

# Hacker, Nelson & Co. receiving Historic Preservation Award

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The Decorah Historic Preservation Commission is presenting its annual historic preservation award to the accounting firm Hacker, Nelson & Co. for their exterior rehabilitation of their landmark downtown Decorah building. The award will be presented Friday, May 13, at a 4:30 p.m. public reception at Java John's Coffee House.

"The Hacker, Nelson building on the corner of Water and Winnebago streets is one of Decorah's gems. The firm has shown architectural sensitivity and great community spirit in restoring the elaborate stonework that graces the building's corner turret," said Commission Chair Mark Muggli.

"It would be a sin not to preserve this historic building. We consider the building part of Decorah's public legacy and are pleased that we are able to preserve it," said Neil Schraeder, who is one of the firm's three partners along with Ken Keune and Joe Bouska.

The award ceremony will include brief introductory remarks by Muggli, a historical overview of the Hacker, Nelson building by local researcher Cindy Womeldorf, and a response by Neil Schraeder. Light hors d'oeuvres will be served, and drinks and desserts will be available for purchase. The Commission hopes that the 4:30 p.m. time slot will make for a casual, "Happy Hour" atmosphere at the event. Java John's is housed in the historic "Ness Store" building on the corner of Water and River Streets.

## The Building

The Hacker, Nelson building's major visible features go back to the Citizen Savings Bank 1897 reconstruction, but the exterior shell covers an earlier stone building of the John Finn Hardware and Machinery Company. "The building has over the years included a wide range of businesses. But whoever the occupants, the Winnebago/Water St. crossing has been central to the downtown commercial district," said local researcher Cindy Womeldorf. "Because the Commission's current major project is to place Decorah's downtown commercial district on the National Register of Historic Places, we are pleased to highlight Hacker, Nelson's preservation of a downtown building. They and the building's previous owners have been a model of the kind of preservation that we hope to encourage in all downtown building owners," said Historic Preservation Commission member Diane Scholl.

The National Register nomination process relies on a major \$25,000 grant from the State Historical Society of Iowa, Historical Resource Development Program, along with matching funding from Decorah Bank and Trust (\$3,250), The Depot Outlet (\$2,000), StoryPeople (\$1,000), and Java John's Coffee House (\$500).



Historic Photo of the Citizen's Savings Bank Block from "Picturesque Decorah: The Progress of a Half-Century as seen through the Camera, June 1849-June 1899."

A major component of the nomination process is research on each of the potential 130 buildings in the downtown district. Commission member Jody Holland complimented the volunteer researchers and local historical organizations for the “marvelous work they’ve been doing in digging up interesting stories about the Decorah downtown. We’re pleased to have this architectural heritage, but it’s not a matter of luck—it’s a matter of responsible decisions by owners down through the years.”

The National Register district will include Water Street from the Dry Run through Vesterheim and parts of several adjoining streets. The district will be contiguous with Decorah’s other historic district, the Broadway-Phelps Park residential and civic district.

National Historic designation does not restrict owners’ control over their properties, but buildings that contribute to a historic district are eligible for state and federal tax credits for approved rehabilitation projects. Business owners should contact the Commission chair for further information (612-720-5795; mugglimz@luther.edu).

#### The Commission

The Decorah Historic Preservation Commission is certified by the state of Iowa as Decorah’s advisory body on preservation. The current Commission includes Jody Holland, Susan Jacobsen, Mary Hull Mohr, Mark Muggli, Diane Scholl and Judy Van der Linden. Because of announced vacancies, the Commission is currently seeking a number of new members. Previous Decorah Historic Preservation awards have been given to Kevin and Dan Sand, Helen Basler, Deborah Bishop, Dominique and Michael Bockman, David Wadsworth, and Elizabeth Lorentzen and Ed Epperly.



Hacker, Nelson & Co. of Decorah received the annual historic preservation award from the Decorah Historic Preservation Commission last week. From left to right: Mark Muggli, Darv Hacker, Neil Schraeder, Joe Bouska and Cindy Womeldorf. (Photo by Julie Berg-Raymond)

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The Commission designed the gathering as a casual, "Happy Hour" atmosphere at Java John's, which is housed in another historic structure. Java John's was the former "Ness Store" building on the corner of Water and River Streets.