

BLACKSTONE BUILDING

c. 1927

112 W. Washington Blvd.

The street level of the Blackstone Building provides an entrance and lobby for the south block residential condominiums. This building is rather small, as it was erected in what was the alley space between the Fort Wayne Printing Building and the Schmitz Block. The upper floors contain just two residential units, one on each of the second and third floors. Originally a three-story structure, it was expanded to four floors to connect with the Schmitz building. The fourth floor now holds one of Midtowne's two workout facilities. Much of the space on each floor of this building serves as the elevator lobby. An open marble staircase leading from the lobby to the third floor is the most prominent remaining historic aspect inside the building.

William H. Noll bought the site of the Blackstone Building in 1912, at the same time he purchased the adjacent Schmitz Block (see Schmitz Block). Noll erected the building in 1927 to house Blackstone Shop, a women's clothier owned by his wife, Laura Green Noll. Mrs. Noll's shop occupied the building for ten years. A men's clothing store, Harold Hughes, opened in the building in 1941, and was succeeded by Nobbson, another women's clothier, in 1951. Nobbson used this building, along with the first floor of the Schmitz Block through 1979, at which time it abandoned downtown for the suburbs. This building stood empty from the time Nobbson left until construction for Midtowne Crossing began in 1989.

A prominent local businessman and native of Fort Wayne, Noll made his fortune mass-producing a cough syrup originally developed by his pharmacist father. He later opened the country's first factory for producing liquid nail polish.

The Blackstone Building is primarily of local architectural significance as an example of terra cotta construction in the neoclassical style. It is one of the few existing examples of the commercial designs of Charles Weatherhogg. The Blackstone Building is the only commercial building still existing in downtown Fort Wayne to have an upper façade clad entirely in terra cotta. Virtually all other similar local examples were theaters, including the Lyric (c. 1910), Keith (1907), and Orpheum (c. 1924), all of which have been demolished. The best existing example of terra cotta as trim is the Embassy Theater/Indiana Hotel (1928), which has tapestry brick as its principal facing material. Though he designed many major downtown structures during his career, only four of Weatherhogg's other designs survive: his Central High School (1902), Elks Temple (1907), Masonic Temple (1922) and Journal-Gazette Building (1927). His vanished works include not only such other downtown landmarks as the Anthony Hotel (1907, Louis H. Sullivan, associate architect), the Keenan Hotel (1922), and the A.M. Strauss Utility Building (1924), but also a suburban commission related to the origins of the Blackstone Building, his 1915 design for the same client, William H. Noll, of a palatial mansion that was arguably the most elaborate residence built in Fort Wayne during this century.

History and architectural information were taken from the National Historic Register nomination written by Craig Leonard in 1987. It was updated through our own research and with assistance from Don Orban.

The Blackstone Building was added to the National Historic Register in 1988 and to the Local Historic Register in 1989.