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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 an 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

2. Location	*L				
street & number _	200 10 th Street			[N/A] not for public	cation
city or town	Des Moines	·		[N/A] vicinity
state Iowa	code IA	county	Polk	code 153	zip code <u>50309</u>
does not r [_] nationa	d meets the procedural and pro neet the National Register criter ully [_] statewide [x] locally. ([_] PONYOLOCALY of certifying official/Title STATE HISTORICAL SOC ederal agency and bureau	ia. I recommensee continuatio	nd that this prop n sheet for addi DSHPO Date	erty be considered sigr tional comments).	ny opinion, the property [x_] meets [_ nificant

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification hereby certify that the property is: entered in the National Register. Date of Action of the Keeper 9 [] 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:)

<u>Clemens Automobile Company Building</u> Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa County and State

5. Classification					_Ownership of Property
Category of Property Num	ber of Resources within	Property			
(Check as many boxes as apply) [x] private	(Check only one box) (Do n [x] building(s) Co	ot include previe	ously listed resources ir oncontributing	the count.)	
[_] public-local	[] district			buildings	
] public-State	[] site		v		
public-Federal	[_] structure		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	sites	
	[_] object				
				structures	
				objects	
			<u> </u>		
		1	0	Total	
			N		
Name of related multiple p (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of			in the National F		ources previously listed
(Enter N/A il property is not part o	or a multiple property listing.)		in the National F	register	
N/A			0		
6. Function or Use					
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions	N		Current Function (Enter categories from		
	, ,			n instructions)	
Commerce/trade/speciialtystore			rade/business rade/restaurant		
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7. Description					Architectural Classification
	Materials	······································	·····		
(Enter categories from instructions))		(Enter categories fron	n instructions)	
Late 19 th and 20 th Century B	evivals/Classical Revival	founda	tion concrete		
Late 19 th and 20 th Century R Late 19 th and 20 th Century M	ovements/commercial stvl	e walls	brick		
			concrete		
		roof	asphalt		
		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.)

- [X] 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.
- [X] 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 vielded, or is likely to vield. 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 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 [] Federal agency [] previously determined eligible by the National [] University Register [] designated a National Historic Landmark 1 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

[] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Architecture

Period of Significance 1916-23

Significant Dates 1916

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Lovejoy, J. E.

Primary location of additional data: [x] State Historic Preservation Office [] Other State agency [] Local government

[x] Other - property owner Name of repository: #

10. Geographical Data Acreage of Property

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a 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 James E. Jacobsen

organizationHistory Pays! Historic Preservation Consulting F	Firm	date <u>March 9, 2009</u>			
street & number 4411 Ingersoll Avenue		_ telephone	e <u>515-27</u>	4-3625	
city or town Des Moines	state _	IA	_ zip code _	50312-2415	

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the complete 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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Principal Hotel Company L. C./Mr. Jeff	Hunter		
street & number 1000 Walnut Street	telephone515-2	43-1161	
city or town Des Moines	stateIowa	zip code _50309	

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Section number 7 Page 1 Clemens Automobile Company Building

7. Narrative Description:

This six-story brick warehouse building is located in Des Moines, Iowa's capital city and in Polk County. This places it just south of center within the state. Des Moines, being divided by the Des Moines River, has downtown areas along both sides of that river. The west side downtown, being the original and dominant one, extends from the river west to 19th Street. As of 1916 the western boundary of that downtown was along 10th Street, the location of this building (see Figure 42 for location). It is located on the northwest corner of Mulberry and 10th streets. The Hotel Fort Des Moines, listed on the National Register on September 16, 1982, is located immediately to the north of this building and the subject building is currently used as an annex to the hotel. The building contains a restaurant on the ground floor, meeting rooms, offices, and a swimming pool, on its upper floors. Des Moines is the state capital and is located in Polk County, Iowa.

The former Clemens Automobile Company building is a reinforced concrete structural design that is completely disguised by a light brown brick veneer. The style is overtly Classical Revival and a diluted base-shaft and capital arrangement is employed. The building with its prominent corner location has two facades, the primary east-facing 10th Street one and the secondary, south-facing Mulberry Street one. The same design ground rules apply to both facades. A very high first story comprises the "base" and a white terra cotta belt course defines the sill level of the second floor. The upper five stories, the "shaft," are of equal height, and are unadorned apart from the use of terra cotta sills. Shallow flat pilasters divide the main façade into three equally long bays and the secondary façade into seven unequal bays. Elongated rectangular windows infill almost the entirety of the wall plane between the flanking pilasters. The "capital" consists of the cornice, which is adorned with white terra cotta. Each pilaster has a blank terra cotta base. At the intersection point with the first floor sill level, a second row of terra cotta blocks features a recessed elongated cruciform shape on their lower sections. The same decorative inserts cap each pilaster at the base of the cornice line. The elaborate terra cotta cornice projects above a corbelled frieze. The parapet above has terra cotta quoins and a flat cap at each pilaster continuation point. The irregularity of the south side bay pattern is due to the presence of a stairway within the central bay. The rear wall was also fully fenestrated and remains so above the second floor. There is a full basement. A single door south entrance, with a terra cotta bracketed frieze, matches the main front entrance in treatment.

The main entrance is particularly ornamented, in contrast to similar auto-related nearby designs. The double-door entrance is framed by a plain terra cotta surround, with a rectangular transom above. Brickwork in turn encases this inner door frame and a second, more notable terra cotta door frame surrounds the whole. The arrangement of this second frame mirrors the pilaster/cornice design above. Flat plain terra cotta pilasters culminate in capitals that are then surmounted by a miniature cornice. Above the cornice, ornate terra cotta pilaster caps continue upward. A thin terra cotta line, linking those two caps, defines a plain brick rectangular panel that is set above the entryway.

The Clemens Building design contrasts with that of the other nearby automotive warehouses by excluding an automobile entrance from its main façade. Two Proudfoot and Bird designs are located to the south featured façade auto entrances and even a recessed corner gas station. The availability of a side wall entrance, given the corner location, might explain this distinction. The principal façade as a result reads visually as a commercial front with a highly ornamental and centered terra cotta entry. The display windows extend nearly to the ground level with virtually no kick plate. These openings have the same terra cotta sill treatment. The two easternmost south side ground floor openings matched those on the façade, and no façade ground level opening on either the east or south frontages provided egress for automobiles. Automobiles entered the building via a garage door opening on the south side wall (now closed in). Rail deliveries were brought directly into the building through the overhead door that was at the base of the elevator, set above grade on the ground floor. This is quite unusual given the purpose of the building.¹

¹ William T. Proudfoot and George W. Bird established what is considered to be Iowa's premier architectural firm. The partners re-located to Des Moines in 1896 and in later years added partners Harry D. Rawson and Henry Clark Souers.

Section number 7 Page 2 Clemens Automobile Company Building

Polk County, Iowa

The building is rectangular on plan (67 feet by 121 feet) and each floor contains 8,676 square feet of floor space. Only the blank north sidewall betrays the reinforced concrete skeleton, with tile (eight inches by four inches by four inches) infill set flush with the exposed concrete columns and beams. The same material forms the elevator penthouse and the coursing includes rowlock courses, just like regular brickwork. An interesting historical bit of signage, atop the north side wall parapet, still reads "Clemens Automobile Company." Other historic signage is partly visible on the north side wall.

The foundation walls are of brick construction while the infill in the concrete skeleton walls uses four inch by four inch by eight inch "Des Moines" tile. The concrete beams and columns remain exposed on the north and west walls and these surfaces have been painted a tan color. The two façade walls, to the south and east, are veneered with a light brown face brick. Two rows of six square concrete columns divide each floor into three longitudinal bays. Concrete beams are tied into the columns. The ceilings are arched (Figure 1). The concrete work was all board formed but is otherwise unfinished. The basement columns contain electrical conduit and switches within the casting. The building construction is entirely fireproof, with even the roof being of the same cast reinforced concrete construction. This solid construction allowed for the construction of a massive swimming pool on the sixth floor, but the accompanying raised skylight had to be cut out of the concrete roof.



Figure 1: Vaulted concrete ceiling profile, sixth floor, view south (photo by J. Jacobsen, March 2008)

The basement remains original in its layout and plan. The original Kewanee boiler and related storage and hot water tanks remain in place in the northwest corner. The original elevator twin hinged metal fire doors (Figure 2) remain as does a Fairbanks Scale (Figure 3). A cart for hauling plate glass (Figure 5) even remains from the Standard Glass and Paint era of the building. The south staircase, of concrete with round steel railings, is of recent date and it is the only internal staircase. A second staircase ascends in the northwest corner of the connecting area that links this building with the hotel to the north.

The ground floor is occupied by a brewpub/restaurant (Figure 5). Ceiling heights are substantially higher. A concrete mezzanine runs atop the northernmost bay and is carried to the south across the third bay from the east end. This mezzanine originally contained the company offices. The front two bays feature a pressed tin ceiling but other ceiling surfaces at this level are stuccoed. Wall surfaces are exposed. An original black and white tile floor survives (Figure 6).

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Polk County, Iowa

The second floor is used as an exhibition hall and retains its open plan. The freight elevator service terminates at this level and the elevator chamber has been removed through the sixth floor and the resulting floor openings infilled. Bathrooms are located in the northwest corner. Figures 7 and 8 illustrate a typical foyer entrance and the open floor plan. The columns have been boxed in (column dimensions diminish as the live load diminishes on successive floors). Floors three through five house offices and floors four and five have dropped ceilings and largely retain their open plans, with cubicle offices. The third floor is divided into two suites and some permanent walls have been constructed. The sixth floor features the hotel pool, set above grade within the central bay. A high skylight, set atop an eight-foot-high sidewall, projects above the roof level, above the pool, but is not visible from the ground level (Figures 9 and 10).



Figure 2: Basement elevator fire doors, view west (photo by J. Jacobsen, March 2008)



Figure 3: Base for Fairbanks Scale (the scale, detached, remains as well), view north (photo by J. Jacobsen, March 2008)

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Figure 4: Plate glass cart (photo by J. Jacobsen, March 2008)



Figure 5: First floor with mezzanine, stairwell at front right, view northeast (photo by J. Jacobsen, March 2008)

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Polk County, Iowa

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Figure 6: Tile floor, southeast corner, view southeast, first floor, note exposed tile wall (photo by J. Jacobsen, March 2008)



Figure 7: Second floor foyer entrance, view southeast (photo by J. Jacobsen, March 2008)

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Figure 8: Typical open floor plan, second floor, view southeast, stairwell to right (photo by J. Jacobsen, March 2008)



Figure 9: Sixth floor pool and skylight superstructure, view east (photo by J. Jacobsen, March 2008)

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Figure 10: Rooftop view showing skylight (left), former elevator penthouse, and HVAC equipment, view southwest (photo by J. Jacobsen, March 2008)

The building is linked to the to the Hotel Fort Des Moines by a full-height foyer/elevator shaft connecting link that was built in 1985. This addition is deemed to be a part of the hotel building and is therefore excluded from this nomination. The infill provides floor to floor pedestrian connections to the two buildings and adds elevator and stair service as well. There is a ground level entry that fronts east to 10th Street. :



Figure 11: Connecting infill on north side, view east from alley (left), view west from 10th Street (right) (photographs by James Jacobsen, March 2008)

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Alterations:

The Principal Hotel Company purchased the Clemens Building in 1980 and all of the notable physical changes postdated that purchase, as the two adjoining buildings were interconnected physically, and portions of the Clemens Building were redesigned for use as appendages to the hotel proper. Building permits identify substantial remodeling in 1985 (permit issued April 23, valued at \$1,400,000, issued to the Hotel Fort Des Moines) and 1997 (City Assessor). These changes are known to have been made:

•complete window replacement:

The downside of this change was that a dark reflective glass was used and no effort was made to emulate the transom area within the ground level openings. Otherwise the Chicago style window form was retained and the original window openings were retained as well. The 1916 completion photos (Figures 34-36) show that the upper stories of the south wall had metal industrial windows with centered hopper openings. It is probable that the rear windows had the same window inserts.

•a suspended swimming pool, 1985:

This perhaps unexpected feature is found on the sixth floor and required some extensive structural support arrangements. A two-story skylight was also added, all within the center of the plan.

•ground level restaurant conversion:

The restaurant occupies all of the ground floor. A mezzanine staircase was added.

• south entrance:

This is sealed off and the staircase removed at least on the ground floor.

•elevator:

The west wall fenestration appears to intrude into what was the original elevator shaft. Presumably the elevator shaft was removed in whole or in part and the rear window openings represented enlargements of what openings there were originally.

•west windows:

These openings, which do indicate that the entire wall was originally fully fenestrated, have been blocked in within the north bay. At the sixth floor level, four small square openings were set within the block infilling.

The Clemens Automobile Company Building maintains a high degree of all seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The building retains its commercial setting. The essential building design remains intact save for replacement windows and the closing up of a south side garage door opening. The overall form of the building has remained unchanged since it assumed its intended scale in 1916. All the original exterior architectural materials and detailing, including cornice, window openings, and ornament remain as built. While the interior has been

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completely altered and floor plans largely changed (particularly with the removal of the freight elevator on the upper levels) the ground floor remains mostly open in plan and retains its decorative ceiling. The feeling and association, linked most closely to the ground level and storefront, is retained by the survival of the display window openings and original main entrance.

Floor plans:



Figure 12: Basement floor plan (base floor plan courtesy of Hotel Fort Des Moines)



Figure 13: First floor floor plan (base floor plan courtesy of Hotel Fort Des Moines)

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Figure 14: Floor plan, floors two through five (base floor plan courtesy of Hotel Fort Des Moines)



Figure 15: Floor plan, sixth floor (base floor plan courtesy of Hotel Fort Des Moines)

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Figure 16: Rooftop plan (base floor plan courtesy of Hotel Fort Des Moines)

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Polk County, Iowa

8. Significance Statement:

The Clemens Automobile Building is locally significant on the basis of its and its commercial historical associations (Criterion A) with secondary significance based upon tis architecture (Criterion C). This building's commercial significance is based upon its association with the Clemens Automobile Company, a successful firm that operated from 1909 until 1923, and sold Willys and Overland automobiles. This building was claimed as "the largest building in Des Moines, exclusively devoted to automobiles," and since Des Moines was the hub of an emerging state automotive industry, it was almost certainly the state's largest such building. Its construction was in response to the growing success of its client company, and that success reflected the fact that the Willys-Overland range of models was one of the top three national auto makes as of the spring of 1916. This building was the first one built by that growing firm, and was occupied by the company from late 1916 until 1923. After the Clemens family consolidated its holdings, the Standard Glass and Paint Company relocated to this building and occupied it until 1979. The period of significance is 1916-23 and is based upon the period of building occupancy by the Clemens Automobile Company. The significant date of 1916, denotes the orginal construction.

The secondary significance on architectural grounds reflects the negative visual impact of the replacement windows. Despite this important and negative alteration, the building retains sufficient historical integrity to represent the significant aspects of its original design. The building is architecturally significant because it is a well-preserved example of the automobile department store, a multi-storied all-in-one automobile sales and service facility that was soon replaced by smaller and more horizontally-oriented auto strip salesrooms and garages. The building is presumed to be an excellent example of the work of Des Moines architects Ralph Edmund Sawyer and Charles Albert Watrous, a notable firm that competed head-on with Proudfoot & Bird. Given the lack of absolute certainty, the nomination does not claim these architects as the building designers. This building, and the Standard Glass & Paint Company Building (112 West 10th) immediately to the south, are hemmed in by three notable Proudfoot & Bird designs (Herring Motor Company Building, 210 10th to the south, a second and much larger Herring Motor Company Building, 111 West 10th-greatly altered), and finally the Hotel Fort Des Moines to the north (10th and Walnut). The building design is notable because it clothed an automotive facility in a more commercial and uptown design, using a Neo-classical style. The otherwise functional building was completely veneered in brick with Chicago style windows, and all automotive entrances were relegated to the rear or perhaps the north walls. Enlarged display windows flanked the ornamental pedestrian entrance on the façade. Unlike the other nearby auto department buildings, this design was fully fenestrated and employed industrial metal windows only on a portion of the south façade and likely the rear wall.

Previous Survey Evaluations:

No previous historical or architectural survey investigated the historical origins of this building apart from Barbara Long, who included the Clemens brothers in her contextual summary of the major Des Moines auto dealers (along with Clyde Herring and William Sears). She suggested that the brothers were particularly successful as auto dealers because they were able to use their pre-existing glass and paint retail contacts throughout the state to build up their new auto-selling endeavor. She rated the Clemens Building as an "A" in terms of its historical significance. This was the highest-level rating in that survey (Long, pp. 46, 57).

Downtown Development Context:

The Des Moines downtown proper, located on the west side of the Des Moines River, began a westward expansion c.1903. Prior to that time, commercial expansion was largely concentrated within the defined original downtown, with some northward expansion. The appearance of taller buildings, beginning in the late 1890s, also absorbed some of this new growth. The city was bordered on the east by the river, railroad tracks and warehouse/factories to the south, and residential areas to the west and north. Walnut Street was then the principal commercial arterial and there was a scattering of commercial and

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institutional buildings amongst what was otherwise a residential area west of 9th Street. The appearance of taller buildings within the established downtown produced a clustering of banking and office buildings to the west of 5th Street. A second clustering, at reduced vertical scale (save for the Hotel Fort Des Moines), represented a continued westward commercial expansion that had been preceded by the building of several large storage warehouses along the south edge of the downtown, to the east of 10th Street. Tenth Street, then still solidly residential, began a commercial transition in 1905 when Meredith Publishing Company converted and first occupied a former duplex at 207-11 10th, located across the street and southeast of the subject building. In 1906, the four-story National Biscuit Company (architect not yet identified) was the first factory/warehouse building to be built on the west side of West 10th, north of Cherry Street, at the south end of 10th. The Herring Motor Company warehouse (Proudfoot and Bird, architects) followed, immediately north, in 1912, and was immediately expanded from four to six stories a year later. The four-story Standard building (Sawyer & Watrous, architects) followed in 1913, even as the Herring was being expanded. The Clemens brothers, owners of the Standard Building, built this six-story automotive warehouse and dealership immediately north of Mulberry Street, in 1916 and the Herring Motor Company erected its huge five-story building (Proudfoot and Bird, architects) on the east side of West 10th, opposite the Standard Building, a year later. The massive Hotel Fort Des Moines (Proudfoot and Bird, architects) was built in 1918-19, to the north of the Clemens building. Save for the hotel, all of these buildings were warehouses and all of the buildings were taller edifices, being at least four stories in height. They represented a tall building period that dated back to the 1890s, and one that would largely conclude only with the Great Depression. Collectively the buildings formed a sharp demarcation between the downtown proper and what was to develop as "Auto Row" to the west, the latter being larger but shorter buildings, mostly two stories high. The buildings also represented the importance of the warehousing and jobbing sectors to the growing City of Des Moines (Jacobsen, Des Moines' First "West *End*"..., pp. 25-33).²



Figure 17: View south along 10th Street, c.1919 (Clemens Building at front right) (Des Moines *Register*, November 25, 2003)

² The Hotel Fort Des Moines was listed on the National Register on September 16, 1982; the Herring Motor Car Company and Standard Glass and Paint were both similarly listed on December 6, 2004.

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While the 10th Street automotive buildings were distinguished in terms of their size from their "auto row" counterparts, they were still considered to be the east anchor of that retail district (see Figure 17). The earliest automobile dealers located in existing buildings within the downtown and on both sides of the Des Moines River. It wasn't until 1910 that the first building purpose-built for automobiles sales and storage appeared on Locust Street, west of 11th Street, but it wasn't until 1915 that the term "auto row" was first applied to that developing part of the downtown (Jacobsen, pp. 45, 67).



Figure 18: 10th Street, north from Cherry Street, c.1918 (the Clemens' Building is fifth from the left) (Courtesy Ed Massman)

Figure 18 documents the rapid and large-scale industrial and commercial transformation of 10th Street following the completion of the National Biscuit Company plant at the south end of that street. The transformation proceeded from south to north, with the completion of the Herring Motor Car Company building in 1912, to which two additional floors were added in 1913; the building of the Standard Glass and Paint Company Building, built in 1913; Clemens Auto "department store" at the corner of 10th and Mulberry, built in 1916; the second Herring Company auto department store in 1917 (visible at the right); and finally the Hotel Fort Des Moines, built 1918-19.

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Figure 19: The new Herring building (Horseless Age, January 29, 1913)

Figure 19 illustrates the city's first "auto department store," while Figure 4 depicts the third and final example, built 1917-18.



Figure 20: The second Herring Motor Car Company Building (State Historical Society of Iowa)

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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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Des Moines Construction Context, 1916:

NAMES OF TAXABLE PARTY OF TAXABLE PARTY OF TAXABLE PARTY. Des Moines High in Building Record Aside from the building that is being George Ragsdale-312 Court avenue: done in the motor trades district, there is cost \$12,000. Highland Park Church-Christian dea great deal more of it being done, and the nomination; cost \$15,000. sum total mounts into millions. Among other operations of the year must Among the list of buildings now being not be eliminated Grand Avenue bridge, erected or shortly to go up are: which has been ordered by the City Coun-Register & Tribune-Thirteen story modcil, and on which plans will shortly be out. ern building on Locust, between Seventh This great improvement will cost about 1/4 and Eighth streets; cost \$300,000. million dollars. Clemens Automobile Company-Six story Also there is the fact that \$300,000 of modern concrete building, corner Tenth and school bonds have been voted, and the In-Mulberry streets; cost \$60,000. dependent School Board will authorize a large portion of this construction within Franklin Hotel-Just completed at the corner of Fifth and Locust streets, 130 the present year. rooms, completely rebuilt, at cost of The old Y. M. C. A. at the corner \$200,000. of Grand avenue and Fourth street will be Valley National Bank Building-Corner rebuilt this year. No permit has yet been Fourth and Walnut streets, 128 by 128 taken out. feet; cost of \$400,000.

Hotel Rogers—Completely rebuilt at the corner of Sixth and Mulberry streets, 65 rooms, at cost of \$40,000.

Homestead Building—Former home of Iowa Homestead, recently removed to its new building on Grand Avenue; old building completely rebuilt, at corner of Third and Locust avenue, at cost of \$40,000.

Reliable Furniture Store — Handsome new building, at Walnut street, near Fourth street; cost of \$60,000.

Home Lodge, A. F. & A. M., East Side— Five stories, completely rebuilt; cost of \$50,000. Younker Brothers, department store people, have bought a tract of ground on Ninth street, between Locust and Walnut streets, nearly one-half block, and within the next two years will construct the greatest department store between Chicago and the Pacific Coast.

The Bast-Fogarty Company has completely rebuilt the old Shannon-Mott mills at Fifteenth and Mulberry streets, and this will be one of the big industrial items of the year.

In addition to the foregoing, residences, apartment buildings, and small store buildings, with scores of remodelings, are in the 1916 list.

Figure 21: Major new building list, Des Moines, 1916 (the Clemens Building is fourth down, left column) (Des Moines Magazine, May 1916, p. 12)

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BIG BUILDING RECORI)
The following table is an ev	Idence of
prosperity.	
It shows where there is being	spent or
n immediate prospect more mo	ney than
was spent for all the building	in Des
Moines last year.	
Valley building\$	400,000
Register building	400,000
Finsberg building	100,000
Bankers Life	500,000
Fleming building	300,000
New schools	350,000
lewitt building	100,000
Memens Automobile Company, .	100,000
Total	and a state of store considerations

Figure 22: The largest new buildings by valuation, 1916 (*Des Moines* Magazine, November 1916, p. 32)

Clemens Automobile Company History:

Ashton Clemens (1872-1923) was a notable Des Moines entrepreneur during the pre-World War I years. Like many other businessmen, Clemens established or played a key leading role in numerous substantial business ventures. He began his business career in Omaha, Nebraska where he established a paint business that he sold in 1902. Anecdotal family accounts describe how Clemens, along with his brother, Ross J. Clemens (1882-1974) sought out a new market area for a new paint company. Des Moines was selected because they "found every house...was painted white and they [the home owners] all burned soft coal" which meant that there would be a constant demand for house paint. Their new company, located at 407 5th Street, was tiled the Standard Glass and Paint Company and the brothers opened for business in 1903. The name of the new firm was based on the premise that only standard lines of merchandise were offered. This venture consumed the entrepreneurial energies of the brothers through c.1906. Ross Clemens was the sole traveling salesman, while Ashton Clemens ran the wholesale-retail business. Ross Clemens was vice president of the firm by 1907 but thereafter he had no company association until 1913, by which time he was its treasurer. By 1907 Ashton Clemens was treasurer for the Des Moines Cabinet Company. Beginning in 1917 yet another new company was listed on Ashton Clemens' resume: the Ankeny Linseed Oil Manufacturing Company. This company had displaced Des Moines Cabinet Company in the family portfolio and Ashton Clemens was its vice president (Dunn's Funeral Home Records; Men and Women of Iowa Biographies; Business Men of Iowa, 1953).

By 1909 Ashton Clemens was president of the Riddle Automotive Company, with brother Ross serving as secretary and manager. They acquired this pre-existing automobile company and on June 1, 1913 the firm was renamed the Clemens Automobile Company and this firm became the family flagship company. The company sold Willys-Overland and Knight automobiles and first located at 321-25 Grand Avenue, 1912-17. Ross Clemens was solely in charge of the automotive firm despite his older brother's serving as its president. The firm was the sole distributor for Overland automobiles in Central Iowa

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and there was a branch located in Oskaloosa by early 1914. By 1917, the automobile company was so successful that the brothers built the Clemens Building at 200 West 10th, a six-story automotive department store, located north of their paint and glass building. Noted local architects Sawyer and Watrous were the probable designers (*Horseless Age*, November 13, 1912; June 11, 1913; *Daily News*, June 1, 1913; City Directories, 1903-19, Des Moines *Capital*, December 17, 1913; *Midwestern*, April 1914, pp. 14-15).



Figure 23: The auto company ensconced in its new building (*Daily News*, December 24, 1916)

The growing trade of their automobile company necessitated the construction of a substantial new building was built in 1916 to house it. The Clemens brothers had chosen the right horse, or auto make, when they entered into the business. By the spring of 1916, there were three top automobile companies, those of Henry Ford, William C. Durant, and John N. Willys

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(Willys-Overland). Rather than relocate west to the developing "Auto Row" and building a standard one or two-story combination salesroom and garage, the brothers elected to emulate Clyde Herring by building an automobile department store. Herring's 1912 building, an impressive four stories with full basement, was expanded an additional two stories in 1913. Herring had employed the noted Des Moines architects Proudfoot and Bird to design his building and the Clemens brothers matched Herring's edifice in one fell swoop, by building a six-story high-rise. The automobile company had started out small, selling just 135 cars for a total value of \$150,000 during 1909. Their new quarters enabled them to claim a 1,000 percent increase in their trade by 1917, when they sold 2,000 vehicles worth \$1.5 million. In conjunction with this building, a new \$30,000 three-story brick building was built in Oskaloosa for that branch office. By 1912 the company also had a Waterloo branch office (Des Moines *Register*, March 19, 1916, p. 4; *Daily News*, May 20, 1917; *Capital*, June 29, 1924).



Figure 24: A company advertisement from the new location (*Daily News*, May 27, 1917)

At the end of 1916, the company hosted all of its 185 dealers, representing 109 Iowa cities and towns within their franchise area in a visit to the Toledo, Ohio, Overland Automobile plant. A special nine-car train carried the car dealers to the plant. The travelers returned with 1917 contract orders worth "hundreds of thousands of dollars" (*Daily News*, December 3, 21, 1916).

In mid-1917 the company also became a distributor for the Waterloo-based Interstate Engine and Tractor Company, selling Plowman tractors. The company was supplying tractors to England and 60-70 combination Overland and Plowman dealers gathered at Fort Des Moines, the military post south of the city, to watch a Plowman tractor plow a Chamber of Commerce victory garden. The tractors were not inexpensive, selling for \$1,158 each. While it is not known how long the dual product sales persisted, the mating of auto and tractor sales within a single dealership was certainly a creative and unusual marketing step (*Daily News*, May 25, June 3, 1917).

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Ashton Clemens achieved his pinnacle of success by 1918, by which time he was serving a third consecutive one-year term as president of the Des Moines Chamber of Commerce. He first served as a Chamber director in 1915. Nationally he was Councilor for the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. His wartime home front service included his roles as vice president of the Polk County Chapter of the American Red Cross, membership on the Executive Committee of the Seventh Federal Reserve District, taking a leadership role in the Third Liberty Loan Campaign, serving as treasurer of the Iowa Division, Military Training Camp Association, and a role as vice chairman of the Des Moines War Recreation Board. Reflective of this leading community war role, the vacated automobile quarters at 4th Street and Grand Avenue were converted for use as a serviceman's social club and emergency quarters. Clemens' Red Cross role put him in charge of overseeing funds used for health and sanitation at nearby Camp Dodge, the military cantonment north of the city (*Daily News*, August 24, 29, September 5, 1917; *Des Moines* Magazine, February-March, 1918).



Figure 25: A day in the busy life of Ashton Clemens, 1917 (Daily News, December 12, 1917)

In addition to his work with the Des Moines Chamber, Clemens was a member of the Greater Iowa Association, the Greater Des Moines Committee, and the Des Moines Rotary Club and the Des Moines Club. His business roles consisted of his serving as president and manager of the Standard Glass and Paint Company, president of Clemens Automotive Company, vice-president of the Jaeger Manufacturing Company, vice-president of the Ankeny Linseed Oil Company, and as a director of the Iowa National Bank, the Bankers Trust Company and the Des Moines Hotel Company. Clemens retired from his Chamber leadership post in early 1919 (*Des Moines Magazine*, February-March, 1918; *Daily News*, January 23, 1919).

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Ross Clemens was the more involved partner on the automotive side of the family ventures. This focus was reflected in his election as the chairman of the Motor Trades Bureau of the Chamber of Commerce in January 1918 (*Daily News*, January 22, 1918).

The war failed to impact automobile sales, at least initially. By mid-October 1917 the company was filling 92-97 percent of new orders the same day. The inventory of automobiles was worth \$30,000. The seventh annual Overland dealers dinner drew 150 company representatives to Des Moines in February 1918. The gathering, while predicting a banner year in auto sales for 1918, was dominated by war-related entertainment. The company had its own employee baseball team by 1916 and an award-winning bowling team by the next year (*Daily News*, December 30, 1916; May 1, October 13, 1917; February 21, 1918).



Figure 26: Ashton Clemens (1872-1923) (*Des Moines Magazine*, February-March, 1918).

The post-war transition was hard on automobile dealers but the Clemens brothers survived. In early 1921, the makers of Willys-Knight automobiles slashed prices to such an extent that they literally claimed they would initially suffer a loss on each sale until increased production volumes reduced production and materials costs. The death of brother Ashton placed

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increasing burdens on Ross Clemens and he announced his retirement from the automobile business in mid-1924, voluntarily relinquishing the local franchise. The Willys-Overland Company reorganized the branch (one of just 18 nationally) to a wholesale basis, kept the entire managerial and sales force, and relocated it to 1430 Locust Street, to auto row. Thus ended a fourteen-year-long success story in what was a tumultuous trade and one that was fraught with consolidation and the closing of hundreds of auto-making firms. A business that sold fewer than 100 vehicles annually in 1909, was selling 2,500 a year when it closed. The new branch retained the Clemens name for two more years (*Capital*, May 22, June 29, 1921; city directories).

Ashton Clemens died at the age of 51 on August 24, 1923. His widow, Emma [Ohlson] Clemens (1875-?) was also actively involved in World War I home front work. The couple had three daughters, two of whom were still minors at the time of their father's early death, but none of them participated in leadership positions within the Standard Glass and Paint Company (*Who's Who In Des Moines*, 1929, p. 57).

The former Clemens Automobile Company building, at 200 10th Street was vacant as of 1924 and it wasn't until early February 1925 that the paint company moved north to 200 10th. The larger building allowed the already large firm to substantially expand. Ross Clemens promised that the move would make his company "one of the finest paint stores in the entire United States." The move took place as the company reached its 23rd anniversary of operation. The new location housed the company offices and wholesale department until 1979 when the company was discontinued. Ross J. Clemens was listed in city directories as company president beginning in 1925 and he continued in that position until 1947. As of 1950 he was chairman of the company board. Ross served as president of the National Paint Distributors Association and the National Glass Distributors Association. He served as director of the Central National Bank and Trust Company and served for 32 years as a director of the Bankers Life Company (1928-60) and he served as president of the Greater Des Moines Committee and the Des Moines Club. His son, Philip A. Clemens (1918-1999) replaced him as president and would run the firm until it closed. He was trained as a chemist at Iowa State College (B.S. 1942) (*Businessmen of Iowa*, 1953, p. 127; *Register*, August 12, 1962; *Capital*, January 4, 1925).

By 1919 the company had added storefront construction to its range of products, and the 1950 city directory listing specified "Kawneer Storefronts" as its preferred vendor. By 1915 the retail storefront for the company was relocated to 514 East Locust and it remained there through 1946. A new storefront was established at 3405 Ingersoll and this branch store was continued until the company folded. A second storefront was at 2407 University as of 1962.

As of 1962 the company retained its regional importance with branch stores located at Waterloo, Fort Dodge, Cedar Rapids (established 1921) and Mason City. A new warehouse and store was finished at Cedar Rapids that same year. Noted Iowa artist Libby Momberg (born 1930), worked for the firm for six years during the early 1970s.

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Figure 27:Ross J. Clemens (left), Philip Clemens (right) (Des Moines *Register*, August 12, 1962)

Building History:



Figure 28: Architect's elevation sketch (Des Moines Magazine, April 1916, p. 9; Des Moines Register, March 26, 1916)

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The building plans were complete as of late March 1916 and J. E. Lovejoy was the general contractor. The elevation sketch that appeared during March and April clearly depicted a mezzanine level, centered along the south frontage. Only the easternmost three bays, on the first through the third floor levels, had Chicago style windows, the remainder was industrial sash with centered hoppers. The building was intended to be completed by June but for unknown reasons, was not ready until late August. The building was promoted as being of reinforced concrete construction and "absolutely fireproof." The expected accolades were offered, it being said that when finished this would be "one of the most complete automobile sales and service establishments in the West." The concrete frame of the building was complete by late July 1916. The office and salesroom components of the company were in the newly completed building by September 1, 1916, and the mechanical section was only being installed by mid-month (*Daily News*, September 1, 14, 1916; *Des Moines* Magazine, April 1916).



Figure 29 nicely summarizes the emergence of the "big motor car home" in Des Moines, and since Des Moines was the emerging auto center of the state, in Iowa as well. The Studebaker building reference is likely a mistaken nod to the second Herring auto building, which was built diagonally to the southeast of the Clemens Building, in 1917-18. The Studebaker building, finished in 1918, was large but was only three stories high and it was located at Locust and 15th at the west end of Auto Row (Jacobsen, *Des Moines' First "West End,"* pp. 96-97).

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Figure 30: We are erecting...one of the finest Automobile sales and service buildings in the Middle-West (*Des Moines* Magazine, May 1916, p. 7)

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Even as the contractor struggled to complete the building, its owners used the site to host their dealers who were in town for the state fair. The new building was "the largest building in Des Moines, exclusively devoted to automobiles." So the Clemens brothers considered their new edifice to be larger than the Herring building.



Figure 33: Already using the new address, August 1916 (Des Moines *Tribune*, August 30, 1916)

The initial building description placed the show and salesrooms and the restrooms on the first floor. Service, repair and storage filled the upper floors (*Daily News*, September 1, 1916).

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Figure 34: Completion photo, view northwest (Des Moines *Capital*, September 1, 1916)

The most detailed account of the building's internal layout and usage came half a year after it was occupied. The *Daily News* was the source:

Their fine building at 10^{th} and Mulberry streets is 68x132 feet, six stories and basement, and is absolutely fireproof throughout.

The top two floors are used for storage. The fourth floor is the paint shop, where customers can have any kind of a car painted any known color. The company makes a specialty of pleasing people who desire original paint schemes. Two rooms on this floor are partitioned off for the varnishing work.

The third floor is another storage department where shipments of Overland cars are placed until driven away by buyers. The number of cars carried in stock varies with the season of the year, but it sometimes as high as 200.

There are 22 different models of Overland according to Manager Clemens and their company usually has every different make in stock. These cars range a small four-cylinder roadster sedan [sic].

The second floor has two departments. The front half of the floor is used as a salesroom, where slightly used cars, after being put thru the paint shop, are stored and cared for as carefully as new cars. The rear half is a service station for Overlands only.

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Between the second and first floors is a balcony containing most of the offices. Long rows of metal cases containing repair parts are also found here. Close to \$25,000 worth of parts are kept in stock by the company at all seasons of the year. A dummy elevator connects this balcony with the service station.

The main salesroom and sales office are, of course, on the first floor, facing 10th st. [sic], the rear of the floor being a quick service room for cars needing but slight attention.

The basement is used as a store room for heavy parts such as wheels, fenders, radiators, etc., and cars leaving the paint shop are stored here until called for.

Altho the Clemens Automobile company's plant is but two blocks from the Hubbell office building, yet a spur of the Des Moines Union railway reaches the rear of the building, and shipments of cars are unloaded from box and freight cars directly on the elevator of the plant.

This spur is the nearest piece of tracking to the retail district of Des Moines, and gives the Clemens company an advantage of location not possessed by any other firm in the city (*Daily News*, May 20, 1917).



Figure 35: The newly occupied building, view northwest (*Des Moines* Magazine, September 1916, p. 29)

When the paint company occupied the building, beginning in early 1925, the retail trade occupied the first floor. Company offices for the wholesale trade were on the second floor, likely in the front of the plan. The basement and the four upper floors were used for warehousing and a part of the fourth floor was used to bevel and silver mirrors. The plate glass

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department occupied the back of the first floor. The railroad spur continued to supply the building from the west end (*Capital*, January 4, 1925).



Figure 36: Still working out the bugs in the new building, March 1917 (*Des Moines* Magazine, March 1917, p. 15)

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WALNUT



In Figure 37 the horizontal arrow locates the new building. The building detail is not legible in this reproduction, but the Clemens Automobile Company was naturally recorded as the owner/tenant firm. Note how the alleyway to the north of the building remained open. It is probable that automobiles were brought into the building using this alley. Recent construction has obscured any closed garage door openings at that point.

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Figure 39: 1941 aerial view of the west edge of the main downtown The Clemens Building is immediately left of center, to the right of the Hotel Fort Des Moines, the massive tall building at the left side (Plan and Zoning Department, City of Des Moines)

The Architects:

The presumed architects (absent solid proof, they are not identified in this nomination as the architects), Ralph Edmund Sawyer (1873-1947) and Charles Albert Watrous (1875-1940) were both MIT graduates and formed a design partnership in Des Moines in 1905. Watrous was the business manager and construction supervisor, while Sawyer was the designer. Watrous did not come to Des Moines until 1909 so the Standard Glass and Paint Building, if one of their designs, would have been an early commission for the new firm. The partnership endured until Charles Watrous' death. Architectural historian Wesley Shank credits the firm with "a number of significant commissions in Des Moines" and their works included a great many notable residences. While Proudfoot and Bird and their successors are considered to be the first tier of Iowa/Des Moines architects, Sawyer and Watrous should be strong candidates for a second tier of significant architects. They competed one-on-one with Proudfoot and Bird and designed a broad range of very substantial commercial, public and residential buildings. Figure 41 presents a short list of their projects as of 1917.

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AKE your factory building suit your product; not your product suit a building. House your business in a home planned for you instead of the secondhand home of another.

Production problems are lessened in a well lighted, well ventilated, modernly constructed "made-foryou" manufacturing plant.

Increased production, reduced operating expense, healthier working conditions, less over-time expense makes the modern factory a paying investment to its owner.

We would be pleased to consult with you on your individual business building problems.



Figure 40: Architects' factory building advertisement (Des Moines Magazine, May 1918)

In Figure 40 the architects appear to have pictured the new Clemens building into a hypothetical streetscape that closely resembled 10th Street, viewed north from Mulberry Street. The large building in the background mimics the location of the planned Hotel Fort Des Moines, while the building in the left foreground accurately depicts this building. The pages of *Des Moines* Magazine, published 1916-21, are filled with commissions completed by the firm and an unattributed architect's elevation sketch appears in that same source. Arguing against crediting the design to Sawyer and Watrous is the fact that the architects do not claim it as their design, as they do with dozens of other projects and when they present a historical summary list (Figure 41) of their most notable designs as of 1917.

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Polk County, Iowa

Insurance On Your Building Investment

The house in which you live and the building in which you work are insured against fire.

Just as you insure your home against fire, insure the house you plan to build against errors of construction and design by retaining the services of a competent architect.

Men of affairs do not entrust the expenditure of thousands of dollars to an architect without being confident of his ability and integrity.

Below are listed a few of the buildings that have been entrusted to this firm.

RESIDENCES

Gardner Cowles Mrs. G. M. Hippee Meyer Rosenfield Edwin T. Meredith Geo. A. Dissmore Samuel F. Ellis

Sen. Addison M. Parker B. S. Henry Charles Weitz Henry Frankel C. S. Walker Gerard Nollen

OTHER BUILDINGS

Hippee Building St. Elmo Apartment W. F. Hansen Apartment Library at Hamburg Church, Nevada, Iowa Harbach Undertaking Building Banks at Lorimer and Dayton

Grocers Wholesale Co.'s Building Nurses' Home, Methodist Hospital Store and Apartment for M. H. Cohen Picture Theatre, Herrold, Camp Dodge Iowa Loan & Trust Co., Banking Rooms Globe Machinery & Supply Co. Schools at Sheldahl and Knoxville

RALPH E. SAWYER

CHARLES A. WATROUS

Sawyer & Watrous Architects 401 HIPPEE BUILDING

Figure 41: Commissions list, Sawyer & Watrous, November 1917 (Des Moines Magazine, November 1917, p. 11)

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Des Moines Capital, December 17, 1913; September 1, 1916, May 22, June 29, 1921 June 29, 1924; January 4, 1925

Daily News, June 1, 1913; September 1, December 3, 21, 24, 30, 1916; May 20, 25, 27, June 3, August 24, 29, September 5, October 13, December 12, 1917; January 22, February 21, 1918; January 23, 1919

Des Moines Register, March 19, 26, July 30, 1916; August 12, 1962; November 25, 2003

Des Moines Tribune, August 30, 1916; August 21, 28, 1930

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10. Geographical Data:

Boundary Description:

Lot 1 Block 20 of H. M. Hoxie's Addition.

Boundary Justification:

This lot is fully occupied by the subject building and has been historically associated with it since its construction. The connecting link to the Hotel Fort Des Moines, occupying the south 14 feet of Lot 2, same block and addition, is excluded, the same being assigned to the hotel building (National Register, September 16, 1982).

<u>Map:</u>

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Polk County, Iowa



Figure 42: Locational Map

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Polk County, Iowa

Photographs:

Photographer:James E. JacobsenDate:August 25, 2008Film:TMAX 100 ASA

Frame	: View:	Description
1	Northwest	overview, south and east facades, Hotel Fort Des Moines to right rear
2	West	entranc/elevator/foyer infill between Clemens and hotel building
3	Southwest	east facade
4	Northwest	east facade
5	Northwest	south facade
6	West	detail, east façade entrance
7	Northeast	detail lower portion of south façade, south entrance
8	Northwest	detail, south façade entrance
9	Northwest	sealed in south garage door to west of south entrance
10	North	cornice detail, west end south façade
11	Northeast	west end wall and south facade