

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

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received MAR 11 1986

date entered 4-28-86

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

1. Name

historic Hawkeye Insurance Company Building

and/or common Hawkeye Building

2. Location

street & number 209 4th Street _____ not for publication

city, town Des Moines _____ vicinity of

state Iowa code 019 county Polk code 153

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Bruce W. and Toni Gerleman

street & number 3126 40th Place

city, town Des Moines _____ vicinity of state Iowa 50310

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Recorder's Office

street & number Polk County Courthouse

city, town Des Moines _____ vicinity of state Iowa 50304

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Maves Survey, 1975
Long Survey, 1980 has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1975, 1980 _____ federal _____ state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records Iowa OHP

city, town Des Moines _____ vicinity of state IA 50 319

7. Description

Condition excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Hawkeye Insurance Building (1869, 1871, 1881) is a three story brick commercial block, built originally as the first installment of what was to have been a larger complex. It reflects its early construction by virtue of its small scale, its half raised basement, and its commercial Italianate design features. These last named include the restored bracketted cornice, the tall thin hooded windows, and the vertical visual thrust which is imparted by its raised setting and pilasters. The facade employed a minimal amount of decorative terra-cotta, an early tin cornice, and a high degree of decorative brick work.

Description:

The overall block (refer to Figure 1) measures 81' by 66.5' feet, is rectangular on plan, and consists of a three story core with a two story annex in the northeast corner. The original block, dating to 1868-9, stands three stories or 34' high and has a raised basement. It measures 40' by 20'. The facade of this front consists of a central three window-wide central section which is flanked by single window side bays. Broad brick pilasters separate these sections. The storefront reflects this same pattern, having an open basement window well which runs along its entire frontage. The basement windows, including a central entryway, blend into the storefront ones above. A cast iron column and rounded arch system frames and separates the three storefront windows. High rounded transoms cap each of these. Double door entryways flank the middle section, being reached by half flights of stairs from the sidewalk. On the first floor level the pilaster bases have niches in the brickwork, the lower set being quite narrow with rounded brick arch tops, the upper set being quite broad with terra-cotta caps which match the keystones inserted in the window hoods between the two entrances. Each door has a brick segmental arch cap with terra-cotta hood and keystone. Each window band is treated with different hold molds. The outside windows have a rounded and elongated mold with keystone. The third floor central panel have the same hoodmolds but no keystone. Second floor windows have a flattened segmental hoodmold with straight cut turned ends. Two horizontal bands of terra-cotta panels, featuring a series of enterlocking curved lines with rosette centers, define the base of each floor level. A corbelled brick panel enclosed the top of each recessed front section. The elaborate pressed tin cornice, newly restored, consists of four bracketted round hooded caps, each terminating above a pilaster on the facade. Two of these mark each cornice end. Two flank a centered half-round inscriptive panel bearing the words "HAWKEYE INS CO."

A two story annex (1871) of identical depth to the original building, and thirty five feet in length stands to the north side. Its most recent facade reflected its adaptation for hotel usage. A parapet wall makes this 22' high section appear taller. A chamfered central bay is cantilevered from the center of the second floor. A similar bay fills the north end along the alleyway. Horizontal and vertical lines, projecting from the brickwork, frames the bays and the flanking window sets. The building restoration plan envisions a 19th century storefront, an excavated basement well, and the retention of the second floor.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates Hist: 1869–1913 **Builder/Architect** William Foster (1869 facade & addition)

Arch: 1869, 1871, 1881

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criteria C: Architecture, A: Commerce

The Hawkeye Insurance Building is doubly significant. From 1868 until early in the 20th Century, this edifice was the headquarters of the Hawkeye Insurance Company, the first successful casualty insurance company in Des Moines and whose success sparked a boom in this field that earned the city the sobriquet, "Hartford of the West." The building is probably the oldest commercial structure in downtown retaining its basic integrity. William Foster, probably the state's leading architect in the late 19th century, designed it and also had his office here. This commercial Italianate edifice may well be the oldest surviving example of his work.

The year 1865 saw the establishment in Des Moines of two fire insurance companies, the State Insurance Company and Hawkeye Insurance Company. The latter, organized principally by Ebenezer Jared Ingersoll (1828-1891), a lawyer was the first successful casualty insurance company. An earlier firm, Iowa Central, attempted by the same individuals, had failed in 1863. B. F. Allen, reputedly the wealthiest man in Iowa at the time provided the initial capitalization of \$100,000. Allen was treasurer. J. B. Tiffin was secretary and James Callahan Jr., vice president.

Fire insurance, and later insurance in general, would make Des Moines the largest center for that industry outside of the eastern coast. Stock fire insurance (as opposed to mutual fire insurance) provided investment funding during a capital poor period. Fire insurance companies distributed membership plaques to their policy holders. When fire struck, the fire companies would quell the blaze. If no plaque was exhibited, the companies would simply keep insured properties from catching fire. The local paper remarked on the case of one F. H. Boyer, a satisfied customer. Boyer's house sported a "Hawkeye" plate. Boyer's blaze was put out by both the cold weather and the fire fighters on a Friday. The next day he called at the company office and was paid his damages. The paper noted "We like the way the Hawkeye is managed, and will simply say that upwards of four hundred of its plates placed on as many nice detached dwellings in this city, is proof sufficient of its standing at home" (Daily Iowa State Register, 27 January 1868).

Hawkeye's success was credited to good planning. "By an unflinching adherence to well-established insurance land-marks; making farm property and detached dwellings in cities and towns, and the safer classes of property, a specialty; by being prompt and liberal in the adjustment and payment of its losses; and by straightforward and honorable dealing with and honorable dealing with its patrons, the Hawkeye has become the model Insurance Company of Iowa..." (Land Owner, Vol. 2, No. 3, March 1870, p. 65)

The struggle for success in this field no easy task. "The older Eastern companies, represented by agents, interposed every possible obstacle to his [Ingersoll's] progress, but they reckoned without their host when they struck Ingersoll, for he was a man of indomitable will and courage, denoted in every line of his face, which, like an electric current, became stronger as resistance against it increased. Opposition only intensified his force. The Hawkeye was his creation. He was the moving spirit of it, making it one of the strongest financial institutions of the state, but he had to fight for it, step by step" (Annals of Polk County, 1898, p. 324).

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Des Moines Southeast

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	4	4	8	2	0	0	4	6	0	3	7	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

North 81 feet of Lot Five, Block Twenty-Four (24), Fort Des Moines Plat. Contains only subject building..

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Form and Text: James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator
Research: John Zeller, Des Moines

organization Iowa Office of Historic Preservation date February 27, 1986
Iowa State Historical Department

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

city or town Des Moines state Iowa 50319

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Powell J. Sorka*

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date February 28, 1986

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

John A. Brown Entered in National Register date 4/28/86
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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The remainder of the building (1881), three stories high, has a forty foot depth and fills the full length of the lot. It consists of at least two additions, both of which predated 1883. The oldest of these dates to 1869-71 and is located just behind the earliest part, and has the same dimensions. The second part, dating from 1881, is ell shaped. This portion is fully fenestrated on its north side (alley side), with three levels of windows, two central triple sets, and single windows set slightly apart at each end. These windows have segmental arched caps and stone sills. The east or rear wall was a party wall. An air shaft on the southeast corner is fenestrated (four windows per level) on the south end wall.

The roof consists of five flat-roofed (slightly pitched) component sections, each of which drains in its own manner, all of which are enclosed within parapet walls. A number of flues or chimneys originally projected from the perimeters of the various additions. These are all capped, with the exception of the main stack on the east wall which served the heating system and newspaper power plant.

An interesting internal feature in the building was a central atrium. This glass roofed area with its own enclosing load-bearing walls and interior windows, housed an interior stairway. A blank west wall screened the atrium from the street.

The Hawkeye Insurance Company building is located on 4th Street just north of Court Avenue west of the Des Moines River. This was the heart of the developing downtown at the time of this building's construction. Envisioned by its builders as only the first part of a larger complex extending to the adjacent corner on Court Avenue, it represents the somewhat hectic and uncoordinated nature of the city's growth during the second half of the 19th century. Block 24, on which it stands, is quartered by criss-crossing alleyways. The subject property adjoins an alley on its north side, and the building fills one fourth of one of the four quarters. The site was appropriate, adjacent properties housed other insurance companies, major newspapers and governmental services. Court Avenue developed as a warehousing, wholesaling district.

The loss of 19th century buildings in this area is largely complete along the major streets to the north. The survival of a pre-1870 building with its original storefront and facade largely intact is a singular instance.

Alterations:

The building underwent substantial alterations in 1913 when it was converted to hotel use. renovation plans developed by the architectural firm of Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson, 1911-13 document both the pre-existing floor plan and general configuration as well as the alterations which took place. The plans indicate the previous replacement of the original cornice and front pediment with a straight, bracketted cornice. The basement entrance was still in use up until the conversion. On the facade, the architects eliminated the basement well and entrance, lowered the first floor some four feet, closed the right-hand

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entrance, and lowered the remaining doorway to accommodate the new floor level. The double door was reduced to a single door and a pseudo-Colonial window pattern was installed across the lower level. Transoms filled the upper portions of the windows and doors (24 lights). Casement-like window pairs (24 lights) filled the remaining space. The windows on the upper two levels were by this time one over one double hung windows. They had as late as 1883 been 2/2. Exterior wood fire escapes were retained on the north and rebuilt on the south.

Inside, the earliest part of the building became a lobby with its lowered floor level. A half flight of stairs led up to the remainder of the building. The plans clearly indicate that the southern main entrance led to a hallway and a stairway to the second floor offices. These elements were removed when the door was eliminated. Four penetrations are indicated in the load bearing wall which separates the 1869 and 1871 areas. Three of these were by 1913 sealed with brick, two served as shallow closet areas. A new main stairway, dogleg in plan, was added in the center of the 1871 annex, replacing two sets of narrow straight flight stairways. This location was originally the site of one of two vaults, and the vault was removed to allow for the stairs. The stairs were topped by a five by seven foot skylight. The remainder of the first floor was carved into ten hotel rooms, the second and third floors into fifteen. The upper two floors had nearly identical floorplans. On those levels, the largest rooms, each with private bath, fronted on Fourth Street. The new plan retained the light court and provided for a balcony on its east side on two levels. A small skylight was added above a private bath in the southeast corner of the third floor.

The location of a second vault, in the northwest corner of the basement, is shown on the plans. Two of four full sized basement windows on the south side were cut down to accommodate the lowered first floor. The ground plan indicates that the 1871 addition had in addition to its perimeter foundation, a series of three load-bearing central rooms, apparently originally supporting the vault above.

Perhaps most importantly, the plans ignore the existence of the "anex" building in the northwest corner and the area immediately south of the building as well. these parcels were apparently not owned as of 1913.

Later apartment conversions greatly altered the upper two floors during the 1960's, and a fire on the south end of the third floor level caused floor and wall damage.

At some point in time the basement beneath was reduced to a crawlspace, being filled with sand. The "annex" was acquired some time later and was incorporated into the hotel/apartment scheme. The exterior of the annex was totally rebuilt as noted above, with two lower storefront areas separated by an interior bearing wall, and with the bays on the second floor being added.

The vacant corner lot (the infamous "Billboard Lot", refer to historical significance)

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adjoining the Hawkeye building to the south was finally developed in 1902-3 with the construction of a two story commercial building. By 1920 the second floor of this corner building housed additional hotel rooms for the Hawkeye Hotel and a second floor iron clad catwalk connected the two buildings. Both the 1920 and 1943 Sanborn Maps indicate the presence of this catwalk. A narrow ell shaped storefront was constructed of concrete block by 1957, and was in 1966 incorporated into a unified aluminum and yellow glass storefront. In the 1960's the building was converted to apartments.

The present restoration effort has attempted to retain the surviving interior features, and has replicated or restored missing components. The 1869 facade has been restored, the cornice (plywood and fiberglass) replaced and the parapet wall strengthened. The interior floor level has been restored with the resulting restoration of the original basement and raised main floor entryways and window pattern. The cast iron, terra cotta and stone decorative components have been repaired. The Annex (1871) has been restored on the second level and redesigned on the storefront level to better work with the original facade. The basement open well has been extended across this area. The interior has been redeveloped for office use. A new roof was put on the building but the same roof system retained.

Significant interior features are few in number, but the restoration work has located a number of items of interest and these have been uniformly retained and incorporated into the reuse plan. Two vaults survive. A smaller vault with an iron door is located just behind the 1869 portion of the building. A larger vault, with vaulted brick ceiling, is inside the north wall just behind the annex. This was referred to on Sanborn Maps as an "oil room". Three cast iron columns with capitals in the south main floor are the only substitutions for a load bearing wall in the building. Two elaborate wooden ceilings on the second floor were restored. The most notable interior feature is a two story atrium, present by 1882. It features a first floor roof, a third floor glass covering and an interior stairway. Windows look out on the area from the two floor levels and doors connect between them by means of an interior stair.

The Hawkeye Insurance Company Building stands on the very edge of downtown redevelopment and reflects a continuing movement of restoring and reusing many of the significant buildings along Court Avenue. It stands out in its restored state as a rare survivor of its time.

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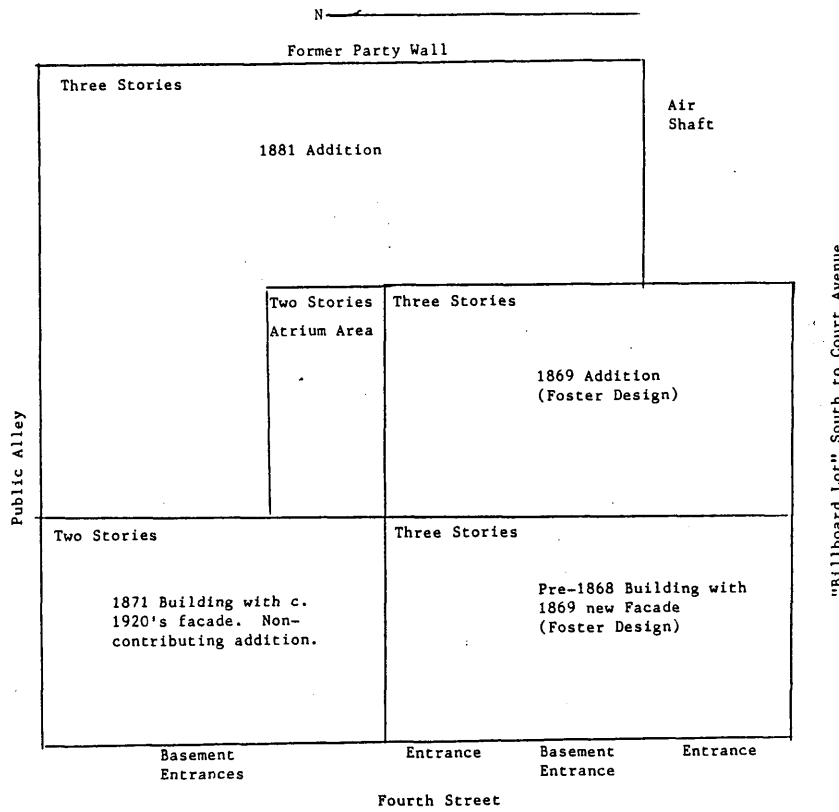
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Floor plan, Hawkeye Insurance Company Building

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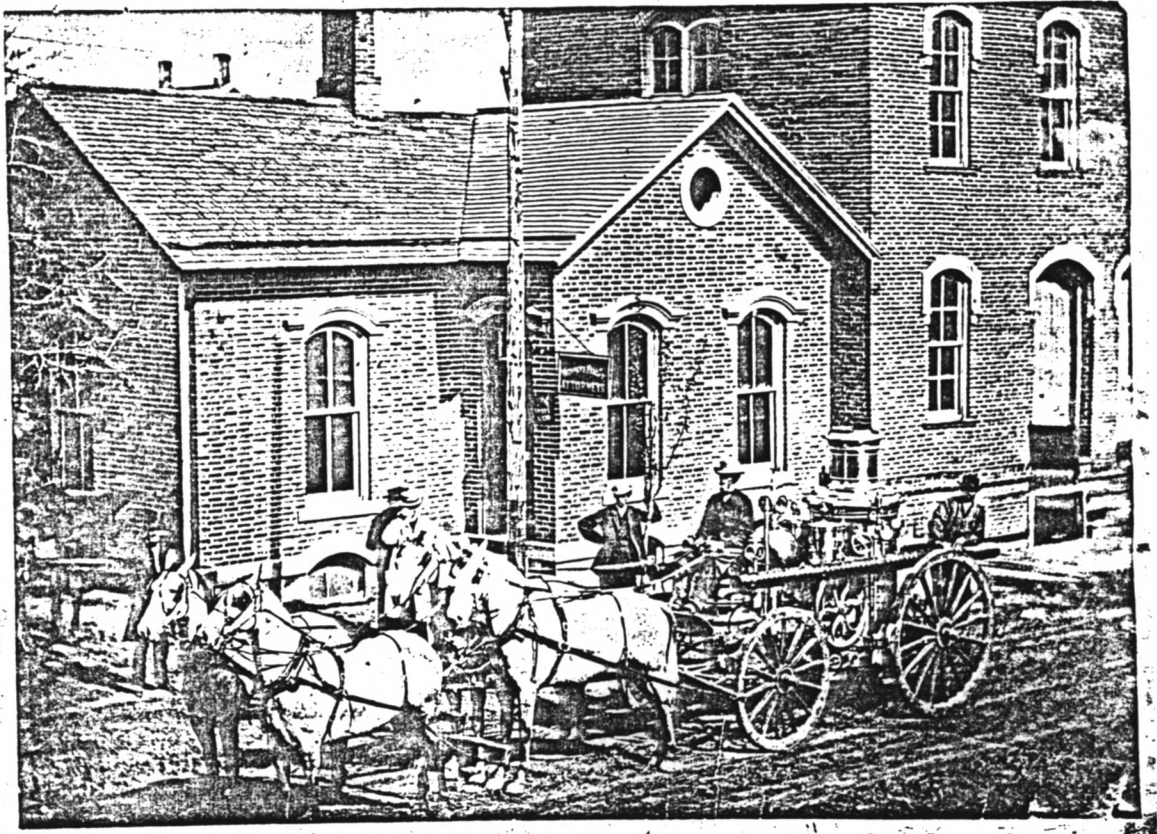
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J. P. Sharman's Photograph of first Des Moines steam fire engine "General Crocker" taken May 9, 1868. View shows the original facade (pre-1868) of the original portion of the Hawkeye Building. Brick cottage to north in view was replaced by the "Annex" in 1871.

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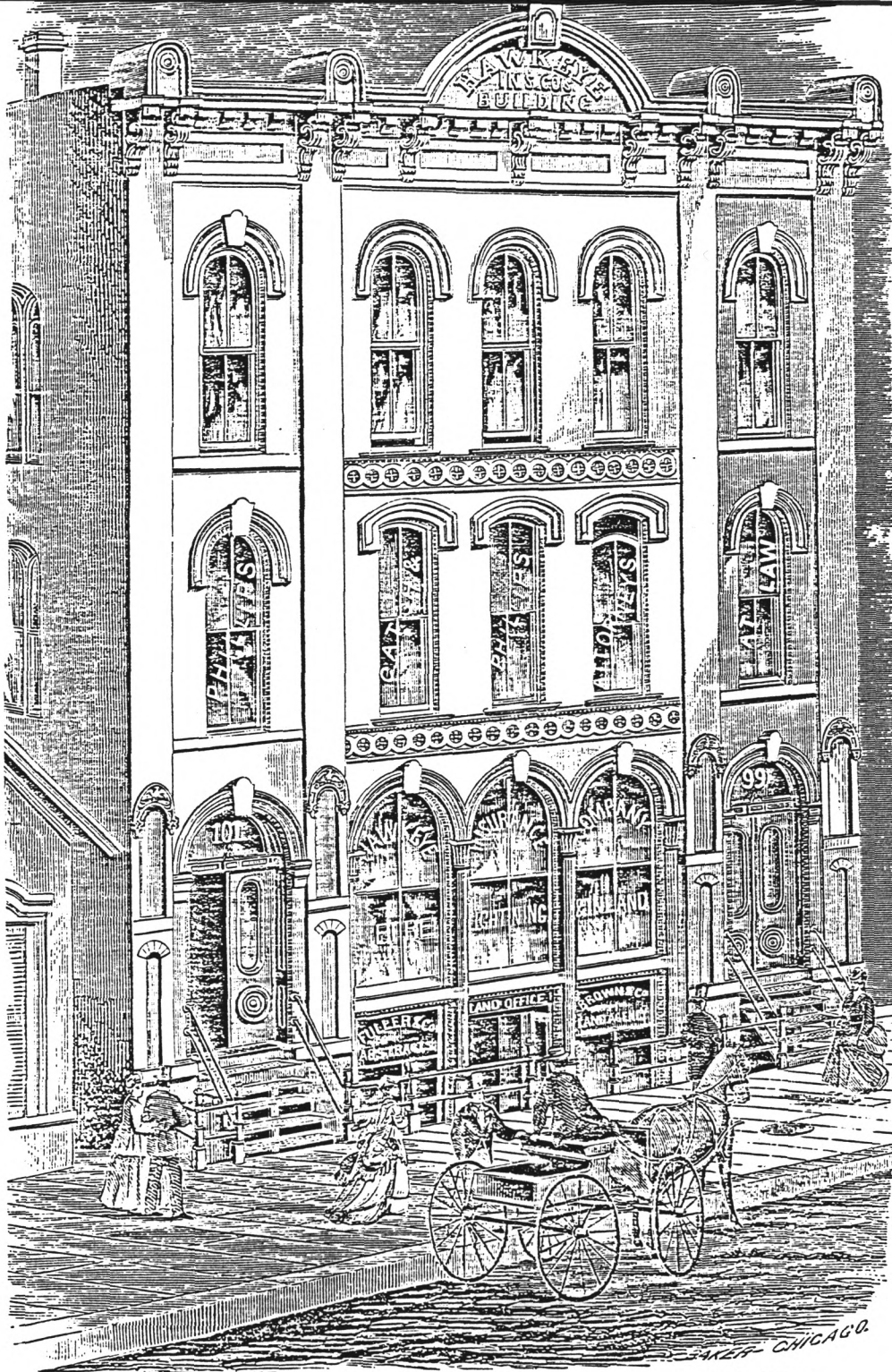
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THE HAWKEYE INSURANCE COMPANY'S BUILDING, DES MOINES, IOWA.

Earliest view of completed new facade, from Land Owner Magazine, Chicago, Vol. 2, Number 3, pp. 64-5.

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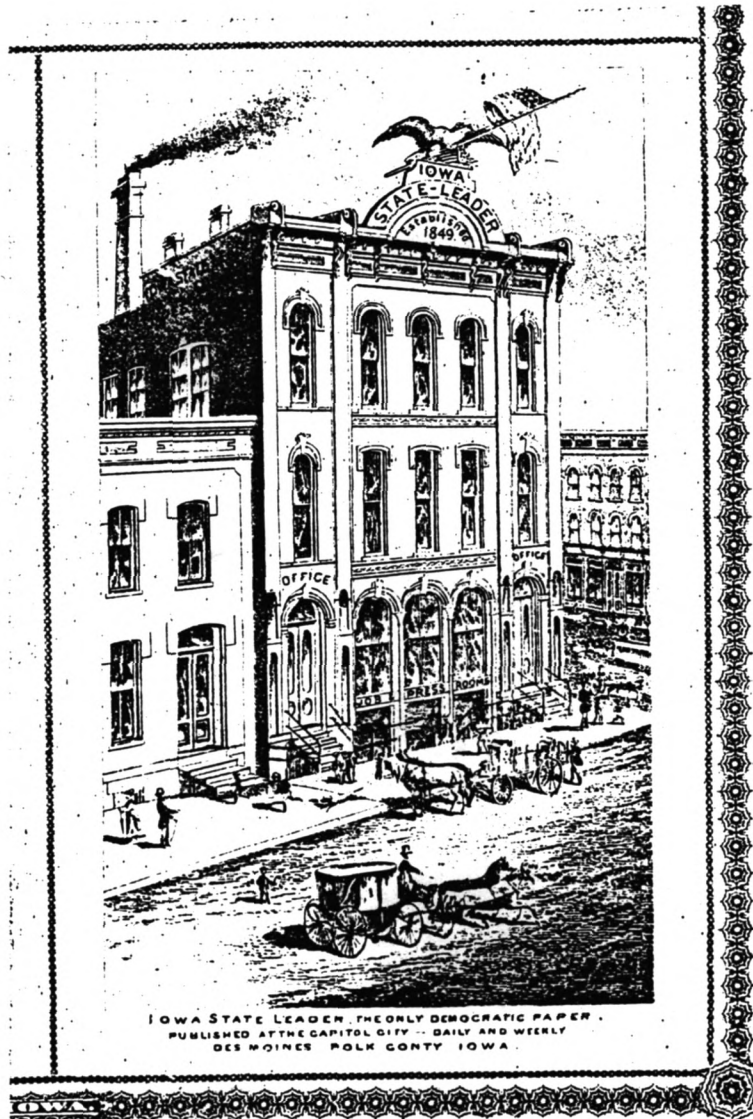
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1875 View of Hawkeye Insurance Company Building.
From A. T. Andreas' Illustrated Historical Atlas
of the State of Iowa, Chicago: Andreas Pub. Co.,
1875.

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Bushnell's Des Moines Directory. 319

E. J. INGERSOLL, President. JAMES CALLANAN, Vice Pres't and Treas. ADAM HOWELL, Secretary.

HAWKEYE

INSURANCE



COMPANY.

DES MOINES,

STATE OF IOWA.

CAPITAL AND SURPLUS JAN. 1, 1877,
OVER \$500,000.

This Company, organized March 13, 1865, has done more business—Paid more Losses—
Has a larger Surplus over all Liabilities, and a Larger Surplus and capital than any Iowa
Company.

Office in Company's building, 4th, N. E. Cor. Court Avenue.

1877 image of Hawkeye Building

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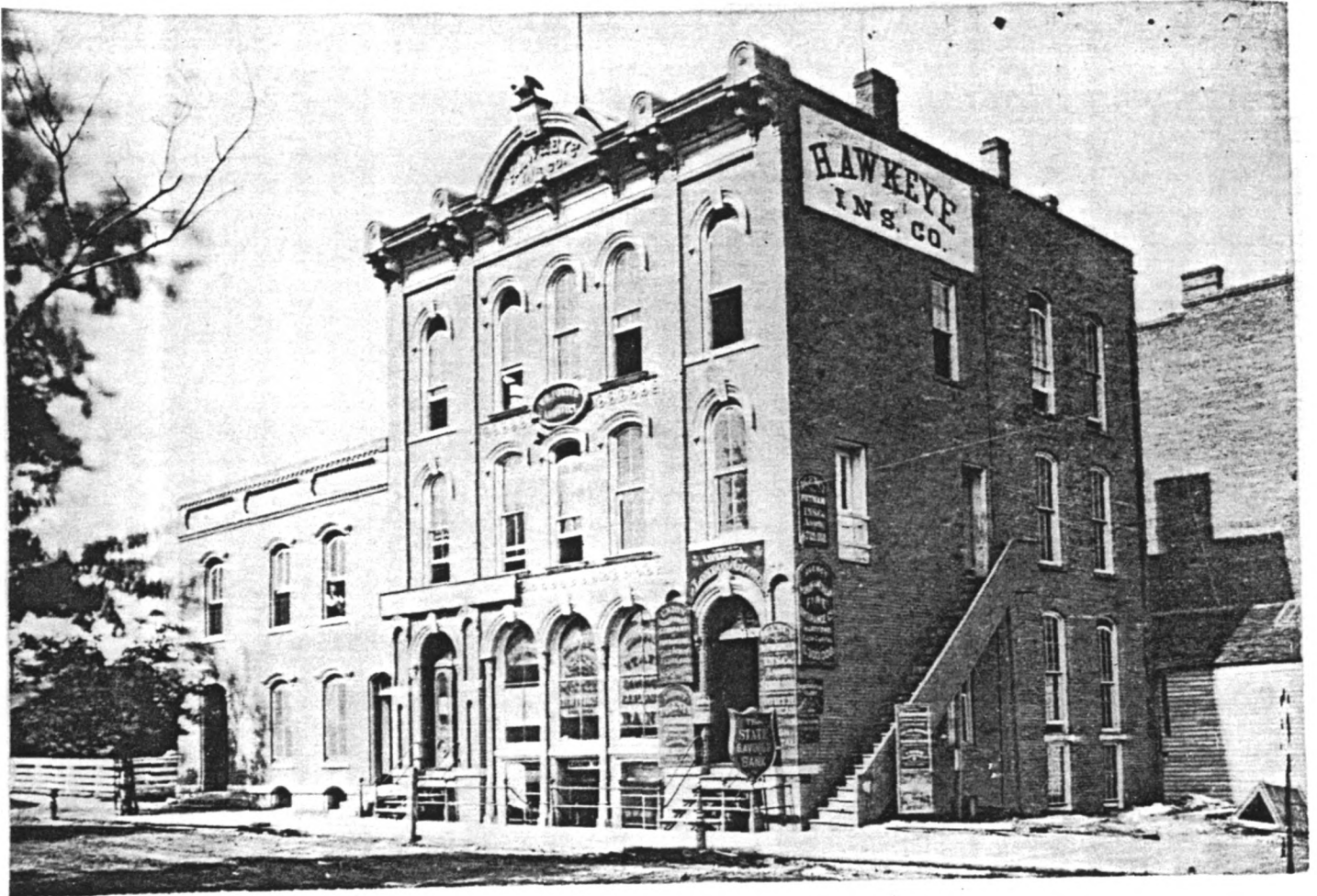
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July 1883 View of Hawkeye Building and Annex.
Architect William Foster's shield hangs between
the upper two floors.

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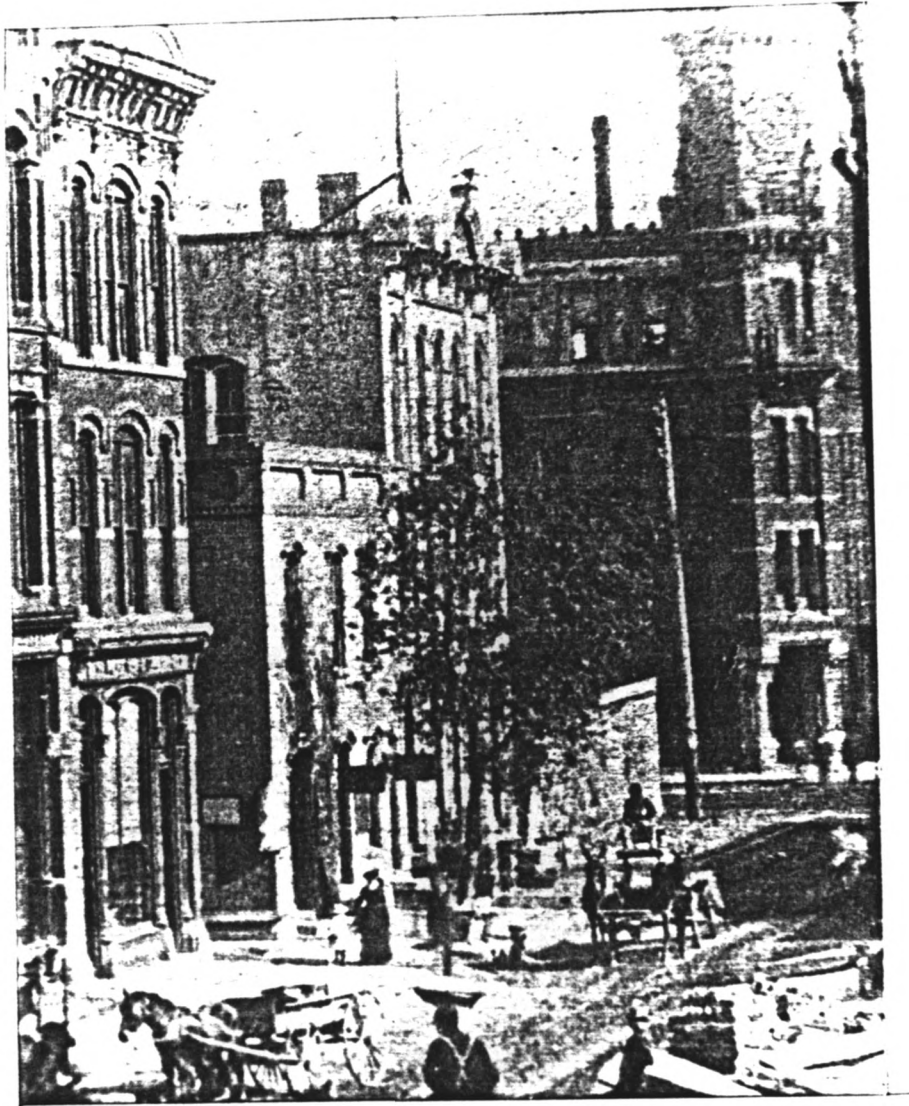
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Stereoscopic View, detail, dated May 1883, view south along Fourth Street, shows Annex, Hawkeye Building and Billboard Lot. Courtesy Mr. Bill Angrick, Des Moines.

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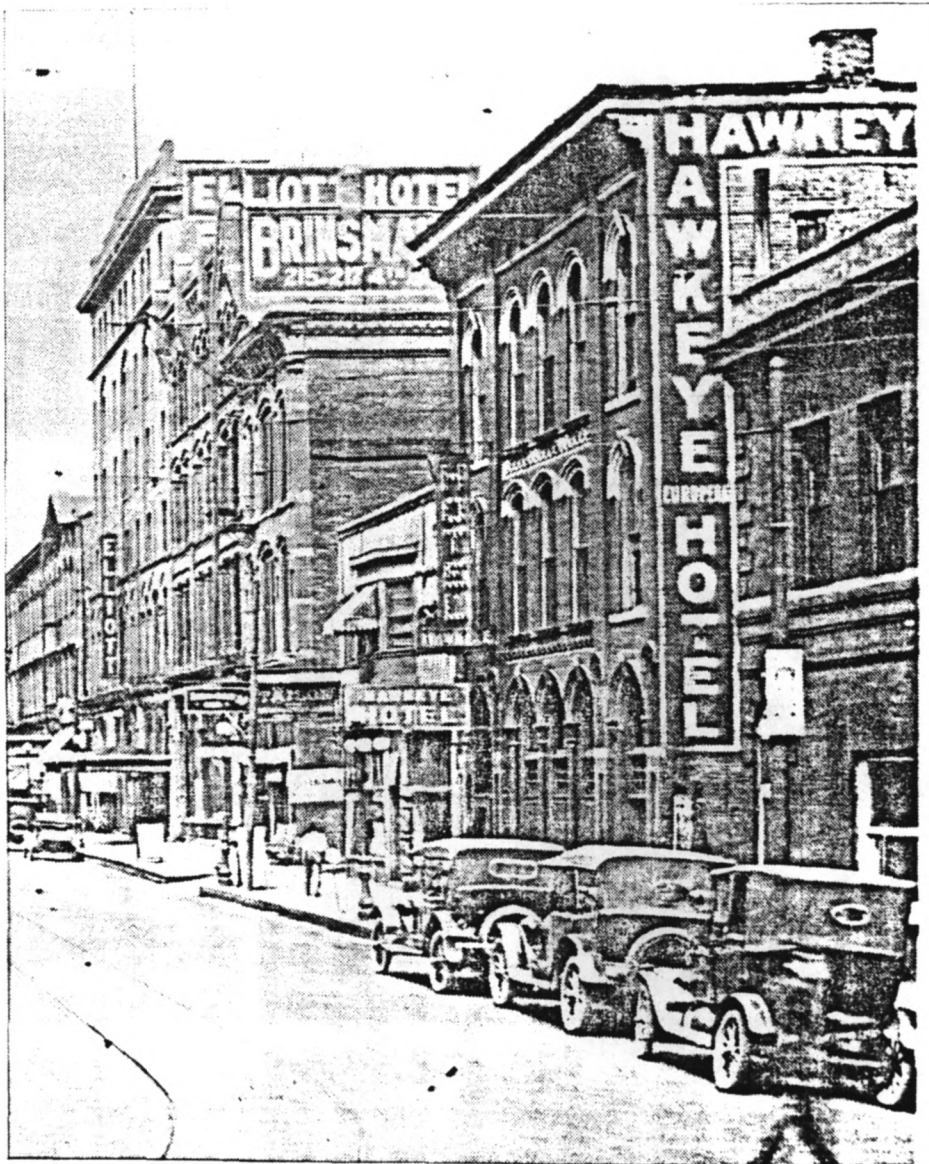
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c. 1919 view north along Fourth Street. Hawkeye Hotel in right foreground.

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Ingersoll too appears to have played the general agent game, he advertised in partnership with Adam Howell in 1869 that they represented fifteen insurance companies as general insurance agents. The partners along with Hawkeye Insurance settled into their new building in early August, 1869. The firm claimed to represent \$35 million in capital "in the strongest, oldest and most reliable fire insurance companies in the United States. (Daily Iowa State Register, 6 Aug. 1869)". The firm retained virtually the identical officers almost to the turn of the century. Exceptions included the addition of Adam Howell (1840-1899), a Canadian born underwriter, who became secretary in 1872 and James Callanan who replaced Allen as treasurer in 1875. Several other investment firms were inter-woven into the company operations. Ingersoll and, Callanan established the State Savings Bank in late 1870. The company by that time was said to possess "...a thorough organization, and a competent and efficient set of employes and agents. Its arrangements at the home office are complete, and its various departments thoroughly systematized. (Andreas Illustrated Historical Atlas, 1875, p. 391). By January 1877 the company boasted that they had "...done more business-Paid more Losses-Has a larger Surplus over all Liabilities, and a Larger Surplus and capital than any Iowa Company." By 1888 company assets totaled three-quarters of a million dollars by 1888. Their reputation was noted by Leading Industries of Des Moines that year. "...The names of the officers and managers of the company are a sufficient guarantee of the reliability of this great and growing concern, and of the care which is exercised in all business matters. Their patrons and policy holders include many of the foremost wealthy citizens of Des Moines and Iowa, and the uniform promptness with which losses have been investigated and paid, has given the company a substantial claim to public favor and confidence....This is strictly an Iowa institution, and as such should continue to receive a liberal patronage from the people of the Hawkeye State. There is no need whatever, of paying money to wealthy eastern corporations for insurance, when just as good, and even better insurance can be obtained from reliable home companies."

The firm flourished in the long run but nearly fell victim to the Panic of 1873. Its primary financial backer, B. F. Allen, had a Chicago bank that was linked to Jay Cook's Northern Pacific Railroad scheme. Cook's scheme collapsed and Allens bank reorganized as the State Safty Bank and barely survived. This loss of capital apparently quashed plans to build a monumental office block just south of the subject property (see "Billboard Lot" below).

The Architect:

Architect William Foster (1842-1909) designed the the Hawkeye Insurance Building, in 1869 (refer to building history below). Foster came to Des Moines with his father, L. W. Foster Sr. and entered into practice on his own in April 1868. Foster was briefly in partnership with Joseph S. Blake as of August 1869 and by September 21 of that year the two partners were housed in the Hawkeye Building, immediately following its completion. The original building design is credited to Foster however. Their advertised specialty included churches and dwellings however. Foster was throughout his career a proponent of

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hollow-wall construction as it related to improved heating and ventilating. Foster continued to occupy the entire third floor in this building until 1875 when he moved to his newly built "Academy of Music" quarters. Some confusion remains to be clarified concerning the Foster family. An 1872 advertisement located "L. W. Foster & Co. Architects" at the Hawkeye Building. An 1873 photo of the same building indicates that the architect's shingle on the building front read simply "William Foster." There appears to have been a brother, L. W. Foster Jr., also an architect, who departed the city for Nebraska. An obituary reference for William Foster mentions a brother Samuel.

William Foster was a prolific architect of commercial and residential designs and over time his reputation became statewide and regional. Major works included the Nebraska State Prison and insane asylum, the identical institutions in Iowa, , Moore's Opera House (1873), Foster's own opera house (1875), St. Paul Episcopal Church, and "...most of the prominent buildings of Des Moines" as of 1880. He worked in his field through the mid-1890's when he became fully involved in the theatrical world.

The Building:

On May 9, 1868 Des Moines photographer J.P. Sharman caught the image of the city's first steam fire engine, the "General Crocker" from the window of his Fourth Street photo studio. His image (Figure 2) captured a one story brick law office and the lower levels of an adjoining building. This latter building became the Hawkeye Insurance Building. Apparently still in its final stage of construction or more likely, a remodeling, the building matched the dimensions of the Hawkeye building that was pictured on the site the very next year. Oddly enough, the 1868 view indicates the presence of a quite different facade. The main facade was a simple front, the plan apparently consisted of two separate central doors with single flanking side windows. The window and door hoods had elongated vertical sides. The Hawkeye Building facade, designed by Foster and executed in 1869, took a pre-existing building, removed the facade, and replaced all or most of it (the present facade is structural, not a veneer). The 1869 design effectively eliminated the design integrity of any pre-existing building, but the structural core remains in the present building. It is perhaps worthwhile to explore the possible origins of the earlier building. It is probable that this small commercial three story building is the oldest surviving building of its type in the city.

The incremental and somewhat bizzare expansion of the Hawkeye building, in a series of stages, not surprisingly correlates directly with the acquisition of parcels of land on the site. Lot Five (120' x 66') of Block Twenty Four was, in its original platting, with its narrow dimension towards Court Avenue to the south. Early land sales split the lot into thirds (22' x 121'). Since Lot Five was a corner lot, developmental pressures came from two sides and the westernmost one third was broken up into thirds (40' x 22') as well to accomodate building needs along Fourth Avenue. Two of these narrow rectangles were built on by 1868, the small law office on the north, and a three story brick building on the middle parcel. The earliest reference to an office at this address is that of attorney and

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counselor at law Seward Smith, whose office is listed on Fourth between Walnut and Court "directly north of Allen Bank"(Iowa State Register, 28 June 1866). The Allen Bank was just south of Court Avenue, so the reference to "directly north" must allow for some interpretation. A year later, a card for the law partnership of Withram and Wright stated "...they may be found in the new brick building on Fourth Street between Court Avenue and Walnut, first floor" (Iowa State Register, 13 January 1867). The adjoining law office was only a single story building. It can therefore be assumed that the three story building was standing by early 1867, and was therefore raised no later than late 1866. The partnership of Seward Smith and William J. Shannon continued to be separately listed (Iowa State Register, 2 April 1867) so it must have occupied the northernmost parcel. These names do not correlate with those of the property owners so they must have been tenants only.

Hawkeye Insurance acquired the western one third from Mr. Allen in 1870 (excepting the north one third). It added the middle one third in 1871 (correlating with the construction of the 1871 rear addition to the original building) and the eastern one third in 1879 (again correlating with the final ell-shaped addition). The north one third of the west one third remained isolated, surrounded by the Hawkeye building.

The new facade for the Hawkeye Insurance Company building, three stories high, and a mere forty by twenty feet wide and deep respectively, was constructed during the summer of 1869. The fact that this was not new construction is documented by the Des Moines Bulletin, which reported improvements made during 1869 in its January 1, 1870 issue, "Hawkeye Insurance Building, imp[rovements], e [stories], br[ick], near Court Avenue, \$6,500." It's completion was noted on the 29th of July when it was locally described as "the three-story house that Jack [B.F.Allen] built with the State's money on Fourth street, near Court Avenue." By August 6 Ingersoll & Howell, insurance agents had removed to "the new Hawkeye Building." The same day "A large and magnificent hawk, all gilded and spangled, of terra cotta cast" arrived and was placed on the cornice.

A March 1870 woodcut (Figure 3) in a Chicago based magazine depicted the completed facade. The building is duplexed, #99 Fourth being the south entrance, #101 the north one. Phillips, Gatch & Phillips, Attorneys at law occupied the second floor, Hawkeye Insurance Company the lower floor. The basement housed C. E. Fuller & Company Abstract Company and Lewis J. Brown & Company Land Agency. The third floor housed the office of William Foster "the Architect of the Building...[who is]...looked upon as one of the leading Architects of the West."

In 1871 the company expanded to the north with the construction of a two story annex, also executed in brick, with brick cornice, and two ground floor entrances at each side of the front. A July 1873 stereo view (Figure 4) of the city, taken from the county courthouse, shows the two buildings. Architect Foster's oval shingle is visible, centered between the upper two floors. A ground level photo (Figure 5) from the same period clearly depicts both buildings and signs of the several occupants. The 1873 views indicate that the depth

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of the 1868 building had been doubled with the construction of a rear three story brick addition. The addition is undated, possibly having been added during the 1869 or the 1871 expansion. Windows in this addition are semi-circular rounded thin Italiante openings. An abandoned second story door on the south wall indicates that a different exterior stair system has once existed.

The 1873 tenants bedecked the ground floor with sign boards which mirrored the shape of the building's windows. Hawkeye Insurance Company had painted signage on each side wall below the parapets and its various represented agencies framed the entrance #99 Fourth Street. The Des Moines Leader newspaper occupied the basement. The State Savings Bank on the first floor had a sidewalk shield shaped sign and one in the window. The annex bore no signage. Hawkeye occupied the entire first floor, including its banking and other associated firms. Two vaults served the firm on that level. The Iowa State Leader was the Democratic state paper, and like most papers also did job printing. The Leader was in the Hawkeye building by 1872. Perhaps the most telling sign is that which is placed above the door of #101, that of the American Emigrant Company. This was yet another real estate firm that specialized in bringing Germans and Scandinavians to the plains states. Fourth Street is said to have been the focal point for the Des Moines German community. The Hawkeye Building itself was a favorite gathering place on that block.

During the year 1881 the building was completed to its final overall configuration with the construction of an ell-shaped rear wrap-around three story section. Costing \$13,000, this addition included the atrium area, and a power plant in the northeast rear basement with a main square shaped stack that rose 12' feet above roof level. A May 1883 photo (Figure 6) and the earliest Sanborn Map (1884) confirm the completion. Additional work the next summer added a new interior stairway that replaced the exterior stair on the south side, and the brickwork was "repainted" in white. The building retained this same color until the hotel era. The interior stair apparently served the southern entryway.

A May 1883 photograph of the building, viewed from the northwest along Fourth Avenue, shows the completed facade of the building. The brickwork on the Hawkeye (and not on the annex) is painted white. A tree survives in front of the annex. The sidewalk is quite cluttered with protruding stairways, overhanging signage, and basement entrances. The "billboard lot" on the corner beyond boasts a range of posters.

The Building in 1884 was called the "Hawkeye Block". The insurance firm remained as apparently did the newspaper. The basement was the bindery and press room, the third floor was the composition room. By 1891 the same occupants remained. An electric motor powered the printing work. By 1901 the basement housed a barbershop, but Hawkeye Insurance remained.

The departure of this firm in 1913 coincided with its purchase by outside interests. That same year, the building was remodeled for use as the "Hawkeye Hotel." The 12 March 1910 issue of American Contractor announced the remodeling, valued at \$10,000, by Des Moines

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architects Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson. It also noted that "...plans [were] completed". The actual plans, are dated to 1911-13 and if that date is correct, they were perhaps redrawn or held in abeyance. The new owner, Morris Bucher (Figure 7) redeveloped the building as a rooming house with forty rooms, calling it the "Hawkeye Hotel," operated on the European Plan. The raised basement aspect of the facade was eliminated, and the first floor storefront and floor level lowered.

By 1920 the hotel had expanded south into the upper level of a two story building (on the "billboard lot"), reached by means of a catwalk. This usage pattern persisted as late as 1943 (Sanborn Map). The annex was also incorporated into the complex, but it is not known when this occurred. The title "Hawkeye Hotel" persisted past 1943, being finally retitled the "Roxie Hotel" by 1957. By that time a small storefront had infilled to the south between the Hawkeye Building and the hotel annex to the south. Apartment conversions followed in the early 1960's. Redevelopment for office use took place during the summer and fall of 1985.

The infamous "Billboard Lot":

The physical and historical history of the Hawkeye Building cannot be truly appreciated without some consideration of the development, planned for fully thirty-one years of the lot adjoining to the south, the "billboard lot."

From the start, the Hawkeye Building was envisioned as merely a first installment on their 100' x 40' lot. The half lot on the corner of Fourth and Court, prime real estate, was to be the site for a major edifice, a monument to the company's success. Perhaps the collapse of Banker B. F. Allen halted the earliest plans to build. In the 1875 Andreas Illustrated Atlas of Iowa the firm subscribed to a full page view of the city, a view that prominently displayed their building to be. It pictured a four story building with a five story mansard corner tower and matching roof. The company honestly portrayed the subject building with an empty lot along side it in a corner inset.

Eventually a wooden board fence was raised around the lot and it attracted bill posters, rubbish, and the attention of the local newspapers who poked fun at the lack of utilization of the corner lot. The year 1881 appears to have been the last effort on the part of the firm to assure the community that a building would indeed be erected. On July 24 of that year the Iowa State Register announced that the firm had "...let, or will soon let, the contract for building a five-story building 44x100 feet...and expect to crowd it toward completion as fast as possible." A year later the same source said reported " It is said that every mention of the billboard lot extends the time of the building 3 months, all right. Count this three months and we'll make that lot bald-headed, if age will do it by three month extensions when we get the leisure." The paper questioned "...has the solid company that has built a fine building, and found it a great means of profit, encroached on its patronage, and taken the most of its income?" The paper even tried ridicule. It alleged that the owners planned to add a second story of fencing to corner the market on

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posters. The fence would also have "a mansard cornice, lightning rods at both ends, and a flagstaff on the corner." The next day the reported plan was altered to include a grand bandstand, and again the next day to include an awning, and sentry-box entrance. These efforts were to no avail. The lot remained vacant even then.

In 1902, the Des Moines Register and Leader (16 November 1902) announced an end to the saga. The headline told all:

"HAWKEYE SALE THE FEATURE OF WEEK: Only Corner Property in the Business District Never Improved: Cost of the Corner: Counting Interest and Taxes the Holders Have Made Nothing on it."

The account traced the history of the lot once again:

"For years it has been one of the prominent corners of the city and for thirty-one years title to it has stood in the name of the Hawkeye Insurance company. It is the only corner property in the west business district that has never been improved. The only source of revenue that has been derived from it in the years the Hawkeye has owned it has been the small rental paid for a bill board privilege. For years it has been a constant source of wonderment why it has not been made a revenue producer and some kind of improvement put upon it. There has never been a time when the cheapest kind of an improvement would not have yielded rentals sufficient to pay the taxes assessed against the property and the interest upon the original investment. This because of its location, which for the first twenty years it was held by the Hawkeye was the very best in the business district and which in the last ten years has been considered a fairly good corner."

The article went on to calculate the actual loss incurred by the owners, some \$18,600! Purchasers were Marcus and Aaron Younker. In the next year construction finally began on a two story brick building, with two store fronts. This fairly common building still stands, a monument to what might have been.

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