

Iowa Architecture Firm Turns 100

Date : January 27, 2023

Des Moines, Iowa, January 27, 2023 – frk architects + engineers, one of Iowa’s premier, most accomplished and historic firms, turns 100 this year. frk has for much of that history focused on school design, starting with its first project of Valley Junction Junior High in 1923 and continuing through to the recently-completed Waukee Northwest High School.

Other recent major high schools frk has designed include the new Johnston High School, Southeast Polk High School and Clinton High School. Throughout its tenure frk has worked on school projects in nearly all 99 counties in the state of Iowa. frk’s approach to school design is to create spaces that are “future ready” to help students find success in whatever path they take following graduation.

Founded in 1923 by James Dougher, Herbert Rich, and Chester Woodburn, frk is one of the few continuously operating architecture firms in the state of Iowa that is able to celebrate its centennial anniversary. Starting out as Dougher, Rich and Woodburn, the firm has changed names a number of times to reflect its owners, but has remained frk architects+engineers for the last 20 years. The firm is called an architecture and engineering firm since it has had a structural engineer as part of the team since the 1920s, though architecture is its principal focus.

frk is known primarily for its public architecture around the state, and it has contributed to Iowa’s architectural landscape with the iconic PWA Art Moderne courthouses in Buchanan, Cass, and Jones Counties as well as the Mid Century Modern courthouse in Kossuth County. The firm is also responsible for various buildings at Iowa State University, and in the Des Moines area it counts the Temple B’Nai Jeshurun, Hoover High School, Meredith Middle School and many other school projects as its accomplishments.

The firm has also been involved in numerous commercial projects over the years such as Crescent Chevrolet and the Adventureland Inn along with numerous banks, motels and office buildings.

frk architects+engineers are led by president Rachelle Hines (AIA) and partners Tom Wollan (AIA), and Brian Bartlett (Structural PE). The trio recognizes the firm’s deep commitment to timeless design, high quality design documents and attentive client care as the cornerstones both to its century-long history and its successful future.

To celebrate their anniversary, frk will hold a number of events throughout 2023, including a celebration event for friends of the firm and monthly service/outreach activities to give back to the community.