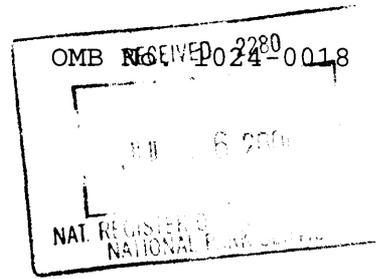


JUL -9 2001



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Crane Building

other names/site number C.E. Erickson Co.

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 1440 Walnut not for publication   
city or town Des Moines vicinity             
state Iowa code IA county Polk code 153 n zip code 50309

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Rowell J. Saito July 11, 2001  
Signature of certifying official Date

**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA**

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau



=====  
6. Function or Use  
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Industry/Processing/Extraction Sub: Manufacturing Facility

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Work In Progress Sub: \_\_\_\_\_

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

=====  
7. Description  
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century & early 20<sup>th</sup> century American movements:

Commercial

Chicago

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

roof synthetics/rubber

walls brick

other \_\_\_\_\_

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

=====  
8. Statement of Significance  
=====

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1916  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates 1916  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder Sawyer and Watrous

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

=====  
9. Major Bibliographical References  
=====

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

- Previous documentation on file (NPS)
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
  - previously listed in the National Register
  - previously determined eligible by the National Register
  - designated a National Historic Landmark
  - recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
  - recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

- Primary Location of Additional Data
- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

=====  
10. Geographical Data  
=====

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	447000	4603580	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	_____ See continuation sheet.					

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

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

=====  
11. Form Prepared By  
=====  
name/title Julie A. Liening

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date November 10, 2000  
street & number 6812 SW 14<sup>th</sup> Street telephone 515/285-3249  
city or town Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50315

=====  
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 Kirk V. Blunck

street & number 5223 Waterbury Road telephone 515/277-3316  
city or town Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50312

=====  
=

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

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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Crane Building  
name of property  
Polk County, Iowa  
county and State

Narrative Description:

The Crane Building is a 6-story masonry building with flat roof and prominent entrance framed with limestone piers, ornamental limestone capitals and a strongly proportioned limestone cornice. The building fronts Walnut Street at the corner of Fifteenth and Walnut in downtown Des Moines. 15<sup>th</sup> Street, one of downtown Des Moines' last surviving brick roadways, slopes steeply from north to south, from the lowest level of the Crane Building at grade entry along its entire south façade. The masonry exterior walls and cast-in-place concrete structure are both in excellent condition, and the building has had very little alteration to its basic structural or architectural elements since its construction in 1916.

The Crane Building is a noteworthy example of a commercial/manufacturing structure of grand proportions. While it is a utilitarian building which exhibits the refined design style of the Sawyer and Watrous architectural firm. The original owner, who purchased the land in April of 1911, was the Crane Co., a nationally recognized supplier and manufacturer of heating and plumbing supplies.

The façade, which remains entirely intact, exhibits Sawyer and Watrous' tendency to compose a complex pattern of recessed planes, piers and cornices. Their design has two points of visual emphasis, the top of the corner piers and the piers between the second and third rows and the sixth and seventh row of windows. This is almost an academic building in its use of architectural devices. The rusticated base and classical entrance composed of carved limestone elements reflect the history of architecture, while the upper stories express more modern concerns with form, function and an economic use of materials.

Almost all of the original materials and distinctive design elements have survived intact. The original limestone windowsills are in place and in excellent condition. A limestone course at the primary north and west elevations defines the level of the raised first floor and marks a six-inch setback of the masonry from the base level. Limestone parapet caps and ornamental limestone quoins at the top of the emphasized masonry piers are also intact and in good condition.

A second, more substantial belt course of projecting limestone defines and marks the transition to the second level floor line and establishes the base beneath the upper levels. This material too is in remarkably good physical condition.

Fundamental to the functional success of this early 20<sup>th</sup> Century industrial building, are the characteristics of the site. Sloping steeply from north to south, the lower south elevation is marked by seven large overhead doors and dock openings, which give direct vehicular access to the lowest level. This level is nearly 1700 square feet in area and has a building footprint nearly twice the dimension of the upper stories. It is further distinguished by full twenty-foot high ceilings, clear evidence of the original intended use for economic storage of manufactured items.

United States Department of the Interior  
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

Crane Building  
name of property  
Polk County, Iowa  
county and State

=====  
The south elevation continues the pattern of large window openings with limestone sills on the upper five floors, although the brick changes in both color and quality of surface finish, since this was a side of the building oriented to the service alley. The service and dock door openings are irregularly sized in width, though each remains marked by a projecting metal plate dock number and the wood divided light dock doors remain in place.

The east façade departs from the visual order of the other three sides, with significantly fewer windows that vary in number, placement, and size from floor to floor.

Carved out of limestone in basic, bold lettering, the moniker of the original tenant, Crane Co., is prominent above the north entry doors, at the upper section between masonry piers at the north elevation and at the upper section between masonry piers on the west.

The original wood framed, double hung windows are also intact, affording an accurate picture of the architectural design and details. The windows of the first and second levels, with the highest floor dimensions, are marked by glass transoms by vertical muntins into thirds. The north entry is composed of inner and outer pairs of very heavy wood doors and sidelight. It is remarkable that these have survived and not suffered replacement with new, aluminum storefront materials.

Inside, there is ample evidence that the first and second floors (those with the highest ceilings) were fitted for office and/or product display functions. An open stair with ornamental iron balusters and handrail remain in place, connecting the first and second floors from a generously proportioned entry lobby. The second floor indeed may have been the most important. At the center bay running from north to south, there is a field of white hexagonal floor tiles set in plane with adjacent, scored concrete floors.

Also on this floor, two large public restrooms are positioned along the west windows. The Tennessee Grey marble floors, wainscots, and toilet partitions are all still in place with little or no apparent modification to either fixtures or floor plan.

The interior concrete structural columns are marked by "mushroom" capitals, a pure manifestation of their structural load bearing characteristics. All floors are also flat, poured concrete slabs with integral steel reinforcement.

Poured into the floor slabs at the time of construction, a two-way grid of electrical conduit is buried with each floor/ceiling slab. This original system of electrical power distribution has recently been rediscovered and rewired. The result is that miles of exposed electrical conduits have been removed from their attachment to the ceiling surfaces.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 3

Crane Building  
name of property  
Polk County, Iowa  
county and State

=====  
Narrative Statement of Significance:

The Crane Building, locally important under Criterion C, is an industrial building of significance among the works of the Des Moines architectural firm of Sawyer and Watrous.

This building is an example of a commercial/manufacturing structure of grand proportions. While it is a utilitarian building, it still exhibits a thoughtful design based on Chicago influences and the refined design style of Sawyer and Watrous architects. The Crane Company was a plumbing and heating supplier and manufacturer.

Ralph Edmund Sawyer and Charles Watrous, architects and friends, formed a partnership in Des Moines from 1907 - 1927. They were classmates and members of the same fraternity at Massachusetts Institute of Technology where they were both enrolled in the architecture program.

Charles Watrous received his preliminary education in the public schools and graduated from the West Des Moines High School in 1894. He was connected with the office of George Hallett, a noted architect of Des Moines, during 1894 and 1895. Having decided on a professional career, he studied architecture at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston where he met Ralph Edmund Sawyer. Watrous graduated from MIT in 1899. After leaving college he was employed by Sawyer for approximately one year and several years thereafter in various other Boston architectural offices. In the spring of 1907 Watrous and Sawyer opened their Des Moines office. Watrous was in charge of the Des Moines office, Sawyer in charge of the Boston office. In the spring of 1911 the business in Des Moines had increased so much that Sawyer closed the Boston office and moved permanently to Des Moines.

Sawyer, a member of a prominent Boston family, returned to Boston after graduating from MIT in 1897 where he first joined up with E.B. Homer of Boston and designed the Tremont Building there. In 1901 he joined the firm of E.Q. Sylvester, also of Boston, where he remained until 1907 when he formed a partnership with Watrous.

Sawyer was the firm's designer, and he was a very independent man and a sensitive and artistic designer. He always retained his "Boston rectitude". Watrous, on the other hand, was said to be "extroverted with scientific leanings and a positive personality". This made them not unlike the partnership of Proudfoot and Bird in their contrasts of personalities, Proudfoot an astute businessman and Bird, a somewhat recluse designer.

In their early years they designed a number of residences on 37<sup>th</sup> street, among them the Gardner Cowles Sr. house, and houses for Meier Rosenfields and the Pfeiffers. They occupied rooms in a building owned by the Watrous family after Sawyer moved to Des Moines in 1911.

United States Department of the Interior  
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 4

Crane Building  
name of property  
Polk County, Iowa  
county and State

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George Hippee boosted their careers by having them design the main streetcar offices, waiting room and turnaround at 6<sup>th</sup> and Mulberry and, soon thereafter, the Hippee Building, now called the Midland Building. The twelve story, brick and terra-cotta clad Hippee building (1913) is perhaps their greatest work. Other major structures include the former Shrine Temple, The Main Power Station for the Des Moines Electric Company, the Logan School, the Brinsmaid Store on 7<sup>th</sup>, and the Enterprise building at 12<sup>th</sup> and Grand. Drawings of many of these structures appear in advertisements placed by the firm in the Spokesman for the City of Des Moines, 1916-1919.

The Crane Company was founded in 1855. The company began a modest plumbing and heating wholesale business that first opened its doors in Winnipeg, Canada in 1906. In the early 1900's Crane introduced matching fixture ensembles and successfully glamorized affordable bathroom fixtures for the average North American consumer.

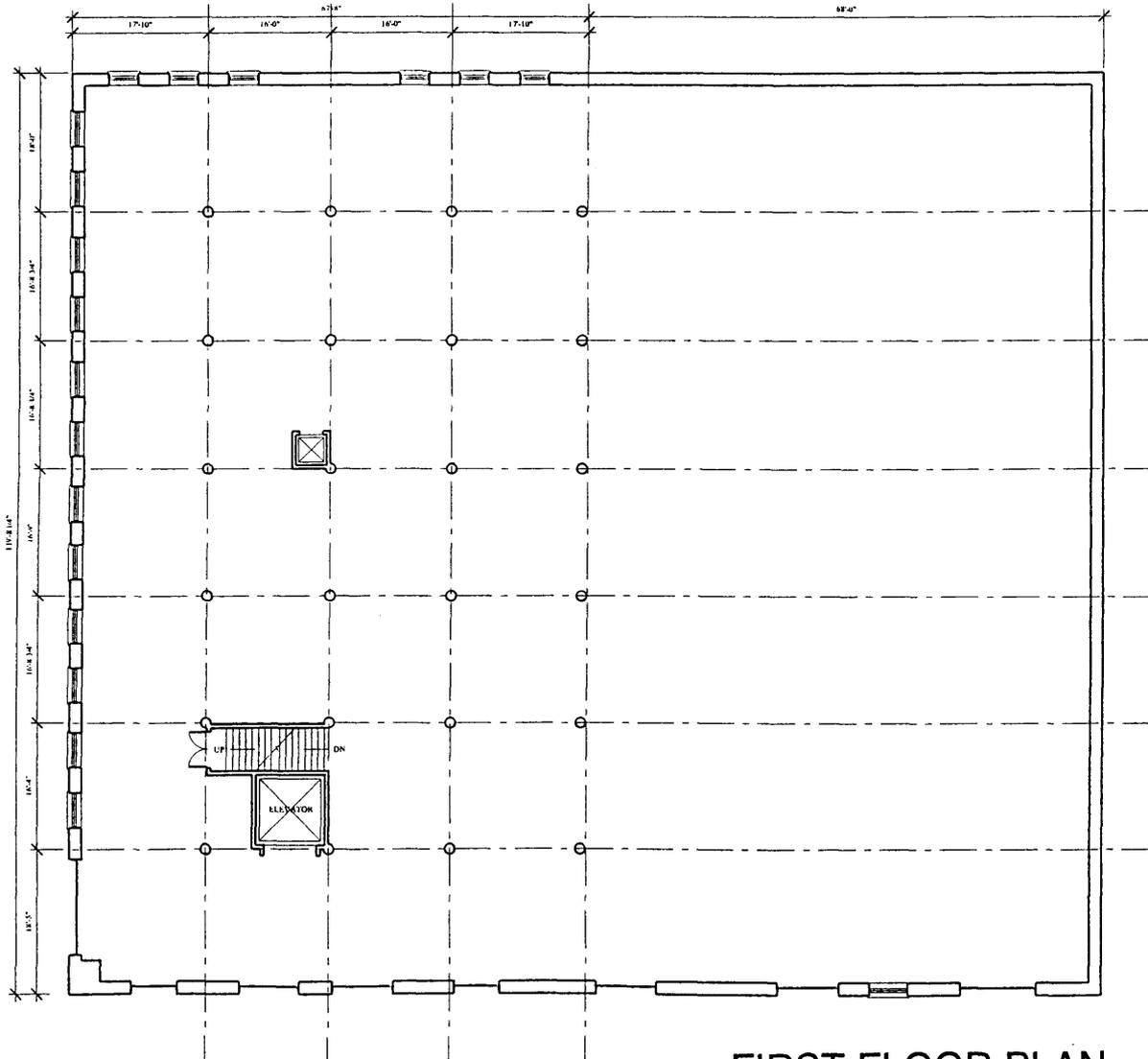
The Crane Company originally purchased the land at Fifteenth and Walnut in April of 1911, but did not finish construction of their building until 1916. Charles Weitz, Builder and Contractor (now known as The Weitz Company) was the builder. The Weitz Company was originated in 1855 and is today known nationally. Weitz has built many landmarks in the City of Des Moines, including the Hubbell Building, the Valley National Bank Building, Hotel Fort Des Moines, Hoyt Sherman Place, Des Moines City Hall, and the Drake University Fieldhouse and Stadium.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Section 8 Page 5

Crane Building  
name of property  
Polk County, Iowa  
county and State



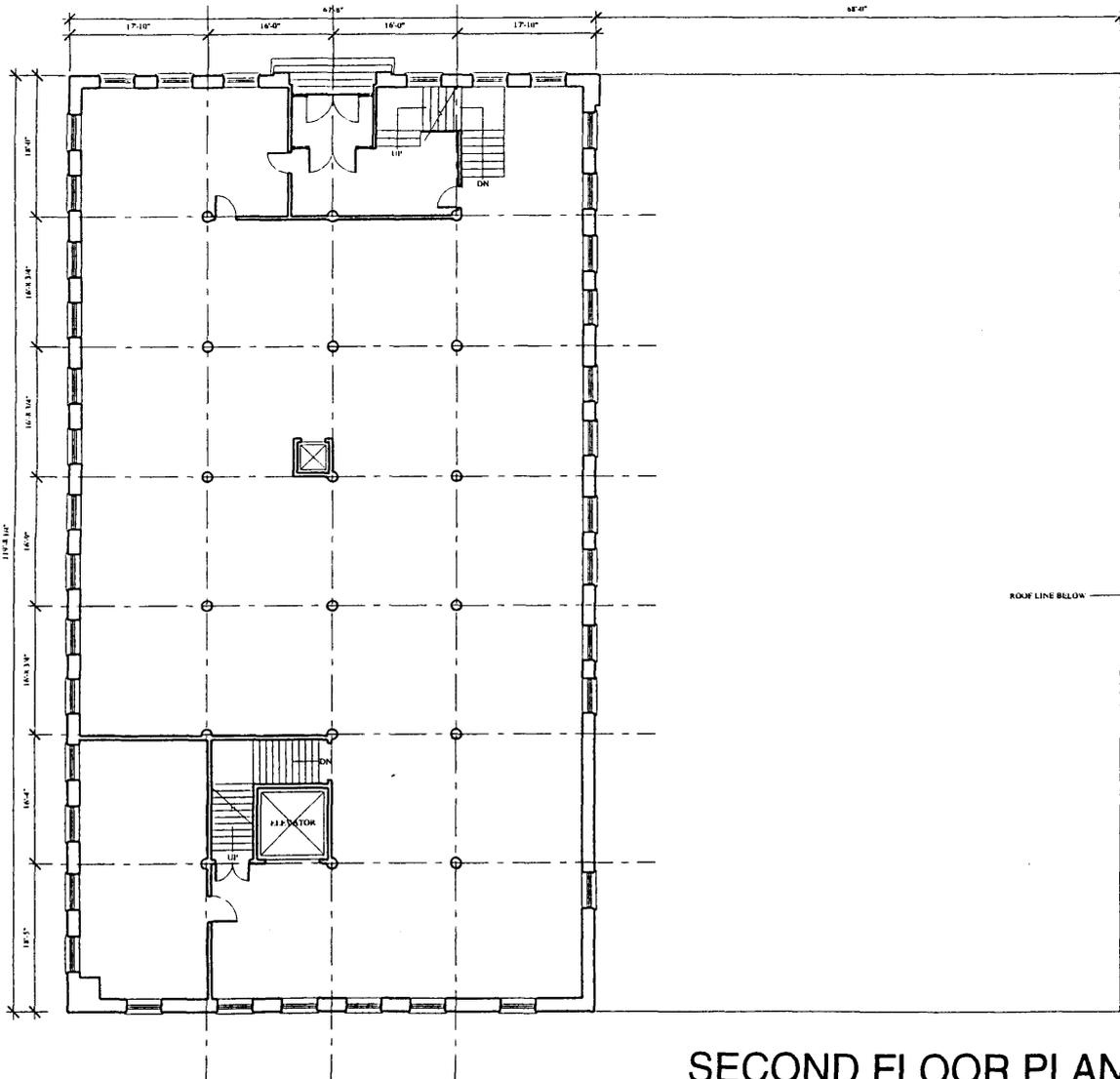
FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
N ↑

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 6

Crane Building  
name of property  
Polk County, Iowa  
county and State



SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
N ↑

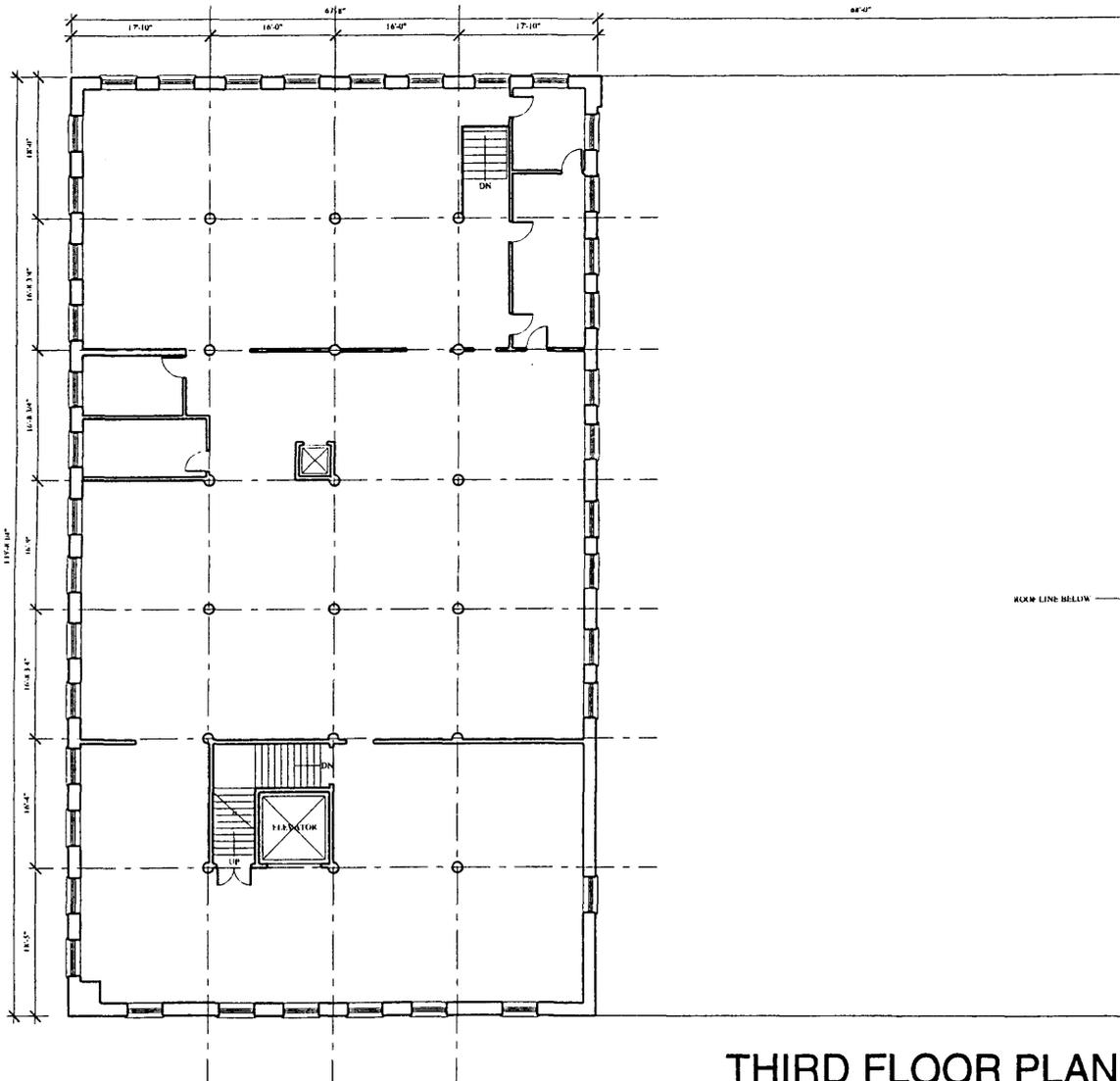
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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Section 8 Page 7

Crane Building  
name of property  
Polk County, Iowa  
county and State

=====



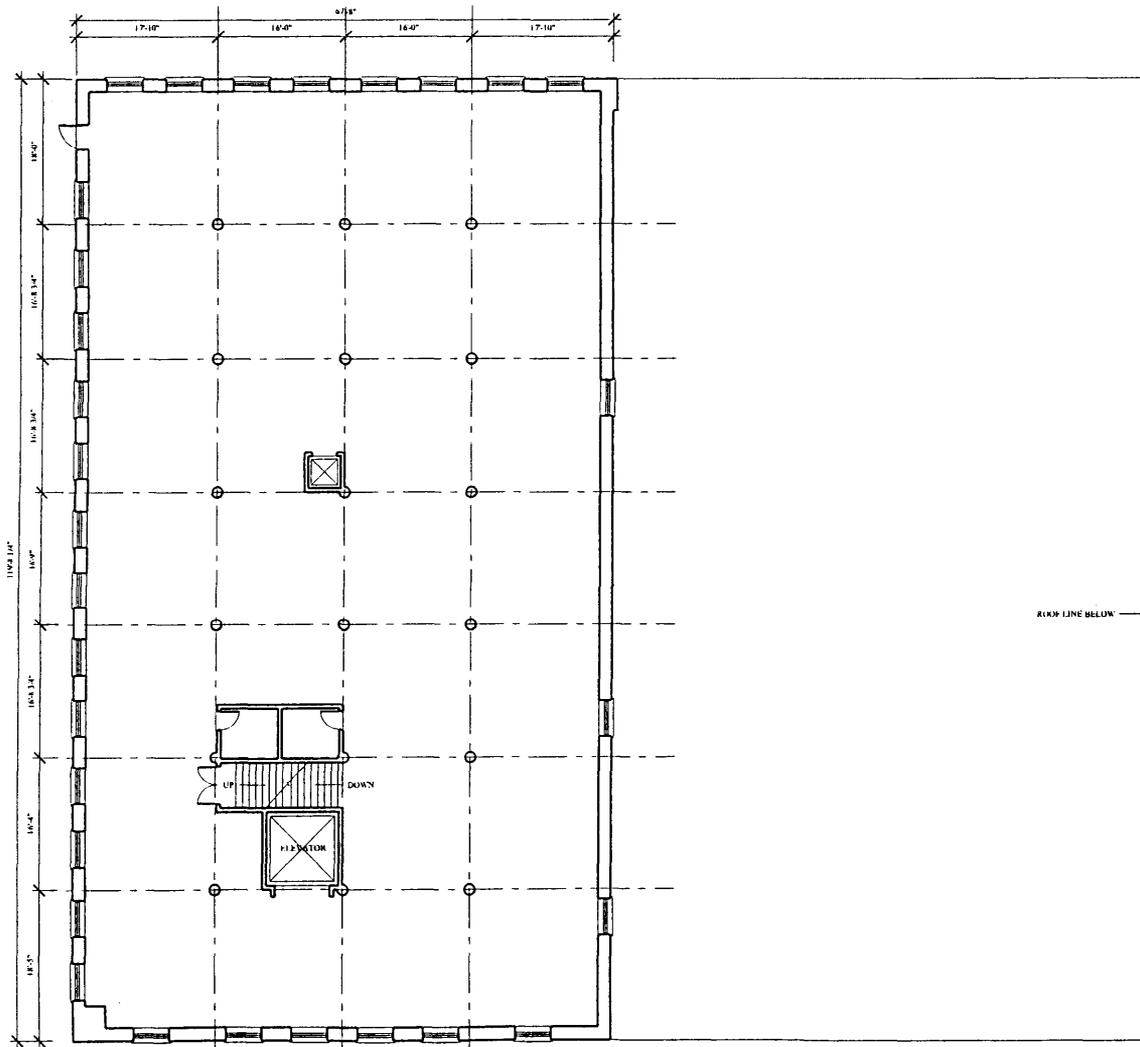
THIRD FLOOR PLAN  
N ↑

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Section 8 Page 8

Crane Building  
name of property  
Polk County, Iowa  
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FOURTH FLOOR TO SIXTH FLOOR, TYPICAL PLAN



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National Park Service

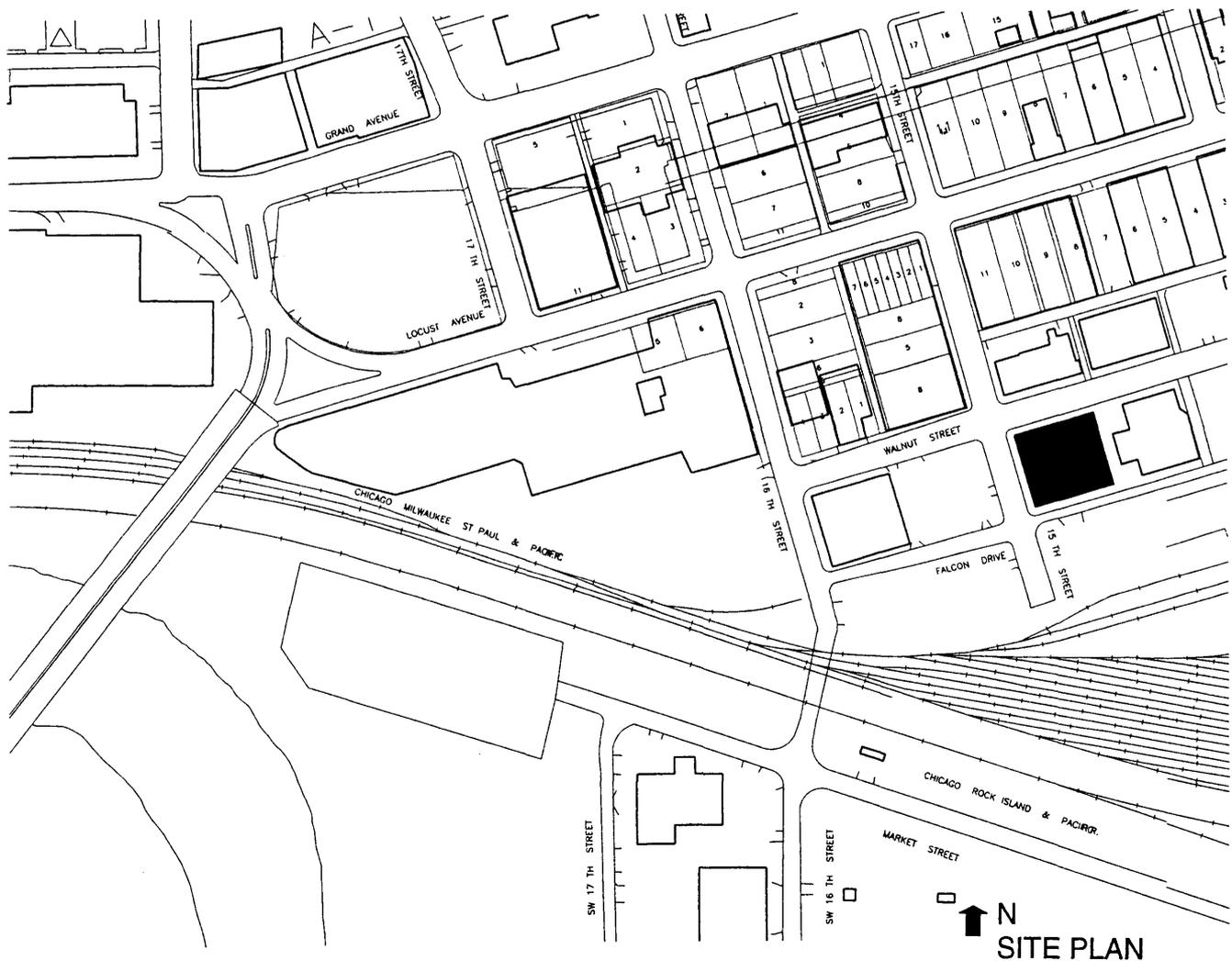
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 9

Crane Building  
name of property  
Polk County, Iowa  
county and State

DATE: 1994

SOURCE: PLAN AND ZONING DEPT., CITY OF DES MOINES, ELECTRONIC FILE





United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9, 10 Page 11

Crane Building  
name of property  
Polk County, Iowa  
county and State

=====  
Major Bibliographical References:

Evaluation and Site Inventory form completed by Patricia Eckhardt, April 1995, on file at the State Historic Preservation Office in Des Moines, Iowa.

Berry, Pat, HADB Report 77-052, *Des Moines Commercial Architecture 1876-1937, A Historic Context and Survey of Sites.*

Brigham, Johnson, *History of Des Moines and Polk County.* SJ Clarke Publishing Co., Chicago, Illinois, 1911. 2 volumes.

Long, Barbara Bevig, *Des Moines and Polk County: Flag on the Prairie,* 1988.

Sawyer and Watrous Architects advertisements in *Spokesman for the City of Des Moines* (Des Moines Chamber of Commerce), May, 1916.

Crane Company History, *A Tradition of Quality,* [www.craneco.com](http://www.craneco.com).

City of Des Moines Fire Map, 1920.

Verbal Boundary Description:

West 1/2 Lot 4 & All of Lots 5 & 6, Block 39, Lyons Addition

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries were selected because they are the legally recorded boundary lines historically associated with the Crane Building and it is a single property.

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National Park Service

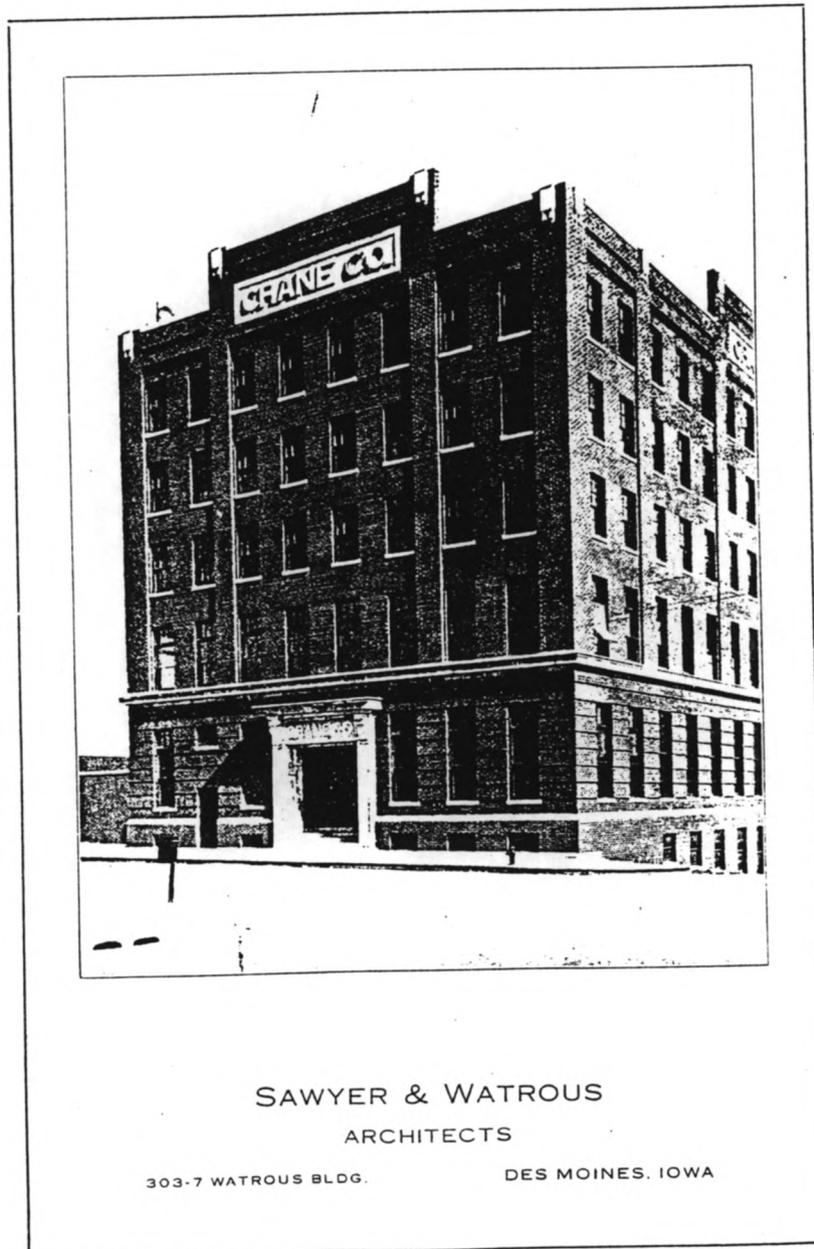
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 11 Page 12

Crane Building  
name of property  
Polk County, Iowa  
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=====

SOURCE: *SPOKESMAN FOR THE CITY OF DES MOINES*  
DATE: MAY, 1916



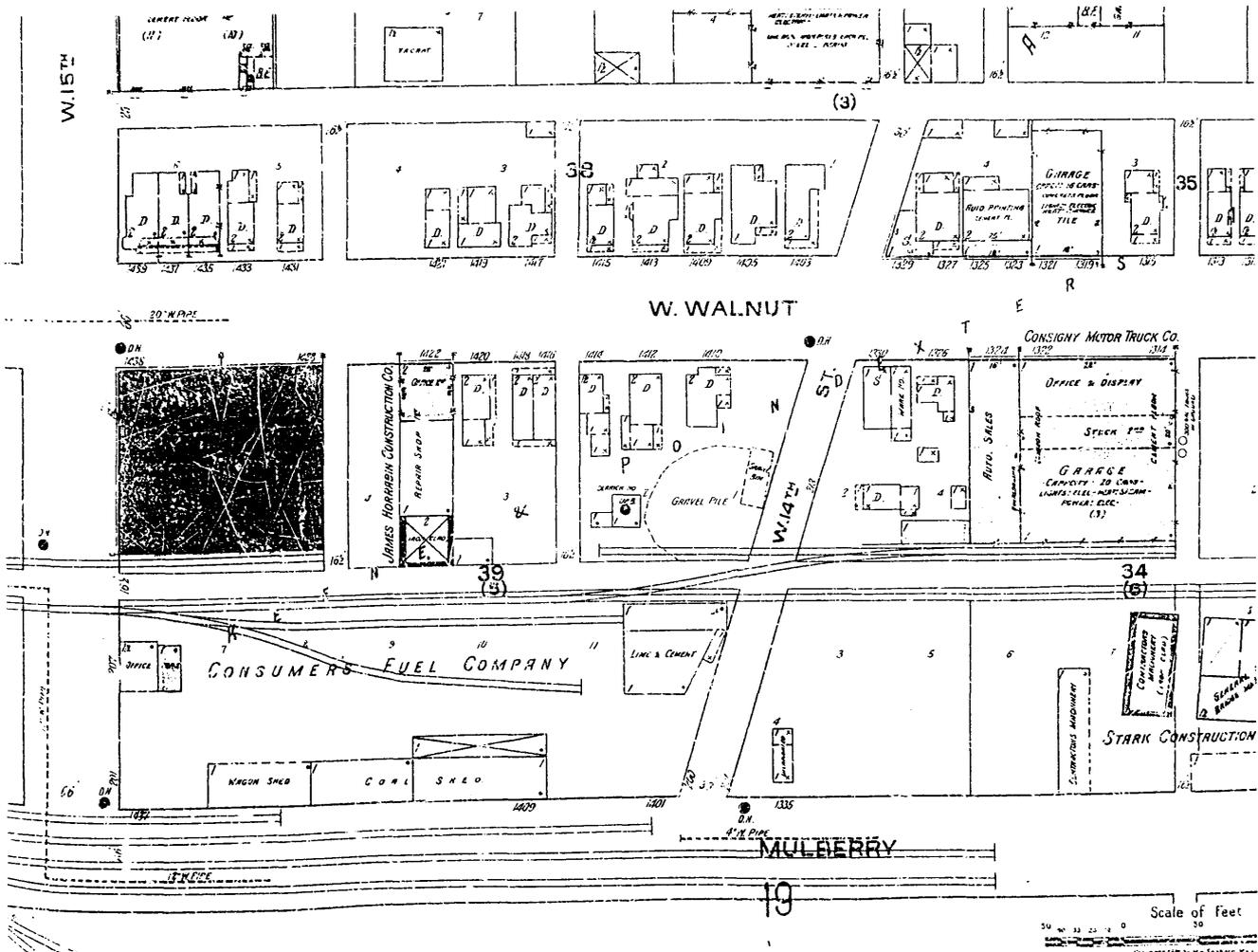
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 11 Page 13

Crane Building  
name of property  
Polk County, Iowa  
county and State

SOURCE: CITY OF DES MOINES FIRE MAP  
DATE: 1920



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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Photos Page 14

Crane Building  
name of property  
Polk County, Iowa  
county and State

=====  
Photograph 1      Photographer: Jim Dwinell      Date: August, 2000  
Original Negative Location: Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture

Fourth level looking south showing concrete "mushroom" columns and capitals, and smooth concrete floors.

Photograph 2      Photographer: Jim Dwinell      Date: August, 2000  
Original Negative Location: Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture

Sixth level looking north. To the left of the photo is the core of the building elevator and service rooms. The exposed concrete roof deck slopes from north to south.

Photograph 3      Photographer: Jim Dwinell      Date: August, 2000  
Original Negative Location: Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture

Second level looking north. The second floor had finished plaster ceilings and columns, portions of which are evident in the two columns to the right of the photo.

Photograph 4      Photographer: Jim Dwinell      Date: August, 2000  
Original Negative Location: Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture

Second level looking west. The north one-third of the second level was developed into office at the perimeter, portions of which still exist.

Photograph 5      Photographer: Jim Dwinell      Date: August, 2000  
Original Negative Location: Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture

Third level looking south. The interior of the upper floors was composed of smooth concrete floors, exposed brick walls, and exposed concrete slab ceilings.

Photograph 6      Photographer: Jim Dwinell      Date: August, 2000  
Original Negative Location: Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture

The primary building entrance on the north elevation. The original limestone entrance, heavy wood entrance doors, and wood windows have all survived intact.

Photograph 7      Photographer: Jim Dwinell      Date: 1971  
Original Negative Location: Jim Dwinell, Des Moines, Iowa

The center bay of the north elevation. The original doors and wood windows are in place.

Photograph 8      Photographer: Jim Dwinell      Date: 1971  
Original Negative Location: Jim Dwinell, Des Moines, Iowa

The entire west elevation taken from 15<sup>th</sup> Street. The limestone separating the first and second level is shown to be intact. The large vent stacks have been removed since this photo was taken. Fifteenth Street adjacent to the Crane Building is one of the last surviving brick streets in downtown Des Moines.

Photograph 9      Photographer: Mark Mickunas      Date: November, 2000  
Original Negative Location: Mark Mickunas, Des Moines, Iowa

North and west elevations. Photo taken from the northwest corner of 15<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Streets.

Photograph 10      Photographer: Mark Mickunas      Date: November, 2000  
Original Negative Location: Mark Mickunas, Des Moines, Iowa

South elevation looking towards Walnut, showing 15<sup>th</sup> Street to the west.