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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store

other names/site number Warfield-Pratt-Howell Co. building; Churchill Drug Co. building

2. Location

street & number 97 3rd Avenue SE not for publication N/A

city or town Cedar Rapids vicinity N/A

state Iowa code IA county Linn code 113 zip code 52401-1410

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official — Date: 10 MARCH 2016

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- [x] entered in the National Register
  - [ ] See continuation sheet.
- [ ] determined eligible for the National Register
  - [ ] See continuation sheet.
- [ ] determined not eligible for the National Register
- [ ] removed from the National Register
- [ ] other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper: Edson W. Beall — Date of Action: 5·3·16

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- [X] private
- [ ] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- [X] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Commercial Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
walls BRICK
roof OTHER
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.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

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

Property is:

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

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1901-1966

Significant Dates

1901

1941

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Unknown

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

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

Primary Location of Additional Data:

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

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1-acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 43.067851 Longitude: -92.672119
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

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

organization AKAY Consulting date 02/15/2015

street & number 103 W. Island Avenue telephone 515-491-5432

city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55401-1509

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps: A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Shadow River LC

street & number 221 2nd Avenue SE, Suite 400 telephone 319-364-7444

city or town Cedar Rapids state MN zip code 52401

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

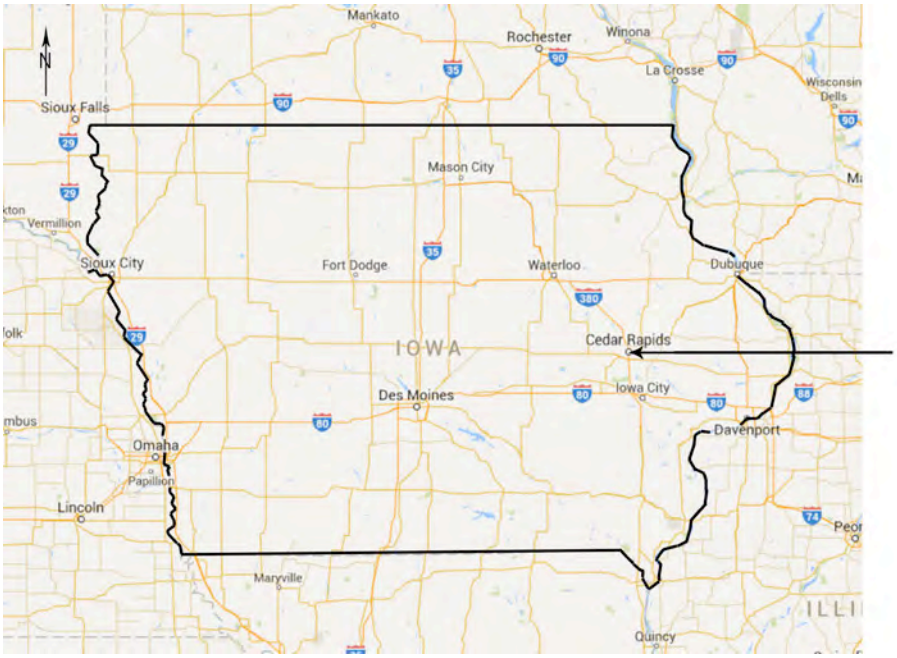
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.0. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

7. Narrative Description

Site Description

The Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store is located in Cedar Rapids, Linn County, Iowa (Figure 1). Situated in southeast Iowa, Cedar Rapids (pop. 126,326) is the largest city in the southeast quadrant of the state and ranks second among Iowa's cities overall - exceeded only by the state capital at Des Moines with a population of 203,433.[1] Cedar Rapids covers an area of some 70.80 square miles and is bisected by the north-to-south running I-380 and the east-to-west running U.S. Highway 30.[2]

Figure 1. Map of Iowa – 2015

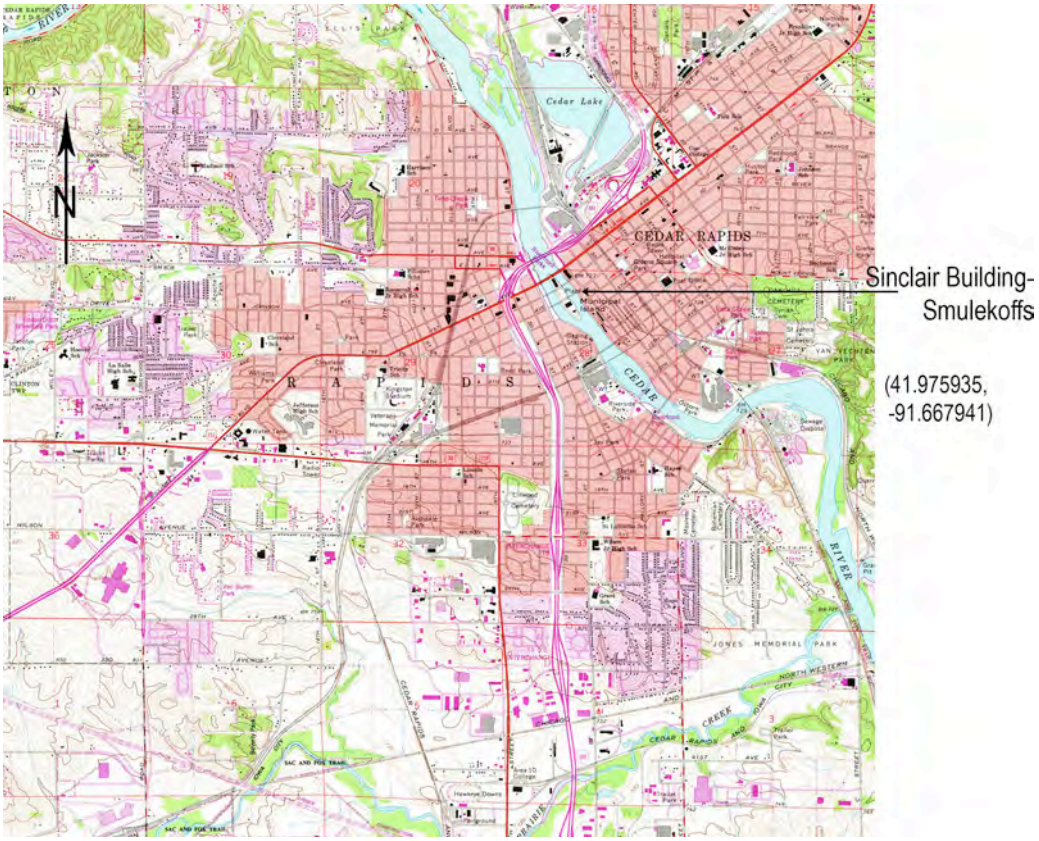


(SOURCE: https://www.google.com/maps/place/Cedar+Rapids,+IA. Accessed 08/31/2015)

The location of Cedar Rapids, Iowa is indicated.

1 "Iowa's Largest Cities," *Quad City Times*, February 10, 2011. Online at http://qctimes.com/iowa-s-largest-cities/article_c5d8850a-3556-11e0-ba3b-001cc4c002e0.html. Accessed 07/25, 2014.
2 http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/19/1912000.html. Accessed 07/25/2015.

Figure 2. 7.5 Minute USGS Topographic Map – Cedar Rapids South Quad - 1975



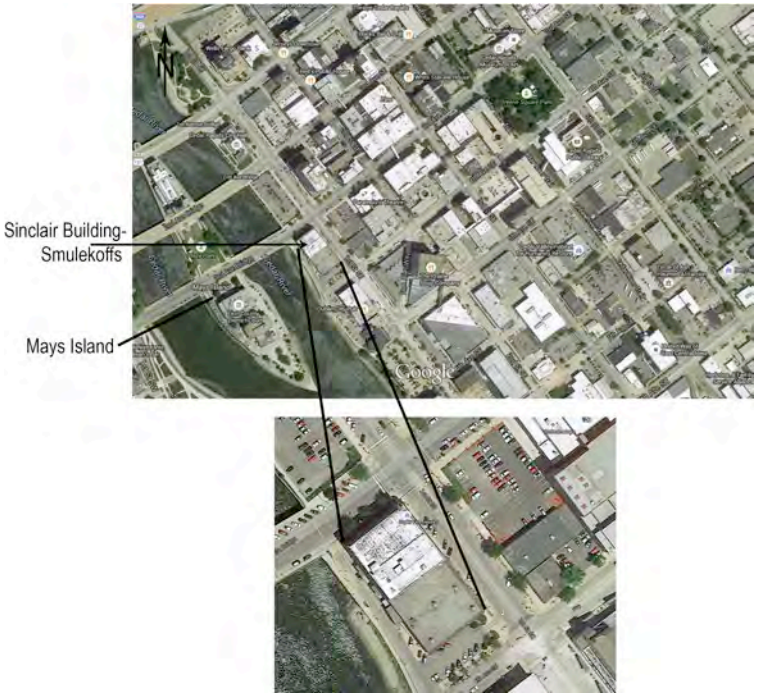
(SOURCE: https://store.usgs.gov. Accessed 08/31/2015)

The building is sited on the east bank of the Cedar River and on the west edge of the commercial downtown area.

The original town of Cedar Rapids was laid out on the east side of the Cedar River with a gridded plat of some 60 blocks oriented with its streets running perpendicular to the course of the river; as a result, the street grid is rotated approximately 45 degrees to the cardinal directions (Figure 2). Street names were changed in the early 20th century and today these streets start east of the river with 1st Street, numbering ordinally eastward. Avenues bisect the streets with those south of 1st Avenue numbered ordinally (Figure 3).[3]

3 Marlys Svendsen, *Historical and Architectural Survey Report for Community Block Grant Neighborhoods, Cedar Rapids, Iowa* (Cedar Rapids: City of Cedar Rapids, 1995), 4.

Figure 3. Aerial Map – 2015



(SOURCE: https://www.google.com/maps/place/Cedar+Rapids,+IA. Accessed 08/31/2015.)

Typical of Iowa communities, the city grew outward from the commercial sector, which was initially concentrated along 1st through 3rd Streets SE between 1st and 4th Avenues SE. By 1865 an extensive system of railroad lines passed through the city's downtown, west side, and the riverfront area creating industrial corridors and warehouse districts as factories and distributors located facilities in close proximity to transportation. A series of "Y" spur lines and sidings extended rail service into the downtown, with the Milwaukee Road's siding stretching along the rear of the 1st Street buildings, adjacent to the Cedar River, as far as 3rd Avenue SE. The Sinclair Building-Smulekoff Furniture Store was constructed along the Milwaukee siding, the proximity to the line being a driving factor behind its construction. Although the tracks were removed in the 1970s, the building retains its orientation to that historic feature.

The building is also located adjacent to the 3rd Avenue bridge, which provided early and critical access between the west and east sections of the city, separated by the Cedar River. As transportation of goods transitioned from the railroads to trucks, the bridge became increasingly more important to the businesses located along 1st Street SE. This is particularly true in the late 1910s and 1920s as the wholesale district in which the Smulekoff building is located began a transformation to one anchored in the retail sector.

The area in which the Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store is located was, from the late 1890s through the early 1930s dominated by warehouse businesses like the Churchill Drug Co. and the Warfield-Pratt-Howell Co., which each occupied this building for portions of that period after its 1901 construction. Ready access to railroad transportation via spur lines that served the area's distribution houses made it an economically viable location for wholesale businesses. The area began a transition from wholesale to retail interests in the late 1910s through the 1930s, with many of the existing buildings making that functional evolution. As a result, the city sector in which Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store is located retains a number of large-scale buildings dating to the late 19th and early 20th century that function today for multiple purposes from office to housing. New construction and surface parking lots are also represented in the immediate area (Image 1).

The Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store is located on a five-lot parcel on the southwest corner of the intersection of 3rd Avenue SE and 1st Street SE (historically addressed as either 97 3rd Avenue SE or 301-303 1st Street SE). As a corner building, both the east and north elevations are considered primary. The building is bound on the south by surface parking and on the west by a paved alley (formerly the location of a railroad spur line), which separates the building from the Cedar River (Photograph 3). A public sidewalk runs flush to the building along the north and east elevations, providing access to the primary entrance on the northeast corner of the building.

Image 1. Site View

(Image by AKAY Consulting – 08/26/2015)

View of the 1st Street SE streetscape, looking northwest from near 5th Avenue SE with Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store at mid-ground, left.

The five-lot parcel upon which the building is situated has an approximate 311-foot frontage on 1st Street SE and an approximate 125-foot frontage on 3rd Avenue SE. The two-section, 250-foot by 125-foot building abuts the property lines on the north and the east with an 8,000-square foot parking lot occupying a full lot at the south end of the building (Photograph 4).[4]

Property Description

The Sinclair Building-Smulekoff's Furniture Store is comprised of two primary sections: the five-story, red brick building constructed in 1901 and a two-story, brick addition built in ca.1973. The historic building is visually defined by its tripartite organization, abundant fenestration, and the five-story Smulekoffs sign, which has become iconic in the community.

Image 2. Exterior Elevation

(Image by AKAY Consulting – 08/26/2015.)

View of the Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store, looking south across the intersection of 3rd Avenue SE and 1st Street SE. In this view we see the original, 1901 5-story building with the ca.1973 addition at left.

4 http://www.cedar-rapids.info/assessor/pmc/appraisal_report.asp?pid=142820700100000. Last accessed 09/26/2015.

Exterior

Masonry construction, a flat roof, abundant windows, and the stylistic contrast between the historic and non-historic sections of the building visually define the exterior of the Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store. The 1940s era awning and prominent signage are significant elements of the visual character.

Constructed in 1901 as a corner building, the five-story portion of the building has two primary elevations – the north and the east – each of which were treated even-handedly in terms of quality and type of materials, design elements, and arrangement of fenestration (Image 2). These primary elevations use a mottled, red brick laid in a common bond. Indicative of the Commercial Style, the elevations feature a tripartite composition: base, shaft, and cap with classical influences apparent. Subsequent to the building's transition from wholesale to retail function, the base has been dominated by large display windows set in metal frames. The primary entrance, which is located at the northeast corner of the building, is recessed with two round columns supporting the cantilevered awning. The storefront extends the full length of the base on both of the primary elevations.

The shaft of the historic building is visually distinguished as the area between the storefront cornice and the decorative cornice between the fourth and fifth stories (Image 3). The shaft is characterized by the use of vertical pattern – with fenestration aligned between floors and recessed between alternating wall surfaces of varying widths. The wall surface assumes the character of a pilaster, extending through three stories from the upper stone horizontal band of the storefront cornice to culminate in a capital created from stepped brick courses. The combination of varying pilaster widths and recessed planes creates an active visual character that varies as the angle of shadow changes throughout the day.

The pilasters of the shaft support a cornice comprised of a brick entablature and dentils topped by a projecting wood or metal cornice.

The building cap eschews the complex pattern of the shaft, being instead a simple march of windows, one single followed by a series of pairs, across the elevation; although aligned with the windows of the shaft, the absence of recesses flattens the visual character. Typical of the windows used on the primary elevations, those of the cap are relatively small in scale, with a three-over-three light configuration. Each window opening has a flat head and utilizes a stone sill, but otherwise lack trim or decorative detail. The current windows were introduced in 2001.

Like that of the shaft, the cornice of the cap is comprised of a brick entablature and dentils topped by a projecting metal cornice. A brick parapet with stone coping finishes the building.

Image 3. Exterior Detail: Fenestration and Shaft Cornice

(Image by AKAY Consulting – 08/26/2015.)

View of the fenestration, this on the east elevation.

Character-defining features of the primary elevations which mark the historic building's early 1940s transition from wholesale to retail business are the deeply cantilevered awning and the iconic "Smulekoffs" sign that is mounted on the north elevation near the northeast corner. The awning is constructed of an undetermined material with a fired enamel fascia in white and brown. The sign, which is V-shaped in plan view, reaches from the storefront cornice to extend above the roofline by some six feet and projects from the wall plan approximately 18-feet. The sign background is white with a sans serif typeface of brown on both sides of the sign.

The rear (west) elevation lacks all of the stylistic elements of the primary elevations (Image 4). Typical of secondary elevations, the brick utilized on the west is of a lower grade; it is laid in a common bond. The fenestration of the second through fifth floors mirrors the arrangement established on the primary elevations. Stone sills are used here, but the window openings use an arched header and vary in proportions. Like the remainder of the building, the windows on the west elevation were replaced in 2001.

The ground floor of the west elevation features three loading doors – two of which appear to be original to the building, with the third clearly a later modification of historic openings. An elevated, poured concrete dock runs approximately two-thirds of the length of the elevation from south to north. An iron fire escape,

with landings at each of the upper floors, is attached to the elevation from roofline to the second floor.

The south elevation (visible above the ca.1973 addition) utilizes the same brick as that of the west elevation and is devoid of applied ornament and windows.

An elevator penthouse and exhaust stack are visible on the roof.

Image 4. Exterior Elevation

(Image by AKAY Consulting – 08/26/2015.)

View of the rear (west) and north elevations, looking east-southeast from the 3rd Avenue bridge.

A two-story addition was made to the historic building in ca.1973 (Image 5). The addition was constructed on the site formerly occupied by three late-20th century, brick buildings; the northernmost of the three being a three-story brick building that adjoined the Sinclair Building-Smulekoff Furniture Store, with interior

access on the first and second floors.[5] A ghost marking on the south elevation confirms the removal of an earlier adjoining building. The addition is visually characterized by its low profile, flat roof, masonry exterior, and expansive use of glazed storefronts. The addition is otherwise without windows. Further, the addition lacks any applied ornate, rather, the deeply cantilevered awning, which was extended from the historic building to stretch along the primary elevations (east and south) of the addition, is the sole stylistic element on what is essentially a brick box.

Due to its simple form, minimized height, and absence of a strong visual character, the addition is visually subordinate to the historic building.

Image 5. Exterior Elevation

(Image by AKAY Consulting – 08/26/2015.)

View of the Sinclair Building-Smulekoff's Furniture Store, looking northwest across the intersection of 1st Street SE and 4th Avenue SE.

5 *Fire Insurance Map,* Chicago: Sanborn Company, 1913, revised 1949.

Interior

The interior of the Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store (both sections) is visually defined by a generally open floor plan at all levels, with post and beam construction visible (fully or partially) on all levels of the historic building.

The historic building and the addition are represented in the interior space of the first and second floors of the Sinclair Building-Smulekoff Furniture Store. The interior space of the addition is generally open, with regularly spaced post supports and a dropped ceiling (Photographs 11-17). Floors are carpeted. The south and east elevations are dominated by display windows and the second entrance is located on the southeast corner, adjacent to the parking lot. Three sets of stairs, a public elevator, and a freight elevator are located in the addition. The second floor of the addition is a reiteration of the first (Figures 4-5).

The first floor of the 1901 building is generally open in plan, with minor subdivision of space in the southwest quadrant; this amounts to partial walls used to create display spaces for furniture groupings. The space retains its iron column and beam construction (now painted), with the floors carpeted (Image 6). As noted in the exterior description, display windows line the east and north elevations and the primary entrance is located at the northeast corner.

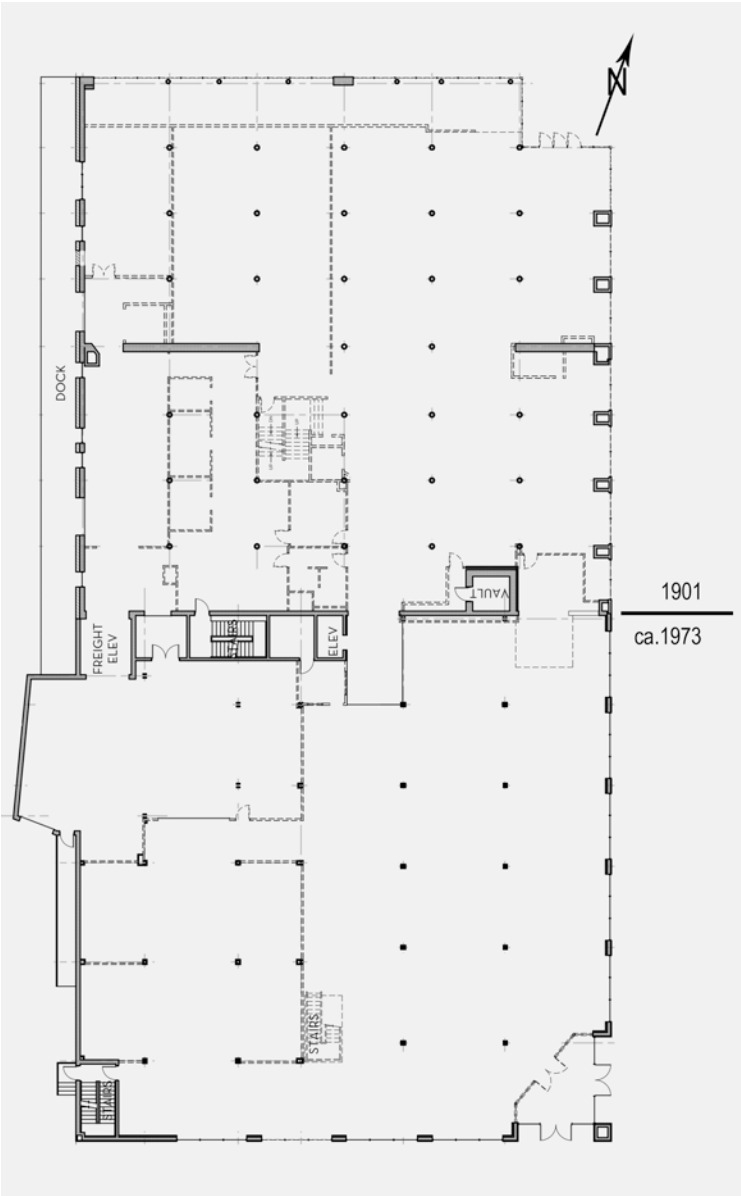
It should be noted here that the structural system in the 1901 building varies between the first floor and the upper floors. The first floor post-and-beam construction is of iron, while the upper stories post-and-beam structural system is executed in wood. In most spaces of the upper stories, the system has been clad in finish materials. However, the slow-burning timber structure remains fully visible on the fifth floor (Image 8).

Image 6. Interior – First Floor – 1901 Building

(Image by AKAY Consulting – 08/26/2015.)

View looking southeast toward the addition.

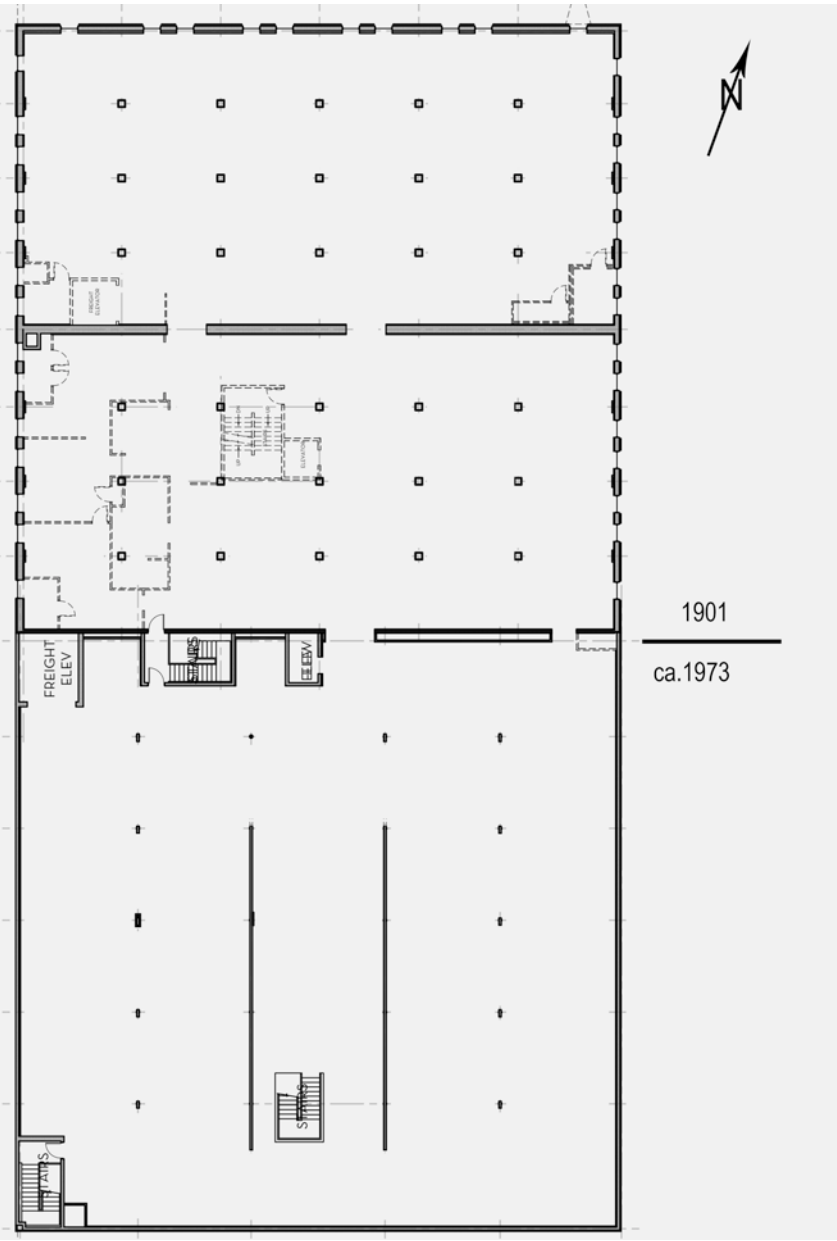
Figure 4. Floor Plan – First Floor



(SOURCE: Aspect Architecture/Design – 2015)

The interior of the first floor (both sections) is generally open in plan, with the historic post-and-beam structure visible in the 1901 building.

Figure 5. Floor Plan – Second Floor

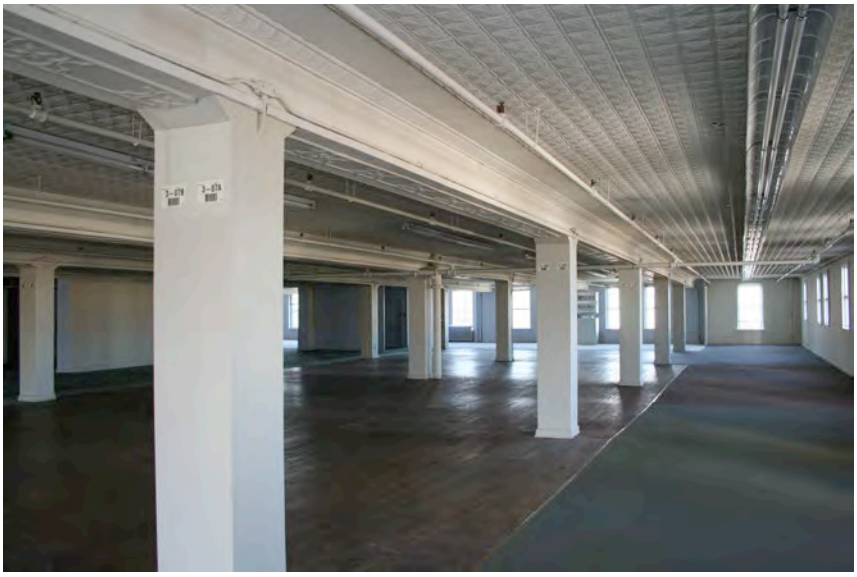


(SOURCE: Aspect Architecture/Design – 2015)

The interior of the second floor is open in plan, with the structural system visible in the historic building.

As the floor plan in the previous figure indicates, the interior of the historic building's second floor remains generally unencumbered, with the wood, post-and-beam structural system visible (Image 7). At this level, the post-and-beam members are smooth-coated with pressed metal detailing applied to the beams. The space is further defined by the retention of the pressed metal ceiling, with some areas of wood floors exposed; other areas now carpeted, are also likely wood. The walls of the space are smooth plaster, painted. Non-historic florescent lighting runs parallel to the structural system.

Image 7. Interior - Second Floor – 1901 Building

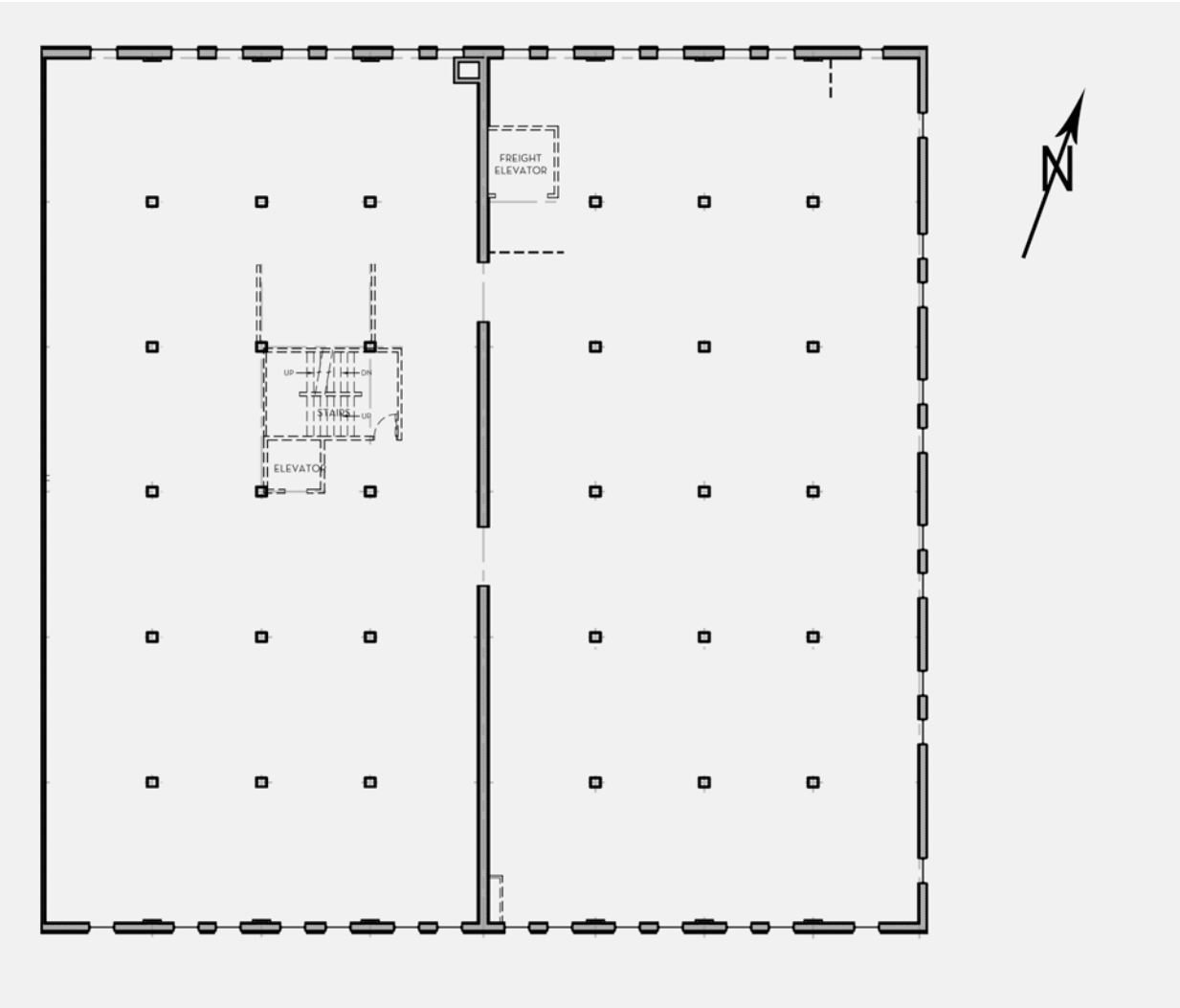


(Image by AKAY Consulting – 08/26/2015.)

View of the second floor in the 1901 building, looking west-northwest through the space. Note the treatment of the structural system and the use of a pressed metal ceiling.

The third floor plan (Figure 6.) likewise retains its open plan with the wood post-and-beam structural system visible, though smooth-coated and painted. The ceilings and walls of the space are smooth plaster, painted. The historic wood floors are retained and exposed in most areas.

Figure 6. Floor Plan – Third - Fifth Floors



(SOURCE: Aspect Architecture/Design – 2015)

The interior of floors three through five are open in plan, with the structural system visible.

Typical of the historic building on the whole, the fifth floor remains open in plan with the slow-burning timber post-and-beam structure visible (Image 8). Atypically, the structural members remain unfinished – the various components and natural wood exposed. Historic fire insurance maps and later design plans indicate the fifth floor was used as a warehouse space – both for the early wholesalers and later for Smulekoffs Furniture Store.[6] The lack of finish at this level reflects that historic function.

On the fifth floor we get a thorough understanding of the structural system, which incorporates a 10-inch square post with a simple bolster to provide an increased bearing area. Trusses provide additional structural support at this level. The ceiling joists are also exposed, as are the historic wood floors.

Image 8. Interior – Fifth Floor – 1901 Building

(Image by AKAY Consulting – 08/26/2015.)

Typical view of the fifth floor with structural system (post-and-beam, trusses, and ceiling joists) and floors visible.

6 *Sanborn Company Fire Insurance Map*, New York: Sanborn Company, 1913 and files of Aspect Architecture/Design, 1959 design plans.

Statement of Historic Integrity

The Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store retains a generally high level of historic integrity.

Specifically, because the Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store remains on its original site, the level of integrity as it relates to ***location*** is high. Retention of location is of particular importance, because location is tied directly to the original historic function as a wholesale interest; the building was constructed at this location because of its proximity to the spur line of the Milwaukee Railroad, which facilitated product distribution.

Integrity of ***setting*** and ***association*** are considered very good. In the case of this building, historic setting and association are both about proximity to transportation sources – the river, the railroad, roadways, and the 3rd Avenue bridge – and in an area dominated by commercial interests. The Cedar River retains its physical presence on setting and, although the Milwaukee spur line that ran at the rear of the building was removed in the 1970s, the path that the line occupied remains in use by vehicular traffic. Further, integrity of setting remains defined by the intersecting roadways of 1st Street SE and 3rd Avenue SE, with passage over the Cedar River retained via the 3rd Avenue bridge. Although the composition of the commercial buildings has changed, with a number of the early wholesale buildings lost to later development, integrity of setting and association remains commercial in function and feel.

Historic integrity as it relates to ***design*** and ***materials*** is very good. The alteration of the ground level adversely impacts integrity of design as it relates to the original 1901 design. However, because the period of significance embraces the conversion of the building from a wholesale to a retail building and its subsequent and long-term occupation by Smulekoffs Furniture Store, the alteration of the ground floor (including the introduction of large expanses of display windows, the deep awning, and the 5-plus story sign) is part of the historic fabric which contributes to the historic integrity of both design and materials.

Further, the upper floors of the building retain their tripartite organization, rhythmic arrangement of fenestration and wall planes, and the decorative elements of the cornices. Together, these components elevate historic integrity of design. Retention of historic masonry and cornice materials contribute to integrity of materials.

Integrity of design is most significantly impacted by the ca.1973 addition. However, because the addition is limited to two stories, is attached on the secondary elevation (the location of an earlier building), and because its design style is very restrained, the addition remains visually subordinate to the historic building. The loss of historic windows presents an adverse impact to integrity of materials, but the retention of a sympathetic configuration minimizes the impact on historic design.

As it relates to integrity of design on the building's interior, historic integrity remains high due in large part to the retention of the open interior plan, which appears to have been from the time of its 1901 construction without significant subdivision of interior spaces. As a result, the interior remains defined by open volumes and an exposed structural system.

Integrity of materials on the interior is likewise high. Of particular note is the retention of wood floors – some hidden beneath non-historic carpeting – pressed metal ceilings on the third and fourth floors, and the natural materials of the exposed structural system, particularly impactful on the fifth floor.

As it relates to historic integrity of ***workmanship***, the condition of the building's masonry is testament to the skill of those who built it. The building stands as a representative of an era in which workmanship reflected the skills of an artisan.

The Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store retains a high level of integrity as it relates to ***feeling.*** Because the building retains a very high level of integrity as it relates to location, setting, association, design, materials, and workmanship visitors from the Period of Significance would readily recognize the resource today and experience it very much as they would have historically.

FUTURE PLANS

An historic rehabilitation of the Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store is currently in the planning stages. The plan involves adaptive re-use as multiple unit housing, with commercial space retained on the ground floor. Per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation, the work will respect the character-defining features of the historic building in that conversion. Those features include the historic form (five-stories with a flat roof), exterior stylistic features (masonry, rhythm of fenestration, cornices, glazed storefronts, awning, and Smulekoffs sign), a sense of the historic volume of interior spaces, the historic finishes (pressed metal, wood floors, historic trim where it is retained), and the exposed post-and-beam structure (iron on the ground floor and wood on the upper stories). The historic rehabilitation will retain the non-historic, ca.1973 addition.

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The resource is locally significant in association with the history of commerce, specifically in the building's representation of the trends and patterns that typified the development of the Cedar Rapids' central business district beginning in the decades following the Civil War through the close of World War II.[7]

The resource was constructed in 1901 by Thomas Sinclair whose initial idea of expanding his existing meat market was discarded when the wholesale grocer, Warfield-Pratt-Howell entered into a lease agreement with Sinclair for a building with considerably more space. The result was a five-story, 120- by 120-foot building with a full basement that housed not only Warfield-Pratt-Howell, but also the wholesaler, Churchill Drug Company. The "new Sinclair building" was the second of multiple large-scale warehouse buildings to be built at the turn-of-the 20th century in this part of the Cedar Rapids' downtown.

The viability of the rising wholesale district was supported by the city's highly developed railroad system, which ran in close proximity to the area – the railroad corridor running through the city's downtown commercial district just three blocks to the east. In addition, the Milwaukee line ran a short track along the east bank of the Cedar River as far north as 3rd Avenue. That track was located immediately behind the buildings fronting 1st Street SE, making the area a prime location for wholesale businesses that required direct access to transportation of their goods.

The area remained predominantly wholesale in composition until the 1920s. In 1925 the Churchill Drug Company, which had been the building's sole occupant for ten years, relocated and the building was sold to Rosenbaum Furniture Store – its first retail business. Rosenbaum's occupation marks the beginning of the area's transition from wholesale to retail. Smulekoff's purchased the property in 1941 and after renovating the ground level to a more retail-friendly configuration, the furniture store opened in 1942; they remained in business in the building until 2014.

The Period of Significance for the Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store is 1901 through 1966, which marks the year the building was placed in service through the Secretary of the Interior's recommended 50-year window. The period covers the building's 1901 construction by Thomas Sinclair, its occupation by wholesale jobbers from 1901-1925, and its subsequent transition to retail businesses, most significantly Smulekoffs Furniture Store, which was the owner/occupant from 1941-2014.

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7 Marlys Svendsen, *Historical and Architectural Survey Report for Community Block Grant Neighborhoods, Cedar Rapids, Iowa* (Cedar Rapids: City of Cedar Rapids, 1995), E-68.

The Significant Dates for the Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store building is 1901, the year the building was placed in service and 1941, the year in which the building was renovated to serve as Smulekoff's Furniture Store, which opened the following year.

Historical Background

Cedar Rapids was established on the east bank of the Cedar River in 1841 – then known as Rapids City. When officially incorporated on January 15, 1849, the name of Cedar Rapids was adopted. Growth was slow to start, but the advantages provided by the river and the development of a system of railroads by the end of the Civil War fired industrial growth and, by the turn-of-the-century, the city population had grown from just shy of 300 in 1850 to more that 25,000 in 1900.

The original town of Cedar Rapids was laid out on the east side of the Cedar River, with the early commercial sector concentrated along 1st through 3rd Streets SE between 1st and 4th Avenues SE. The gridded plat of just over 60 blocks oriented with its streets running perpendicular to the course of the river. As a result, the street grid is rotated approximately 45 degrees to the cardinal directions. Street names were changed in the early 20th century and today they start east of the river with 1st Street, numbering chronologically eastward. Avenues bisect the streets with those south of 1st Avenue numbered ordinally.

The early impact of the Cedar River on growth and development was its potential as a power source rather than as a mode of transportation. In practical measure, crossing the river was a significant challenge to the city's initial development. A series of river bridges were constructed beginning in 1856 with varying degrees of success. Crossings were made at Iowa Avenue (now 1st Avenue), at Daniels Street (now 7th Avenue), and at 3rd Avenue (1871). The first of the 3rd Avenue bridges was a wrought iron construction with spans set on stone piers. The 1912 upgrading of the bridge further facilitated traffic across the Cedar River and access to the commercial downtown. Each of the bridge crossings became important commercial and transportation corridors, with the 3rd Avenue bridge particularly impactful on the rise of a wholesale sector.

Typical of Iowa's cities, a network of railroads was central to growth and development in Cedar Rapids. In the 1850s, when the city seriously began recruiting railroads, they worked to assure easy access to the city. In the case of the city's central core, local leaders guaranteed the exclusive use of the 4th Street public right-of-way. That enticement worked - by the close of the Civil War, four major railroad lines ran through the city.

The first of those was the Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska Railroad. Completed in 1859, the line followed the 4th Street corridor through the city with connections to Chicago via Clinton, Iowa. After the Civil War the railroad, then part of the Chicago & Northwestern, was extended westward across the state. In 1865 development of rail connections to the north were underway by the Cedar Rapids & St. Paul Railroad and to the south by the Cedar Rapids & Burlington Railroad. The consolidation of the two lines in 1868 resulted in

the Burlington, Cedar Rapids, & Northern Railroad, which was operated by the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad as its north-south route between St. Paul and St. Louis.[8]

The third railroad line through Cedar Rapids was the Dubuque & Southwestern Railroad (later the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad), which completed a branch from Marion into Cedar Rapids in 1865. The line was later extended from Marion to Omaha and Kansas City. The final, major railroad through the city was the Illinois Central Railroad with a feeder line to the main line that ran north through Manchester, Iowa. The primary physical impact on the city was an active and extensive railroad corridor on the eastern edge of the central business district. A series short-tracks were subsequently constructed to provide transport from the wholesale district that grew up at the western edge of the downtown to the trunk lines and on to regional markets.[9]

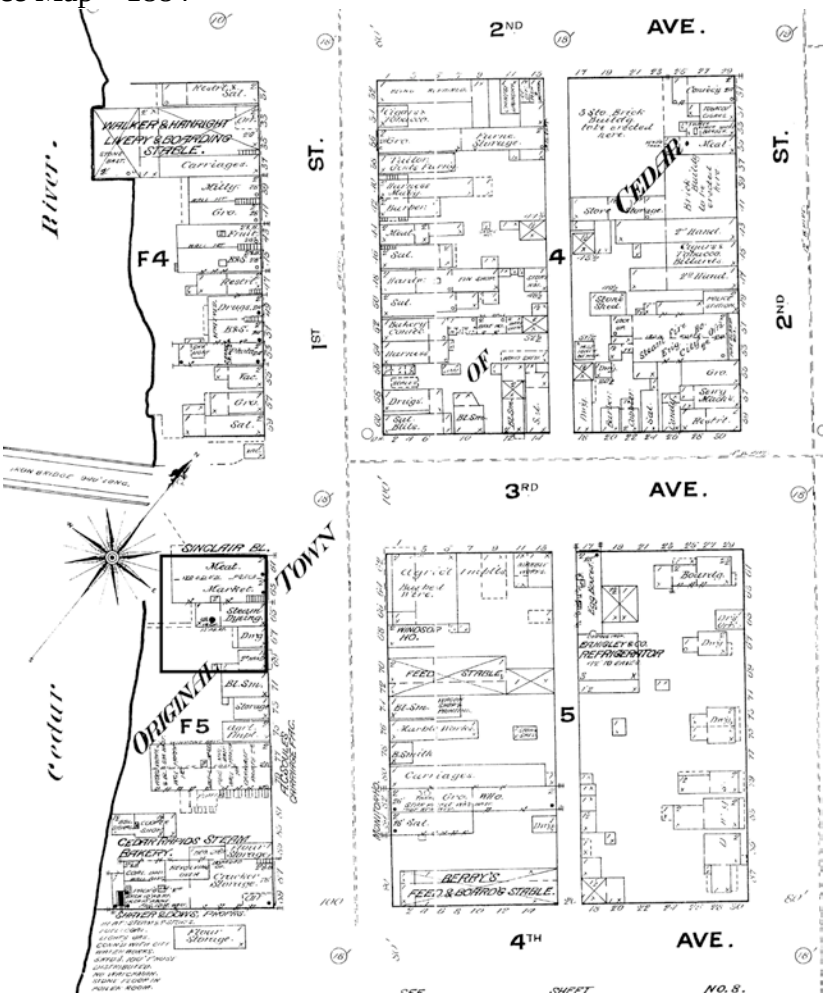
By the late 19th century, the blocks at the western edge of the downtown in proximity to the Cedar River were occupied by small-scale enterprises. As the excerpt from the 1884 fire insurance map (Figure 7) indicates, the area along 1st Street SE was well populated by 2-story commercial buildings occupied by a variety of business interests including Sinclair's meat market (site outlined), three blacksmiths, a carriage maker, a hardware store, drugstore, grocers, and a couple of restaurants. By 1895 the composition of businesses was shifting toward small-scale wholesalers like the newly established Warfield-Pratt-Howell, wholesale grocers, Thomas Sinclair's retail meat market, the National Cracker Company's factory and warehouse, and the Shaver Cheese warehouse (Figure 8). Numerous other unnamed businesses were located in the narrow, two- and three-story buildings that lined 1st Street SE between 2nd and 5th Avenues SE (Image 8). A few non-commercial properties still remained in the area, including dwellings, the Bohemian Theater, and the Salvation Army Hall.[10] That composition and visual character was soon to change.

The 1901 construction of the Sinclair Building-Smulekoff Furniture Store building marks the transition from an early mix of retail and small wholesale warehouse interests to large-scale wholesale buildings that came to define this section of the Cedar Rapids downtown area – the wholesale warehouse district unofficially defined as bounded by 3rd Avenue SE on the north, the Cedar River on the west, Fifth Street SE, and Fifth Avenue SE on the south. The Hach Building (1899) at 401 1st Street SE was the first large-scale wholesale building to rise in that area. The Sinclair Building-Smulekoff Furniture Store building (first known as "the new Sinclair building" after its builder) followed in 1901. Soon after came the Wilcox Building (1901) at 213-215 3rd Avenue SE, the Kubias Building (1902) at 311 3rd Avene SE, and the Fawcett Building (1905) at 117-119 3rd Avenue SE.[11]

8 Marlys A. Svendsen: E-20.
9 Ibid.
10 *Sanborn Company Fire Insurance Map* (New York: Sanborn Company, 1895), 10.
11 http://savecrheritage.org/historical-smulekoffs-building-opens-for-bids-in-downtown-cedar-rapids/. Accessed July 16, 2015

With the demolition of the earlier, smaller buildings and their replacement by this series of 4- and 5-story, large-scale wholesale buildings, the character of 1st Street SE was transformed both in appearance and functional emphasis. That process took several years, but by 1913 that shift had redefined the area.

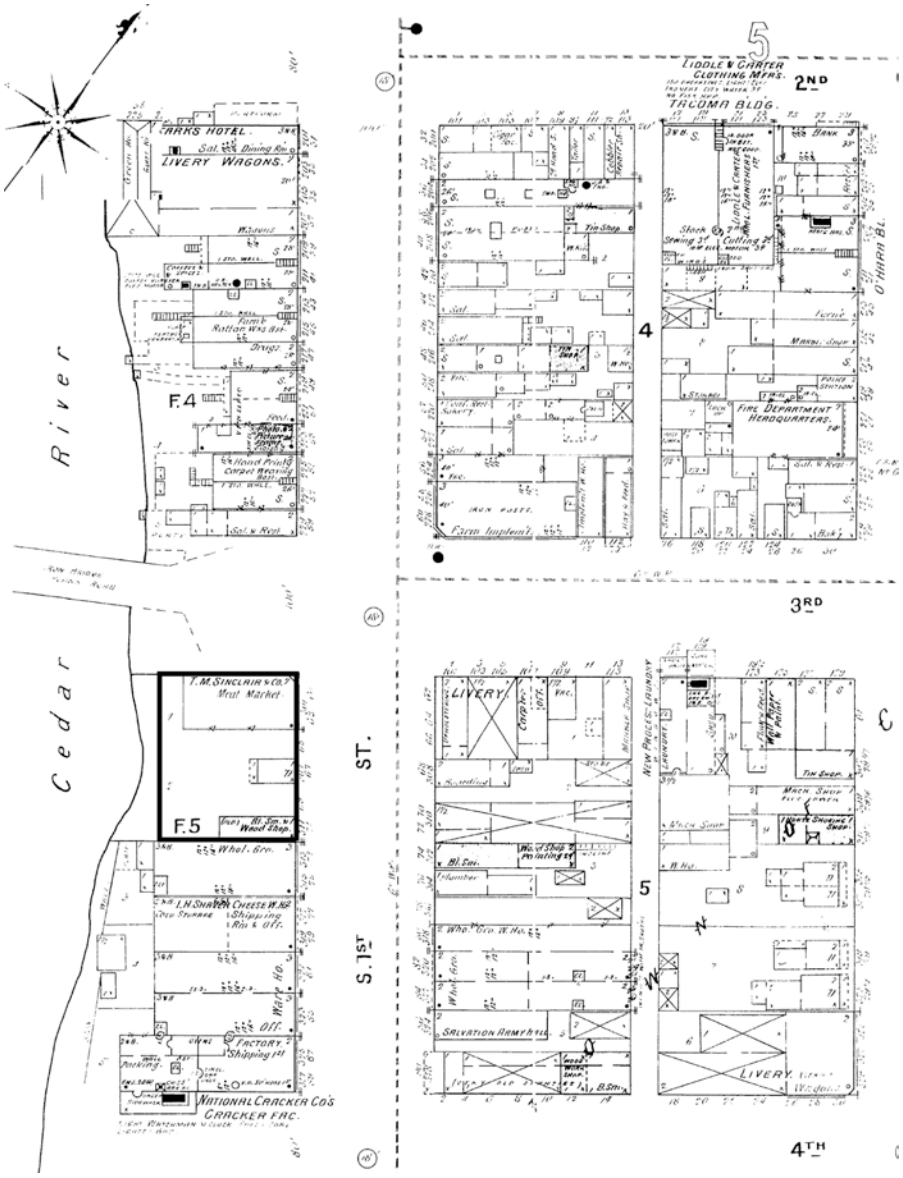
Figure 7. Fire Insurance Map – 1884



(SOURCE: Base map, *Sanborn Company Fire Insurance Map*, New York: Sanborn Company, 1884.)

The 1884 fire insurance map provides a view of the composition of 1st Street between 4th and 2nd Avenue during this period. The buildings were one- and two-story, narrow constructions – some freestanding, but most contiguously arranged. The site of the Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store is outlined, with the "old Sinclair Building" (Sinclair Block) being the corner building on the site.

Figure 8. Fire Insurance Map – 1895



(SOURCE: Base map, *Sanborn Company Fire Insurance Map*, New York: Sanborn Company, 1895.)

By 1895 the composition of buildings along 1st Street had begun to change – larger, taller structures were replacing the earlier buildings. The site of the Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store is outlined – note that the "old Sinclair building" (here noted as T.M. Sinclair & Co. Meat Market) was located on the corner of the site.

Image 9. Streetscape of 1st Street SE – ca.1895

(SOURCE: Donald A. Karr Jr., *Images of Cedar Rapids*, 1987:72).

This view, looking south along 1st Street SE (Cedar River at right) captures the "old Sinclair building" which is the turreted corner building on the right side of the street amid a well-developed streetscape of small-scale 2- and 3-story buildings that were occupied by a variety of small-scale wholesale and retail businesses.

The "New" Sinclair Building

In 1900 the T.M. Sinclair Company had a building commonly referred to as the "old Sinclair building" located on the corner of 3rd Avenue and First Street (Figure 7).[12] That building, which appears on fire insurance maps by 1884, functioned as a retail meat market for the company's highly successful meatpacking industry.[13] With the Frick wholesale house looking for a new location in 1900, the Sinclairs

12 "Permanent Home," *The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, November 24, 1900: 5.
13 Given the language used in local newspaper accounts about the "old Sinclair building" it seems likely that the building was constructed by Thomas M. Sinclair, founder of the Sinclair Company. Sinclair died in an accident in 1881, indicating that the "old Sinclair building" pre-dates 1881.

were prompted to consider remodeling the existing building; the location with a sidetrack at its backdoor was considered ideal for a wholesale interest.[14]

The meatpacking plant of T.M. Sinclair and Company was established in 1871 by John and Thomas M. Sinclair. The Sinclairs acquired a 16-acre site along the route of the new consolidated Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railroad and the Cedar River about a mile downstream of the central business district. Soon the company was slaughtering 2,500 hogs daily half of which was shipped to Great Britain – testimony to the importance of the railroads in connecting Cedar Rapids industry to distant markets.[15]

John Sinclair left the city within a few years, but Thomas stayed, dying in a factory accident in 1881. The family continued to operate the business until 1913 when Sulzberger & Sons purchased the company stock but continued the Sinclair product name. The company was restructured in 1916, becoming Wilson & Co., which in the 1940s was the city's largest employer with 2,500 workers. Additional reorganizing occurred in subsequent years with the company last known as Farmstead Foods. It closed in 1990.

T.M. Sinclair and his family made an important impact on Cedar Rapids – far beyond the economic impact of his very successful and long-lived company. In the late 1880s, the Sinclair family supported the development of Third Presbyterian Church, which was largely attended by workers at the Sinclair plant. In 1915 the company donated a 2-1/2 acre plot at 16th Avenue and 9th Street SE to the City for use as a park. Sinclair Memorial Chapel at Coe College was erected in his honor. The National Historic Landmark known as Brucemore was constructed in 1884-1886 by Sinclair's widow, Caroline Soutter Sinclair. The 10-acre estate, located just two miles from the Cedar Rapids historic downtown commercial area, was initially known as "Sinclair Mansion" or "Fairhome."[16]

By the spring of 1901, work on the old meat market building was underway. The Sinclair Company's initial intent appears to have been to remove the south wall of the existing building and extend the east elevation south by a full 120-feet, which would bring it adjacent to the building then occupied by Warfield-Pratt-Howell, wholesale grocers. The plan also included the addition of a fourth floor. The cost of Sinclair's undertaking was estimated at $40,000.[17]

By June of 1901 Sinclair's plans for the building were drastically altered when the company entered into an agreement with Warfield-Pratt-Howell in which the wholesale grocer agreed to occupy one-half of the building. For Sinclair's part of the bargain, the building would be expanded to include a full basement with

14 "Will Probably Build," *Cedar Rapids Daily Republican*, December 16, 1900: 13)
15 Marlys A. Svendsen: E-30.
16 Brucemore website. http://www.brucemore.org/history/. Last accessed November 18, 2015.
17 "New Four Story Building," *Cedar Rapids Daily Republican*, April 23, 1901: 6 and "$40,000 Improvement," *Cedar Rapids Daily Republican*, April 25, 1901: 6.

storage space under the sidewalk and five full stories. The portion of the building that would be occupied by the wholesale grocer would measure 60- by 120-feet with the Milwaukee Railroad track running "under the rear of the structure."[18] The local news accounts do not provide definitive evidence as to whether, with the agreement made with Warfield-Pratt-Howell, the plans to retain a portion of the existing building were retained and modified. Examination of the building today provides no indication that any portion of the old building was retained. By December of 1901 the building was complete and occupied.[19]

The 1903 city directory indicates that Warfield-Pratt-Howell occupied the building, with an address of 301-305 1st Street SE.[20] A wholesale grocery business, Warfield-Pratt-Howell opened in Cedar Rapids in 1898 – their first location being the Thomas building on 1st Avenue. They soon outgrew that space and by 1899 had relocated to the 1st Street SE building where the company remained until moving into Sinclair's new building. Rapid growth over a short period established the company as a leader in the city, with a traveling sales team of about one-dozen covering Iowa and adjoining states. The firm was marketed as "thoroughly representative of modern progress and intelligently directed" with "nothing in the line of groceries, grocers' sundries, teas, coffees and spices that is not to be found here in its most attractive form – this house being an extensive dealer in the best class of food products and a direct importer of choice teas, coffees and spices.[21] The local newspaper points out that the decision by Warfield-Pratt-Howell to remain on 1st Street SE impacted the continued concentration of wholesale business in that part of the city.[22]

The south half of the new building was also occupied by 1903 - the Churchill Drug Co., wholesale druggist, set up shop at 307-311 1st Street SE (Image 10). Historic images documenting the drug wholesaler's rooms in the building give us a glimpse of the early appearance of the interior (Images 11-12). The Churchill Drug Company was incorporated in 1889 in Burlington, Iowa, the result of a merger between two wholesale drug houses, C.P. Squires & Company and Reynolds & Churchill. By 1915 Churchill Drug Company was counted as one of the largest drug wholesale enterprises in the Midwest, with a traveling sales team of thirty-two. In addition to the branch house in Cedar Rapids, a second was operating in Peoria, Illinois by 1921.[23] The company's Burlington headquarters building, located on 4th Street from Market to Valley, was constructed in 1907 in the Renaissance Revival style.[24]

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18 "Lease New Building. Warfield-Pratt-Howell Company to Occupy Magnificent Sinclair Structure," *Cedar Rapids Daily Republican*, June 8, 1901.
19 "Business Moving Toward Center," *Cedar Rapids Daily Republican* December 18, 1901.
20 *Cedar Rapids City Directory*, 1903.
21 *The Illustrated Review*. Cedar Rapids, IA: No publisher noted, 1900.
22 "Lease New Building. Warfield-Pratt-Howell Company to Occupy Magnificent Sinclair Structure," *Cedar Rapids Daily Republican*, June 8, 1901.
23 Augustine M. Androbus, *History of Des Moines County, Iowa* Vol. 2 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1915), 228-229 and "A.T. Churchill is Dead after Long Illness," *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, March 5, 1921: 1.
24 Rebecca Lawin McCarley, "Manufacturing and Wholesale Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2012:42.

Warfield-Pratt-Howell remained at 301-305 1st Street SE until 1910. With their business continuing to grow rapidly, the company was ready for larger quarters. By 1911 they had moved to the former Hamilton Brothers building at 401-411 1st Street.[25] Another wholesale grocer, Frick-Stearns-Russell assumed the vacated space.

Image 10. Advertisement for the Churchill Drug Company – 1903

(SOURCE: *Cedar Rapids City Directory*, 1903:91).

Although the lithograph in this 1903 advertisement shows the Churchill Drug Co. sign stretching the full width of the building, the company occupied only the south half (307-311). Additional inaccuracies include the arrangement of the façade fenestration and the presence of windows on the south elevation, for which no physical evidence exists on the present building. Despite the discrepencies, the image provides a reasonable representation of the historic appearance of the ground floor during the period in which the building housed wholesale businesses.

25 *Cedar Rapids City Directories*, 1902-1911 and Marlys A. Svendsen, "Commercial and Industrial Development of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, c.1860-c.1945," Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1997: E-40.

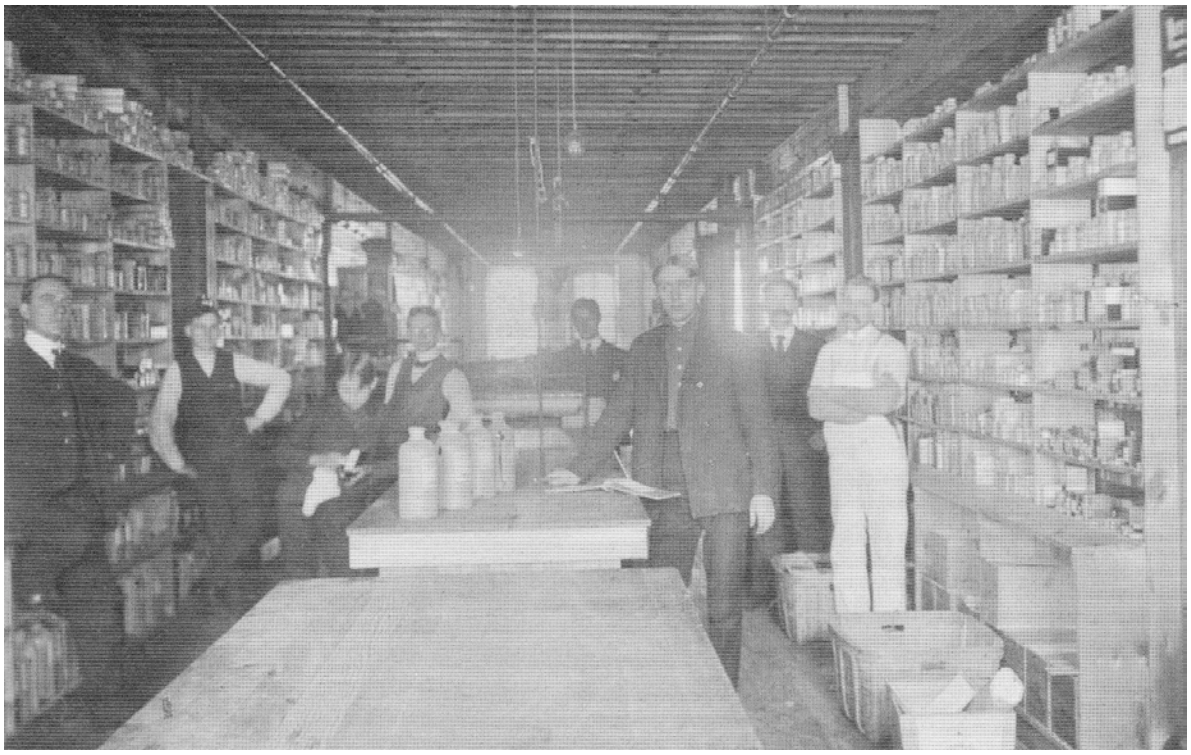
Image 11. Interior of the Churchill Drug Company – ca.1903

(SOURCE: *Cedar Rapids*, Images of America, p45.).

Interior of the Churchill Drug Company's space in the Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store. This is a view of the business office, which, as the round columns at right indicate, was on the first floor. The company proclaimed that, "everything is up to date from the office appliance to methods of accounting." The carefully ordered desk with their organized content is evidence of the company's commitment to thorough record keeping.[26]

26 George Henry, *Cedar Rapids* Images of America series (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), 45.

Image 12. Interior of the Churchill Drug Company – ca.1903

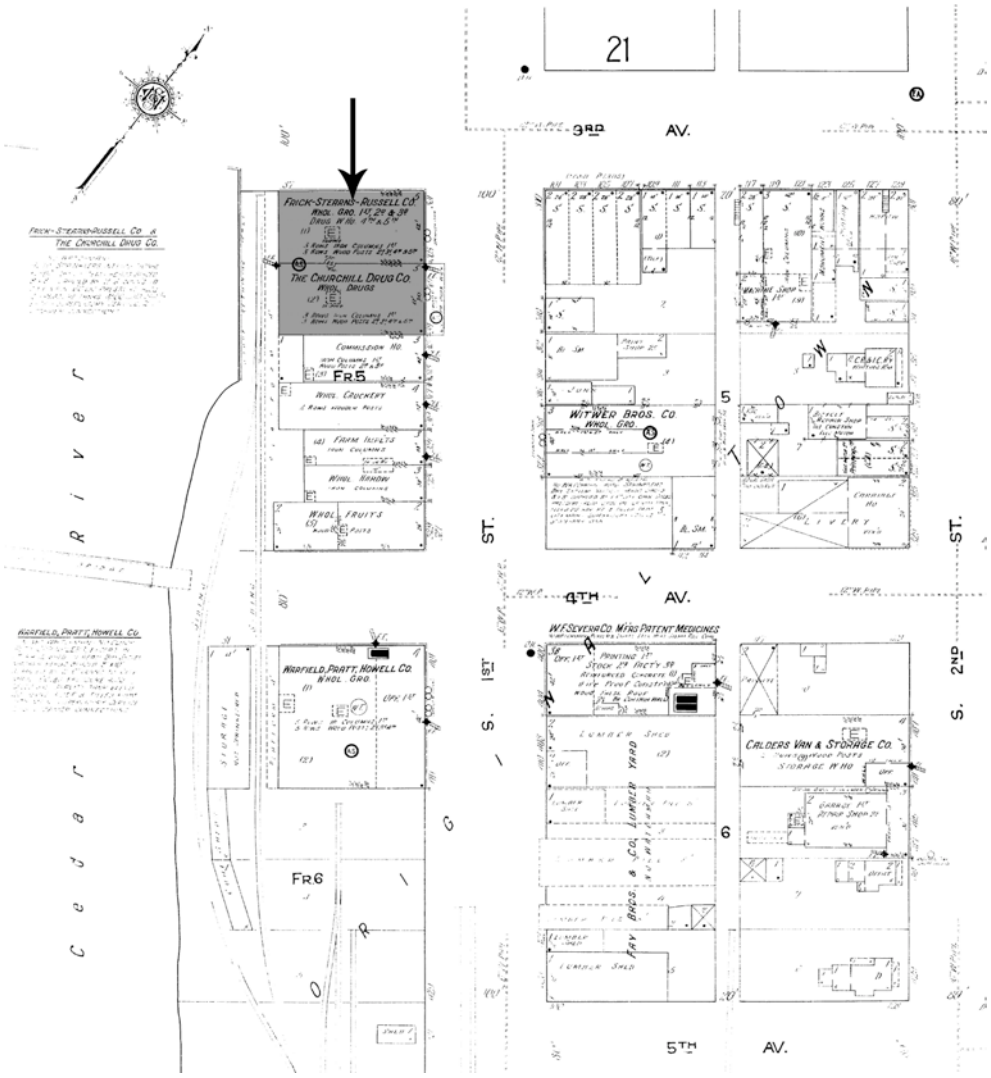


(SOURCE: *Cedar Rapids*, Images of America, p45.).

Interior of the Churchill Drug Company's space in the building.
Judging from the exposed joists, this is the fifth floor, which housed the order room.[27]

27 George Henry, *Cedar Rapids* Images of America series (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), 45.

Figure 9. Fire Insurance Map – 1913



(SOURCE: Base map, *Sanborn Company Fire Insurance Map*, New York: Sanborn Company, 1913.)

By 1913 the composition of 1st Street was predominantly large-scale wholesale jobbing interests, the size of the buildings reflected the spatial requirements of a successful wholesale sector. The site of the 1901 Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store is shaded.

The 1913 fire insurance map (Figure 9) confirms the building's occupants, noting that the Frick-Stearns-Russell Co., wholesale grocer, occupied the 1st through 3rd floors of 301-305 1st Street with the 4th & 5th floors utilized as a "drug warehouse." The Churchill Drug Company, wholesale drugs, is noted at 307-311 1st Street, although the assumption is that Churchill also occupied the upper two floors above Frick-Stearns-Russell. The fire insurance map also notes the use of iron columns on the 1st floor with wood posts on the 2nd through the 5th. Interior access was present between the two building halves at the 4th and 5th floors.[28]

In 1915 plans were underway for the construction of a five-story, "fireproof," brick office and warehouse building on SE 1st Street for Frick-Stearns-Russell. The $75,000 project, which was being undertaken by the Western Grocer Company was pending action by the River Front Improvement Commission related to establishing "a property line along the east back of the river below Third Avenue" before beginning construction of the new building. The new building was designed by local architect William J. Brown with Loomis Bros. as contractor.[29]

With the departure of Frick-Stearns-Russell, the Churchill Drug Company had grown sufficiently to warrant sole occupation of the building, with an address of 301-311 1st Street SE. The company remained the building's only occupant through 1925.[30] Churchill Drug Company remained in Cedar Rapids for many years, with offices located at 902-912 S. 2nd Avenue. The company underwent multiple reorganizations and, by 1940 was operating as McKesson & Robins, Inc., remaining in the S. 2nd Avenue building until 1980.[31]

In 1925 the building at 301-311 1st Street SE was sold to Rosenbaum's Furniture store, which first appears at that location in the city directory in 1926. Rosenbaum's (using the address 93-97 3rd Avenue SE) remained in the building until 1941 when Smulekoff bought out the business.[32]

The Smulekoff Furniture Store opened in their new location at 97 3rd Avenue SE in 1942, having undertaken a substantial renovation of the 1901 building, particularly impactful at the ground level where their retail product would be most effectively on display.

28 *Sanborn Company Fire Insurance Map* (New York: Sanborn Company, 1913), 25.
29 *Coffee and Tea Industries and the Flavor* Field Vol. 38 (New York: Spice Mill Publishing Company, 1915), 445. https://books.google.com/books?id=jCExAQAAMAAJ&dq=frick+stearns+ russell+wholesale+grocer+cedar+rapids+iowa&source=gbs_navlinks_s. Accessed 07/15/2015.
30 *Cedar Rapids City Directories*, various years 1916-1926.
31 Ibid. and Marlys A. Svendsen, "Commercial and Industrial Development of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, c.1860-c.1945," Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1997: E-39.
32 *Cedar Rapids City Directories*, 1924-1941.

The Smulekoff Era

Smulekoffs Furniture Store was a local mainstay for more than one hundred years. Decades before the business was located as 97 3rd Avenue SE, Russian immigrant, Henry Smulekoff was peddling his wares to the residents of rural Linn County. Just one year later, Smulekoff opened a small shop in a building on May's Island and the Smulekoff legacy was established. Over the course of the ensuing years, the business bought out 39 area competitors, growing to become what Smulekoffs stated was the state's largest furniture store under one roof. The store's presence on 3rd Avenue and 1st Street SE was a significant part of the area's transition from a wholesale to a retail focus.

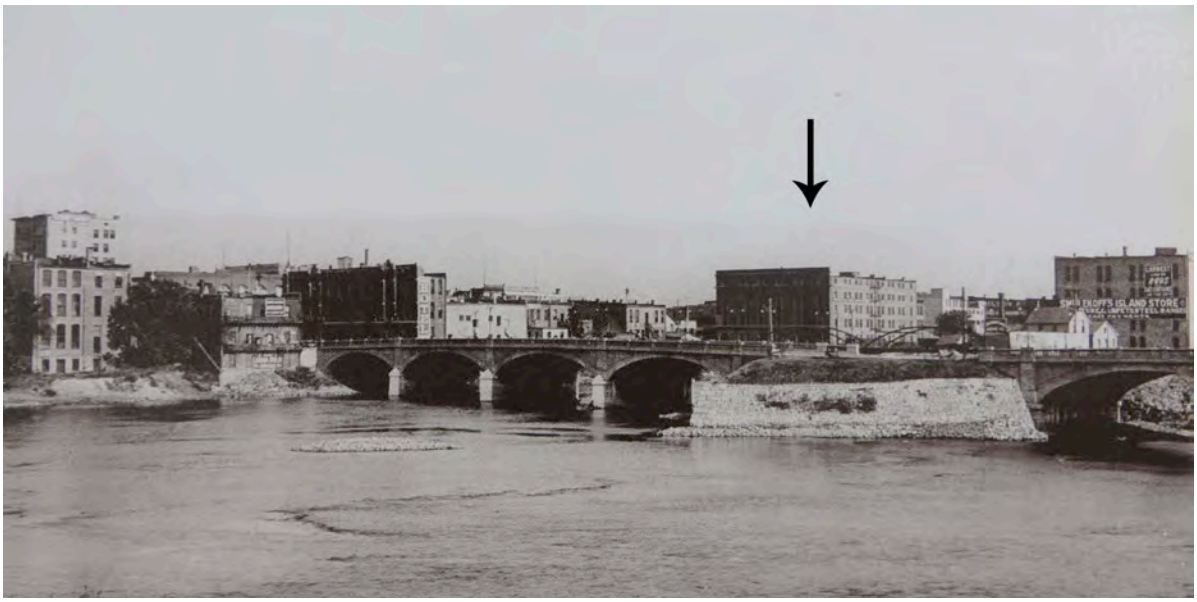
Henry Smulekoff, a Russian immigrant, came to Cedar Rapids in June of 1888. For several years after his arrival, Henry Smulekoff traveled a 35-mile area walking from farm-to-farm selling dry goods and sewing notions to the farm wives of rural Linn County – his success provided the money to purchase a horse and wagon, which increased his territory.

Smulekoff had aspirations of assuming the family legacy of being a "furniture man" which they had been in the old country. A story has been told that one day Henry Smulekoff was crossing the bridge on Mays Island[33] when it began to rain. To keep dry, he stepped into a store, which, coincidentally, sold furniture. By the time the rain stopped, the store was his. According to his sons, the first store on Mays Island was a small store, bought with his $850 in savings; what became known as "The Island Store" followed. In 1890 Smulekoff tore down the small store and undertook the construction of a much larger building (Image 13). Advertised as the "Big Store and Small Prices" the store held four floors and a basement filled with "a first class stock of furniture, carpets, wall paper, stoves, ranges, queensware and in fact everything in the line of general house furnishings." Smulekoff also had a warehouse of goods to keep the store properly stocked.[34]

Near the turn of the 20th century, the city municipality began to consider the merit of owning May's Island. That move was made in 1910 and in 1912 Smulekoffs "Island Store" came into use as a temporary city hall.[35] Following that dislocation, Smulekoff moved to a building at 107-115 3rd Avenue SW (non-extant).[36] Henry Smulekoff remained engaged in the business until 1929 when he retired and moved to California where he died in 1932.[37]

33 May's Island is a ¼-mile long, 6-acre island in the Cedar River that originally extended between 2nd and 3rd Avenues opposite the downtown. Named for its original owner, Major J.L. May, the once wooded island was first a river crossing point. Later a number of commercial enterprises were located there. Its location is noted on the aerial found in Figure 3.
34 *Cedar Rapids of To-day*, 1905, p18.
35 Svendsen: E-5.
36 Ibid. and *Why's Why in Cedar Rapids*, p79.
37 The History Center, subject files.

Image 13. The Island Store – ca.1905



(SOURCE: George Henry, *Cedar Rapids, Iowa*, 54.)

In this view looking southeast from the 1st Avenue bridge we see Smulekoffs "Island Store" at far right – that building was purchased by the City in 1910 and the business moved to the west side of the river. Also in view (noted by the arrow) is the building at 97 3rd Avenue SE, which they occupied from 1942 through 2014.

As young boys, Henry Smulekoff's sons, Abraham Lincoln Smulekoff (1900-1988) and Leo Smulekoff (1901-1995), learned the family business, reporting to the store each day before school to dust furniture. Under their father's tutelage, they learned the difference between good merchandise and "imitation good merchandise."` As A.L. stated, "[The difference] was very apparent, even as a youngster.[38] The father also instilled the importance of those aspects of good business that transcended the bottom line: caring for employees and customer service. They also learned the value of supporting their community.[39] Both brothers attended the city's public school system, and went on to graduate from the Wharton School of Business.[40] The brothers, along with their sister's husband John Miller, took over the family business in 1929, Henry Smulekoff having retired to California where he died in 1932.[41]

38 The Cedar Rapids History Center, subject files.
39 "Mr. A.L. & Mr. Leo. The Smulekoff brothers carry on retail tradition," *The Gazette.* East Neighbors Edition, September 19, 1984: 6E.
40 The Cedar Rapids History Center, subject files.
41 "Furniture store magnate A.L. Smulekoff, 88, dies," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, June 23, 1988:8A and "Leo Smulekoff, among last of Old Guard in C.R., dies," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, October 27, 1995.

Henry Smulekoff was once asked which were the most valuable corner locations in Cedar Rapids. He replied, "The northwest corner of Third avenue at Third street, the northwest corner of Third avenue at Second Street and the southwest corner of First avenue at Third Street."[42] In 1940 the Smulekoff brothers purchased what was perhaps fourth on their father's list of the most valuable corners in the city when they bought out Rosenbaum's Furniture, which had occupied the building at 97 3rd Avenue SE since 1925. In the months that followed, Smulekoff undertook the work of altering the building's ground level. The new storefront featured large display windows, a deeply overhanging awning, and a five story sign. The changes reflect a more modern stylistic character, the sleek look of the awning with its curved corners, and the blocky typeset of the sign stood in stark contrast to the 1901 building.

In the early years of occupancy, the Smulekoffs store filled the five-story building and a three-story building adjoining on the south. Fire insurance maps indicate there was interior access between the buildings on multiple floors.[43] In the early 1970s plans for an addition were in the works. In preparation for construction, five existing buildings were demolished. The two-story addition was placed in service by 1973. It was during this period that the railroad spur, once to critical to serving the wholesale jobbers on 1st Street, was abandoned.[44]

By 1984, although A.L. and Leo Smulekoff were still actively engaged in the business – going to the store every day when they were into their 80s - the day-to-day workings of the furniture store and its 138 employees was managed by Abbott Lipsky, husband of Joan Lipsky who was Henry Smulekoff's granddaughter.[45] In 1989 Smulekoff Furniture Store celebrated its 100th anniversary. From the time Henry Smulekoff arrived in Cedar Rapids in 1888, Smulekoffs bought out 39 area competitors, growing to become the largest furniture store under one roof in the state of Iowa.[46]

November 28, 2014 marked Smulekoffs final day of business. At the time of its closing, the community of Cedar Rapids was still recovering from the devastation wrought by the flood of 2008. The building at 97 3rd Avenue SE had seen much over the course of its 113-year history, but one must imagine that little compared to that event.

42 *Why's Why in Cedar Rapids*, p79.
43 Fire Insurance Map, 1913, Revised 1949.
44 http://savecrheritage.org/historical-smulekoffs-building-opens-for-bids-in-downtown-cedar-rapids/. Accessed July 16, 2015.
45 "Mr. A.L. & Mr. Leo. The Smulekoff brothers carry on retail tradition," *The Gazette.* East Neighbors Edition, September 19, 1984.
46 "Celebrating 100 years ….," *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*, May 2, 1989.

Image 14. Father and Sons - 1984

(SOURCE: *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, September 19, 1984.)

Seen here with a portrait of their father, Henry Smulekoff (center), are brothers Leo (left) and Abraham L. Smulekoff (right).

Relevant Cultural Resource Documents

Numerous historical and architectural surveys have been completed in the city of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Of particular note relevant to the history of commerce and industry in the city are those completed by Marlys Svendsen, including the 1997 National Register of Historic Places MPDF, "Commercial and Industrial Development of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, c.1865-c.1945," and the 2000 National Register of Historic Places MPDF, "Historic Resources of Cedar Rapids, Iowa." Both documents provide important contexts for understanding the establishment of the city and the factors at play in its development as a commercial and industrial center. The 1997 MPDF provides particular information addressing the evolution of the area in which the Smulekoff Furniture Store building is located from a wholesale to a retail sector.

Potential for Historic Archaeology

The potential for historical archaeology was not assessed as part of the present National Register nomination. The presence of paved roadways and a surface parking area suggests the likelihood that the ground disturbance resulting from the construction of those elements may have destroyed localized archaeological resources. Further, multiple constructions followed by demolitions and new construction that occurred on the site over the course of some 110-years diminishes the likelihood that localized archaeological resources may remain intact.

It should be kept in mind that some potential for localized archaeological resources in the area of the former railroad spur line may exist and, given the city's long and significant association with the railroad, a sensitivity to that possibility is important. That likelihood is slim given the former corridor has long been paved. However, in the future, any significant excavation and/or grading, particularly in the area between the building and the Cedar River, should take into consideration the possibility that archaeological and/or sub-grade historical resources may remain.

Research Methodology

This National Register nomination draws on the cultural resources noted above. Further, no research of Cedar Rapids' history and architecture can be completed without the significant collection at the Koehler History Center. Specifically, the archive provided an important source for the history of the building's occupants, the evolution of the building, and the history of Smulekoff's Furniture Store. Fire insurance maps and numerous historic images were also located at the History Center.

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

OT (LESS RR) LOTS 1 & 2 & THAT PT LOTS 3,4 & 5 FR BLK 5 DESC V 1561 P 304 BNG E 130.07' MEAS ON N LN LOT 3 & BNG E 145' MEAS ON S LN LOT 5 & SW 1.25' VAC ST NE OF & ADJ TO LOTS 1,2,3 & 4 THEREOF STR/LB[47]

Latitude/Longitude coordinates: 41.975935, -91.667941

The location of the resource (geoparcel 14282-07001-00000) is outlined.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store and the site to which the building is associated from the time of its construction in 1901 through the present, including the parking lot situated on the south.

47 http://www.cedar-rapids.info/assessor/pmc/appraisal_report.asp?pid=142820700100000. Accessed 08/31/2015.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Map of Iowa Showing Location of Cedar Rapids - 2015
Figure 2. 7.5 Minute USGS Topographic Map – Cedar Rapids South Quad - 1975
Figure 3. Aerial Map - 2015
Figure 4. Floor Plan – First Floor - 2015
Figure 5. Floor Plan – Second Floor – 2015
Figure 6. Floor Plan – Third through Fifth Floors – 2015
Figure 7. Fire Insurance Map – 1884
Figure 8. Fire Insurance Map – 1895
Figure 9. Fire Insurance Map – 1913

EMBEDDED IMAGES

Image 1. Site View: Looking NW from the intersection of 1st Street SE and 5th Avenue SE
Image 2. Exterior Elevation: North and east elevations, looking SW
Image 3. Exterior Detail: Fenestration and cornice at north elevation
Image 4. Exterior Elevation: West and north elevations, looking ESE from 3rd Avenue bridge
Image 5. Exterior Elevation: South and east elevations, looking NE
Image 6. Interior: First floor of the 1901 building, looking SE
Image 7. Interior: Second floor of the 1901 building, looking WNW
Image 8. Interior: Fifth floor of the 1901 building, typical
Image 9. Historic Image – View of 1st Street SE, ca.1895
Image 10. Advertisement for Churchill Drug Co., 1903
Image 11. Historic Image – Interior (1st floor) of Churchill Drug Co., ca.1903
Image 12. Historic Image – Interior (5th floor) of Churchill Drug Co., ca.1903
Image 13. Historic Image – View with Island Store and 97 3rd Avenue SE building, ca.1905
Image 14. Father and Sons - 1984

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Sinclair Building-Smulekoffs Furniture Store
97 3rd Avenue SE
Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Linn County, Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Minneapolis, Minnesota
August 26, 2015

CD-ROM on file with property owner and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office

Photo Key – Exterior Views

Photo Key – Interior Views – First Floor

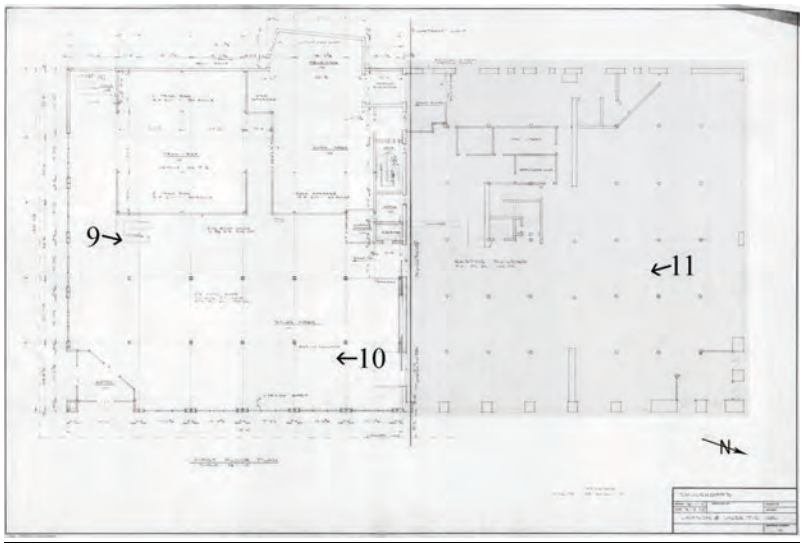
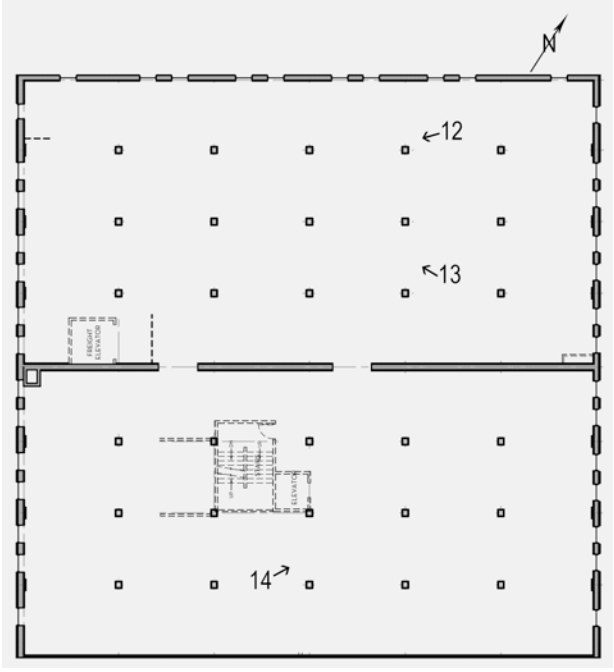


Photo Key – Interior Views – Upper Floors



Description of Photograph(s) and number:

0001. Site View: Looking NW along 1st Street SE
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0001.tif

0002. Site View: Looking SE along 3rd Avenue SE
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0002.tif

0003. Site View: Looking east from the 3rd Avenue bridge
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0003.tif

0004. Site View: Looking N-NE along the Cedar Rive walkway
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0004.tif

0005. Exterior Elevations: View of the north and east elevations, looking SW across 1st Street SE and 3rd Avenue SE
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0005.tif

0006. Exterior Elevations: View of the south and east elevations, looking N-NW
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0006.tif

0007. Exterior Elevations: View of the rear (west) and north elevations, looking S-SE
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0007.tif

0008. Exterior Detail: View of the Smulekoffs sign mounted near the building's NE corner
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0008.tif

0009. Exterior Detail: View of the primary entrance and storefront, looking west along the north elevation
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0009.tif

0010. Exterior Detail: Fenestration, north elevation
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0010.tif

0011. Interior: First floor, looking NE through the addition
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0011.tif

0012. Interior: First floor, looking SE through the addition
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0012.tif

0013. Interior: First floor, looking SE through the 1901 building
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0013.tif

0014. Interior: Second floor, 1901 building - typical
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0014.tif

0015. Interior: Third floor, 1901 building - typical
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0015.tif

0016. Interior: Fourth floor, 1901 building - typical
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0016.tif

0017. Interior: Fifth floor, 1901 building - typical
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0017.tif

0018. Interior Detail: Third Floor Pressed Metal Ceiling
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0018.tif

0018. Interior Detail: Interior Fire Door
IA_LinnCounty_SinclairBuilding-SmulekoffsFurnitureStore_0018.tif

Bistro
ON THE RIVER
HACH BROTHERS COMPANY
BISTRO ON THE RIVER
Route 3
NO PARKING BUS STOP
Route 4

SMULEKO
SIDEWALK CLOSED
STOP
STOP AHEAD
WEIGHT LIMIT 5 TONS

SMUL
STOP AHEAD
WEIGHT LIMIT 5 TONS
Northwestern Mutual

SMULEKOFFS
Northwestern Mutual
START A TEAM
DO NOT ENTER
ONE WAY
FedEx
20

NO
PARKING
BUS
STOP

SMULEKOFF
SPEED LIMIT 25
STOP AHEAD
WEIGHT LIMIT 5 TONS
CITY OF CEDAR RAPIDS

SMULEKOFFS
START A TEAM
WALK TO END
alz.org/walk
800 272 3900
DO NOT
ENTER

MasterCard
VISA

Elevator
Floors 1-5

2-14D
2-14C

3-07B
3-07A

4 – 08D
4 – 08C

Fire Escape
DO NOT PUT
CIG. BUTTS