

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Hobbs Building

other names/site number _____

Name of Multiple Property Listing _____

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

2. Location

street & number 2-4 N. River not for publication

city or town Aurora vicinity

state Illinois county Kane zip code 60506

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this ___ 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 ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: ___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date _____

Illinois Department of Natural Resources - SHPO
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
- ___ determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ determined not eligible for the National Register
- ___ removed from the National Register
- ___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		site
		structure
		object
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce/Trade

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Richardsonian Romanesque

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Limestone
walls: Limestone, brick, terra Cotta
roof: Membrane
other: _____

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

Summary Paragraph

The Hobbs Building is located in Aurora, which is thirty- five miles south west of Chicago in the Fox River Valley in Kane County. It is a monumental brick, limestone, and terra cotta Richardsonian Romanesque style commercial building located in the hub of historic downtown at 2-4 N. River Street. It is built up to the street, in line with the adjacent commercial structures, and occupies the northwest corner of River and Galena Streets.

Narrative Description

Exterior Description

Built in 1895, the exterior of the four-story Hobbs commercial building retains many original significant design elements. Albert Hobbs commissioned Levi Hull Waterhouse to build J.E. Minott's design for a new furniture store. The large building is fifty- six feet tall and with a total of 23,950 square feet of interior space. Dominated by a unique corner turret, pronounced large round arch windows with masonry detailing, and repetitive alternating tiers of projecting bay windows, the Hobbs Building is among the most recognizable buildings in downtown Aurora.

The building is a combination of masonry bearing, heavy timber, and post and beam wood framing construction. The foundation is rough-faced regular course cut limestone that is visible along the south façade on the basement level. The principal areas of the façade are covered with a red brick veneer in a running bond of thin mortar joints accented with limestone and terra cotta detailing.

Storefront/Main Entries

At the corner of River Street and Galena Avenue is the primary entrance to the retail space. The first-floor storefront retains some of its original design features. Storefront windows with transoms flank the corner entrance. Original vertical cast-iron decorative metal panels frame the storefront; the top cap is still in place revealing that the transom framing materials of the storefront are also original. On the eastern façade the storefront is located below the first two upper bays. Above the storefront is an original horizontal decorative sheet metal cornice; that same cornice on the south elevation adjacent to the turret was removed for structural repairs and is stored inside the building. It also serves to tie the bay window details with that of the building façade. A cast iron column at the corner on the ground level supports the turret. The entrance door is a full light wood door with a transom window. The turret extends from the second to the fourth story. The onion dome that topped the turret and its decorative finial were removed in 2016. The only remaining pieces are the finial and the spire which have been stored for re-use.

The first-floor northeast entry on the east façade provides access to the upper floors and retains all its original design features and materials. The entrance is recessed slightly with a step up and a concrete slab leading to the entrance. The ceiling above and the north and south walls adjacent to the entrance are tongue-and-groove wood paneling with beading. The east wall has a series of stamped sheet metal panels that simulate rusticated stone. The wood trim, original door with transom, and adjacent window opening

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are all original and in good condition.

Corner Turret

The turret consists of an exposed five-sided bay window. The turret has the original copper cornice and underside details intact. The original cornice is still in place at the corner turret, wrapping it entirely, though the metal cornice is absent from the south and east facades. The copper cornice is highly decorative with egg and dart, scallop and vine, and dentil moldings. The center window is a fixed pane picture window with a transom, and the four flanking windows are each one-over-one, double-hung wood windows. The turret is clad with artificial siding in the spandrel panels hung in alternating diagonal patterns and is not original though mimics the same pattern of stamped sheet metal that had been in the same location. The original placard inscribed with "Hobbs" is prominently displayed above the central fourth story window

South and East (Primary) Facades

The eastern and southern facades face River Street and Galena Avenue, respectively. The upper story vertical paired window openings of articulated brick arches on brick pilasters of rounded corners with alternating projecting bay windows are defining features on both elevations. The brick masonry detailing utilizes rounded units, rusticated surfaces and sophisticated detailing in the brick arched design. The spandrel panels below the bay windows are covered in artificial siding, which have been installed on an angle to mimic the original diagonal stamped sheet metal spandrel panels.

The bay window consists of three window openings with the center unit being the original fixed picture window with a beveled glass transom. The side windows of the bays are wood double-hung. Each projecting bay has the original sheet metal materials that seal the bottom of the bay window in an arching pattern that intersects the horizontal fascia at the termination of the first-floor ceiling line. On the second-floor space between the projecting tiers of bay windows are paired double-hung wood windows with a shared limestone lug sill and limestone lintel. The third story windows are again paired, wood double-hung windows with limestone lug sills, but they have round arch transom-lights, with muntins radiating out from the center. While the picture windows and transoms within the bays as well as the arched windows on the third floor are original, the double-hung wood windows throughout the building are replacements.

Brick pilasters with decorative fabricated copper capitals support round brick arches on the third story. Arches have rounded corner dentil detailing in the brickwork. The spandrels between the third and fourth story windows are rusticated face brick. Fourth story windows are identical to the second story windows except the lintels extend into a horizontal lintel course and the sills extend to a horizontal sill course. Windows on the southern façade follow the pattern of two pairs of paired windows with alternating tiers of projecting bay windows. There are five bays on the southern façade, two projecting tiers of bay windows and three sets of two pairs of paired windows. At the corner where the two facades meet is the corner turret. The eastern façade has three tiers of bay windows. There are two sets of paired windows broken up by one projecting tier of bay windows.

On the western portion of the south facade is a wood door with the upper half closed off by plywood from the interior though the glazing is still intact on the exterior. The lower section of the door has three vertical inset wood panels. There is a large glass transom above the door. West of the door is a paired double-hung window with a transom above. The lower section of the window has plywood applied on the interior, though the glazing is present in all sashes and in the transom. The storefront in the south east corner spans

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from the corner and to the west just over half the distance of the first bay. Running along the south façade at the first floor are eleven windows which are fixed sash and have a sill course that runs at the same height as the transom windows above the storefront. One of the eleven windows has been replaced with plywood. Nine windows run along the base of the building within the limestone portion at the sidewalk level; they are fixed, single sash windows with aluminum framing. All glazing is intact, though they are boarded over from the interior. A textured steel cellar door extends from the building and into the sidewalk, below the westernmost bay, and provided access to the lower level via a stair, though it has been infilled with concrete block at the interior opening in the basement. An additional exterior stair was located on the south elevation that has since been infilled.

West Elevation

The red brick, detailed terra cotta work, and fabricated copper details that decorate the south and east facades does not continue onto the rear west façade. The rear façade is brick, but of a lower quality than the south and east façades. The brick is in the common (American) bond.

A narrow window on the first bay from the north on the first floor has a segmental arch and limestone lug sill; it has been infilled with plywood. The second bay from the north on the first floor has a similar window, however, the window is slightly wider and it is halfway between the second and first floor; it has been infilled with brick. At the center of the first story is door which has been boarded over, which is not original to the building. The entryway appears to have been for a pair of doors, and the replacement door fills only half the opening; the remaining space is covered over in wood planks.

The second floor has five windows; three of which are equally spaced windows with limestone sills towards the south end, boarded over. The other two windows are towards the north, the northernmost is filled in with brick and small steel two-over-two industrial window has been installed, the other is boarded over. Fenestration on the third and fourth is identical to each other; a single window toward each the north and south corners and a double window, slightly off center to the north. The windows of the third and fourth floor have all been boarded over as well. From the west façade one chimney is visible, common brick towards the south façade. Temporary wood 2x10's were affixed to the brick along the second, third and fourth floor to stabilize the west façade. They have now been removed and the wall has been stabilized by anchoring the masonry to the framing with rods and plates.

North Elevation

The brick on the north façade is identical to the brick on the west façade. The north façade is connected to the next- door three- story commercial building, which shares a party wall. The fourth story is visible and has common brick with one central window similar to those on the west facade. A painted advertisement for the Hobbs Furniture business is still slightly visible on the brick on the fourth story.

Interior Description

First Floor

The wide open first floor retains a high degree of integrity with almost all its original design features and materials intact. The structure consists of a center row of turned wood columns with cast iron caps that support the heavy timber framing. The exposed ceiling structure is a rectangular pattern of exposed heavy wood timbers with recessed stamped sheet metal ceiling panels with sheet metal crown molding trimming and framing the wood beams, with a decorative stamped metal leaf form present in all corners where the beams meet. At the primary corner entrance there is evidence that the entry vestibule was much larger by

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the modification to simpler forms of the sheet metal ceiling and cuts in the wood flooring. Originally the vestibule intersected the cast iron columns near the corner.

Interior partitions have retained all their original wainscoting trim materials and original panel doors. Also, platforms were built inside the front windows for a window display. The windows along the south wall at floor level are covered from the interior with plywood. The original wood floors are partially exposed beneath the delaminating vinyl tile floor. Load bearing wooden columns run the length of the floor on each level. A staircase is present in the center of the first level, descending to the basement level, though it is not original to the space. The walls are exposed masonry, painted on the south and north walls but unpainted on the west wall. The east wall is fully comprised of the storefront.

A small mezzanine enclosure is at the west end and is not original. In the northwest corner a deteriorated simple L-shaped original wood staircase extends to the lower level. The original corner toilet room is enclosed in wood wainscoting.

The northeast vestibule retains significant integrity; all the original materials remain and have been unaltered. The northeast corner is partitioned off creating a vestibule for the staircase and elevator which extend up to the second through fourth floors; this is the access point for the recessed northeast entry at River Street. The vestibule of this stair and elevator has a fully cased door and transom and a fully cased adjacent window. The walls within this area are painted beadboard. Within the first-floor storefront space, the outline of the stringer of the ascending staircase is present and has been encased with wood paneling. A door is present beneath the stringer, providing access to a storage closet and the casing of that door is rather detailed and is fully intact.

The elevator is accessed by a pair of wood doors; the upper half of those doors were likely glass but now have been infilled with a wood panel. The elevator was a simple metal grate enclosed lift and no longer functions. The original doors are found on the elevator opening on the second floor as well. The third and fourth floor openings are covered with plywood. There are transoms above the elevator doors on the upper floors, framing is still visible, but are covered with wood.

Basement

At the basement level, there is evidence of a cut into the first-floor flooring, and additional beam support at the basement level has been added for the stair. The basement is a utilitarian space with exposed heavy timber ceilings, wood columns, wood partition walls, a bathroom, a utility room, and the structural framing supports for the elevator. Originally the basement could be accessed from the street from a bulkhead cellar door entrance and exterior stairs which have since been infilled with concrete block at the former exterior opening. The other access point to the basement was via a simple L-shaped wood stair in the northwest corner. The sidewalk vaults have also been infilled with concrete block at the east and south walls.

Second Floor

The second floor retains many of its original wall partitioning. The remaining architectural features provide a high degree of integrity. The main staircase with an open wood spindle balustrade railing is one of the defining original features still intact. The staircase has a steel trimmed glass block skylight that borrows natural daylight from the fourth floor to the third floor from the roof skylight. The north corridor provides access to numerous rooms that were segmented by north south partitions with an aligned set of access door connecting each room near the south side. All the exterior window trim remains intact. The

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wood trim window casing has bracketed corner blocks with combination egg and dart and dental detail as a projecting head trim window hood. The wood casings have a raised center spline that mimics the bracketed corner blocks. While the window casing is fully intact; the door casings were removed in the most previous attempt at renovating the building. A significant amount of door casing trim, doors and wall base were removed and stored in the basement by the previous owner for reinstallation. A few remaining areas on the first, second, and fourth floor reveal the casing details intact. All door trim has corner blocks and plinth blocks at the base to accept the wood baseboard. The head detail is the same as the windows. The existing plaster ceiling is original but is in poor condition. The wood floor is in good condition in 90% of the areas; the west end has experienced some minor water damage but had finished flooring and wood wainscoting. Areas of this finished flooring and wood wainscoting. Small areas of finished flooring and wood wainscoting were removed to support the temporary cross bracing that provided stabilization of the west wall. The bracing has now been removed on all floors.

Third Floor

The third floor has a more open floor plan with two major spaces. All the original staircase materials, details, and elevator enclosures and doors remain. The glass block skylight in the main staircase remains and has a temporary protective plywood cover on the floor above blocking the light. The third floor window head trim is of a simpler half round back bend edge detail. This same detail trims the large half round Palladian style windows that are prominent features in the space. The radiating fan mullion details are original. Original wood floors remain. The existing wood wainscoting ceiling remains and is original. The center row of exposed wood turned columns are prominent features.

On the eastern portion of the space, ghost lines of previous partitioning on the wainscoted ceiling are evident in the ceiling and were removed at some time. The space appears to have been originally intended for a large open space. The previous owner installed temporary shoring, that was ill-advised, to stabilize the west bearing wall on the second, third and fourth floors. The flooring in these areas on each floor has been cut into in minor sections to support the cross bracing to the decking below, though the original wood flooring throughout remains in good condition in approximately 90% of the space. Repairs to the wall have since been made and the original details will be restored in the proposed renovations.

Fourth Floor

The fourth floor terminates the main staircase with its original wainscoted balustrade. This floor was utilized for a more utilitarian use with its simplified details. Subfloor is exposed in the western half of the space while the eastern half is a wood finished floor. All the wood window and door head trim are of a simple detail than the other floors. The ceiling is wood wainscoting with a large steel framed skylight with a flared wainscoting above the staircase. The original steel framing of the skylight is original, though the glass within has been replaced with plywood. The flooring below the skylight has a temporary plywood cover over a glass block skylight/lightwell that allowed natural light to the lower staircase lobbies.

An open floor plan in the western half has exposed turned wood columns. The centered columns on the west end utilized an undercarriage structural tension rod and clevis system to create more column free space. It is partially exposed below the wainscoted ceiling.

All the exterior original window trim remains intact. The existing wood wainscoting ceiling remains and is original. A portion of the ceiling at the corner turret was removed by the previous owner for repairs. A small center section has a plastered ceiling in poor condition. The remaining partitions have had plaster and wood lath removed.

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Alterations

The following changes have been made to the building: an addition was made and remodeling was done in 1939 to accommodate J and R Motor Supply, a one-story addition to the west which has since been demolished; in 1949 the roof was repaired; an interior partition wall was constructed for the Crosby's Sport Shop in 1952; double-hung wood windows were replaced in the 1960's; copper shingles on the dome were replaced with asphalt shingles in 1980; and additional repairs were made to the roof in 1983.¹ In 1980, the decision to replace the copper shingles with asphalt ones was rather controversial, as the owners' daughter was an architect and objected to the change.² The corner retail entrance was made smaller, referencing the 1901 photo, (figure 1) the original featured a wider entrance at the base of the turret. The windows flanking the entrance to the east and south began further from the corner. The corner cast iron column remains in the same location. Based on materials and timing of tenants, it is estimated that this modification to the storefront occurred when Crosby's Sport Shop opened up in 1952. At some point the original cornice was removed and the parapet rebuilt. The onion dome was removed from the Hobbs in 2016 by the City of Aurora when the dome became structurally unsound and threatened to fall into the street. The trim on the second floor was removed and relocated to the basement sometime between 2005 and 2018. There have been multiple failed attempts at renovations over the years. There are plans are to restore the dome and trim in this restoration, which is already underway.

Conclusion

The effects of the changes are minimal and reversible when the overall size, exterior and interior details are considered. The exterior is clearly defined as the eclectic style of Minott with the use of brick, terra cotta and limestone, the prominent masonry arches, and the tiered bay windows. The Hobbs Building retains sufficient integrity to qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

¹ Archives of the Aurora Preservation Commission, Building Permits Records

² "Then and Now: Hobbs Building? It's the one with the turret," Beacon News, 1 May 1980.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

Period of Significance

1895

Architect/Builder

James E. Minott, architect

Levi Hull Whitehouse, builder

Significant Dates

1895

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The Hobbs Building at 2 N. River Street in Aurora is locally significant under Criterion C, for architecture. It is an excellent representation of a landmark building that anchored an early westside commercial district. The building's unique features are an interesting example of eclecticism, mixing distinct Romanesque, Queen Anne, and Exotic Revival elements including a polygonal corner turret, Roman masonry arches, prominent bay windows, and heavy limestone detailing. The onion dome which was originally atop the corner turret exhibited Oriental design influences. The building's interior spaces have retained most of the original layout and a significant portion of woodwork including tin and beadboard ceilings, detailed window and door casework, and a unique glass block lightwell feature.

While Late Victorian architecture was known for its eclecticism amongst and between buildings, the Hobbs Building is unique in that these features of eclecticism are featured on two public way elevations. The corner location, four stories of building height, and building detailing would have established a commanding presence in a commercial district comprised of one to three story buildings. Although the majority of these buildings have been demolished, the Hobbs Building remains.

The building's architect, James E. Minott, produced other uniquely eclectic buildings in Aurora and the surrounding area, showing great capacity in his range of design. The integrity of the original design is significant and worthy of placement on the National Register.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Early History of Aurora

The current city of Aurora began as two separate cities—Aurora and West Aurora—that grew up along opposite sides of the Fox River and merged in 1857. To quell the rivalry that developed between the east and west sides of the merged city, most of the town's businesses and public buildings such as the post office, city hall, library, and G.A.R building, were built on Stolp Island. The island is situated in the Fox River between the east and the west sides of town and provided neutral territory. The downtown area grew following the arrival of the former Chicago Burlington and Quincy Railroad, now the Burlington Northern Railroad, in 1864. In the late nineteenth century commercial uses expanded from the island to Broadway on the east side and River Street on the west side.

At the time, the area north of the Hobbs Building was primarily comprised of industrial sites and railroad lines, and south of the Hobbs Building on River Street were two and three-story commercial buildings. Shortly after the completion of the Hobbs Building, a three-story commercial building was built just north sharing a party wall with the Hobbs Building. Galena Boulevard originally terminated River Street until a bridge was opened in 1912, which brought an influx of traffic from the east side and Stolp Island.

The Hobbs Family

Nathaniel R. Hobbs was a prominent businessman during the mid to late 1800s. He came to Aurora from the New England area around 1867 and his furniture and undertaking business was quite successful. In addition to

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these businesses, Nathaniel Hobbs, along with his brothers, S.F. Hobbs and E.S. Hobbs, organized the Aurora Cotton Mills in 1883. Nathaniel Hobbs was also active in the community, serving as an alderman for Aurora's 2nd ward during the 1870s.³ Nathaniel's son Albert acquired the family business in 1889 and was held in the same high esteem as his father. Albert was regarded as a hard-working man dedicated to his family and community. Albert Hobbs sought to dissipate the rivalry between the east and west sides of Aurora. His plan to end the hostilities was based on an idea to "redirect the city with every ward embracing territory on both sides of the river." Unfortunately, his plan was never adopted. Hobbs was also active in the Aurora City Club, the Aurora Lodge no. 40, and the Loyal Order of the Moose.⁴

Albert Hobbs was also known throughout Aurora for his love of horses. Within a year of completion of the Hobbs Building, A.J. Hobbs spent \$1000.00 on a gray saddle horse. A pair of gray ponies, Paul and Virginia pulled the Hobbs furniture wagon.⁵ Hobbs is said to have had "one of the finest trotters in this part of the country." At the time of his death in 1926, he still had a stable full of horses and an old Studebaker carriage, "which years ago was pointed to as a vehicle of much pride."⁶

The Hobbs Furniture Business

The Hobbs family lived at 40 N. May on the west side of town very close to the Hobbs Building. The Hobbs family had long been active in the Aurora business community since Nathaniel R. Hobbs came to the area and founded a family furniture and undertaking business with the help of his fifteen-year-old son, Albert J. Hobbs. At this time it was very common for furniture dealers to sell coffins and act as undertakers.⁷ The Hobbs Furniture business always held a "foremost and prominent position in the furniture line" and they were known for their "large and varied stock" with many styles of furniture to choose from that appealed to people in "any station in life."⁸ During the early years of the business, the family's store had been located down the street at 14 S. River.⁹ When Nathaniel Hobbs passed away in 1889 he left the business to his sons, Albert and Will. The partnership was short lived and was "dissolved by mutual consent" in 1890 when Will moved to South Bend, Indiana and opened his own furniture business.¹⁰

The Hobbs Building

Albert Hobbs decided to move his undertaking and furniture business to N. River. He had inherited land at 2 N. River from his father and purchased adjacent property from the CB & Q Railroad Co.¹¹ In 1892, Albert Hobbs commissioned architect James E. Minott to begin plans for the Hobbs Building which was completed in 1895. It was built on the corner of N. River Street and Galena Boulevard, one block west of the river.

³ Aurora City Directories

⁴ "Aurora Merchant Had Been In Business in Aurora for 56 Years," Beacon News, 17 April 1926

⁵ Archives of the Aurora Historical Society, Downtown Photo File, Probate Inventory

⁶ "Aurora Merchant Had Been In Business in Aurora for 56 Years," Beacon News, 17 April 1926

⁷ Muldoon, Peter, "From Furniture Factory to Funeral Home" Smithsonian Preservation Quarterly, Summer/Fall 1995

⁸ Aurora City Directories

⁹ Aurora City Directories

¹⁰ Archives of the Aurora Historical Society, Downtown Photo File, Probate Inventory

¹¹ "Hobbs will build at once" Beacon News, 12 July 1892

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Levi Hull Waterhouse was a prominent builder in Chicago and built the Hobbs Building. Waterhouse is credited with building many of Aurora's brick structures prior to 1900, including the Silver Plate Factory, County Poorhouse, Aurora Watch Co. and Bishop Hotel, as well as various churches and schools.¹²

Originally several small businesses and apartments occupied the upper stories of the Hobbs Building. In the early 1900s Albert Hobbs turned away from the undertaking end of the business and focused his attention solely on the sale of furniture and upholstery.¹³ This change in business focus appears to have made Hobbs' prominence as a businessman increase. By 1909 his furniture and rug store was regarded as "the leading furniture house in Kane County".¹⁴

Albert Hobbs passed away in 1926 and the business and building were sold to Elmer and Grover Simons. Elmer was an experienced furniture store manager previously employed by the Ward and Jones Furniture Company in Aurora. When the Simons' Furniture and Rug Co. began business in the Hobbs Building, the occupants of the upper floors vacated the property with the exception of Samuel Youngberg. Youngberg had worked for Hobbs as a cabinetmaker since 1920 and continued working for the Simons until 1932 when they closed their business.¹⁵

After the Simons closed their furniture business the Hobbs Building was owned by various people and served a variety of functions. From 1932 to 1934 the Aurora Courier Tabernacle led by Reverend W.A. Hines occupied the building. In 1934 the building resumed its original function when it was sold to the Main Furniture Store, Inc., operated by Joseph Swimmer and Julius Zidell. From 1939 to 1943, J & R Motor Supply and Colorart Process Co. occupied the building. The Hobbs Building was home to the Catholic Salvage Bureau in the early 1950s. Crosby's Sport Shop opened its retail store in the Hobbs Building in 1954 until 1983.¹⁶ The upper floors were unoccupied and used sparingly as stock rooms. The building was vacant until 1987 when McGhee's Tool Outlet opened. McGhee's closed in 1990 and the building has been vacant since. The closing of McGhee's as well as Crosby's corresponds to the successful retail development on the fringes of Aurora and the consequent failure of many small family owned businesses in the downtown commercial center.

Late Victorian Period

Queen Anne/Exotic Revival

The Late Victorian period covered the last half of the nineteenth century. This period was one of growth, change and innovation in America. Mass production and improved transportation allowed for a variety of intricate architectural components to be distributed for reasonable cost. Specific ornament and detailing helped define the Late Victorian period.

Most of the Victorian subgroups found inspiration in earlier styles but were combined to produce eclectic interpretations; pattern books and magazines helped popularize the ornate style. One late Victorian style, Queen Anne, seemed to epitomize the period. Queen Anne architecture was generally quite eclectic and ornate. Buildings typically had steep roofs with cross gables or large dormers. They were most often asymmetrical in massing and highly decorated with wooden architectural details and trim. Towers and conical roofs were not

¹² Archives of the Aurora Historical Society, Downtown Photo File, Probate Inventory

¹³ Aurora City Directories

¹⁴ Hill, Thomas E., Hill's Reference Guide to Aurora (Glen Ellyn, IL: Hill Reference Guide Co., 1907)

¹⁵ Aurora City Directories

¹⁶ Aurora City Directories

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uncommon. Other variations during this time borrowed architectural elements and features from foreign places such as the Orient or Middle East and are considered Exotic Revival variations.

A number of Queen Anne and Exotic Revival elements are blended in the Hobbs Building, including the asymmetry of the façades, a corner turret topped with an onion dome, and prominent window bays on the primary south and east façades. When combined with Romanesque elements described below, these elements exemplify the eclectic architectural palette that Minott possessed. Another example of Minott's work is the two-story firehouse on Broadway, which is now known as the Aurora fire Museum. Constructed in 1894, the building has a symmetrical facade with ornate features such as its massive onion dome and keyhole windows which encapsulate Moorish design elements. The station underwent an extensive restoration in 2003 which included the return of the onion dome to the roof. This building is eclectic in style, with bay windows on the second floor and a gothic revival roofline.

Richardsonian Romanesque

The Romanesque Revival style came about during the late 1840's and early 1850's and developed out of the Gothic Revival movement. According to Marcus Whiffen, author of several architectural history books, the style became popular for both churches and public buildings.¹⁷ The second wave of Romanesque Revival was made popular by H.H. Richardson. The 19th century architect was continuing the tradition of classicism in American architecture. The style is defined by the heavy stone massing, rough cut stone, large semi-circular arches. Trinity Church in Boston; Allegheny County Courthouse in Pittsburgh and the Glessner House in Chicago are three existing examples of Richardson's work. Many architects designed in Richardson's style and it has become known as Richardsonian Romanesque.

Hobbs Building

The Hobbs Building is distinguished by many elements of Richardsonian Romanesque. Rough cut limestone in a triple-course base is on the south façade and limestone is also used as windowsills and lintels. A defining feature is the Roman masonry arch which is repeated on the Hobbs Building in the double window bays on the south façade and single bays on the east façade. Brick and terra cotta detailing is seen in the pilasters of the window bays as well as in the arches topping the windows on the third floor. The corner entrance of the building is distinguished by a polygonal corner turret.

J.E. Minott established his architectural firm in Aurora in 1872 and passed away in 1920.¹⁸ During his career, Minott designed several buildings in Aurora which exhibit the eclecticism of his design portfolio, including:

- The aforementioned 1894 Fire Station (figure 2);
- The German M.E. Church at 523-525 W. Downer (Figure 3);
- The home of Professor Quereau at 149 S. Fourth;
- The home of F.B. Rice at 461 W. Downer; and
- The Tevelin mansion on the corner of West Park and Locust.¹⁹

¹⁷ Whiffen, Marcus and Frederick Koeper, American Architecture Volume 1: 1607-1860. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992), 196-201

¹⁸ Aurora City Directories

¹⁹ Archives of the Aurora Historical Society, Downtown Photo File, Probate Inventory

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Minott also designed the Masonic Temple (Figure 4) in Plainfield, Illinois which featured a variety of styles. His ability to design to so many styles points to his skills as an architect.

The Hobbs Building is a blend of the styles prominent in Aurora during this period of growth. It was designed to be a landmark. The location was central to the westside business district. It was a brick and stone four story structure with a signature corner turret and 28' onion dome atop, amidst primarily smaller one to three story Italianates. (See Historic postcards – figures 5 & 6) These buildings that lined the block of South River, south of Galena are now gone. The Hobbs Building is one of few remaining late 19th century structures in the area. The two buildings adjacent to the north were constructed just after the turn of the century. Across Galena Boulevard and to the west is the Galena House, built in 1857. The Second National Bank is two blocks south on River Street and was designed by George Elmslie in 1924. The other three corners of Galena Boulevard and River Street contain a multi-story concrete parking deck, a glass and steel modern building and a surface parking lot.

A Guide to Chicago's Historic Suburbs states, "this building is characteristic of the emerging masonry and iron skeletal construction that preceded the true skeletal forms used in first Chicago skyscrapers."²⁰

Conclusion

The Hobbs Building has always been a landmark in downtown Aurora. While the dome was removed in 2016 due to structural concerns, the Hobbs Building maintains significant original detailing and remains a notable building in downtown Aurora, just as it was when it was built in 1895. This design by local architect, J.E. Minott, features unique Victorian eclecticism that featured his skills as an architect and reflected trends of the time. Today the surroundings have undergone a significant transformation. Many of the historic structures that were present at the time of construction have been torn down. The Hobbs Building has remained relatively unaltered and maintains sufficient integrity for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Hobbs Building was designed to be a landmark in downtown Aurora. As a four-story building set on a corner lot and originally situated amongst a series of one to three story buildings constructed in the Late Victorian period, the Hobbs Building has had an established, prominent role in the built environment of Aurora's downtown for many years. This design by local architect, J.E. Minott, features an eclectic mix of Romanesque, Queen Anne, and Exotic Revival details that demonstrated his skills as an architect and reflected trends of the time.

Today the surroundings have undergone a significant transformation. Many of the historic structures that were present at the time of construction have been torn down. The Hobbs Building has remained relatively unaltered and maintains sufficient integrity for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

²⁰ Back, Ira J., *A Guide to Chicago's Historic Suburbs*, 1980

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Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Archives of the Aurora Preservation Commission, Building Permits Records

Archives of the Aurora Historical Society, Downtown Photo File, Probate Inventory

Aurora City Directories

“Aurora Merchant Had Been in Business in Aurora for 56 Years,” Beacon News, 17 April 1926.

Buffalo as an Architectural Museum. Buffalo Preservation Scroll 2002 The Preservation Coalition. 3 September 2002 <http://bfm.org/preservationworks/bam/archsty/rom/#Victorian>

Carole Rifkind, A Field Guide to American Architecture (New York: New American Libraray 1980), 207-209.

“Commercial Gem, Hobbs Building Awaits Rebirth,” Beacon News, 10 June 2001, section B.

“Hobbs will build at once,” Beacon News, 12 July 1892.

Ira J. Bach and Susan Wolfson. A Guide to Chicago’s Historic Suburbs, (Chicago: Swallow Press Ohio University Press, 1981), 332.

“IS A \$10,000 BEAUTY The New North Broadway Hose House and Police Patrol Building,” Beacon News. 19 November 1894.

Marcus Whiffen and Frederick Koeper, American Architecture Volume 1: 1607- 1860. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992), 196- 201.

“Mrs. Ida Hobbs, Resident Here 77 Years, Dies,” Beacon News, 24 February 1936.

Peter Muldoon, "From Furniture Factory to Funeral Home," Smithsonian Preservation Quarterly, Summer/Fall 1995.

Sanborn Map Company, fire insurance maps of the city of Aurora, 1897, 1907

“Then and Now: Hobbs building? It’s the one with the turret,” Beacon News, 1 May 1980.

Thomas E. Hill, Hills’ Reference Guide to Aurora (Glen Ellyn, IL: Hill Reference Guide Co., 1907).

Vernon Derry, The Aurora Story, (USA: Aurora Bicentennial Commission, 1976).

Romanesque Revival
<https://architecturestyles.org/romanesque-revival>

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>41.759480N</u>	<u>-88.316875W</u>	3	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lots 1 & 2 of Hobbs' and Loser's Sub in Aurora Township, Kane County, Illinois

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the building and lot historically associated with the Hobbs building and that maintains its historical integrity.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Valerie Olafson(2020) Jennie Grobe and Stefanie McQueen(2002) date 11/16/2020
organization Gary Anderson & Assoc. telephone 815-988-1940
street & number 422 S. 1st Street email vjolafson@gmail.com
city or town Rockford state IL zip code 61104

Additional Documentation

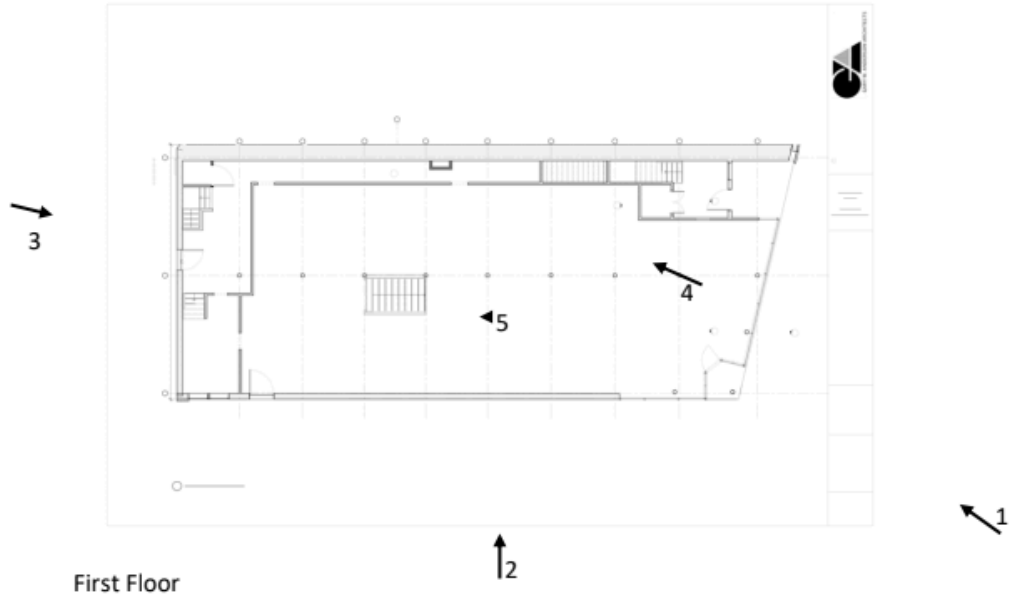
Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**

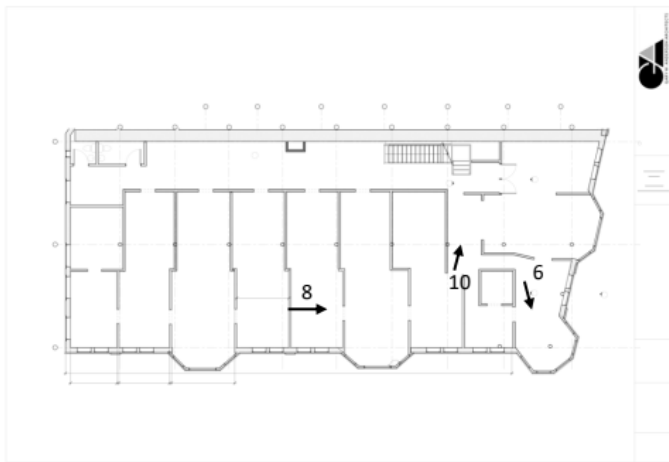
Hobbs Building
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- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).



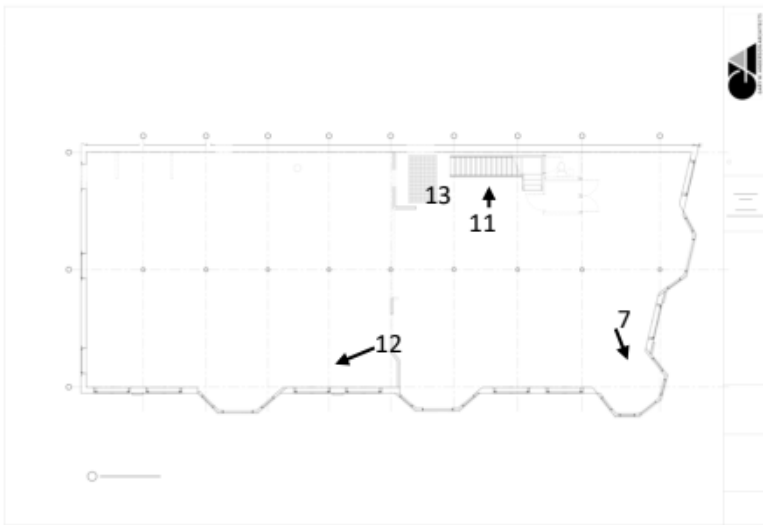
First Floor



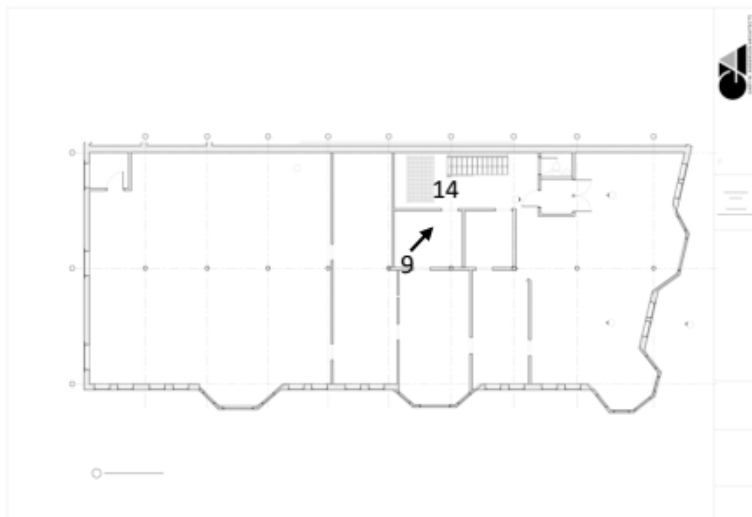
Second Floor

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Third Floor



Fourth Floor

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Hobbs Building
City or Vicinity: Aurora
County: Kane **State:** Illinois
Photographer: Valerie Olafson
Date Photographed: August 2018, June 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of XX:

- 1 of 14, Primary (East) and South façade, looking NW
- 2 of 14, masonry detail on South façade, looking N
- 3 of 14, Rear (West) façade, looking E
- 4 of 14, First floor, looking NW
- 5 of 14, Ceiling detail, 1st floor
- 6 of 14, Turret 2nd floor, looking SE
- 7 of 14, Turret Detail, 3rd Floor, looking SE
- 8 of 14, Doors, 2nd floor, looking E
- 9 of 14, Interior room, 4th floor, looking NE
- 10 of 14, 2nd Floor Corridor, looking SE
- 11 of 14, Stairs, 2nd floor, looking N
- 12 of 14, Bay Windows, 3rd floor, looking SW
- 13 of 14, floor light between 2nd and 3rd floor
- 14 of 14, Looking up at roof skylight

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Photo 1, Primary (East) and South façade, looking NW

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Photo 2, masonry detail on South façade, looking N

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Photo 3, Rear (West) façade, looking E

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Photo 4, First floor, looking NW



Photo 5, Ceiling detail, 1st floor

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Photo 6, Turret 2nd floor, looking SE



Photo 7 Turret Detail, 3rd Floor, looking SE

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Photo 8, Doors, 2nd floor, looking E



Photo 9, interior room 4th floor, looking NE

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Photo 10, 2nd floor corridor, looking SE



Photo 11, Stairs, 3rd floor, looking N

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Photo 12, Bay Windows, 3rd floor, looking SW



Photo 13, floor light between 3rd and 4th floor

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Photo 14, Looking up at roof skylight

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GIS Map



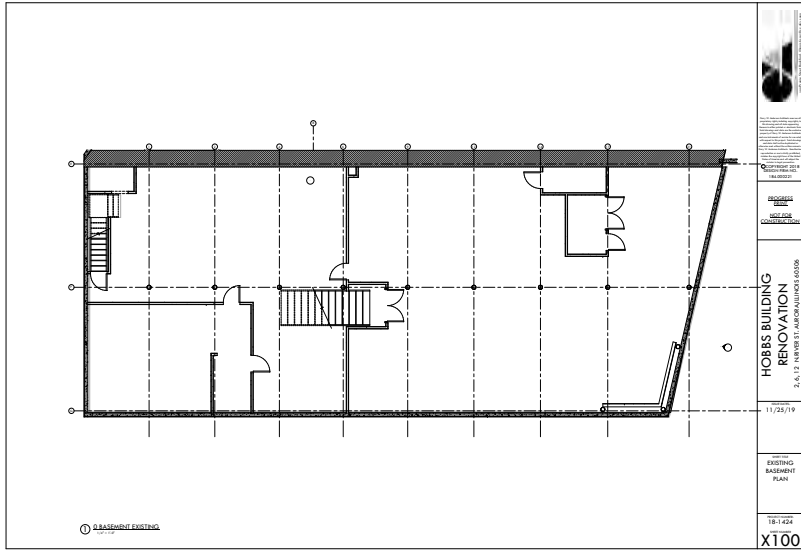
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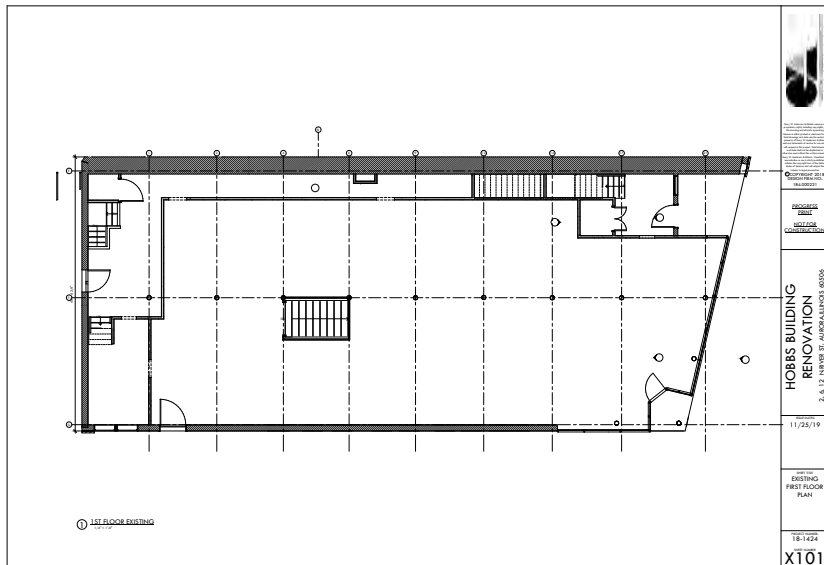
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Floor Plans



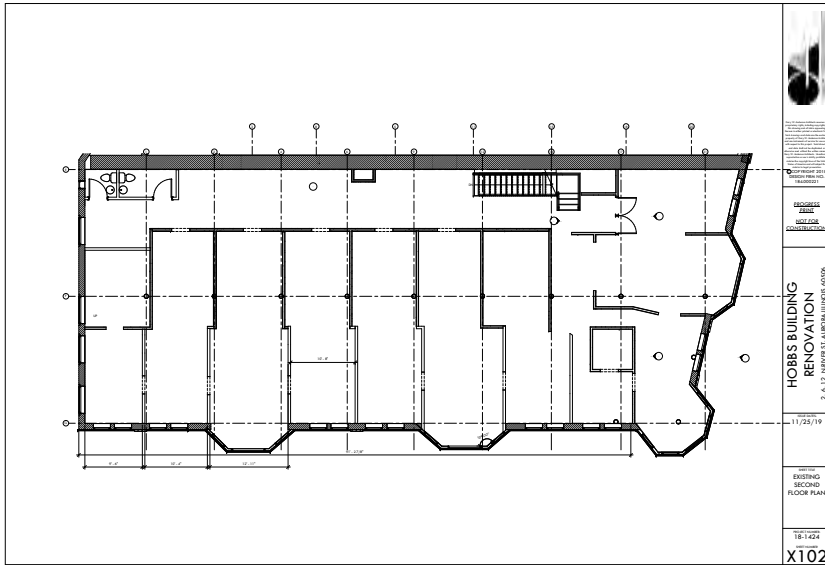
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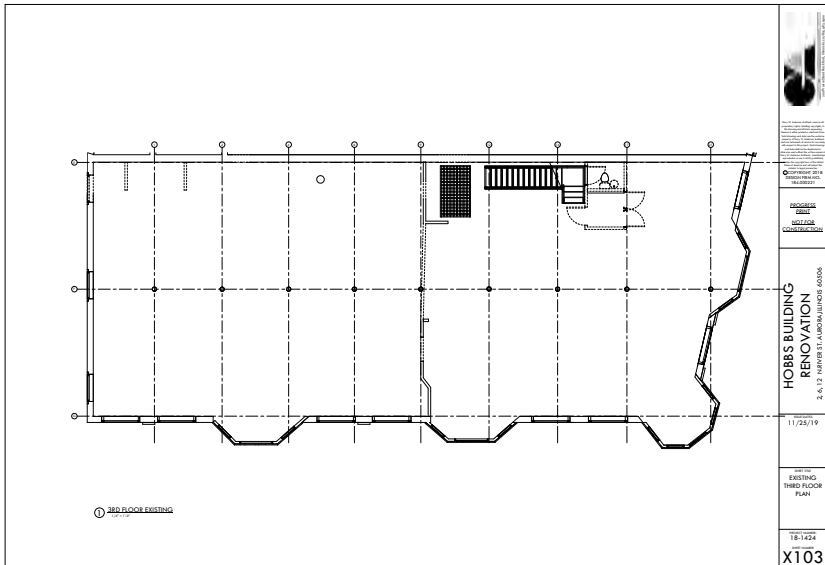
First Floor

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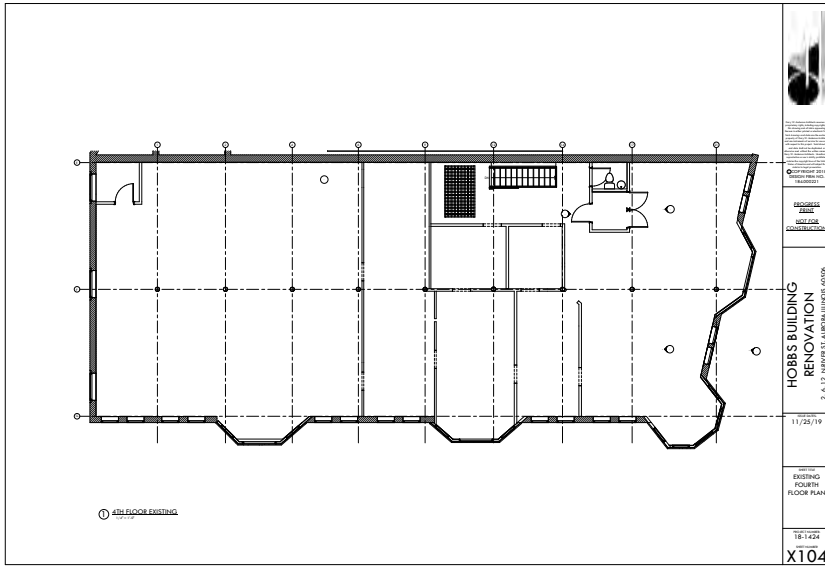
Second Floor



Third Floor

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Fourth Floor

Hobbs Building

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Figure 1: Historic photograph of a high-diver plunging off the Hobbs Block. Conflicting dates for this photograph have been offered by different sources, but evidence points to it having been taken on July 4, 1901.

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Figure 2 Aurora Fire Museum

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Figure 3: The German M.E. Church

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 38

List of Figures

(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all document should be inserted with the top toward the top of the p



Figure 4: Masonic Temple, Plainfield, Illinois

Property name:
Illinois, County:



Figure 5: Historic Postcard, 1st block of S. River, looking SE



Figure 6: Historic Postcard, 1st block of S. River, looking NW