September 10, 1913. The organizing officers were George B. Hippee, President; D.H. McKee, Vice President; and Edwin Hult, Secretary.²⁴ The trust company moved into its new quarters in the Hippee Building in mid-March 1914. News accounts document the formal opening, noting, “the elegance of appointment and artistic construction of the bank’s new home is equaled by few other such institutions in the country.”

The newspaper spread announcing completion of the Hippee Building included artist renderings of the building including elements of its elegant interior. Like the bank space, both public spaces and professional offices were beautifully fitted. The first floor lobby, described as, “probably the most elaborate of any office structure in the state,” sported walls sheathed in Italian statuary marble, Skyross marble panels over the elevators, other elements using a different type of Italian marble in shades of blue and green, and marble tile on the lobby floor (Figure 8). Marble was also used in the newel post and treads of the lobby staircase.²⁵

Figure 8. Architect’s Rendering – Hippee Building Lobby – 1913



(SOURCE: *The Des Moines Register*, July 20, 1913.)

The building’s lobby boasted three kinds of Italian marble including marble tile on the floors. The open staircase was constructed of iron with marble newel posts and treads.

²⁴ Public Notice: “Statement of the Condition of Iowa Loan and Trust Company,” *The Des Moines Register*, September 19, 1913: 9.

²⁵ “New Hippee Building is Iowa’s Tallest Skyscraper,” *The Des Moines Register*, July 20, 1913: Hippee Building Section.

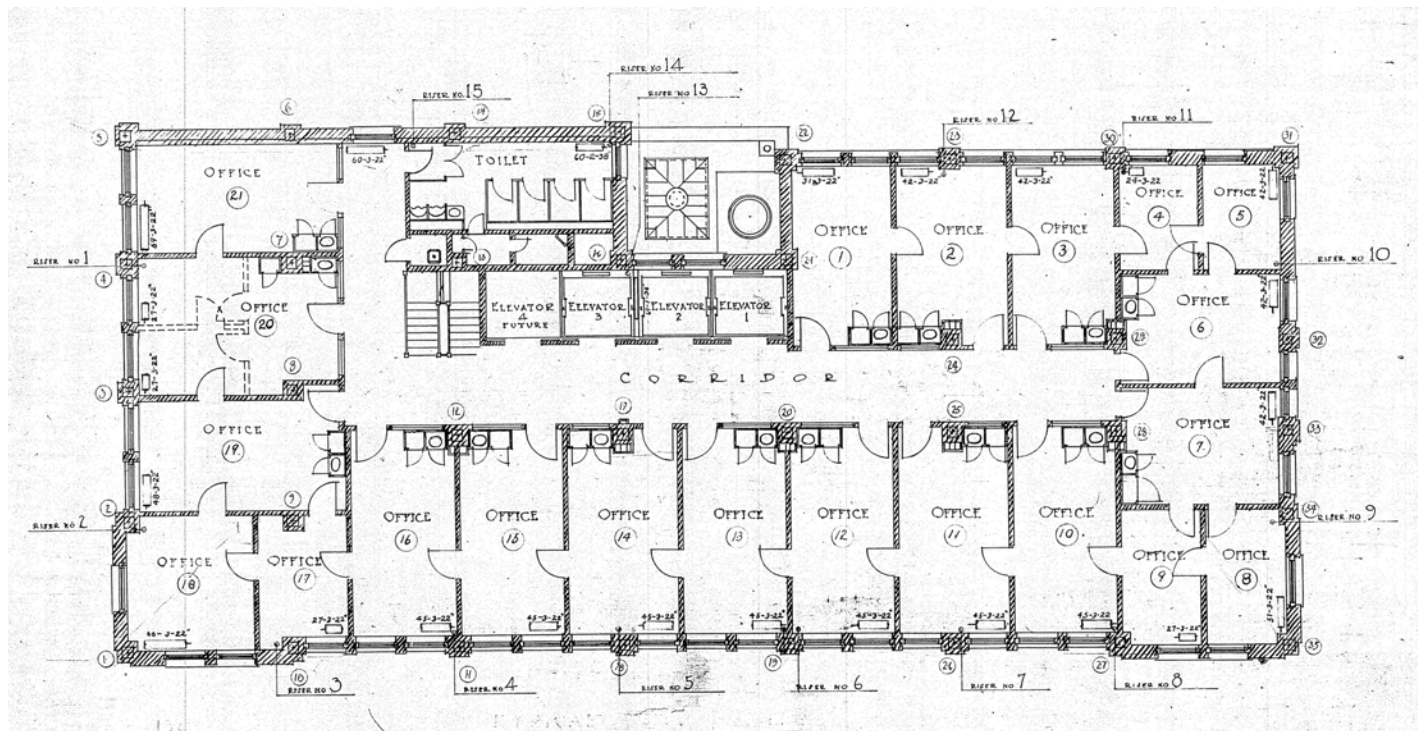
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The lobbies of the upper 12 stories were likewise fitted, with marble wainscoting lining the corridor walls. Corridors were described as wide and well lighted with ceramic tile floors. The 231 offices featured quarter-sawn oak millwork, maple floors, and “lightly tinted” plaster walls. Located on outside walls, each office had ample sunlight and ventilation provided through large windows that extended to the ceiling. Each office and/or suite of offices came complete with a “wardrobe” and a “lavatory.” Public restrooms were located on each floor.²⁶

Figure 9. Design Plan – Typical Upper Floor - 1912



(Historic plans courtesy of property owner.)

Typically, the upper floors were arranged with a series of offices around a central corridor.

Some offices were fitted for specific tenants. As noted, two floors (apparently the 5th and 6th) were provided with the equipment and arrangements necessary for doctors and dentists. Those offices came complete with

²⁶ “New Hippee Building is Iowa’s Tallest Skyscraper,” *The Des Moines Register*, July 20, 1913: Hippee Building Section.

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“compressed air, gas, electricity, and the most modern sanitary plumbing available.”²⁷ H.H. Polk & Co., which occupied a large portion of the 2nd floor, was noted as having a suite of offices “fitted especially for their use.” Likewise, the 12th floor was arranged specifically for long-term tenant, Royal Mutual Union Life. It was noted in an news article about the prosperity Des Moines’ insurance agencies, that the company’s space was furnished in a manner that “would inspire a bare headed man with awe at any time if he were not accustomed to rich surroundings.” When moving into the new Hippee Building, Royal Mutual disposed of its old furniture as “not good enough for the sumptuous surroundings into which the company moved.” As replacements, the company purchased “steel furniture of the latest type.”²⁸

Numerous advertisements for the building architects Sawyer & Watrous, the general contractor Selden-Breck Construction Co., and various sub-contractors as well as for businesses locating themselves in the new building filled the pages of the July newspaper spread. Early occupants represented in the advertisements included several attorneys and dentists (6th floor) as well as Harry H. Polk & Co., investment securities, real estate, and loans (2nd floor), The Letter Factory (7th floor), which specialized in “circular letters, mailing wares, court and convention reporting stenographic work of all kinds,” Elnora Vore “Hair Dressing Parlors” (6th floor), the Des Moines Vapor Sulphur Bath Institute (4th floor), Royal Union Mutual Life (entire 12th floor), and Stratz & Stapf Co., cigars located in the corner storefront.²⁹

Figure 10. Advertisement – 1923



(SOURCE: Advertisement, *Des Moines Register*, August 10, 1923)

As a leasing tool, rearrangement and “fitting” of the upper story office spaces remained a common practice over the ensuing decades.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “No Dull Days For Insurance People,” *The Register and Leader*, August 5, 1913: 5.

²⁹ “New Hippee Building is Iowa’s Tallest Skyscraper,” *The Des Moines Register*, July 20, 1913: Hippee Building Section.

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City directories indicate that vacant offices remained into 1914; a February 1914 advertisement for tenants provides confirmation. The ad notes that space was available “in this newly erected building at moderate rates” with “space adapted for every commercial enterprise.” The building was further promoted as “a building that lends dignity to your business – an accessible building – a well advertised building – a well-groomed building – a building modern and up-to-date – centrally located.”³²

In subsequent years, the occupants of the upper floors came and went with some regularity resulting in the building owner’s willing adaptation of the original floor plans to meet the needs of new tenants. The timing of the ad corresponds to the relocation of the Royal Union Mutual Life Insurance Company, which had occupied the entire 11th floor from the time the building opened in 1913. With its departure, the floor remained vacant until refitted for new lessees; in 1924 the 11th floor had 5 suites, 4 of which were occupied.³³ Although the modification of all the upper floor plans undoubtedly occurred through the building’s history, that of the 11th floor was likely the first and possibly the most extensive.

In December 1924 the Hippee Building was sold to the Southern Surety Company for \$1.5 million and soon thereafter advertisements for Southern Surety appeared in local news accounts noting the building’s new name (Figure 11). At the time the building was purchased by Southern Surety no ground floor businesses, including Iowa Loan and Trust, were to be displaced.³⁴ The purchase of the Hippee Building included the adjoining 44- by 112-foot parcel to the west, which remained occupied by several small buildings. Southern Surety intended to construct a 12-story on the adjacent site. The proposed building would be a near duplicate of the Hippee Building, which had been constructed in such a manner as to facilitate the connection. The new building was to be completed by 1926 with relocation of the Southern Surety offices from their headquarters in the Register and Tribune building completed at that time.³⁶ The change in the economic climate and the unanticipated impact of those changes clearly put a stop to those ambitious plans. Most notably, on December 20, 1926 the Iowa Loan and Trust Company failed to open for business, spelling the end of its long presence in Des Moines and its occupation of the Hippee Building.

The Southern Surety Company was incorporated in Des Moines, Iowa in 1918. In 1922 the company advertised itself as “the largest company of its kind with a home office in this state, and the largest surety company west of the Allegheny [M]ountains.”³⁷ The business was taken over by Southern Surety Company of New York in 1928. The insurance and bonding company maintained their offices on various floors of the building from 1926-1933.³⁸

³² Advertisement: “Hippee Building,” *The Des Moines Register*, February 26, 1914: 4.

³³ City directories, various years.

³⁴ Ibid. and David Ebert, “Boesen purchases Midland Building, has café in mind,” *The Des Moines Register*, August 5, 2005: 36 and <https://casetext.com/case/des-moines-bldg-l-sav-assn-v-bomer>. Last accessed April 11, 2017 and “Hippee Building Sold To Southern Surety,” *The Des Moines Daily News*, December 29 1924: 1.

³⁶ “Insurance Co. to Build to Hippee Block,” *The Des Moines Register*, December 03, 1924: 10.

³⁷ Advertisement, “Southern Service Satisfies,” *The Des Moines Register*, November 30, 1922: 19.

³⁸ Texas Department of Insurance. https://apps.tdi.state.tx.us/pcci/pcci_show_profile.jsp?tdiNum=3731&company

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In 1942 Southern Surety Company of New York defaulted on a \$475,000 loan for which the building mortgage had been provided as security. As a result, title to the building passed to the mortgage holder, Bankers Life Co. (now, Principal Financial Group). In late 1944, the Des Moines Building-Loan and Savings Association purchased the building for \$275,439, which included payment of the 1944 taxes; the company assumed possession on January 01, 1945.³⁹

Figure 11. Southern Surety Building – 1925

The New Home Purchased by The Southern Surety Company (Hippee Building)

FINANCIAL STATEMENT
At Close of Business December 31, 1924

ASSETS	
Cash in Office and on Deposit	\$1,009,833.50
United States Government Bonds	609,701.55
State, County and Municipal Bonds	702,142.65
Public Utility Bonds	174,609.90
Other Bonds and Stocks	195,294.60
Warrants	65,050.00
First Mortgage Loans on Real Estate	1,139,256.60
Office Buildings and Other Real Estate	1,258,977.65
Premiums in Course of Collection	1,672,506.42
Due from States and Counties	184,172.70
Deposit Workers' Compensation Reinsurance Bureau, N. Y.	62,050.35
Reinsurance Receivable	39,214.74
Accrued Interest and Sundry	61,774.29
Other Assets	564,648.82
Total Gross Assets	\$7,254,233.22
Less Premiums in Course of Collection (more than 90 days overdue)	208,178.86
TOTAL ADMITTED ASSETS	\$7,046,054.36
LIABILITIES	
Reserve for Unearned Premiums	\$2,508,908.32
Reserve for Claims	1,858,980.15
Reserve on Commissions	295,548.77
Reserve for Taxes and Expenses	179,554.84
Reserve for Reinsurance	22,691.63
Total Liabilities Except Capital	\$5,075,791.93
Capital Stock	\$1,225,000.00
Surplus	745,272.73
Surplus to Policyholders	1,970,272.73
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$7,046,054.66

Southern Surety Company
Home Office, Des Moines, Iowa

(SOURCE: Advertisement, *The Des Moines Register*, January 25, 1925.)

³⁹ <https://casetext.com/case/des-moines-bldg-l-sav-assn-v-bomer>. Last accessed April 11, 2017.

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The content of a 1949 case before the Iowa Supreme Court in which the Des Moines Building-Loan and Savings Association was appealing a decree of the Polk County District Court, which had refused on appeal from the decision of the Board of Review of the City of Des Moines to reduce the assessor's valuation of the building and the quarter block site, provides a notion of the building's deteriorated condition at mid-century and the owner's intention to undertake its renovation.⁴¹ The brief describes the building thus:

“This building was erected in 1912 and is located on the southeast quarter block at Sixth Avenue and Mulberry Street in the city Des Moines. It has 12 stories and is of steel and concrete construction. It is not entirely fireproof in that it has hardwood floors in the offices and there are no fire doors on the several floor levels of the stairway. The corridors are of a tile, concrete and terraza [sic] character and have marble wainscoting. The elevators are not of a modern character although the interior of the elevator cages is of a comparatively modern design and construction. It is claimed that new elevators are needed which with the other necessary equipment would cost approximately \$250,000. The evidence further discloses that the wiring and electrical system in the building is inadequate and should be replaced. The north half of the first floor of the building was originally used by a banking institution. Prior to the time of the purchase of the building by appellant this room was used by the Insurance Department of the State of Iowa for its offices. It has continued in these quarters since the sale although the appellant-association now uses a portion of this room. There is testimony to the effect that the association contemplates making use of this entire space in connection with its business, which has increased materially during the past few years. It has been prevented, however, from doing so by reason of the fact that the Insurance Department has continued to use the greater portion of this room by reason of the delay in the construction of a State office building wherein it is contemplated that this department will later be quartered. It is contended that this banking room is not suitable to the needs of the appellant-association and that there is a necessity for an expensive remodeling program when it attains its complete possession.

It is the contention of the appellant that the value of its building is materially lessened by reason of its location, the character of the surrounding structures and the type of businesses in them. It is shown that the property is a block away from Walnut Street, one of the main retail streets of Des Moines, and it is claimed the ground floor space is not suitable for retail purposes. The rentals received from the ground floor spaces are materially less than those received for similar property on Walnut Street. The appellant contends that by reason of the conditions heretofore related the property has suffered from economic and functional obsolescence. To the south of the entrance lobby there is a restaurant and in the corner room a bus depot is located, both of which it is claimed do not add to the economic value of the building. It is also asserted that the property in its entirety has been permitted to run down and that necessary and expensive improvements will have to be made to restore the building to a satisfactory condition.”

The finding of the court was an affirmation of the original court's determination, and it appears to have at least slowed the ability of the Des Moines Building-Loan and Savings Association to complete a renovation

⁴¹ <https://casetext.com/case/des-moines-bldg-l-sav-assn-v-bomer>. Last accessed April 11, 2017.

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of the building. However, they did undertake that work, with the former banking space being remodeled to accommodate a new bank. In the spring of 1952, the Loan and Savings Association hosted an open house to celebrate their 36th anniversary and their “completely remodeled and enlarged offices.”⁴² The advertisement provides an understanding of the Midcentury Modern appearance of the space. Although yet to be confirmed, it appears likely that alterations beyond the bank space were made at a similar time – the use of travertine and chrome point to the mid-century period (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Advertisement - 36th Anniversary and Open House - 1952

WELCOME TO OUR OPEN HOUSE

36th Anniversary
1916 - 1952

**DES MOINES BUILDING-LOAN
...AND SAVINGS ASSOCIATION**

*Invites You to Stop in and See Our
Completely Remodeled and Enlarged Offices
May 5th through May 9th*

Des Moines' oldest savings and loan association, the Des Moines Building-Loan and Savings Association, now has a "New Look." Extensive remodeling has been completed, and Des Moines Building-Loan is ready to serve you even better and more efficiently than ever before.

In celebration of the remodeling and our 36th "birthday" in Des Moines, we cordially invite you to inspect our new offices. Proudly, we are proud of them—almost as proud as we are of our 36 year record of progress in Des Moines. This record is based on the principles of sound operation, confidence in the future and service to our customers.

You will always find the personal touch, and a spirit of friendliness and cooperation at Des Moines Building-Loan. This is because Des Moines Building-Loan is sincerely interested in YOU.

We are anxious to meet each of you at our open house. For your convenience we will be open Monday evening, May 5th, until 8:30 p. m. We have arranged with the Mulberry Parking Ramp, 7th and Mulberry, that 100 vehicles after 6:00 p. m. Monday will be given free parking for the evening—so, come early.

NOW AVAILABLE — Des Moines Building-Loan is also pleased to announce that Safety Deposit Boxes may now be rented. Leaving valuable papers and jewelry around the house is an invitation to trouble—wax, paper, irreplaceable loss. You'll find the security of having your valuables together and safe, in worth many times the modest rental fee.

Genuine Leather BILLFOLD AND "SAVEMASTER" INSERT

Given to all who open an account at our SAVINGS DEPARTMENT with \$3 or more. Come in and let us give you all details. Billfold styles for ladies and gentlemen.

Spare Dimes Grow To Dollars Quickly

The "Savemaster" holds 35 dimes in a compact, neat and is secured how quickly it fills up with spare dimes.

This genuine leather billfold is one that will last for years. It is made of the finest leather and is available in a variety of colors. It is a gift that will give you a dollar's worth of security when you visit our office. Hurry. While they last, we make for a limited time only.

FREE!!

Every one of our visitors during our open house will receive, ABSOLUTELY FREE, a handsome GIFT Register booklet with our compliments. This attractive, practical GIFT will prove to be a real servant for busy people—ready for jotting down important phone numbers, birth and anniversary dates—falls to remember. Stop in and get this useful booklet free during our open house celebration.

**Des Moines Building-Loan and Savings Association
Officers and Directors**

ELMER E. SULLIVAN, President and Secretary
ROBERT E. JAMES, Vice President
BEN F. EYKHL, Asst. Vice President
LORDEN E. COCHRAN, Asst. Secretary

JOHN H. LEANING, Asst. Treasurer
A. W. MINNELL, Chairman of the Board
C. L. MINNELL, Treasurer
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Evelyn Johnson
Robert Armstrong
Maime Ellis
June E. Roberts
Frances Jaffe
Pat Peterson
Berice R. Cook
Evelyn Olson
Clifford S. Hicks
Delores M. Van Der Borch

Des Moines Building-Loan and Savings Association
The Oldest in Des Moines
210 Sixth Avenue The Savings and Loan Building

(SOURCE: *The Des Moines Register*, May 04, 1952.)

⁴² Advertisement, *The Des Moines Register*, May 04, 1952: 2L.

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The Des Moines Savings & Loan Association is the documented occupant of the ground floor banking space through at least 1960.⁴³ At a currently undetermined time, Midland Savings Bank assumed occupancy of the banking space and the name of the historic Hippee Building was once again changed to acknowledge its owner and occupant; the building has been known as the Midland Building ever since. In 1986 Central Life Assurance Co. of Des Moines purchased the Midland Building from long-time owner Midland Financial, though the latter then leased the bank space from the new owner. The move was seen as representative of a national trend in which major corporations divested themselves of their headquarters in order to release the substantial amount of funds invested in them.⁴⁴

In 2005 local businessman and real estate owner, Ed Boesen purchased the building (still known as the Midland Building) with the intention of remodeling the building. Boesen purchased the building from a Florida-based mortgage lender that acquired it in 2004 after an investment group defaulted on the mortgage.⁴⁵ Boesen's plan for the Hippee Building ended tragically and, in 2008 Community State Bank took the property. Since that time, the building has been occupied by several tech and startup companies, all with a slew of similar enterprises located along Sixth Avenue, the group has earned the moniker, the "Silicon Sixth."⁴⁶

The Hippee Building: Structure and Style

Promotional articles surrounding the opening of the "New Hippee Building" made some impressive claims, touting the new 12-story building as an "absolutely fireproof" and as Iowa's "tallest skyscraper" and as... all that wrapped up in a stunning Beaux-Arts sheath. The passage of time has revealed both the truths and the falsehoods of those headlines. With that perspective came the understanding of the building's significance as an important representative of each of those achievements and underscores the skill of its designers, Sawyer & Watrous, who brought those elements together in a building that remains significant in the city's downtown landscape.

"Absolutely Fireproof"

Fire posed a serious threat to life and property in cities across the country at the turn of the 20th century; the widespread use of highly combustible wood in congested areas resulted in the leveling of sections of many early downtown commercial centers in communities both large and small. The increasing use of brick and stone helped to ease loss due to fire, but only the development of a more effective fire-resistant building

⁴³ City directories, various years.

⁴⁴ "Midland Financial sell headquarters," *The Des Moines Register*, June 26, 1986: 32.

⁴⁵ "Boesen purchases Midland Building, has café in mind," *The Des Moines Register*, August 05, 2005: 1D, 6D.

⁴⁶ Joel Aschbrenner, "Historic downtown D.M. building sold," *The Des Moines Register*, August 07, 2015.

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material, that of reinforced concrete, when combined with an elevated understanding about the real nature of fireproof design and construction, resulted in a significant advancement in the effort to stem loss due to fire. Like the rest of the country, Des Moines' property losses due to fire were significant, with the year 1912 marking the city's greatest losses in a decade. The Hippee Building opened its doors the following summer against this backdrop of concern about loss to fire. Utilizing materials that had been specifically developed to diminish the likelihood of a catastrophic fire (concrete, brick, terra cotta, and steel), the Hippee Building was designed as an "absolutely fireproof" building.⁴⁷

The loss of commercial buildings to fire had challenged property owners, city officials, and fire authorities from the nation's earliest settlement years. Of course, as communities grew the problem was compounded. The best fire departments could not stop a fire when it fed on wood and, in burgeoning towns across the nation, wood—readily available, relatively inexpensive, and viable as structural timber, exterior walling siding, and roofing shingles—was the building material of choice. Add to that the flammable nature of a building's contents and you have the makings of a true conflagration.⁴⁸

Despite the availability of building materials more resistant to fire - namely brick, stone, slate and tile - the increased cost over wood impeded widespread use. In addition, the prevailing rationalized notion that a major fire would not likely strike at home, or that the purchase of fire insurance would somehow provide adequate protection, stunted progress toward the construction of fire-resistant buildings. Further, a generally accepted definition of the term "fireproof" remained elusive for some time. Not until the early years of the 20th century was it becoming commonly understood that a "fireproof" building was one that combines a fireproof construction (steel and hollow clay tile or reinforced concrete) with non-combustible finish materials, and the proper design (compartmentalization of interior spaces).⁴⁹ The end result of such a construction is the containment of fire, the controlled loss of contents, and the saving of the building itself.

In the United States, fireproof buildings began to appear in the late 1700s, from which time the technology of fireproof construction began its evolution with the central driving notion being that, regardless of construction methods, in order to be considered fireproof a building's "constructive parts were of materials other than wood."⁵⁰ As stated, brick and stone were sometimes utilized as construction materials more resistant to fire than wood. The often limited availability of stone proved a challenge in some areas, but brickyards became commonplace across the country, making that material readily available at a relatively early time. Many found comfort in the use of brick as a construction material,

⁴⁷ William C. Page and Alexa McDowell, "Hotel Randolph," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2008.

⁴⁸ Sara E. Wermiel, *The Fireproof Building: Technology and Public Safety in the Nineteenth-Century American City* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

⁴⁹ *Cyclopedia of Fire Prevention and Insurance* (Chicago: American Technical Society, 1912): 122.

⁵⁰ Wermiel, 6.

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but as Wermiel points out in *The Fireproof Building*, a 19th century brick building, which used timber for floor and roof supports, “was simply a woodpile enclosed in noncombustible walls.”⁵¹

The 19th century introduction of iron as a fire-resistant construction material met with some initial success. Iron beams and girders, and cast-iron columns were employed in building construction; many of Iowa's main street facades dating to the mid to late 1800s utilized such columns. However, iron, while it does not burn, is highly susceptible to the extreme heat associated with fire. Under relatively low exposures to heat, iron softens and collapses under its own weight. Once a structure failed, fire spread beyond the building structure and the contents within it to neighboring structures. The development and utilization of hollow clay tile to surround and protect iron structural elements created the best method of fireproofing a building of its time.⁵² The addition of alloys to iron in the production of steel strengthened the material, but did not eliminate its weakness under high heat. The complementary pairing of steel and clay tile, however, became the “generally accepted construction, particularly of the tall commercial buildings, the 'fireproof structures.’”⁵³

Reinforced concrete was introduced first in Europe: in England in 1854 when wire mesh was set into concrete, then in France in 1867 when Jose Moniers used wire mesh to reinforce concrete for use in garden pots, and, in pivotal developments, the 1867 use of reinforcing bars in concrete and the 1869 introduction of reinforced concrete floor slabs by Francois Hennebique.⁵⁴ By 1876, the first American patent for reinforced concrete for the construction of floors was issued, but until the closing years of the 19th century, few American buildings were built using the new technology.

Due to its malleable form, the potential and versatility of concrete as a building material was quickly recognized. In addition, because concrete is weak in tensile strength, but strong under compression stresses, the addition of steel or iron created a product (reinforced concrete), which offered both qualities. Shortly after the rise of fireproof clay tile, steel frame building construction was coming into use, with the growing need for office space and the skyrocketing cost of land in American cities spurring the development of tall buildings. The development of reinforced concrete as a structural building material met two of the essential qualities needed for such buildings: a strong framework to bear the building's weight and a fire-resistant material to provide safety.

The issue of cost of construction materials had long been a deterrent to fireproof construction. However, a rise in the production of Portland cement coincided with a drop in its price resulting in an increased demand, supporting its widespread use. *The Cyclopedia of Fire Prevention and Insurance* indicates that at the time of

⁵¹ Wermiel, 6.

⁵² *Cyclopedia*, 128.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

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its publication in 1912 the production of Portland cement had risen to 60,000,000 barrels annually, up from 300,000 barrels in 1890.⁵⁵ Further gains toward fireproof construction came as architects became more interested in employing new technologies, including using reinforced concrete. By embracing the increasingly competitive costs of fireproof construction and insisting upon their use with potential clients, the case for fireproof construction benefited significantly. The publication also notes that the use of reinforced concrete in building construction had become “really common, although even now there are cities of some size, where there is not yet a full-fledged reinforced concrete building.”⁵⁶

In many ways, the Des Moines of 1912 was a reflection of the nation, particularly of Chicago whose lead it often followed. In January of that year a local newspaper revisited the events and accomplishments of the year previous: “Fire Loss in 1912 Greatest in Ten Years” headlined an article about the city's ever-present challenge. Six major fires in downtown Des Moines, as well as “hundreds” of smaller fires in the downtown and residential areas, resulted in significant property loss. With buildings constructed of combustible materials and a general lack of strictly enforced building laws, the city struggled to gain a hold on property losses due to fire.⁵⁷

In celebratory promotional materials announcing the opening of the Hippee Building, much was made of the building's aim to be fireproof. Constructed of a steel frame skeleton with vertical members filled with terra cotta tile, brick and clay tile perimeter walls, clay tile partition walls, and concrete and tile structural floors, the primary materials all followed the standards of the day for a “fireproof” building. As the promotion also noted, inflammable materials were limited to maple flooring laid over the concrete and tile, oak millwork, and interior furnishings. News accounts devoted considerable text to how the building's design would minimize the likelihood of catastrophic fire:

“There is no other material used in the construction of the big office block that can be burned. A fire might be started in any one of the hundreds of office rooms in the building, but no other portion of the structure would be in danger. The furnishings of the first room might burn out, were they sufficiently inflammable, but there would be no opportunity of the fire spreading. So confident were the constructors of the building of its fireproof qualities that they often allow unguarded fire to burn on the floors of each tier of rooms during the cold nights of last winter when the freezing temperature might have spoiled the work of the plasterers during the day.”⁵⁸

In so much as was possible, the Hippee Building was indeed built as “absolutely fireproof.” The truth of that statement rests in part on the fact that it remains extant. Although many factors determine the fate of all historic resources, protection against loss to fire certainly ranks high among those factors.

⁵⁵ *Cyclopedia*, 187.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁵⁷ “Fire Loss in 1912 Greatest in Ten Years,” *The Des Moines Register and Leader*, January 01, 1912.

⁵⁸ “New Hippee Building is Iowa's Tallest Skyscraper,” *The Des Moines Register and Leader*, July 20, 1913: Hippee Building Section.

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“Iowa’s Tallest Skyscraper”

“Aside from all the aesthetic considerations the continued erection of the so-called “skyscraper,” the excessively tall building, constitutes a menace to public health and safety and an offence which must be stopped.”⁵⁹

It has been said that the skyscraper, more than any other building type, is quintessentially expressive of 20th century America. Evolving from vaguely European roots in the 19th century, the form became wholly American in its ability to transform the urban environment in the first decades of the 20th century. The skyscraper pushed aside the previous collection of small and medium-sized buildings then typical of the country’s downtown commercial areas to create the American city whose value was defined by size – how many people and how big were their buildings became the standard by which the urban city was measured.⁶⁰

The definition of a skyscraper is, by necessity, vague: “a very tall building” or “a very tall building with many stories.” Generally, the term implies a multi-story office, residential, or commercial building that typically has a passenger elevator. Additionally, it can be thought of as taller than most and visible from a great distance.⁶¹ Such a definition leaves considerable room for interpretation, as a 6-story building in a large city is experienced very differently than a similar building located in a small city.

When constructed in 1913, the Hippee Building was hailed as the tallest office building Iowa, displacing the Equitable Block, which then held the record. Architects of the Hippee Building noted that the Equitable Block rose higher, but was sited at a higher elevation, making the Hippee Building the taller of the two.⁶² The Hippee Building joined the 11-story Fleming Building (1907) located immediately to its north to begin the transformation of the previously ramshackle commercial area along Sixth Avenue into a thoroughly modern, American commercial district (Figure 13). The 1924 construction of the 19-story Equitable Building at 6th and Locust provided the bookend for that period.⁶³

In the following view of Sixth Avenue (Figure 13) we see this portion of the commercial district just prior to the construction of the Hippee Building, with the Fleming Building (at mid-ground) and Polk County Courthouse (at near right) in place. The addition of the 12-story Hippee Building, which rose on the site occupied in this view by a 2-story building, went a long way toward the modernization of the city skyline to one dominated by the skyscraper.

⁵⁹ Paul Goldberger, *The Skyscraper* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 3 quoting: David Kickerbocker Boyd, *American Architect and Building News*, November 18, 1908.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶¹ Joseph J. Korom, Jr., *The American Skyscraper 1850-1940: A Celebration of Height* (Boston: Branden Books, 2008), 19.

⁶² According to city directories, the Equitable block referred to was, in 1891, located at on West 5th Street between Walnut and Court. The building was an 8-story Italian Renaissance Revival style commercial building.

⁶³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equitable_Building_\(Des_Moines\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equitable_Building_(Des_Moines)). Last accessed 04/19/2017. The Equitable Building was the tallest building in Iowa until the construction of the Financial Center (also in Des Moines) in 1973.

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Figure 13. View of Sixth Avenue - 1911



(SOURCE: *Des Moines: The City of Certainties*, 1911.)

Beaux-Arts Classicism

As noted in Patricia Eckhardt's 1995 survey of Des Moines' commercial architecture, the design of downtown buildings constructed around the turn of the 20th century was dominated by classically derived styles.

American Beaux-Arts Classicism, while derived from the French architectural school, found its most relevant influences in the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. In that place, a series of monumental buildings arose in a carefully orchestrated landscape. Designed by various American architects, many of whom had studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and all of whom were strongly influenced by it, the monumental exhibition halls bore all of the hallmark features of the elaborate and eclectic style. The influence of the World's Fair on American cities was apparent soon thereafter, with some of the country's most significant examples appearing in the early years of the 20th century. The Beaux-Arts remained popular through 1929 – Black Friday and the subsequent depression putting an end to the excesses of the style.⁶⁴

Beaux-Arts Classicism – first and foremost an urban style - is typically characterized by a sense of formality of design, symmetrical articulation, a full slate of classically derived features, elaborate and intensive surface

⁶⁴ <https://architecturestyles.org/beaux-arts/>. Last accessed 04/21/2017.

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decoration, coupled columns, facades composed around advancing and receding wall planes, ornamental sculpture, and often an over-scaled feature standing as a central component of the composition.⁶⁵ Although expression of the style varies by building, Beaux-Arts buildings were designed to make a statement. To that end, their materials are typically of the best and most expensive quality. Light colored stone, often limestone, is the predominant material with elaborate details undertaken in stone, cast stone, or terracotta. Interiors are no less elaborate with colorful and richly veined marble commonly used along with polished woods (usually dark), terrazzo floors, and polished brass and bronze. Interiors may also feature painterly effects such as murals.⁶⁶

In its most formal expression, the Beaux-Arts is monumental, axially arranged, and highly ornamented. In Des Moines that form of the style is adroitly expressed in the 1906 Polk County Courthouse, designed by the preeminent Des Moines architectural firm of Proudfoot and Bird.⁶⁷ In contrast to the courthouse, the Hippee Building (sited immediately northwest of the Proudfoot and Bird building) presents a more linear and clearly commercial version of the Beaux-Arts. Nonetheless, the style's character-defining features – applied atop the Chicago Commercial form of base, shaft, and capital - are apparent, namely in the use of a light-colored masonry with terracotta details, monumental scale, articulated symmetry, classically derived features such as fluted columns and fully articulated entablature, lavish ornamentation (in this case concentrated at the base and the capital), and the colossal, engaged columns that stand as a central component of the composition. The style defining elements are carried into the interior where a variety of Italian marbles and terrazzo floors, adorned the modern, 20th century professional office building.

Architects: Sawyer & Watrous

The Des Moines architectural firm of Sawyer & Watrous was established in 1906. Through 1927 the firm undertook the design of a wide variety of building types with a specific focus on residential design, particularly for the city's business and political leaders. While many of those residences remain extant, the majority of the firm's commercial designs no longer exist (Table 1.) Due to its scale, artful design, and elegant character, the 1913 Hippee Building has long been considered the finest example of the firm's work in Des Moines.

Although two years apart, Ralph Edmund Sawyer (1873-1947) and Charles Albert Watrous (1875-1940) both attended MIT where they were enrolled in the architecture course and were members of the same fraternity. Ralph Sawyer, a member of a prominent Boston family, returned to that city after graduation in 1897. In Boston, Sawyer first joined architect E.B. Homer with whom he designed Boston's Tremont

⁶⁵ http://www.crt.state.ia.us/Assets/OCD/hp/nationalregister/historic_contexts/beauxartsREVISED.pdf 4. Last accessed 04/21/2017.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

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Building (status unknown).⁶⁸ In 1901 Sawyer joined the firm of E.Q. Sylvester, also of Boston where he remained until 1906.

While Ralph Sawyer was gaining experience in those years just after his 1897 graduation, Charles Watrous was completing his studies at MIT, graduating with distinction in 1899. After finishing his college work, Watrous joined Sawyer in Boston where he worked for two years before moving to New York. Finally, Charles Watrous returned to his hometown of Des Moines, Iowa where he had developed connections in the architecture arena through a two-year internship (1894-95) with well-known architect, George Hallett.⁶⁹ Once resettled in Des Moines, Watrous established an architectural firm, forming a partnership with his former schoolmate, Ralph Sawyer in 1905.⁷⁰ Sawyer undertook his work from his Boston office until the Des Moines practice was successfully established; in 1909 he relocated to Des Moines.

Sawyer was the firm's designer. He has been described as a very independent man as well as a sensitive and artistic designer. In addition, to his architectural design work, Sawyer was a painter, exhibiting at the Iowa Art Salon, and the Iowa Artists Club Annual Exhibition. He was also a member of the Iowa Artists Club.⁷¹

Ralph Sawyer served on the Des Moines city planning commission from 1910-1925. He was instrumental in the clean-up of the Des Moines riverfront through the creation of the Des Moines riverfront program.⁷² He was also a charter member of the Des Moines Kiwanis Club and served as the group's first president. Specific to the city's built environment, Sawyer is remembered for his visionary approach to architecture; in 1921, he was actively advocating for standardizing air conditioning in office buildings and factories.⁷³

Charles Watrous, on the other hand, was said to have been "extroverted with scientific leanings and a positive personality."⁷⁴ This made for a partnership of contrast with Watrous providing the business acumen, an interest in new technologies such as reinforced concrete, and a commitment to the landscape into which a building was constructed. Ralph Sawyer, with his considerable design skills, plied his artistic sensibilities to buildings of all types.⁷⁵

In addition to his numerous affiliations with local service and business groups, Charles Watrous was noted as an advocate of a 1925 city building ordinance that restricted the height of downtown building, seeing the limitation as detrimental to commercial development. In addition, Watrous served as a major in World War I,

⁶⁸ Eleazer B. Homer was also a graduate of MIT (class of 1885). In addition, he was a professor of architecture at MIT from 1887-1901; the period during which Sawyer and Watrous studied at the college. This, according to www.belmontcitizensforum.org. Last accessed 05/26/2017.

⁶⁹ Wesley I. Shank, "Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary," (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 172.

⁷⁰ Iowa State Historic Preservation Office Architect's Files, Press Club of Des Moines clipping, 1912:194 and Shank, 172.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, *Iowa Artists of the First Hundred Years*, undated excerpt.

⁷² "Ralph Sawyer, Architect, Dies," *Des Moines Register*, October 23, 1947: 6.

⁷³ Iowa State Historic Preservation Office Architect's Files, undated notes from Bill Wagner.

⁷⁴ Shank, 172.

⁷⁵ Architect's Files, uncited clipping.

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remaining in the active reserves after his service concluded. He later rose to the rank of colonel.⁷⁶

George Hippee boosted the firm's profile by hiring them to design his streetcar company's main offices, waiting room and turnaround at 6th and Mulberry and, soon thereafter, the Hippee Building. The 12-story brick and terracotta clad Hippee building (1913) is perhaps their greatest work. The impact made by the Hippee commission can be seen in the many residential designs completed by the firm in the years immediately after the Hippee Building was placed in service, a preponderance of which were constructed between 1915 and 1917 (Table 1).

Other major buildings designed by Sawyer & Watrous include the Za-Ga-Zig Shrine Temple (non-extant), the Main Power Station and a Sub-Station (non-extant) for the Des Moines Electric Company, Logan School (non-extant), Brinsmaid Store at 206-210 7th (non-extant), the 1916 Crane Building (NRHP), and the Enterprise building at 12th and Grand (non-extant). Drawings of many of these and others appeared in advertisements placed by the firm in the "Spokesman for the City of Des Moines," 1916-1919. Among them are many of the residential commissions undertaken for some of the city's most prominent citizens, including the Gardner Cowles house at 100 37th Street (extant), the E.T. Meredith house at 600 42nd Street (non-extant), and the residence of Mrs. George M. (Eliza) Hippee at 321 37th Street (extant). The houses stand as excellent representatives of various styles commonly associated with the first quarter of the 20th century.⁷⁷

Undoubtedly, the firm undertook the design of buildings throughout the state, though little is currently known about those commissions. In late summer 1925, the small town of Emmetsburg, Iowa announced plans to build a 50-room \$100,000 community hotel, the design of which was provided by Sawyer & Watrous. Construction of the hotel was one piece of the community's aim to become a "city beautiful." With money raised for its construction, the hotel was planned for the corner of 11th and Broadway, the site purchased in 1917 for that purpose.⁷⁸ The firm also designed a school in Sheldahl, Iowa (1915), a small bank in Lorimor (ca. 1916), and houses in Grinnell, Monroe, and Boone. Much remains to be known about their commissions, particularly those constructed outside of Des Moines.

The architectural firm of Sawyer & Watrous was in practice through 1927. After that time, Ralph Sawyer joined the Des Moines firm of Wetherell & Harrison.⁷⁹ A summary of known buildings constructed in Des Moines follows (Table 1).

Charles Albert Watrous died on December 25, 1940 at his home, 2928 Ingersoll Avenue (non-extant); he was 65 years of age.⁸⁰ Ralph Sawyer died in October of 1947 at his home at 4303 Pleasant Street (status unknown); he was 74 years of age.

⁷⁶ Ibid., and "Major Watrous Returns," *The Des Moines Register*, May 03, 1919: 5.

⁷⁷ Julie A. Liening, "Crane Building," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2000: 8.4.

⁷⁸ "Iowa Town Will Build Fifty Room Community Hotel . . .," *Arizona Republic*, August 06, 1925: 6.

⁷⁹ "Ralph Sawyer, Architect, Dies," *The Des Moines Register*, October 23, 1947: 6.

⁸⁰ "C.A. Watrous Is Dead at 65; Was Architect," *The Des Moines Register*, December 26, 1940: 1.

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Table 1. Sawyer & Watrous Des Moines Commissions⁸¹

Building	Address	Date	Status	Style
Des Moines Electric Company Main Power Station	TBD	1916	TBD	Neo-Classical
Des Moines Electric Company Sub-Station	TBD	1910	Non-Extant	Neo-Classical
Crane Building	15 th & Walnut Streets	1915	NRHP	Commercial
Blackhawk Tire Factory	E. 20 th & Walnut Streets	1919	Non-Extant	Industrial
Selway Steel Post Company	TBD	ca.1919	TBD	Industrial
Globe Machinery & Supply	205-211 Court Avenue	ca.1915	Non-Extant	Neo-Classical
Hippee States Company Building	704-710 Mulberry Street	1920	Non-Extant	Commercial
L. Oransky & Sons, Dept. Store	313-315 Walnut St.	TBD	Non-Extant	Commercial Block
Frankel Clothing Store (Façade)	513-515-517 Walnut	1923	Non-Extant	Commercial Block
Commercial Building (Enterprise)	12 th & Grand Avenue	1918	Non-Extant	Commercial
Brinsmaid Building	206-210 7 th Street	ca.1917	Non-Extant	Commercial
Meredith, E.T., Residence	600 42 nd Street	ca.1916	Non-Extant	Colonial Revival
Ellis, S.F., Residence	5220 Waterbury Road	ca.1916	Extant	Colonial Revival
Cowles, Gardner, Residence	100 37 th Street	ca.1916	Extant	English Cottage
Hippee, Mrs. George M., Residence	321 37 th Street	ca.1916	Extant	English Cottage
Henry, B.S., Residence	4995 Country Club Blvd.	1917	Extant	Tudor Revival
Nollen, Gerard S., Residence	402 29 th Street	1916	Extant	Colonial Revival
Cathcart, C.M., Residence	4308 Woodland	ca.1916	Extant	Arts & Crafts
Weitz, Charles H., Residence	Waterbury Road	ca.1916	TBD	TBD
Parker, Senator Addison Parker, Residence	141 37 th Street	ca.1916	Extant	Tudor Revival
Harris, Frank M., Residence	803 Hickman Road (aka Prospect Rd.)	ca.1917	Extant	Tudor Revival/ Craftsman
Dissmore, Geo. A., Residence	540 42 nd Street	ca.1917	Extant	Colonial Revival
Rosenfield, Meyer, Residence	207 37 th Street	ca.1916	Extant	Eclectic
Country Club Knolls Spec. House	736 52 nd Street	1926	Extant	English Cottage
Apartment Building	35 th & University	1918	Extant	Neo-Classical
Drake Observatory	Observatory Road	1923	Extant	Neo-Classical
L. Harbach Sons Funeral Home	6 th Avenue & Center Street	ca.1915	Non-Extant	Moorish
Za-Ga-Zig Shrine Temple	9 th & Pleasant	1925	Non-Extant	Moorish
Logan School	Garfield & Dixon	ca.1915	Non-Extant	Neo-Classical
Hotel Cargill	7 th Street & Grand Avenue	TBD	Non-Extant	TBD

⁸¹ This list is compiled from various sources including the State Historic Preservation Office's architect's file for the firm. Lists of the firm's commissions were checked against historic city directories, the Polk County assessor's records, and GoogleMaps to determine addresses and whether the resource remains extant. The list is by no means comprehensive.

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The Iowa Loan & Trust Co. and the “City of Homes”

Des Moines’ financial institutions brought significant capital and the resulting prosperity to a fledgling community, at the same time establishing the capital city as Iowa’s financial center in the years after the Civil War. The banks provided important, basic services to local businessmen, commonly acting as local agents for Eastern capitalists with money to invest in the West. In this manner, the city’s economy was stimulated which created the foundation necessary for the establishment of local commercial business, manufacturing and railroad building ventures.⁸²

The Iowa Loan & Trust Co. served Des Moines from its incorporation in 1872 through its closure in 1926. In contrast to building and loan associations, which existed to provide services solely for their members, a loan and trust company was organized to make a profit. Several in Des Moines were relatively short-lived. Due to its size, longevity, and rather sensationalized end, the Iowa Loan & Trust Company was the city’s best known.⁸³

From its temporary location on Fourth Street, the company quickly became successful, due in large part to the prosperity of the times. Entering the scene at a time of great development in the state, Iowa Loan & Trust is inseparable from that early period of Iowa’s growth. In the early years, the company placed mortgages on farms and resold them. Their services expanded in subsequent years to include significant investment in suburban development. In Des Moines specifically, the company’s investment in real estate provided an additional and important boost to the physical development of Des Moines as a “City of Homes.”⁸⁴

The Iowa Loan & Trust Company was incorporated in 1872 with Des Moines pioneer businessman, Samuel Merrill as president. By 1911 the company capital, surplus and earnings amounted to \$1,178,481.14 with assets of \$3,258,820.01, making it the largest institution of its kind in the city.⁸⁵ In 1885, the company built their own building at 207-211 5th Street. George M. Hippee served as president of the Iowa Loan and Trust Company from 1912-1920.⁸⁶ Perhaps it was his influence on his son George B. Hippee that brought the company to the newly constructed Hippee Building; in 1914 Iowa Loan & Savings Co., as part owner, moved to the ground floor space, which was constructed and fitted especially for them. At the new location, the company expanded their operations to include general banking services.

In 1922 the company celebrated its 50-year anniversary (Figure 14). At that time, Iowa Loan and Trust offered a variety of customer services including a full array of commercial banking: extension of credit to commercial businesses; collateral based loans; interested bearing accounts; and certificates of deposit. In

⁸² Barbara Beving Long, “Des Moines Center of Iowa: Survey of Historic Sites, 1982: 36.

⁸³ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 41.

⁸⁵ *The Midwestern*, Vol. 5, 1911: 32.

⁸⁶ Long: 39.

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addition, the company offered a specialized Savings Plan, the funds of which were used for investment purposes. Female customers were offered special attention aimed at making them feel free to seek financial advice – the company acknowledging they took “pleasure in advising women on investments – a subject which contains hazardous possibilities.” To that end, the company had a “Women’s Room” that was equipped for the “comfort and convenience of [their] feminine patrons.”⁸⁷

The company also offered safe deposit boxes and foreign exchange services along with their departmental services: Trust Department, Mortgage Department, and Investment Department. Organized as a mortgage company for the purpose of handling farmland transactions in Iowa and adjoining states for sale to investors in Eastern state, Iowa Trust and Loan Co. expanded into other areas. Despite the expansion of services, the company remained significant investments in farmland and city mortgages.⁸⁹

Typical of investment-related businesses, specific laws, customs, and issues of profitability dictated the structure of financial institutions in Iowa. Banks could be chartered as State, National or private financial institutions. Only those with “savings” in their names could be savings banks, but they generally engaged in regular commercial loan activities as well. Loan and trust companies could also take deposits, but were established primarily to make loans. Mutual building and loan associations provided money for their members to purchase homes.⁹⁰

The Iowa Loan & Trust Co. had a dedicated real estate department focused on assisting Des Moines residents to purchase their own homes. To that end, the company pioneered subdividing and developing suburban property. In 1922 the company stated that to date, they had developed 3,000-acres of land adjacent to the city the company, upon which they had laid out “some fifty or sixty different additions comprising around 8,000 separate home sites.”⁹¹ To make purchase of a lot manageable, the company established “the easy payment plan” which consisted of small monthly payments “suited to their means.” The company noted that the 1920 census placed Des Moines first in the nation as a city of homes, with 51.5% of citizens being homeowners. The Iowa Loan & Trust Co. took specific pride in the role they played in that achievement.⁹² Advertisements for residential building sites in newly platted subdivisions appeared in local newspapers with great regularity between 1914 and 1922.

In 1914 Iowa Loan & Trust Co. developed Easton Place Lots. The subdivision was situated near the north edge of the city, with 140 lots lining 24th and 25th Streets between Jefferson and Guthrie Avenues. The lots were sold based on size, with prices ranging from \$85 to \$330. Easy terms of \$1 down and \$1 weekly with no interest and “no payments when sick” made purchase attainable for many, African Americans excepted.

⁸⁷ Full page advertisement, “A Half Century of Growth and Prosperity,” *The Des Moines Register*, February 12, 1922: 9.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Long, 37.

⁹¹ Full page advertisement, “A Half Century of Growth and Prosperity,” *The Des Moines Register*, February 12, 1922: 9.

⁹² Ibid.

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The advertisement stated specifically, “We cannot sell these lots to colored people.”⁹³ Also in 1914, the company developed Lovington, a tract of nearly 200 acres, located west of Beaver Avenue on the Perry Inter-Urban line. The tract was divided in to irregular acreage plats ranging from just shy of one-acre up to ten-acre parcels.⁹⁴ The 20 lot Indianola Acres (Indianola Road and Evergreen Avenue) and the 139 lot Douglas Acres (E. 29th Street and Douglas Avenue) were also developed by Iowa Loan & Trust Company in 1914.⁹⁵

Figure 14. Advertisement – Anniversary Celebration of Iowa Loan & Trust Co. – 1922



(SOURCE: Advertisement. *Des Moines Sunday Register*, February 19, 1922.)

Iowa Loan & Trust celebrated their 50-year anniversary in 1922.

⁹³ Advertisement, “Easton Place Lots,” *The Des Moines Register*, June 24, 1914: 11.

⁹⁴ “Iowa Loan and Trust Company Opens New Acreage Tract on Beaver Avenue,” *The Des Moines Register*, May 24, 1914: 32.

⁹⁵ Advertisements, “Indianola Acres” and “Douglas Acres,” *The Des Moines Sunday Register*, March 29, 1914: 21.

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In 1915 the company developed Ingersoll Park, which they described as the “Highest Class Residence Plat in the City.” Located between Ingersoll Avenue and West Grand Avenue and along Polk Boulevard, the subdivision had a total of 27 lots, 14 of which had sold by that April. Four residences costing between \$3,000-\$8,000 had been built. Terms for sale were 1-percent down, 1-percent per month, and 6-percent interest.⁹⁹ By contrast, the Iowa Trust & Savings Co. advertised for sale a 2-acre tract located on the Inter-Urban at Oralabor for “Colored People.” Terms for purchase of the \$700 tract was \$7 down and \$7 per month.¹⁰⁰

In 1916 Iowa Loan & Trust developed Daily’s Woods (Figure 15). Located near the city’s north border at Aurora Avenue, Daily’s Woods encompassed 27 one-acre lots from 6th Avenue to W. 11th Street. Also in 1916, Plat 3 of Douglas Acres, which was promoted for its proximity to the “new 5c extension of the Grand View car line.”¹⁰¹

One of the company’s biggest developments was that known as Four Mile, which was located on the city’s east side opposite Grand View – on the site of a former amusement park known as White City. Touted as Iowa’s largest subdivision, the 275-acre tract was platted with 1,118 lots, the wisdom of its development being supported by proximity to the Grand View streetcar line and the Colfax branch of the Inter-Urban. Iowa Trust & Loan Company sold the lots for an average of \$150 on their installment plan with \$1.00 down and a \$1.00 per week payment – interest free.¹⁰² By mid-June 1916 – just 30 days after the addition opened - the company was advertising that 470 of the 1,118 lots had sold.¹⁰³

Four Mile was only one of the many new subdivisions developed in Des Moines in 1916. News reports described the year as “exceptional in the real estate world.” While a number of factors contributed to the prosperity, the large number of additions and subdivisions developed within and adjacent to the city was the primary factor. According to the county recorder, 26 additions totaling some 500-acres for a total of 1,910 lots of various sizes were opened. In addition, lots were selling at a rate not previously experienced with houses rising and streets being paved. Of the 26 additions with approximately 1,910 lots opened in 1916, the Iowa Trust & Loan Co. was responsible for four: Four Mile, Douglas Acres, Paul Place, and Deerfoot Acres (53rd and Urbandale) which, together, had 1,232 lots.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Advertisement, “Ingersoll Park,” *The Des Moines Sunday Register*, April 18, 1915: 37.

¹⁰⁰ Classified ad, “For Colored People,” *The Des Moines Register*, October 03, 1915: 57.

¹⁰¹ Advertisements, “Daily’s Woods” and “Plat 3 Douglas Acres,” *The Des Moines Register*, May 11, 1916: 13.

¹⁰² “Four Mile, Opened Today, Is Largest Iowa Subdivision,” *The Des Moines Register*, May 21, 1916: 42.

¹⁰³ Advertisement, “Four Mile,” *The Des Moines Register*, June 17, 1916: 11.

¹⁰⁴ “Platted Land To Des Moines Much During 1916,” *The Des Moines Sunday Register*, December 24, 1916: 22.

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Figure 15. Advertisements – 1916

Daily's Woods
ONE ACRE LOTS
Terms:—1 Per Cent Down—
1 Per Cent Per Month

You've been looking for wooded acreage. Here it is. Perfect lying acres all covered with mammoth native forest trees. Everybody is enthusiastic about it. It is one of Nature's beauty spots.

Daily's Woods extends from 6th Avenue to West 11th Street, on the north border of the city. Aurora Avenue, the north city limits, is the south line of this plot. The southeast corner of it is two blocks north of Oak Park school. It is two blocks from the end of 6th Avenue paving.

To insure a good-looking tract, as it becomes occupied we have provided in our contracts that any temporary or incomplete dwelling be erected on the rear one-third of the tract.

We will call for you any daylight hour.

24 SOLD; 3 LEFT

Iowa Loan & Trust Co.
210 SIXTH AVENUE PHONE WALNUT 147

Douglas Acres
Plat 3

A couple of blocks to the new 5c extension of the Grand View car line, which is to run to Douglas Ave.

42 1/2 acres. Part fine orchard and part fine open garden land.

See detail location.

TERMS: 1 per cent down, 1 per cent per month. Interest 3 per cent.

Phone Walnut 147 for a man to take you out in the auto.

Iowa Loan and Trust Co.
210 Sixth Ave.

(SOURCE: *The Des Moines Register*, May 11, 1916: 13.

The end of World War I and the associated end of high demand for farm products put a stop to financial growth; Iowa's economy was hit hard with the banking industry, especially those with strong ties to agriculture finding themselves in dire straits. Between March 20 1923 and July 15, 1928, 298 State banks closed in Iowa. A few reopened or reorganized, but 248 went into receivership. Banks in the city were not spared entirely, but because most were well capitalized and relatively free of agricultural interests, most of the city's prominent institutions managed to weather the worst of it.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Barbara Beving Long, "Des Moines Center of Iowa: Survey of Historic Sites, 1982: 41.

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The Iowa Loan & Trust Company, however, did not - on December 20, 1926, the bank failed to open. The decision to remain closed was made by the bank's directors after negotiations for take-over by either another bank (name undisclosed) or by the Des Moines Clearing House Association failed. Discussions of a take-over were halted after it was disclosed that Iowa Loan and Trust guaranteed payment of more than \$3-million of mortgages sold in the east. News accounts reported that, "Although members of the clearinghouse and leading businessmen of the city were willing to make large contributions to a pool to take over the assets and pay off depositors in the fall, the contingent liability feature of the mortgage guarantee proved an inseparable obstacle. The Iowa Loan and Trust had \$500,000 in capital, \$500,000 in surplus and about \$7-million of deposits. Its losses were largely due to frozen or poor real estate loans."¹⁰⁷ After 36 hours of meetings between representatives of the bank, the Des Moines Clearing House Association members, and representatives of the State Banking Department, efforts to save the bank failed and bank passed a resolution to place the state banking department in charge of Iowa Loan and Trust Company. A meeting of the clearinghouse committee was held subsequent to the closure with the goal of determining whether a plan for reorganization or liquidation by the clearinghouse was feasible. One member of the clearinghouse estimated that depositors would receive at least 60-cents on the dollar. Holders of safety deposit boxes who did not owe money to the bank were allowed to remove valuables from the vault early the following week.¹⁰⁸

Shortly after the bank's closure, it was announced that depositors would be allowed to borrow 50-percent of the value of their savings accounts up to \$400 from any clearinghouse bank in the city. The loans would be made as soon as the books of the Iowa Loan and Trust were reviewed to verify the savings accounts. This procedure was suggested as a means of assisting the small depositor who would otherwise be in financial straits. The loans would come due when the bank liquidation was complete.¹⁰⁹

Liquidation of assets of the Iowa Loan and Trust produced sufficient funds to pay a 40-percent dividend to depositors directly from the liquidation funds. Payments of 100-percent were made to small depositors (those with accounts of \$50 or less) first. By court order in late February, personal property and "fixtures of the closed bank" were sold.¹¹⁰ The first payments to larger depositors were made in July of 1927.¹¹¹ Additional distribution of dividends in the amount of \$450,000 were scheduled for January of 1928 with dividends from the United State bank to come in March. Ultimately, dividend payments to former depositors was projected to total 90-95-percent, shared between the Iowa Loan and Trust Company and the United State bank.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ "Iowa Loan and Trust Company Fails to Open; Frozen Assets Blamed," *Des Moines Tribune*, December 20, 1926: 1 and "Denies Iowa Loan & Trust Conspiracy," *The Des Moines Register*, December 25, 1926: 3.

¹⁰⁸ "Iowa Loan and Trust Company Fails to Open; Frozen Assets Blamed," *Des Moines Tribune*, December 20, 1926: 1 and "Denies Iowa Loan & Trust Conspiracy," *The Des Moines Register*, December 25, 1926: 3.

¹⁰⁹ "Closed Bank Depositors May Borrow," *Des Moines Tribune*, December 23, 1926: 1.

¹¹⁰ "Court Orders Loan & Trust to Pay 40 Pct.," *The Des Moines Register*, February 24, 1927: 7.

¹¹¹ "Closed Bank Now Paying First Claims," *Des Moines Tribune*, July 30, 1927: 1.

¹¹² "Half Million in Bank Dividends To Be Paid Soon," *Des Moines Tribune*, November 22, 1927: 1.

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Closing of the bank was not without controversy. Before the closing of 1926, charges of self-interest were brought by one depositor questioning the constitutionality of the statute that made the superintendent of the State Banking Department the receiver of a failed state bank. The charges alleged a conspiracy that resulted in the unnecessary closure of Iowa Loan and Trust.¹¹³ The claimant worked to organize depositors in an effort to see a 100-percent return on their deposits. Through his efforts, a damage suit for “several hundred thousand dollars” was brought against the member banks of the Des Moines Clearing House Association. The suit was supported by more than 200 depositors who argued against various decisions made by the clearing house related to the liquidation of assets and the decision to make 100-percent payments to small depositors without offering the same to larger depositors.¹¹⁴ Having considered the evidence of the claimant, the Iowa Attorney General moved to dismiss the suit, which remained under active consideration by the court through 1927.¹¹⁵

While the impact of the Iowa Loan & Trust Company on Des Moines residential expansion is apparent by the examination of the city’s growing boundaries and the platting of various developments, the long-term impact of the bank’s failure on the Des Moines real estate market is unclear. Although the bank was still selling lots in the existing Four Mile and Elmwood Park developments in the spring of 1926, its advertising was not focused on large-scale residential development. Rather, the bank’s limited marketing was directed at individual properties (existing homes), indicative of both the general financial climate and that of the bank itself. In the months immediately following the closure of Iowa Loan & Trust, other local banks and mortgage companies were actively marketing their real estate services including the sale of large-scale residential developments and to expansion of the city continued.¹¹⁶

The Hippee Legacy

The Hippee family has multi-generational ties to the commercial history of Des Moines. From the early work of family patriarch George M. Hippee in organizing multiple financial interests, to construction of the Hippee Building by son George B. Hippee, to the establishment of the motor supply company, Hippee-States Co., by grandson George P. Hippee, the name remains familiar and the contributions significant.

George M. Hippee came to Des Moines in 1855 and rose to prominence in banking, land speculation, and transportation. The Des Moines Valley National Bank was organized in 1872 and incorporated as a national bank in 1883. Hippee, who was also involved with the Des Moines Savings Bank, and J.J. Towne were the president and cashier, respectively. He served as president of the Iowa Loan and Trust Company from 1912-

¹¹³ “Denies Iowa Loan & Trust Conspiracy,” *The Des Moines Register*, December 25, 1926: 3.

¹¹⁴ “Closed Bank Now Paying First Claims,” *Des Moines Tribune*, July 30, 1927: 1

¹¹⁵ “Plan Damage Suit Against Clearing House,” *The Des Moines Register*, February 18, 1927: 2.

¹¹⁶ “Week’s Real Estate Sales Total \$98,625,” *The Des Moines Register*, April 18, 1926: 49 and “Real Estate Sold Last Week Total \$152,467,” *The Des Moines Register*: 25.

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1920 and was also among the organizers of the Des Moines Street Railway.¹¹⁷ His widow, Eliza Hippee, lived in a home designed by Sawyer & Watrous, which remains extant (Figure 16).

Son of George M. Hippee, George B. Hippee, was responsible for construction of the Hippee Building. George B. and his father-in-law Jefferson Polk owned the Des Moines City Railway Company, which in 1911 operated 103 cars on 78.81 miles of tracks.¹¹⁸ Although the extent of his involvement in construction of the Hippee Building is unknown, an early sketch of the building's exterior identifies it as the Hippee-Polk Building.¹¹⁹ Further, Polk was a long-time occupant of the building's second floor office space.

George B. Hippee died suddenly on January 02, 1930. His wife Minnie P. Polk Hippee and four adult children (George P., Herndon P., Mrs. Phineas Henry, and Mrs. Luther L. Hill) survived him.¹²⁰ Minnie Polk Hippee (daughter of Jefferson H. Polk and sister of Henry H. Polk) passed within months of her husband.¹²¹

Like his father and grandfather, George P. Hippee, son of George B. Hippee, was also a successful Des Moines businessman. In addition to acting as the property manager of the Hippee Building, George P. Hippee established the Hippee Motor Supply Co. in a single storefront at 710 Mulberry Street in April of 1915. After a few short months, J.V. Henley of Davenport joined Hippee and the business expanded into an adjoining space, more than doubling its size.¹²² This partnership did not last long, however. In December of 1916, the company consolidated with the States Auto Supply Co., becoming known as Hippee-States Company. Father, George B. Hippee was at the time acting as the company treasurer and chairman of the board of directors.¹²³ The business remained at its location on Mulberry Street (by then occupying 708-709-710) with plans to build "one of the finest and most modern accessory building in America." Those plans were underway in March 1920, when the design for the new Hippee-States Company building appeared in the news. The building, designed by Sawyer & Watrous, was a 5-story brick, "fireproof" building to be constructed on the site of the company's existing building. The building is non-extant.¹²⁴

Mrs. George P. Hippee is notable for her work with the women's suffrage movement in Des Moines, with the Hippee building providing first meeting space and then office space (room 303) for the group.¹²⁵

¹¹⁷ Barbara Beving Long, "Des Moines Center of Iowa: Survey of Historic Sites, 1982: 39.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ The name "Hippee-Polk Building" does not appear in any other known source. Until the building's sale to Southern Surety in 1924, the building was universally known as simply, the Hippee Building.

¹²⁰ "Hippee Will Creates Trust," *The Des Moines Register*, January 07, 1930: 1.

¹²¹ "Mrs. Hippee, 76, Dies at Home," *The Des Moines Register*, April 12, 1941: 1.

¹²² "Story of a Big Des Moines Success," *The Des Moines Register*, February 13, 1916: 3.1.

¹²³ "Two Local Motor Firms Are Merged," *The Des Moines Register*, December 28, 1916: 3.

¹²⁴ "New Building for Hippee-States Company," *Des Moines Sunday Register*, March 07, 1920: Commercial, 1.

¹²⁵ "All Day Reception in New Suff Home," *The Des Moines Register*, July 22, 1916: 3 and "Suffrage Noonday Rally in the Hippee Building," *The Des Moines Register*, January 18, 1917:5.

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Figure 16. Mrs. George M. (Eliza) Hippee House – 321 37th Street



(SOURCE: "Home of Mrs. G.M. Hippee ...," *The Register and Leader*, February 15, 1914.)

This home was designed by architects Sawyer & Watrous for Eliza Hippee after the death of her husband, George M. Hippee.

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The Des Moines Daily News. "Most of Hippee Bldg. is Leased." March 17, 1913.

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The Des Moines Register and Leader. "The Hippee Building is Absolutely Fireproof." July 20, 1913.

_____. "New Hippee Building is Iowa's Tallest Skyscraper." July 20, 1913.

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_____. "Hippee Building." February 26, 1914.

_____. "Trust Company in its New Quarters." March 15, 1914.

The Des Moines Sunday Register. Advertisement, "Indianola Acres." March 29, 1914.

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The Des Moines Register. "Iowa Loan and Trust Company Opens New Acreage Tract on Beaver Avenue." May 24, 1914.

_____. Advertisement, "Easton Place Lots." June 24, 1914.

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_____. Advertisement. Iowa Loan & Trust Co. December 15, 1915.

_____. "Story of a Big Des Moines Success." February 13, 1916.

_____. Advertisement, "Daily's Woods." May 11, 1916.

_____. Advertisement, "Plat 3 Douglas Acres." May 11, 1916.

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_____. "Four Mile, Opened Today, Is Largest Iowa Subdivision." May 21, 1916.

_____. Advertisement, "Four Mile." June 17, 1916.

_____. "All Day Reception in New Suff. Home." July 22, 1916.

The Des Moines Sunday Register. "Platted Land To Des Moines Much During 1916." December 24, 1916.

The Des Moines Register. "Two Local Motor Firms Are Merged." December 28, 1916.

_____. "Suffrage Noonday Rally in the Hippee Building." January 18, 1917.

The Des Moines Sunday Register. "New Building for Hippee-States Company." March 07, 1920.

The Des Moines Register. "A Half-Century of Growth and Prosperity." February 12, 1922.

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_____. Advertisement. Southern Surety. January 25, 1925.

Arizona Republic. "Iowa Town Will Build Fifty Room Community Hotel ..." August 06, 1925.

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_____. "Real Estate Sold Last Week Total \$152,467. June 13, 1926.

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_____. "Closed Bank Depositors May Borrow." December 23, 1926.

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_____. "Court Orders Loan & Trust to Pay 40 Pct." February 24, 1927.

_____. "Closed Bank Now Paying First Claims." July 30, 1927.

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The Des Moines Register. "Hippee Will Creates Trust." January 07, 1930.
_____. "C.A. Watrous Is Dead at 65; Was Architect." December 26, 1940.
_____. "Mrs. Hippee, 76, Dies at Home." April 12, 1941.
_____. Advertisement. Des Moines Building-Savings and Loan Association. May 04, 1952.
_____. "Midland Financial sell headquarters." June 26, 1986.
_____. "Boesen purchases Midland Building, has café in mind." August 5, 2005.
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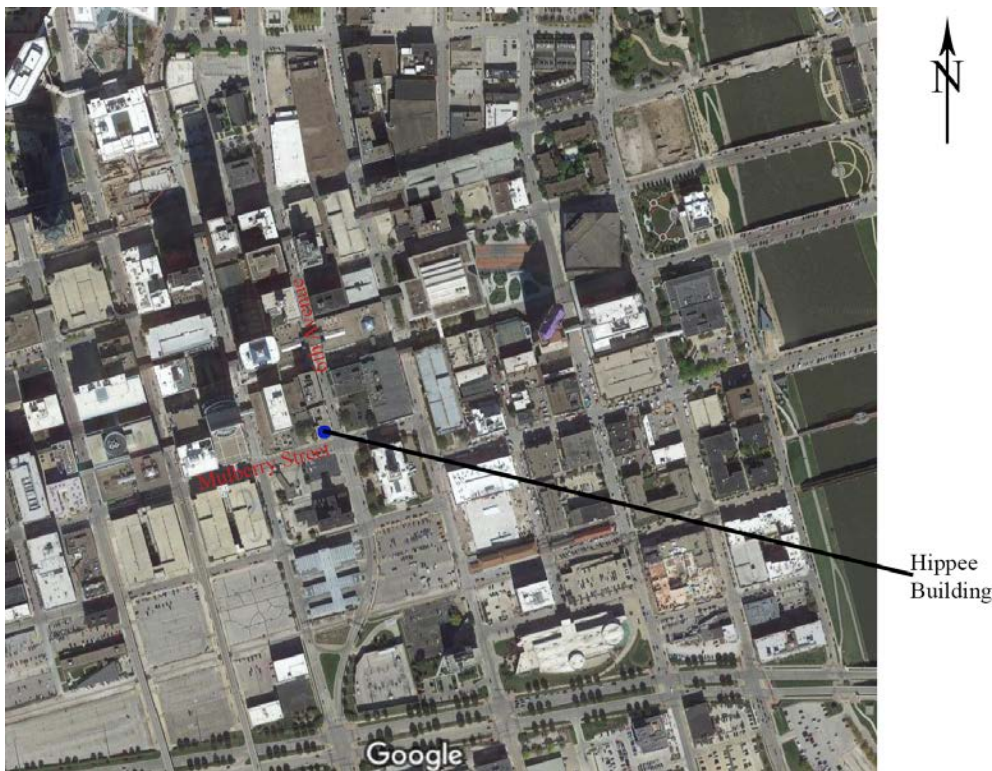
County and State Polk County, Iowa

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

Latitude/Longitude: 41.585496, -93.624591

Site Map - 2017



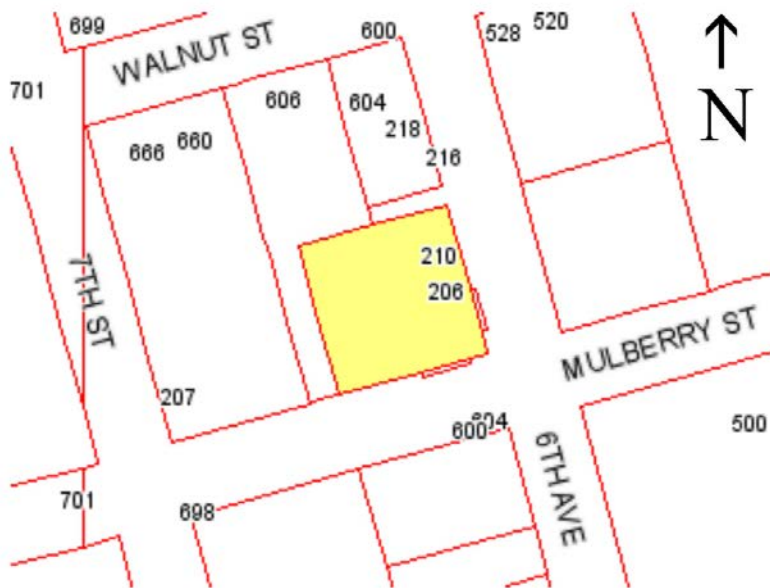
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Assessor's Parcel Map - 2016



Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the Hippee Building and the legal parcel to which the building is now associated (020/01156-003-00) as seen in the above parcel map.

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- Figure 5. Hippee Building - 1913
- Figure 6. First Floor Plan - 1912
- Figure 7. Iowa Loan & Trust Company - Lobby – 1916
- Figure 8. Architect’s Rendering – First Floor Lobby – 1913
- Figure 9. Typical Upper Floor Plan – 1912
- Figure 10. Advertisement – Hippee Building Tenant Space – 1923
- Figure 11. Advertisement – Southern Surety – 1925
- Figure 12. Advertisement – 36th Anniversary Des Moines Building-Loan & Savings Assn. – 1952
- Figure 13. View of Sixth Avenue – ca.1911
- Figure 14. Advertisement - Anniversary Celebration of Iowa Loan & Trust Co. – 1922
- Figure 15. Advertisement – Daily’s Woods and Douglas Acres – 1916
- Figure 16. George M. Hippee House – 321 37th Street - 1914

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- Image 2. Exterior: South and east elevations, looking northwest
- Image 3. Exterior: Storefront, east elevation
- Image 4. Exterior Detail: Building cornice
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- Image 6. Interior: Staircase
- Image 7. Interior: Storefront, looking south
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LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Hippee Building
206 Sixth Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa
Polk County, Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Minneapolis, Minnesota
March 29, 2017
CD-ROM on file with property owner and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office

Photo Key – Site Views



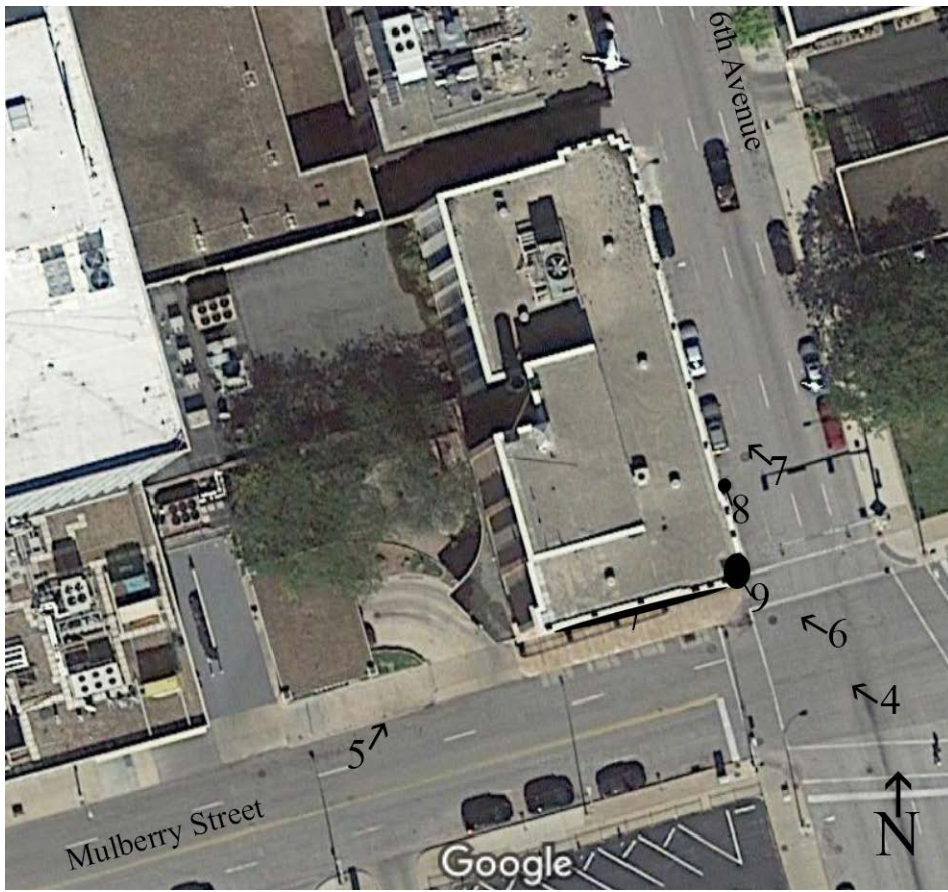
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Photo Key – Exterior Views



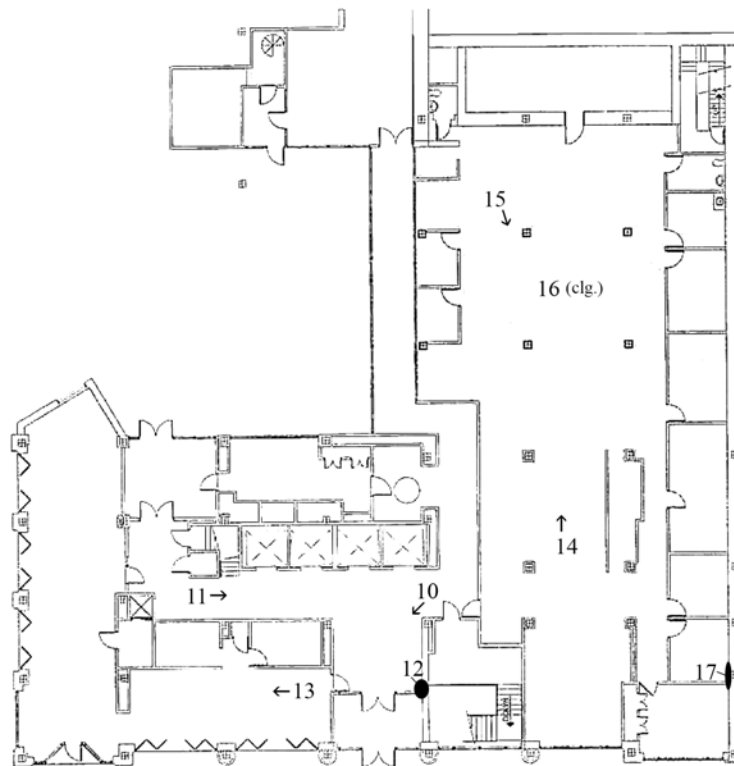
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Photo Key – Interior Views: First Floor



First Floor Plan



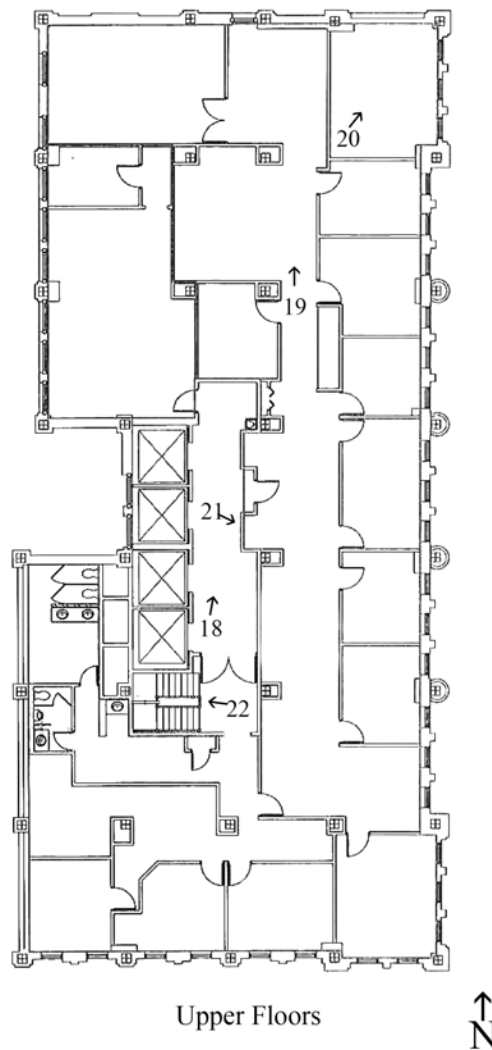
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Photo Key – Interior Views: Upper Floors



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Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 0001. Site: Looking northwest along Sixth Avenue
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0001.tif
- 0002. Site: Looking south along Sixth Avenue
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0002.tif
- 0003. Site: Looking northeast across 7th and Mulberry Streets
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0003.tif
- 0004. Exterior: View of the façade (east) and south elevation, looking northwest
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0004.tif
- 0005. Exterior: View of the rear (west) elevation, looking northeast
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0005.tif
- 0006. Exterior: Storefront level, looking northwest
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0006.tif
- 0007. Exterior Detail: Storefront and primary entrance, east elevation
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0007.tif
- 0008. Exterior Detail: Second story terracotta details
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0008.tif
- 0009. Exterior Detail: Building cornice, terracotta details
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0009.tif
- 0010. Interior: First floor lobby, looking southeast toward entrance vestibule
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0010.tif
- 0011. Interior: First floor lobby, looking north toward historic banking space
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0011.tif
- 0012. Interior Detail: First floor lobby, denticulated cornice molding
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0012.tif
- 0013. Interior: First floor storefront, looking south
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0013.tif

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- 0014. Interior: First floor historic banking space, looking west from near storefront side (east)
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0014.tif
- 0015. Interior: First floor historic banking space, looking east from rear of the space
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0015.tif
- 0016. Interior Detail – 1st Floor: Coffered ceiling of historic banking space
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0016.tif
- 0017. Interior Detail – 1st Floor: Pilaster capital detailing in historic banking space
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0017.tif
- 0018. Interior – 10th Floor: Representative upper story corridor
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0018.tif
- 0019. Interior – 3rd Floor: Representative upper story office space
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0019.tif
- 0020. Interior – 10th Floor: Representative upper story office space
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0020.tif
- 0021. Interior Detail – 12th Floor: Mail chute
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0021.tif
- 0022. Interior Detail – 2nd to 3rd Floor: Interior iron and marble staircase
IA_PolkCounty_HippeeBuilding_0022

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P

← 8th & Mulberry

↑ 5th & Walnut

↑ 7th & Grand

usbank

PARK



Walgreens

6th St

BLANK STREET



WELLS
FARGO

WELLS
FARGO

P
A
R
K

NEUMANN
SAFETY SIGNAGE







WELLS & LOAN BUILDING

MIDLAND BUILDING 206

WELLS & LOAN BUILDING
206-208
206-208
206-208
206-208

Blue parking sign with wheelchair icon

Red and white sign with illegible text





























10723 10

U.S.
MAIL
CHIEF OF POLICE



2
FLOOR

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination
Property Name: Hippee Building
Multiple Name: _____
State & County: IOWA, Polk

Date Received: 3/6/2018 Date of Pending List: 4/2/2018 Date of 16th Day: 4/17/2018 Date of 45th Day: 4/20/2018 Date of Weekly List: _____

Reference number: SG100002325
Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 4/17/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria Accept, National Register Criteria A and C.

Reviewer Patrick Andrus *Patrick Andrus* Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2218 Date 4/17/2018

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

CHRIS KRAMER, ACTING DIRECTOR

IOWA ARTS
COUNCIL

PRODUCE
IOWA

STATE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF IOWA

STATE HISTORICAL
MUSEUM OF IOWA

STATE HISTORICAL
LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

STATE HISTORIC SITES

STATE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
OFFICE OF IOWA

IOWA HISTORICAL
FOUNDATION

February 28, 2018

J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240



Dear Mr. Loether:

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

Hippee Building

The 1913 Hippee Building, so named for Des Moines businessman George B. Hippee, is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The building is locally significant in association with the history of commerce, specifically as it relates to the contributions made to the city's residential development by the building's part owner and 11-year occupant, the Iowa Loan & Trust Co. The Hippee Building is also eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The resource is locally significant as an example of Beaux-Arts Classical architecture in a "fireproof" commercial building of the skyscraper form and as a representative of the work of the Des Moines architectural firm of Sawyer & Watrous. The Period of Significance for the Hippee Building is 1913-1926, the period embracing the year the building was placed in service and the final year it housed its most significant occupant, the Iowa Loan & Trust Company. The period represents that which best illustrates its significance under both Criterion A and Criterion C. The Significant Dates are 1913, the year the building was placed in service, and 1914, the year in which the banking space for the Iowa Loan & Trust Company was completed and the company assumed occupancy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Laura Sadowsky
State Historian and National Register Coordinator
State Historical Society of Iowa

Enclosures.