#### STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

December 8, 2020

St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Teresa Kimker, Chair 25 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, 1400 CHA St. Paul MN 55102

RE:

Certified Local Government Comment on the nomination of: St. Paul Casket Company, 1222 West University Avenue, St. Paul, Ramsey County to the National Register of Historic Places

Dear Teresa Kimker, Chair:

The above referenced property may be considered by the State Historic Preservation Review Board for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places on February 16, 2021. Because the City of St. Paul has been granted Certified Local Government (CLG) Status under the provisions of 36 CFR 61.5 and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office's "Procedures for Applying For and Maintaining Certified Local Government Status," the nomination (copy enclosed) is being sent to the Office of the Mayor and to the Heritage Preservation Commission for review at this time.

This nomination is classified as both a <u>historical</u> nomination and an <u>architectural</u> nomination. (A digital copy of this nomination will be available online approximately one month before the scheduled meeting at: <a href="http://bit.ly/StateReviewBoard">http://bit.ly/StateReviewBoard</a>). After allowing a reasonable opportunity for public comment, the Commission may prepare a report indicating its opinion as to whether the property meets the National Register Criteria (copy enclosed). At least one Commission member who meets the Federal Standards for History, and one Commission member who meets the Federal Standards for Historic Architecture or Architectural History (see Appendix A of the state CLG procedures) should participate in formulating that opinion.

If the Heritage Preservation Commission does not include members who meet the Federal Standards, the city may choose not to comment on this nomination through the CLG review process (in which case please advise the Preservation Office of that choice), or the Heritage Preservation Commission may obtain the opinions of qualified professionals in the subject areas and consider these opinions in its recommendations. The comment must include both the credentials and opinion of the consulted professionals. If the city chooses not to comment under the CLG process outlined above, comments on a nomination may be submitted to the Preservation Office in as much as any interested party may submit comments.

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The Mayor may transmit the report of the Heritage Preservation Commission together with his comments on the eligibility of the property to Amy Spong, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, at 50 Sherburne Ave., Suite 203, St. Paul, MN 55155. This response must be received before the close of business on February 12, 2021. Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, if both the Heritage Preservation Commission and the Mayor determine that the property does <u>not</u> meet the criteria, the nomination will not be further considered unless an appeal is filed with the state office.

We should note that the standard notification of SHPRB consideration of this property has been sent to the owner. Appropriate officials will be notified approximately one month before the scheduled meeting.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

**Amy Spong** 

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

enc.: National Register Program

National Register Criteria

Copy of National Register Nomination

cc: 1222 Partners LP

1335 Pierce Butler Route

St. Paul, MN 55108

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#### THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROGRAM

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the official list of historic properties recognized by the Federal Government as worthy of preservation for their significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture. The NRHP was created in 1966 and is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our significant historic places under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act. The National Park Service (NPS) provides oversight for the program under the Secretary of the Interior. The program is managed by the professional staff of the National Register in Washington, DC, State Historic Preservation Officers, and the Preservation Officers in Federal Agencies. Contact the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for information describing the National Register program (MNSHPO@state.mn.us). For online information go to:

https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm http://mn.gov/admin/shpo

For further information on National Register Federal Program Regulations refer to the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 36 CFR60. For online information go to:

https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/what-is-the-national-register.htm

#### LISTING IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER PROVIDES BENEFITS TO HISTORIC PROPERTIES:

Eligibility for Federal Tax Provisions: Since 1976 the Federal Internal Revenue Code has contained a variety of incentives to encourage capital investment in historic buildings and to spur revitalization of historic properties. These incentives include a 20% investment tax credit to encourage the preservation of historic commercial, industrial, and rental residential buildings listed in the NRHP by allowing favorable tax treatments for rehabilitation. Owners of NRHP properties who choose to participate in the preservation tax incentive program must follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and receive approval by the NPS of the rehabilitation project in order to receive the tax credit. For online general information go to: https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm

For further information on building certification requirements refer to 36 CFR67. For online information go to: https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives/taxdocs/36cfr67.pdf

Eligibility for State Tax Provisions: The Minnesota Historic Structure Rehabilitation Tax Credit was signed into law in April 2010. The state rehab tax credit mirrors the 20% federal historic preservation tax credit and must be used in conjunction with the federal credit. Property owners who are undertaking a historic rehabilitation project are eligible to receive a state income tax credit up to 20% of qualifying rehabilitation expenses. Owner may elect to receive a grant in lieu of a credit equal to 90% of the allowable credit. For online information go to: http://mn.gov/admin/shpo/incentives/state

**Easement Donations**: The Federal Internal Revenue Code also provides for Federal income, estate, and gift tax deductions for charitable contributions or partial interests in real property (land and buildings). Taxpayers' gifts of qualified interest may be "exclusively for conservation purposes." For online information go to: https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives/taxdocs/easements-historic-properties.pdf

Because tax aspects outlined above are complex, individuals should consult legal counsel or the appropriate Internal Revenue Service office for assistance in determining the tax consequences of the above provisions. Maria Blake is the IRS representative who serves taxpayers in Minnesota. She can be contacted at (954) 991-4132 or <a href="mailto:maria.blake@irs.gov">maria.blake@irs.gov</a>.

Consideration in planning for Federal, federally licensed, and federally assisted projects: Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their actions on historic properties listed on or determined eligible for the NRHP. Regulations of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, an independent Federal agency, guide this consultation process, which is intended to assure that the value of the historic property is considered in project planning. For online information go to: <a href="http://www.achp.gov">http://www.achp.gov</a>

For further information on the Advisory Council refer to 36 CFR Part 800. For online information go to: <a href="https://www.achp.gov/sites/default/files/regulations/2017-02/regs-rev04.pdf">https://www.achp.gov/sites/default/files/regulations/2017-02/regs-rev04.pdf</a> and <a href="https://www.achp.gov/digital-library-section-106-landing/citizens-guide-section-106-review">https://www.achp.gov/digital-library-section-106-landing/citizens-guide-section-106-review</a>

**Qualification for Federal grants for historic preservation**: Presently, funding levels are inadequate for these grants to be available.

Consideration in planning for State, state licensed, and state assisted projects: Minnesota Statues Chapter 138 requires that state departments, state agencies, and political subdivisions of the state (counties, townships, cities, etc.) have the responsibility to protect the physical features and historical character of properties listed in the NRHP. The relevant public agency is required to consult with the SHPO before carrying out any undertaking, or funding, or licensing, or permitting an undertaking by other parties, in order to determine appropriate treatments and to seek ways to avoid and mitigate any adverse effects on NRHP-listed properties. For further information, refer to Minnesota Statutes Chapter 138.665 and 138.666. The statutes are online at:

http://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=138.665 http://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=138.666

Consideration before demolition: The rules of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) require preparation of an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) by the responsible unit of government for any proposed demolition, in whole or in part, or moving of a property listed in the NRHP. For further information on the Environmental Quality Board refer to Minnesota Rules Parts 4410.0200, 4410.1000 and 4410.4300 subpart 31 or call 651-201-2477. For online information go to:

https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=4410 https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=4410.4300

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE NATIONAL REGISTER PROCESS AND THE MEANING OF LISTING:

Owning a property listed in the National Register does not automatically impose a regulatory burden on an individual property owner. Listing in the NRHP does not mean that the Federal Government wants to acquire the property, place restrictive covenants on the land, or dictate the color or materials used on individual buildings. State and local ordinances, local historical commissions, or laws establishing restrictive zoning, special design review committees, or review of exterior alterations, are not a part of the NRHP.

Historic properties of national, state, or local significance under private or local/state government ownership may be nominated by the SHPO. Property owners, historical consultants and SHPO staff may prepare nominations. A Federal agency's Federal Preservation Officer nominates properties under Federal ownership to the NRHP. For online information go to: <a href="https://www.achp.gov/protecting-historic-properties/fpo-list">https://www.achp.gov/protecting-historic-properties/fpo-list</a>

Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPO) perform the same type of preservation activities as those performed by SHPO's. These activities, however, are associated with historic properties located on Tribal Lands. Contact the SHPO for a list of THPO's in Minnesota. For online information go to: <a href="http://www.achp.gov/thpo.html">http://www.achp.gov/thpo.html</a> and <a href="https://www.nps.gov/THPO">www.nps.gov/THPO</a>

In recognition of the importance of local actions to historic preservation, the 1980 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act established the Certified Local Government (CLG) program that required each State preservation program to develop a mechanism for the certification of local governments in the State. As a CLG the mayor and the heritage preservation commission have the opportunity to comment on a property being nominated in their city. If both the mayor and the heritage preservation commission determine that the property does not meet NRHP criteria, the nomination will not be considered unless an appeal is filed with the SHPO. For a list of certified local governments, contact the SHPO.

State Historic Preservation Office 50 Sherburne Ave. Suite 203 St. Paul, Minnesota 55155 651-201-3287 mnshpo@state.mn.us http://mn.gov/admin/shpo

Updated 3/23/2020



## NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and

- (a) that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- (b) that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (d) that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS. Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- (a) a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- (b) a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- (c) a birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with their productive life; or
- (d) a cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- (e) a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- (f) a property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance; or
- (g) a property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance

#### **SUnited 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.

A	B	C	D	
recommend level(s) of sinationa	that this prope gnificance:	erty be consi _statewide	dered signifi lo	not meet the National Register Criteria icant at the following
the documen Places and m	tation standar neets the proce	ds for registed and pro-	ering proper rofessional r	est for determination of eligibility meet ties in the National Register of Historic equirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60
				toric Preservation Act, as amended,
	deral Agency			
	nber: <u>1222 W</u> : <u>St. Paul</u> lication:		: <u>MN</u>	County: Ramsey
2. Location		· · · · · ·	•	

St. Paul Casket Company Building	Ramsey, Minnesota
Name of Property	County and State
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
5. Classification	· ·
Ownership of Property	
(Check as many boxes as apply.)	
Private: X	
Public – Local	
Public – State	
Tublic – State	
Public – Federal	
Category of Property	
(Check only one box.)	
Building(s)	
District	
Site	
Structure	
Object	

OMB Control No. 1024-0018 NPS Form 10-900 Ramsey, Minnesota St. Paul Casket Company Building County and State Name of Property **Number of Resources within Property** (Do not include previously listed resources in the count) Noncontributing Contributing buildings 0 sites structures objects Total 0 Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A 6. Function or Use **Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions.) COMMERCE/warehouse INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility **Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions.) COMMERCE/warehouse

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
NPS Form 10-900

OMB Control No. 1024-0018

St. Paul Casket Company Building
Name of Property

Ramsey, Minnesota
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/ Commercial
Style

Style

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN COMPLETED BY REFERENCING WITH PERMISSION AN EARLIER NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM PREPARED BY MARJORIE PEARSON, PH.D OF SUMMIT ENVIROSOLUTIONS INC.

IN MAY 2015.

Principal exterior materials of the property: <u>CONCRETE; STUCCO</u>

## **Narrative Description**

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

(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 four-story St. Paul Casket Company Building is located on the south side of University Avenue between Griggs and Syndicate Streets. Designed in a commercial style with Modern Gothic detail by the Saint Paul architectural firm of Allen H. Stem, it was built in 1922-1923 of reinforced concrete flat slab construction with structural clay tile partitions, roof, and walls. The exterior walls are covered by light gray-beige stucco. Piers modeled as buttresses and a tall central tower housing a water tank accentuate the structure designed as a vertical urban factory.

The building retains integrity of design and materials, as well as integrity of feeling, all of which are reinforced by the prominent central tower. The building retains its integrity of location, although the integrity of setting has been changed over the years by new commercial and institutional building construction. It is located along one of Saint Paul's major commercial avenues at the southwest corner of University Avenue and Griggs Street. The remainder of the University Avenue blockfront is occupied by a four-story commercial building, a parking lot, and a three-story modern office building. Set back from the modern office building is a surviving building from the Brown and Bigelow Company complex. Two one-story mid-twentieth century commercial buildings and a parking lot are located on the north side of University Avenue. The

St. Paul Casket Company Building

Name of Property

Ramsey, Minnesota County and State

tracks of the Green Line light rail extend down the middle of University Avenue. Historically, a major streetcar line followed this route between 1890 and 1953. The building has changed its manufacturing function since the period of significance, although it retains its warehouse and related office function. Consequently it has diminished integrity of association.

### **Narrative Description**

## University Avenue Façade (Photos 1, 2 and 4)

The four-story University Avenue façade is organized into nine bays with slightly projecting pavilions at the corners and a slightly projecting centered entrance pavilion that rises to a multistory tower, 104 feet high. The single windows in the corner pavilions are flanked by shallow piers that rise to stylized pointed-arch tops, giving the effect of buttresses. Balustrades formed of short piers and latticework fronts are placed at the bases of second-story windows (Photo 6). The fourth-story windows are set below pointed-arch panels. The sections flanking the center pavilion are articulated by shallow piers, similar to the corner piers, with single windows flanking triple-window groups. The shallow piers of the center pavilion flank a deeply recessed entrance set in a shallow arch and triple window groups. A balustrade similar to that at the corners is placed at the base of the second-story windows above the entrance. The entrance is approached by a center concrete walkway leading to shallow steps flanked by low wing walls. The urns which once adorned the wing walls have been removed. The double wood and glass doors, now painted, appear to be original. The piers rise up the tower in shallow setbacks, accentuating its verticality (Photo 7). A clock face is set in a square surround at the base of the tower, while a narrow vertical window opening rises above it. The tower is similarly articulated on all four sides. The windows open to interior stairs in the tower that go up to the water tank. All the window openings retain their original industrial steel sash, although the glass in the firststory windows has been painted. The lawn area in front of the building has been enclosed by a security fence.

## Griggs Avenue Elevation (Photos 1 and 3)

The four-story Griggs Avenue elevation is organized into seven bays with slightly projecting pavilions at the corners flanking five bays articulated by shallow piers. The pavilions have three window openings on the second through fourth stories with pointed-arch panels above the fourth-story windows. The first-story window openings have been filled in and stuccoed over. Balustrades formed of short piers and latticework front are placed at the bases of second-story windows. The piers articulating the corner pavilions and the midsection are similar to those on the University Avenue façade. Triple-window groups with industrial-steel sash are placed in the midsection. Some of those at the second story have been modified with infill panels. The first story has two loading bay openings with metal doors. The loading bay closest to University Avenue is original to the building.

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#### West elevation (Photos 2 and 5)

The four-story west elevation is like the Griggs Avenue elevation, although it is less visible. The first-story window openings remain in place. Ventilation ductwork has been added to some of the window openings.

### South elevation (Photos 3 and 5)

The first story of the four-story south elevation is covered by a berm with plantings along Griggs Street, accessed by a driveway and topped by a parking lot. This berm was the location of the original rail spur into the property and the garage and lumber drying building. Unlike the other three faces of the building, the south elevation was never intended to be highly visible from a major public street. Like the other three faces of the building, it has shallow corner pavilions accentuated by piers. The midsection only has regularly spaced window openings with industrial steel sash. A tall brick chimney rises above the roofline.

A photograph of the building under construction in 1922 (Figure 3) illustrates the structural clay tile that was installed on the exterior walls. Once the walls were in place they were covered with concrete stucco, and the pointed arches of the piers and window panels were cast in concrete stucco. The color is described as white in early newspaper accounts. The exterior stucco has been redone at least once, which has obscured some of the sculptural details. The color is now a light gray-beige.

#### Interior

The building remained in use as office and warehouse space up until Winter 2020 when it was purchased. The interior conditions maintain good integrity. There have been few alterations within the building as its open-plan served well as storage space for the past few decades. The original decorative cast and wrought-iron railings remain on the main stairwell along with a spiral staircase up to the water tank in the tower (Figure 8 and Photo 10). Within the tower, the original clock and its machinery are still intact and accessible. (Figure 4). The original freight elevator remains and is in working condition (Figure 13 and Photo 11). The second floor features a historic terrazzo floor that spans the extent of the former Display Room (Figure 8 and Photo 8). The decorative plaster ceiling that covered the Display Room is still largely extant (Figure 8 and Photo 9). This space is the only area of the building with extra detailing as the rest served as production and storage space. Concrete floors with yellow lines demarcating workspaces and product flow are still visible on former production floors. (Figure 10 and Photo 11). All original mushroom columns stand free and unaltered (Figure 10 and Photo 12). The original sprinkler lines connected to the water tank in the tower are also extant, though not currently functioning. The boiler room and associated components are also intact and in historic condition. There are no found remnants of the St. Paul Casket Company production equipment or machinery, they were likely removed when Snyder's Drug took over the space in 1952.

National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form OMB Control No. 1024-0018 NPS Form 10-900 Ramsey, Minnesota St. Paul Casket Company Building County and State Name of Property 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 Χ 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.) 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

United States Department of the Interior

St. Paul Casket Company Building ame of Property
Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
INDUSTRY
ARCHITECTURE ENGINEERING
ENGINEERING
Market and the state of the sta
- Control of the Cont
Period of Significance
<u> 1923-1951</u>
NS COMMON CONTRACTOR C
C* *# (T)
Significant Dates
1923
Marie Control of the
Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A
Cultural Affiliation
N/A
Architect/Builder
Haslund, Roy H.
Stem, Allen H.
Stom, Anoma,

Ramsey,	Minnesota
County and	State

St. Paul Casket Company Building

Ramsey, Minnesota
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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 St. Paul Casket Company Building is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Industry as the home for almost thirty years of a large specialized manufacturing concern, the most important casket manufacturer in Saint Paul and one of the most important in Minnesota during that time. It also meets Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Engineering as a notable example of a 1920s industrial building designed as a multistory vertical urban factory with a prominent tower that embodies its type and method of construction. It is associated with the Minnesota Statewide Historic Context of "Urban Centers, 1870-1940" and the Saint Paul Historic Context of "Transportation Corridors: 1857-1950." It is also related to the "Midway Industrial District of Saint Paul" historic context. The building was designed by the architectural firm of Allen H. Stem with associate architect Roy H. Haslund and was built in 1922-1923. The company began operations in the building in 1923, remaining there until 1951. The period of significance dates from 1923, when the building opened, until 1951, when the company ceased business on University Avenue. Presently, this property will be employing the tax credits for historic rehabilitation.

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

# History of the Company and the Development of the Funeral Business

The St. Paul Casket Company had its beginnings in 1887 as the North St. Paul Casket Company. The business had been established in North St. Paul at the urging of Henry A. Castle, who envisioned North St. Paul as a railroad hub that would rival Saint Paul and Minneapolis in business. When the village of North St. Paul and many local businesses suffered a reversal of their fortunes soon after the village's founding, the casket company was taken over in 1890 by Ernest C. Reiff (1847-1928) and Uriah Meeker Stone. The casket company factory was located along the Wisconsin Central (later Soo Line) railroad line. Reiff, a native of Schleswig-Holstein, came to the United States in 1868 or 1869, running a general store in Bryant, Iowa, and then a banking business in the Dakota territory. He came to North St. Paul in 1890, three years after the village had been established. Under the leadership of Reiff and his partner Uriah Stone, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Carole Zellie and Garneth O. Peterson, "St. Paul Historic Context Study: Transportation Corridors: 1857-1950," prepared for the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, 2001.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Betsy H. Bradley, Jennifer L. Bring, and Andrea Vermeer, "The Midway Industrial District of St. Paul MPDF," 35-48, *Phase II Architectural History Investigation for the Proposed Central Transit Corridor, Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, Minnesota*, submitted to the Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority by the 106 Group Ltd., 2004. While the geographical area discussed in this historic context is located to the west of the St. Paul Casket Company Building, the context provides a useful discussion of the railroad lines and spurs, the interurban rapid transit line along University Avenue, as well as the associated building types including industrial buildings and warehouses. <sup>3</sup>The Minnesota Secretary of State lists the original North St. Paul Casket Company as Record No. 21980-AA with a filing date of July 21, 1887. Company histories list the founding date as 1888. When Reiff took over the company, the incorporation was filed on May 9, 1890, listed as Record No. 21979-AA.

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company quickly grew to become one of the leading manufacturers of coffins and caskets in the state.

Traditionally in the United States, coffins had been fabricated by local carpenters and cabinetmakers. Funeral services were simple with burial in local churchyards or town cemeteries. By the mid-nineteenth century, landscaped pastoral cemeteries were becoming popular. During and after the American Civil War, embalming was increasingly accepted as a way to preserve bodies for shipment to distant localities or to accommodate delays in scheduling funeral services. With these changes, the manufacture of caskets in factories for sale and distribution to undertakers and funeral directors started to become the norm.

Undertakers, who called themselves funeral directors, had begun to professionalize by the 1880s, offering both goods, in the form of caskets, vaults, burial garments, and similar items, and services, in the form of embalming and the arrangement of funerals in the home, church, or increasingly by the late nineteenth century, the specialized funeral home. The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) was established in 1882.<sup>4</sup>

Undertakers and funeral directors in Saint Paul were part of this trend. By the early twentieth century, they were praised as being "fully abreast of modern scientific progress and discovery, and ...the men belonging to this, one of the most important professions, rank with the foremost in the state."

In their history of American funeral directing, Habenstein and Lamers note that,

the very term 'casket' signified [a] box or container for something precious, and the preciousness of the human body was felt to be best expressed to the world symbolically by the aesthetic luxury of the casket. . . . The casket was chosen either from a catalogue, the undertaker's display room or stockroom, or in some cases, from the casket showrooms which manufacturers were beginning to set up in the larger cities and to which undertakers were beginning to take their clients. Selections . . . ranged widely in style, composition, and price. The selection of a casket from a catalogue, and its delivery in time for the funeral were made possible by improved techniques of body preservation and by developments in communication and transportation. . . Once a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>See Chapter 13, "The Business of Death in the Late Nineteenth Century," in Gary Laderman, *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes Toward Death, 1799-1883* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), and Chapter 5, "The Modernization of Funeral Service," in James J. Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980). Farrell concludes: "This philosophy of funeral service manifested itself in America in four changes in funerals—in the care of the body, in the container for the body, in the place of the funeral, and in the ceremony itself." (183)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Moira F. Harris and Leo J. Harris, "'Good Grief!' Said Charlie Brown: The Business of Death in Bygone St. Paul," *Ramsey County History* 45 (Spring 2012): 14-24. The authors discuss various practices in the funeral business in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The quote is from a biographical entry for John A. Willwerscheid, "one of the leading undertakers of St. Paul," in Henry A. Castle, *History of St. Paul and Vicinity* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1912), II: 720.

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choice had been made, the undertaker immediately dispatched a coded telegram to the factory. . . Once the telegram reached the factory or warehouse, the casket asked for was immediately boxed and rushed to the express office for shipment, if it was available. <sup>6</sup>

When the St. Paul Casket Company opened its new factory in 1923, it extolled progress that had been made in casket manufacturing: "It was not until the American took upon himself to manufacture the casket that it has become an important industry. It has now become one and the American casket is used all over the world."

Casket manufacturers, undertakers, and funeral directors had a symbiotic relationship. Casket manufacturers marketed to funeral directors. Funeral directors were encouraged to seek products and guidance from casket manufacturers. Advice in the *Funeral Director's Guide* (1917) was typical; it was intended "to establish a standard of value on Funeral-Furnishings, that will be of mutual benefit to all concerned." The manufacturers were praised:

Some of these are spending enormous sums of money each year, in creating new designs and producing receptacles for the repose of the dead, in keeping with present day manner of living, another considerable item of their expense is in furnishing catalogues and photographs, and advertising in the trade papers, in their efforts to bring their products to the attention of the Undertaker, upon whom they (the manufacturers) must entirely depend for their business. . . It is unquestionable to this class of men in the supplying of the goods, that belongs a generous portion of credit for the improved conditions in the undertaking business of today, as compared with a few years ago. <sup>8</sup>

Funeral directors were encouraged to sell caskets, along with trimmings such as handles and name plates, linings, and burial garments that "harmonize[d] with the age and taste of the deceased as well as with environments in the home." Caskets came in a variety of styles and sizes and were fabricated in various materials including wood, metal, and even glass. Early manufacturers generally offered closed caskets, but later in the nineteenth century, the couch casket with a cover that opened for viewing was becoming popular. Once the funeral director placed an order, trimmings, linings, and similar features might be added before the casket was shipped.

Casket companies employed traveling sales forces and also competed for business among funeral directors by featuring their wares, offering prizes of caskets, and promoting factory tours at conventions of funeral directors. For example, at the Minnesota Funeral Directors Association

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Robert W. Habenstein and William M. Lamers, *The History of American Funeral Directing* (Milwaukee: Bulfin Printers, 1955), 400, 401-402.

<sup>7&</sup>quot;St. Paul's Newest Industry [display advertisement]," St. Paul Pioneer Press, June 24, 1923, 4th section, 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>H. Cloud Bryan, *The Funeral Directors Guide* (Pittsburgh: McMillen Printing Co., 1917), 3, 4.

<sup>9</sup>Bryan, 9.

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convention in March 1922, four Twin Cities casket companies donated caskets as prizes to four undertakers.  $^{10}$ 

As early as 1906, the North St. Paul Casket company began to distribute a catalogue of its wares to the "Funeral Directors of the Northwest":

We have illustrated such goods only as will meet the demands of the trade in this territory, displaying goods from the cheapest to the most expensive. . . In Coffins and Caskets we manufacture an extensive line. In our Dry Goods Department we have an endless variety of Linings, Robes, Wrappers and Suits of the latest styles, standard in quality and perfectly made. <sup>11</sup>

When the village of North St. Paul celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1912 with a homecoming parade through the town, the casket company sponsored a float featuring its employees holding banners that announced their years of service with the company. At that time, the company had 40 men in the factory, 4 men in the office, and 7 salesmen. Among the factory workers were experienced cabinetmakers. Several of the office staff and salesmen were former undertakers and funeral directors. One of the staff was Ernest R. Reiff (1886-1965), son of the founder, who worked part-time in the factory when he was a student at the University of Minnesota and later became part of the traveling sales force. Another was John Schneeweis, who began working as a factory helper at a young age, shifted to work in the office, and later became the company treasurer. <sup>12</sup>

In 1913, when the *Wood Using Industries of Minnesota* was published, the North St. Paul Casket Company was one of seven casket manufacturing companies listed. Its closest competitor geographically was the Northwestern Casket Company in Minneapolis. Other Minnesota companies manufactured coffins, but this group of seven used enough wood to be listed in this survey. The authors commented: "The manufacture of coffins is not as evenly distributed over the whole country as many other industries are, though no commodity is more universally used. Large factories in certain centers often supply surrounding States." <sup>13</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>"Do You Want a Coffin? Caskets Will be Given as Prizes at Funeral Directors' Convention," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, February 26, 1922. The article does not list the four companies, but it is likely that they included North St. Paul Casket, and Northwestern Casket and Minnesota Casket, both of Minneapolis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>North St. Paul Casket Company, *Catalogue to the Funeral Directors of the Northwest* (North St. Paul: North St. Paul Casket Company, [1906/1917]. Partial copy available at Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Rosemary Palmer, *North St. Paul: A Century of Good Living* (North St. Paul: North St. Paul Centennial Commission, 1987), 76-78, 85. The worker numbers are from a letter reproduced in an advertisement in the *North St. Paul Sentinel*, June 21, 1912.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Hu[bert?] Maxwell and John T. Harris, *Wood Using Industries of Minnesota* (Saint Paul: Minnesota State Forestry Board and Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1913), 45 (for the quote), 73 (for the company list). The other companies are: Duluth Burial Case; Fergus Casket Works, Fergus Falls; H. Siren, Milaca; Moen Casket and Furniture, Peterson; Winona Casket Company. Several of these companies had easy access to lumber; others were in favorable locations for shipping.

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While the company factory remained in North St. Paul, it also established an office at 237 West Seventh Street. Stone, the company vice president and general manager, was killed in 1916 after being hit by a truck driver on West Seventh Street. He was succeeded as general manager and superintendent by Alfred Swift, a British-born cabinetmaker who had been with the company since 1890. <sup>14</sup> The younger Reiff enlisted in the Army in 1918 during World War I and then assumed the position of general manager and vice president on his return. While the elder Reiff remained the president of the company, it is likely that the younger Reiff was instrumental in the decision to relocate the company to University Avenue in Saint Paul as the North St. Paul factory was outgrown. He was responsible for supervising the construction of the new building. <sup>15</sup> A company history explained:

The development of the business has paralleled the progress of the Northwest. Periods of depression have been weathered and each year has shown progress over the one preceding. The spirit of fair dealing and the desire to serve characteristic of this institution since its inception have made and held many good friends among the undertaking profession, to whose kind offices the success of this firm is due in no small measure. <sup>16</sup>

Another major factor in the growth of the company was its ability to meet the growing demand for caskets within its sales territory of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North and South Dakota, and Montana, caused by several major forest fires, cyclones, and the influenza epidemics between 1918 and 1920.<sup>17</sup>

The company stated that several locations for the new factory were carefully investigated, and the site on the south side of University Avenue at Griggs Street was chosen in 1922. Not only was the North St. Paul factory crowded and inadequate, the village itself had never become the major business and industrial center anticipated by Castle. A new, modern factory in a central location easily accessible by rail, streetcar, bus, and road, was seen as key to the company's growth and continuing success. <sup>18</sup>

The site is near the eastern edge of the Midway Industrial Division Plat, which was laid out with large parcels to accommodate industry and was served by rail spurs and sidings linked to the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway and the Minnesota Transfer yards. Immediately to the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>R.L. Polk's St. Paul City Directory (St. Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1915, 1920); "Casket Company Head is Killed by Truck; Driver Faces Charge," *Minneapolis Tribune*, September 3, 1916, 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>Ernest Roland Reiff, World War I Bonus File, Warrant Number 81736, available at Minnesota Historical Society; "St. Paul's Newest Industry."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Five Hundred Years (Saint Paul: St. Paul Casket Company, [1926/7]), 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>"St. Paul's Newest Industry." This territory was served by several major railroads including the Great Northern Railway and the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, which enabled the sales force to travel widely and efficiently. <sup>18</sup>Palmer, 116; *Five Hundred Years*; "Casket Factory to be One of the Most Modern in Country," *St. Paul Daily News*, June 24, 1923, 6; "St. Paul's Newest Industry." The company history and the newspaper articles published contrasting pictures of the old factory and the new building.

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west at 1246 University Avenue was a four-story loft and warehouse building, built in 1923, that was occupied by the Minnesota Highway Department. The twin-towered offices, warehouse, and printing plant of Brown and Bigelow (1913-1915, 1918) was set back from University Avenue on the block between Syndicate Street and Hamline Avenue on a site the company called Quality Park. St. Paul Casket announced that its new building was "built to fit in with the surrounding buildings of the Quality Park Industrial Section." The Montgomery Ward store, offices, and warehouse building, built in 1921 with a prominent tower, occupied the block between Albert and Pascal Streets. All of these buildings took advantage of the visibility of their University Avenue location, while utilizing the rail spur access to the south (Figures 4, 5, 6). <sup>19</sup>

Excavation for and construction of the new factory building began in September 1922 and was largely completed by the end of the year. However, it did not open for business until the summer of the following year. In June 1923, the North St. Paul Casket Company officially changed its name to the St. Paul Casket Company and advertised that it provided "wholesale funeral supplies." Attendees at the annual convention of the Minnesota Funeral Directors' Association were invited to tour the new facility. The company proclaimed:

35 Years ago the St. Paul Casket Co. began business as a small shop in North St. Paul. Step by step it has gone forward, increasing its output and its patronage, until today it owns the finest casket factory in the United States. Located on University Avenue, near the Minnesota Transfer, and only fifteen minutes from the Twin City freight and express depots, and equipped with the most modern type of motor driven machinery, electric lifts and gravity conveyors, our new factory is now prepared to fill orders with far greater speed and efficiency than ever before. <sup>21</sup>

When the company published its history about three or four years later, it extolled the advances in coffin design from simple burial cases in the early years of the company to elaborate, elegantly furnished wood and metal caskets, and it provided background on the company staff and workers. It also gave a photographic overview of the new building and its operations (Figures 7 through 13). Even though this was a modern factory operation meant to promote efficiency, the company still appreciated the longevity of its workforce. It also noted that many employees were sons and daughters of earlier employees. At that time, the company had four officers, the senior and junior Reiffs, Alfred Swift, and John Schneeweis, both of whom had advanced through the company. The billing clerk and the bookkeeper-cashier had previous banking experience. Four of the eight salesmen had previously been undertakers; the other four had worked in either the company factory or office. There were 36 men working in the factory in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1926), vol. 3, sheet 333, 335, 337. See "St. Paul's Newest Industry."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Minnesota Secretary of State, change of business name, June 2, 1923; "Casket Factory to Be One of the Most Modern"; "The St. Paul Casket Co. Extends a Hearty Welcome to the Funeral Directors to Inspect Their New Home," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 24, 1923, 4<sup>th</sup> section, 6-7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> "St. Paul Casket Co. [advertisement]," St. Paul Daily News, June 24, 1923, 6.

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various aspects of casket fabrication, fitting, trimming, and shipping. The twelve women in the factory produced casket interiors and burial garments.<sup>22</sup>

After Ernest C. Reiff's death in 1928, Ernest R. Reiff became company president, and his older sister Henrietta took over as vice president. Alfred Swift, the company secretary and superintendent, was succeeded by Andrew A. Nelson. John Schneeweis, who was named the company treasurer in 1919, remained in that position. Like the younger Reiff, all had worked their way up through a variety of positions. City directories indicate that the company remained at University Avenue until 1950-1951. By then, the Reiff siblings had retired and Elmer J. Wold, another long-time employee, had taken over as secretary. Schneeweis remained as treasurer. During its years on University Avenue, it was one of a few casket manufacturers in Saint Paul and the one with the greatest longevity. Other casket manufacturers in Saint Paul appeared in city directories for a few years, then disappeared. The rival Northwestern Casket Company, located in Northeast Minneapolis in an 1885 factory building that was expanded over time, remained in business at its original location until about 2006. Another Minneapolis rival, the Minnesota Casket Company, located at 722 Central Avenue/601 First Avenue NE, went out of business in the 1950s. It would seem that all three of these companies were able to take advantage of the efficiencies of mass production and targeted marketing to remain in business as long as they did.

## Architecture, Construction, and History of the Building

In August 1922, announcements were made that the North St. Paul Casket Company was finishing plans for a new factory at University Avenue and Griggs Street. It was described as four stories of brick, tile, and concrete, 95 feet by 150 feet, to cost about \$150,000. The architect was listed as Allen H. Stein [sic], a misreading of the handwriting on the building permit application. The permit itself was issued on August 30. In fact the architect was the firm of A. H. Stem with Fred C. Norlander as the general contractor. Construction proceeded rapidly with the last recorded inspection in December. <sup>25</sup>

As evidenced by newspaper accounts, work continued on the building into the following year. It was described prior to its opening:

The new building is an imposing white structure, designed to harmonize with the adjacent factories. It contains in its four stories at least twice the floor space of the old

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Five Hundred Years, 10-11, 20-23. The company explained that the employees had aggregate experience of 500 years. See also, "St. Paul's Newest Industry."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>"E.C. Reiff, President of St. Paul Firm, Dies at 81," St. Paul [Pioneer Press], [Jan. 18,] 1928; R. J. Polk's St. Paul City Directory, 1923 through 1930, 1941, 1950, 1951. For Northwestern Casket Company see <a href="http://smith.mn/nwcc/">http://smith.mn/nwcc/</a>. Copies of company catalogues from the 1920s are in the Minnesota Historical Society Library.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>Copies of company catalogues from 1923, as well as a photo album featuring an exhibit in 1940 at the Minnesota State Fair, are in the Minnesota Historical Society Library.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>The American Contractor 43 (Aug. 5, 1922): 60; The Iron Age 110 (August 17, 1922): 457. City of St. Paul, Department of Parks, Playgrounds, and Public Buildings, Bureau of Public Buildings, Building Permit 87975; Building Inspection Record; Building Permit Index Card for 1222 University Avenue.

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North St. Paul home of the company. It is built of reinforced concrete covered with white stucco and will cost in the neighborhood of \$200,000.... The equipment throughout the building is of the latest style, and every important labor-saving device possible in a factory of this kind has been installed. Few casket companies in the entire country have so complete a workshop. <sup>26</sup>

The company also emphasized that the equipment was "entirely motor drive and with every safety device for the protection of the employee." Clearly the Reiffs wanted St. Paul Casket to hold its own stylistically, with its bold forms and prominent tower, with Brown and Bigelow and Montgomery Ward to the west along University Avenue, as well as functionally as a modern factory that could take advantage of aspects of mass production.

In their history of St. Paul's architecture, Hess and Larson describe the building as:

The most sophisticated and best preserved of the Midway's towered commercial designs. [The architect] set the corners with monumental piers in a manner superficially similar to stock factory building design. But these perch on a clearly articulated basement story and are pierced with vertically dimensioned windows. Rather than anchoring the building to the ground, the corners propel the design upward, reinforcing the vertical thrust of the central tower. The tower itself is set within stepped corner piers, clearly anticipating the great setback designs of the near future. <sup>28</sup>

The St. Paul Casket Company building exemplifies a type of modern factory design that was coming into use in the 1910s. Called a vertical urban factory, the integrated multistory plan promoted efficiency as production flowed from top to bottom, or vice versa, as components were "mixed, sorted, or assembled by workers or machines, then carried by conveyors or chutes to the end of the process for transport to market." A multistory building could fit onto a relatively constrained lot in an urban site with easy access to markets, rail lines or other forms of transport, and workers. Such factories were constructed of fireproof materials such as reinforced concrete and terra-cotta tile, had wide entrances and staircases, well marked emergency exits, and an abundance of light provided by large steel-sash windows and skylights, leading to the characterization "daylight factory." Fire safety was also ensured by automatic sprinkling systems, serviced by a rooftop water tank, often concealed in a dramatic tower. St. Paul Casket emphasized that its new building was of fireproof construction with an automatic sprinkler system and dust collectors. It explained that the "daylight type" factory provided maximum sunlight and fresh air. It also extolled the gravity carriers and lift elevators that were used to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>"Casket Factory to Be One of Most Modern."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>"St. Paul's Newest Industry."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>Jeffrey A. Hess and Paul Clifford Larson, *St. Paul's Architecture: A History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 150-151.

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move materials through the factory. The verticality of the design was emphasized by the treatment of piers and buttresses flanking the window openings.<sup>29</sup>

The St. Paul Casket Company building features large open spaces with flat-slab concrete floors carried on regularly spaced reinforced columns with flared or mushroom-shaped caps. During the 1910s and 1920s several systems of flat-slab construction were in use. C.A.P. Turner, a Minneapolis engineer, had patented a system of mushroom columns to support flat slabs in 1903, but his system had been generally superseded by the 1920s because of patent disputes. The St. Paul Casket Company Building used reinforced steel for the flat-slab floors from the Corrugated Bar Company, a Buffalo, New York, company that had a regional office in Saint Paul. Corrugated Bar had patented a flat-slab floor system called Corr-Plate in 1913. The round interior columns were formed in metal molds provided by the Deslauriers Metal Products Company. 30

Architectural historian Betsy Hunter Bradley has pointed out that Chicago architect, George C. Nimmons, a specialist in industrial building design, was influential in promoting the towered factory form, often with Gothic-inspired piers and details. His work in the 1910s and 1920s for several printing companies, warehouses for Sears, Roebuck and Company, and other manufacturers were widely published. All featured a central tower with a clock on each face that concealed a water tank for the automatic sprinkler system. Such a tower is a prominent feature of the St. Paul Casket Company Factory Building.

The illustrated company history depicted the spaces for the casket production process, to illustrate some of the aspects of its promised efficiency. Conveyors, lifts, and motorized machinery to improve material handling were standard in mechanized factory production and

http://www.skyscraper.org/EXHIBITIONS/VERTICAL URBAN FACTORY/vuf.htm. St. Paul Casket explained many of these features in "St. Paul's Newest Industry." See also, H. L. Gilman, "The Design of Industrial Plants," *Architectural Forum* 31 (November 1919): 153-156, for a more general discussion.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>The vertical urban factory was explored in an exhibit by that name, held in 2011 at the Skyscraper Museum, New York, curated by Nina Rappaport. See Introduction, Timeline, The Concrete Factory:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup>See Ernest W. McMullen, "The Concrete Factory," *Architectural Forum* 31 (July 1919): 7-9; Burtis S. Brown, "Types of Reinforced Concrete Construction, Part II. Flat Slab Construction," *Architectural Forum* 31 (Nov. 1919): 157-158. The notice of the reinforced steel contract was listed in *Improvement Bulletin* 61 (October 28, 1922): 17. Corrugated Bar Company, *Corr-Plate Floors* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Corrugated Bar Company, 1916); Corrugated Bar Company, *Useful Data on Reinforced Concrete Buildings for the Designer and Estimator by the Engineering Staff of the Corrugated Bar Company, Inc.* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Corrugated Bar Company, 1919). See also, Walter S. Edge, "Flat-Slab Construction," in *Concrete Engineers' Handbook*, by George A. Hool and Nathan C. Johnson, 470-471, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1918). The Deslauriers column molds were featured in an advertisement accompanying "St. Paul's Newest Industry."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 219. Robert Craik McLean, "The Modern Factory as Illustrated in the Works of George C. Nimmons," *Western Architect* 23 (January 1916): 3-11. *The Western Architect* was published in Minneapolis. Nimmons was the architect of the Sears, Roebuck and Company Retail and Mail Order Center, constructed in 1928 on East Lake Street, Minneapolis (NRHP).

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contributed to the development of efficient "goods-in-process" systems.<sup>32</sup> Other aspects of production were customized and very specific to casket manufacturing such as the fabrication and installation of trimmings and linings.

The manufacturing process began in the lumberyard, where a two-story building (no longer extant) south of the factory next to the railroad spur housed a kiln, a lumber drying space, and a vehicle garage. Once the lumber was dried, it would be moved by truck into the factory for cutting and further processing through a loading doorway on the Griggs Street side of the building. The lumber would be unloaded and moved by elevator to an upper floor for sawing and shaping of casket pieces. The pieces would then be moved to the casket floor for assembling and finishing. Assembled caskets would be outfitted with trimmings, exterior and interior, in the trimming department, and linings in the lining department. Trimmings and linings could be preassembled or be installed according to orders received from funeral directors. Finished caskets were moved by freight elevator to a large stock room and the interior driveway and loading dock off the Griggs Street side of the building. Caskets were loaded onto trucks for transport to local funeral homes and truck and rail depots, or to the railroad spur for unloading into railroad cars. <sup>33</sup>

The company history and the newspaper articles reveal other aspects of the design that differentiated it from standard factories and reinforced the connection of the company with funeral directors and undertakers. The wide segmental arched main entrance is surmounted by a stylized balustrade. The newspaper accounts stated that the entrance "resembles that of a church or public building." The entrance opened into a stair hall with stairs leading to the upper floors. The staircase and landings had decorative cast and wrought-iron railings. A reception room for undertakers and funeral directors was located off the entrance hall. A photograph in the company history indicates that the reception room was decorated and furnished like a parlor. Also close to the entrance hall were the display room for burial garments and similar items and the large display room, 45x124 feet, for caskets. Both of these rooms had decorative ceiling panels with ornamental lights, terrazzo or carpeted floors, and windows with drapes. The display room space was designed around the round columns that support the upper floors. The company office was also close to the entrance (See Figures 7 and 8). An unusual feature was a large recreation room, 45x75 feet, on the fourth floor, to be used for indoor sports. The space was also used for educational and industrial films and lectures for employees, embalmers, and undertakers. The provision of such amenities reflected a shift in modern factory design and practices with the goal of enhancing worker productivity.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>The Standard Conveying Equipment was provided by the Standard Conveyor Co. For more discussion of the importance of material-handling equipment see, Robert Lewis, "Redesigning the Workplace: The North American Factory in the Interwar Period," *Technology and Culture* 42 (October 2001): 665-684.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>"St. Paul's Newest Industry"; Five Hundred Years; Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of St. Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1926), sheet 337. The kiln was a Thermo-Myst Dry Kiln, "one of the finest installations of kiln-drying equipment in the northwestern territory."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup>"Casket Factory to be One of the Most Modern"; "St. Paul's Newest Industry"; *Five Hundred Years*; Warren R. Briggs, "Modern American Factories," *Architecture* 38 (September 1918): 231-232. Brown and Bigelow also provided recreation facilities for its employees, including a small golf course fronting University Avenue (Figure 4).

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Allen H. Stem and Roy H. Haslund

The architectural firm of Allen H. Stem was an outgrowth of the firm of Reed and Stem. Allen H. Stem (1856-1931) was born in Van Wert, Ohio, and received his architectural education at the Indianapolis Art School and then worked in the office of his father J. H. Stem between 1876 and 1884. He moved to Saint Paul in 1884 and became a partner of Edgar Hodgson in 1886. He then joined in partnership with Charles A. Reed in 1891, forming the firm of Reed and Stem.

Reed and Stem developed a very active business as the designer of railroad stations for the Northern Pacific and Great Northern Railways, while also becoming known for its commercial, industrial, and civic buildings. Reed's sister was married to William Wilgus, vice president in charge of engineering for the New York Central Railroad. Through this connection, Reed and Stem gained the commission, along with the New York architectural firm of Warren and Wetmore, for the new Grand Central Terminal in 1901. Reed moved to New York to supervise the construction, while Stem maintained the Saint Paul office. Among the firm's notable buildings were Wulling Hall, University of Minnesota (1892), Michigan City (Indiana) Public Library (1897), Saint Paul Civic Auditorium (1907), Denver Auditorium (1908), the Saint Paul Hotel (1909), and the University Club, Saint Paul (1913). Reed died in New York in 1911, two years before Grand Central Terminal was completed. Stem eventually won a major lawsuit over the award of architects' fees in the Grand Central project in the New York State Court of Appeals.

After Reed's death, Stem continued in practice as A. H. Stem, bringing several talented architects into the firm including Beaver Wade Day and Roy H. Haslund. The firm received the commission for the Saint Paul Athletic Club in 1915. After the Saint Paul Athletic Club was completed in 1918, Day left to form Toltz, King and Day with engineers Max Toltz and William E. King, who also worked on the Athletic Club. Stem also served as president of the Saint Paul chapter of the American Institute of Architects and was active in establishing a zoning plan for the city. In 1929, following the death of St. Paul City Architect Frank X. Tewes, Stem was under consideration for the position of City Architect.<sup>35</sup>

Roy H. Haslund (1888-1970) received a B.S. in architecture from the University of Illinois and worked for several Minneapolis architectural firms as a draftsman. Haslund had enlisted in the Army in 1917, serving in the Ordnance Corps in France, then returning to the Stem firm in 1919 as an associate architect. Haslund received his Minnesota architect's license in 1922. It seems

<sup>&</sup>quot;Noted St. Paul Architect Dies," St. Paul Daily News, May 20, 1931; "Allen H. Stem, Widely Known Architect, Dies," St. Paul Pioneer Press, May 20, 1931, 1; "Allen Stem Funeral to be Held Thursday," St. Paul Dispatch, May 20, 1931, 1; "Stem, Allen Hartzell," National Cyclopaedia of American Biography (New York: James T. White Company, 1933), 23:331; "Allen H. Stem [obit.]," Pencil Points 12 (July 1931): 547; Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased) (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956), 570; Alan K. Lathrop, Minnesota Architects: A Biographical Dictionary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 201-202. "Allen H. Stem Slated to Be City Architect," St. Paul Pioneer Press, Nov. 3, 1929, 1. Lathrop, 182, 201-202, possibly based on Withey, states that Stem retired in 1920, but this does not appear to be the case.

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likely that he oversaw the firm's shift to the design of factories and warehouses, although Stem probably used his reputation and connections to obtain the commissions. After beginning work on the St. Paul Casket Company factory, the firm received commissions for at least two similar Saint Paul buildings in 1922. One was the building at 1246 University Avenue for Herbert Bigelow, owner of Brown and Bigelow and a friend of Stem, described as a garage and auto school for the YMCA. Another was the large manufacturing plant for the American Radiator Company at Minnehaha and Prior avenues. When the St. Paul Casket Company factory opened, the firm advertised as "Allen H. Stem Architect, R. H. Haslund Associate." The firm had become Stem and Haslund by 1924. The Stem and Haslund firm was dissolved in 1928 when Haslund joined Toltz, King and Day. Stem maintained his office space in the Endicott Building until his death in 1931. Haslund was with Toltz, King and Day for 27 years, then joined Ellerbe and Company for nine years, until he retired in 1964. 36

## Later History

While the building was set up to facilitate the integrated vertical factory operations of St. Paul Casket, it proved to be flexible for other kinds of factory operations and warehousing. After the St. Paul Casket Company moved out of the building, it was acquired in 1952 by the Snyder Drug Store corporation. It used the building as its general office and warehouse for about ten years. The building was vacant from 1962 into the 1970s. It was then acquired by Dimensional Display and Design for use as offices, factory, and warehouse. Since 1991, it has housed several businesses including most recently, Landfill Music and Books.

#### Conclusion

The St. Paul Casket Company Building remains locally significant as the home for almost thirty years of a large specialized manufacturing concern, the most important casket manufacturer in Saint Paul and one of the most important in Minnesota during that time. As such, it is important in the area of industry as the company used its modern factory building to meet the needs of the expanding funeral industry. It also exemplifies broader changes in industrial production during the 1920s. It remains significant in the areas of architecture and engineering as a notable example of a 1920s industrial building designed by the architectural firm of Allen H. Stem with associate architect Roy H. Haslund as a multistory vertical urban factory with a prominent tower that embodies the type and method of construction.

<sup>36&</sup>quot;Roy H. Haslund [death notice]," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 28, 1970, 28, gives 1915 as the year of Haslund's graduation, but this may be a mistake as he began working for Minneapolis architectural firm of W. C. Whitney as an apprentice draftsman in 1910. Lathrop, 182; *R. L. Polk's St. Paul City Directory*, 1920 – 1930; Toltz, King and Day, Inc., Architects' Roster Questionnaire, 1946, American Institute of Architects Archives, *The AIA Historical Dictionary of American Architects*, s.v. "Toltz, King and Day, Inc." (ahd4005416), http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/ahd4005416.aspx. The announcements of the garage and school were published in *Improvement Bulletin* 62 (Dec. 16, 1922): 22; 62 (Dec. 30, 1922): 21, and the manufacturing plant in *Improvement Bulletin* 61 (October 7, 1922); 15; 61 (October 14, 1922): 15; 61 (October 28, 1922): 17. Further examination of building notices in the *Improvement Bulletin* would undoubtedly reveal more factories designed by the Stem firm and Stem and Haslund.

St. Paul Casket Company	Building
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  - St. Paul Casket Company, 1222 University, St. Paul, ca. 1923. Photo: C. P. Gibson. MR2.9 SP3.1S p23.
  - St. Paul Casket Company, 1222 University, St. Paul, ca. 1924. MR2.9 SP3.1S p24.
  - Tower buildings along University Avenue facing east, ca. 1925. MR2.9 SP2.2 p68.
  - View of Brown & Bigelow and St. Paul Casket Company Building from Montgomery Ward tower, facing northeast, 1926. Photo: Northwest Photographic Studio. MR2.9 SP1 ip21.
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aul Casket Company Building		Ramsey, Minnesot County and State
of Property		County and State
Previous documentation on f	file (NPS):	
nreliminary determinatio	on of individual listing (36 CFR	67) has been requested
previously listed in the N	National Register	
previously determined el	ligible by the National Register	
designated a National Hi	istoric Landmark	
recorded by Historic Am	nerican Buildings Survey #	
recorded by Historic Am	nerican Engineering Record #	AM and a great production of the second of t
recorded by Historic Am	nerican Landscape Survey #	Germany Address Company of Marie Company
Primary location of addition	nal data:	
X State Historic Preservat	ion Office	
Other State agency		
Federal agency		
Local government		
University		
Other		
Name of repository:		
10. Geographical Data	Number (if assigned): <u>RA-SI</u>	
Acreage of Property <u>0.44</u>		
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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form NPS Form 10-900 OMB Control No. 1024-0018 St. Paul Casket Company Building Ramsey, Minnesota Name of Property County and State Or **UTM References** Datum (indicated on USGS map): NAD 1927 NAD 1983 1. Zone: 15N Easting: 488005.65 Northing: 4978008.34 2. Zone: Easting: Northing: 3. Zone: Easting: Northing: 4. Zone: Easting: Northing: Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.) The property occupies Lot 1 of Block 3 of the Midway Industrial Division Plat. It has the property identification number of 34.29.23.42.0001. The rectangular parcel extends 100 feet along University Avenue W. and 190 feet along Griggs Street N. Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.) The boundaries are those that have been historically associated with the property.

11. Form Prepared By			
name/title: Alex Haecker, AIA organization: AWH Architects street & number: 12 E 25 <sup>th</sup> St			
city or town: <u>Minneapolis</u> e-mail <u>alex@awharchitects.com</u>	state: _	MN	zip code: <u>55404</u>
telephone: 612-558-5383 date: September 2020	-		

Additional Author: Marjorie Pearson, PH.D, see note on Section 7 Page 4.

St. Paul Casket Company Building

Name of Property

Ramsey, Minnesota
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#### **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Maps: A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- Additional items: (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

#### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, 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: St. Paul Casket Company Building

City or Vicinity: St. Paul

County: Ramsey State: MN

Photographer: Sara J. Nelson (Photos 1-7) Alex Haecker (Photos 8-12)

Date Photographed: August 26 (1) & September 15, 2013 (2, 4, 7), March 17, 2014 (3, 5, 6), February 2020 (8-12). While taken at different dates, all photos still reflect the current conditions.

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

1 of 12. St. Paul Casket Company Building, east elevation (left) and north façade (right), facing southwest

2 of 12. St. Paul Casket Company Building, north façade (left) and west elevation (right), facing southeast

#### St. Paul Casket Company Building

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- 3 of 12. St. Paul Casket Company Building, south elevation (left) and east elevation (right), facing northwest
- 4 of 12. St. Paul Casket Company Building, north façade, facing south
- 5 of 12 St. Paul Casket Company Building, west elevation (left) and south elevation (right), camera facing north
- 6 of 12. St. Paul Casket Company Building, east elevation (left) and north façade (right) detail, facing southwest
- 7 of 12. St. Paul Casket Company Building, north façade detail and tower, facing southwest 8 of 12 St. Paul Casket Company Building, interior, view of historic terrazzo flooring on Level 2
- 9 of 12. St. Paul Casket Company Building, interior, view of Level 2 historic ceiling detailing
- 10 of 12. St. Paul Casket Company Building, interior, view of cast iron railings in main stairwell
- 11 of 12. St. Paul Casket Company Building, interior, view of original freight elevator, ground level
- 12 of 12. St. Paul Casket Company Building, interior, view of columns at fourth floor.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 - 60-100 hours

Tier 2 - 120 hours

Tier 3 - 230 hours

Tier 4 - 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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### **Figures**

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Figure 2	Sketch Map & Photo Key
Figure 3	Construction of St. Paul Casket Company, ca. 1922 (Photo: C. P. Gibson, MR2.9 SP3.1S p22, Minnesota Historical Society)
Figure 4	St. Paul Casket Company, ca. 1924 (Photo: MR2.9 SP3.1S p24, Minnesota Historical Society)
Figure 5	Tower buildings along University Avenue facing east, ca. 1925 (Photo: MR2.9 SP2.2 p68, Minnesota Historical Society).
Figure 6	View of Brown & Bigelow and St. Paul Casket Company Building from Montgomery Ward tower, facing northeast, 1926 (Photo: Northwest Photographic Studio, MR2.9 SP1 ip21, Minnesota Historical Society)
Figure 7	St. Paul Casket Company Building, main entrance and office (500 Years, 1927)
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Figure 11	St. Paul Casket Company Building, engine room and floor for assembling cabinets (500 Years, 1927)
Figure 12	St. Paul Casket Company Building, trimming and lining departments, stock room (500 Years, 1927)
Figure 13	St. Paul Casket Company Building, shipping and loading activities (500 Years, 1927)
Figure 14	Insurance Maps of St. Paul, Minnesota (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1926), vol. 3, sheet 337.
Figure 15	Insurance Maps of St. Paul, Minnesota (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1950), vol. 3, sheet 337.
Figure 16	Large scale map, depicting entire nominated property within the full extent of the USGS map.

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St. Paul Casket Company Building

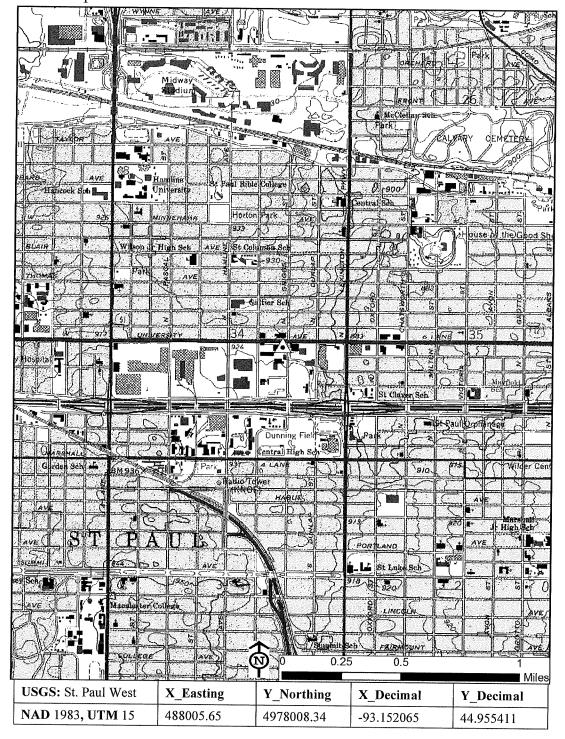
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Name of Property Ramsey, Minnesota

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Figure 1. USGS Map



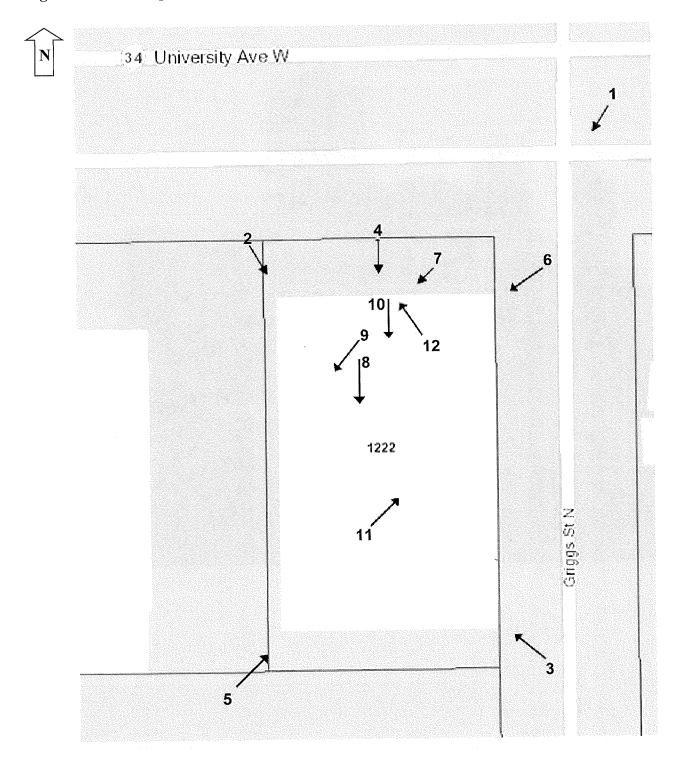
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Figure 2. Sketch Map and Photo Key

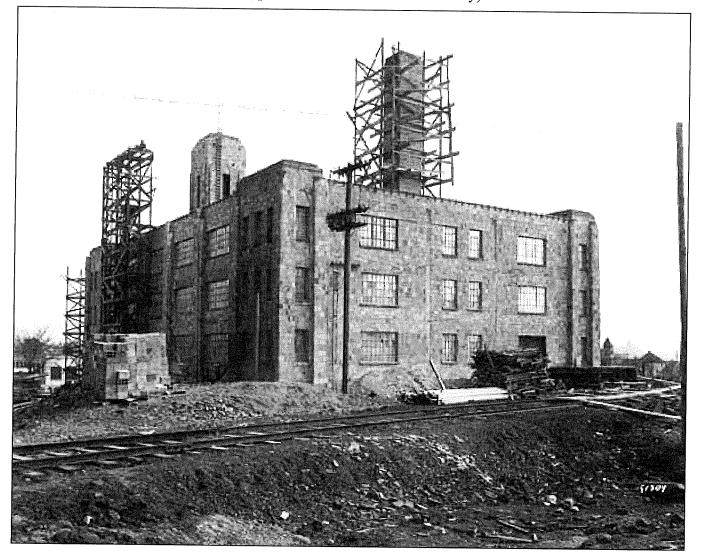


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**Figure 3.** Construction of St. Paul Casket Company as seen from the rear, view to northeast, ca. 1922 (Photo: C. P. Gibson, MR2.9 SP3.1S p22, Minnesota Historical Society).

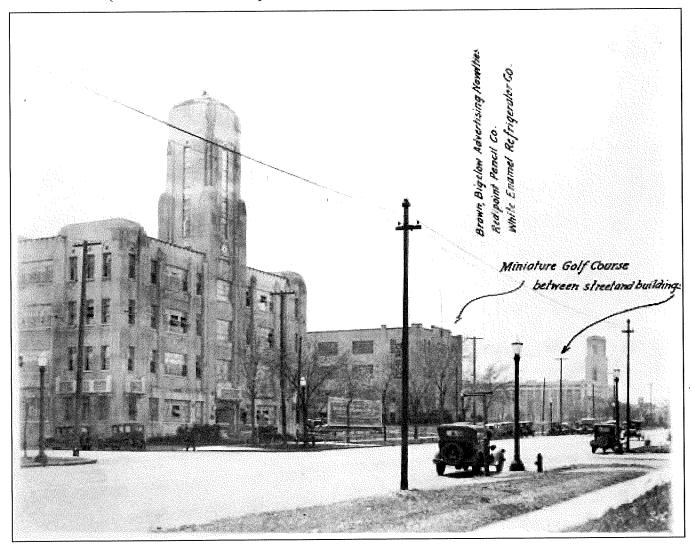


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**Figure 4.** St. Paul Casket Company, ca. 1924. The Montgomery Ward tower can be seen in the distance to the west; the YMCA auto school and garage building, later the Minnesota Department of Highways, is in the middle (Photo: MR2.9 SP3.1S p24, Minnesota Historical Society).



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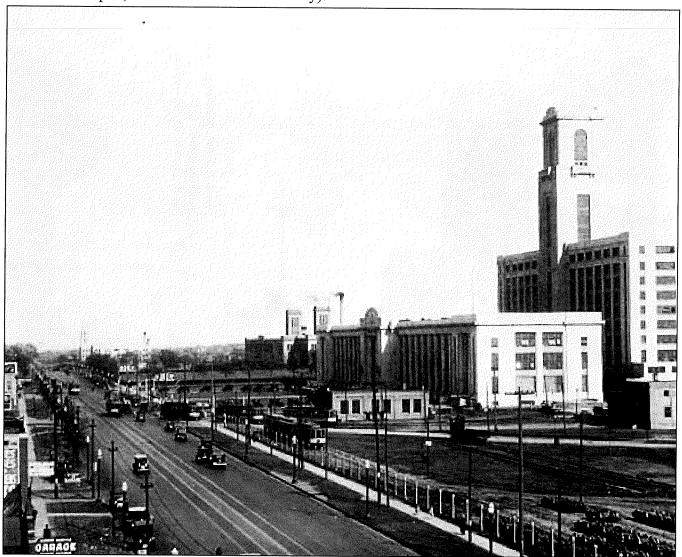
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N/A

**Figure 5.** Tower buildings along University Avenue facing east, ca. 1925. St. Paul Casket Company is in background; Brown & Bigelow is in the center, and Montgomery Ward is in foreground (Photo: MR2.9 SP2.2 p68, Minnesota Historical Society).



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**Figure 6.** View of Brown & Bigelow (center right) and St. Paul Casket Company Building (left background) from Montgomery Ward tower, facing northeast, 1926 (Photo: Northwest Photographic Studio, MR2.9 SP1 ip21, Minnesota Historical Society).



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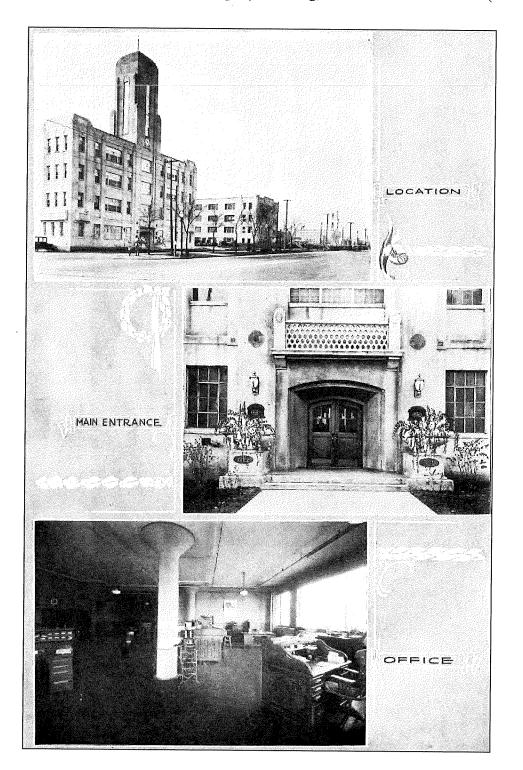
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St. Paul Casket Company Building

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Figure 7. St. Paul Casket Company Building, main entrance and office (500 Years, 1927).

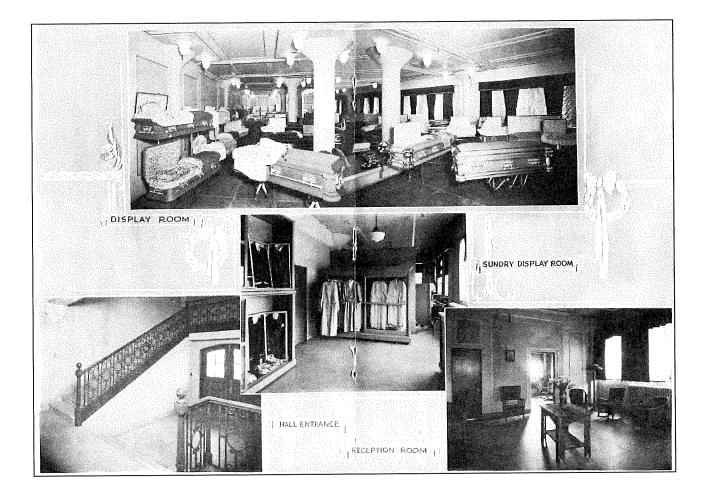


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**Figure 8.** St. Paul Casket Company Building, entrance hall, reception room, and display rooms (500 Years, 1927).



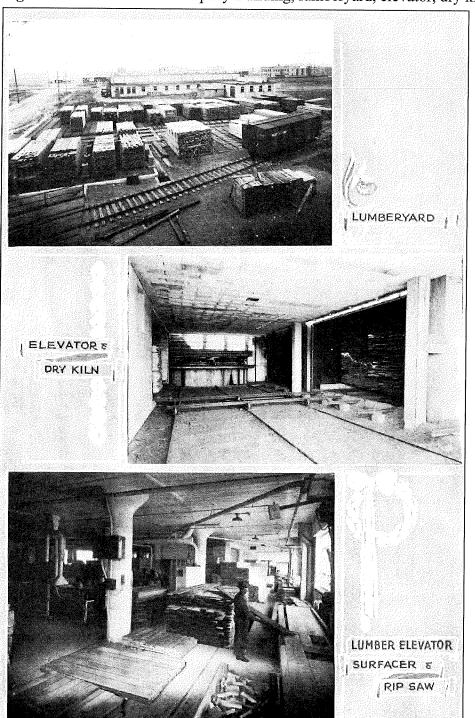
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Figure 9. St. Paul Casket Company Building, lumberyard, elevator, dry kiln, tools (500 Years, 1927).



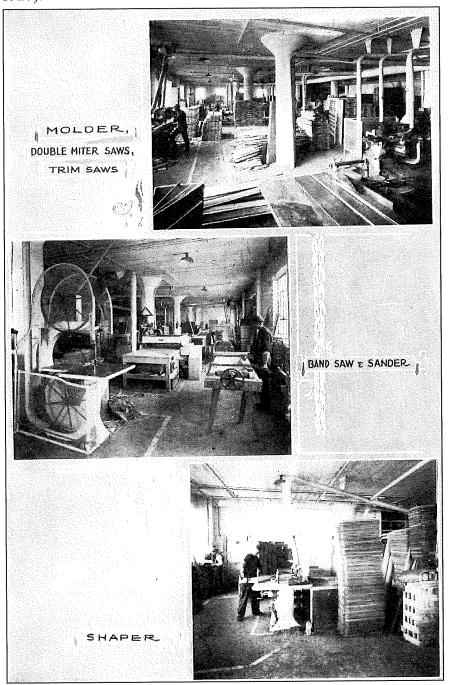
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**Figure 10.** St. Paul Casket Company Building, spaces and tools for sawing and shaping (500 Years, 1927).



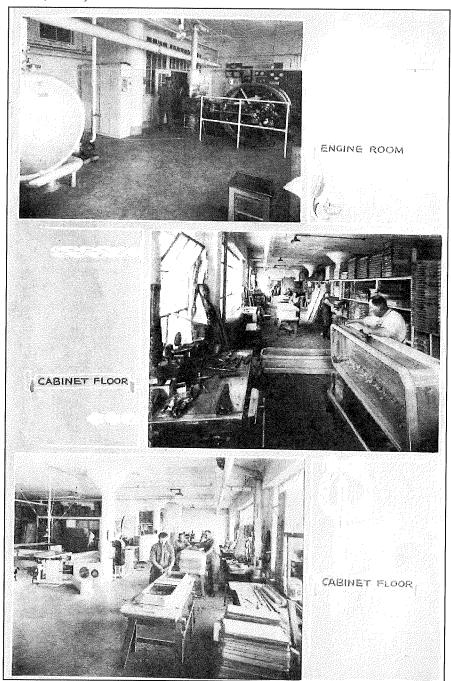
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**Figure 11.** St. Paul Casket Company Building, engine room and floor for assembling cabinets (500 Years, 1927).



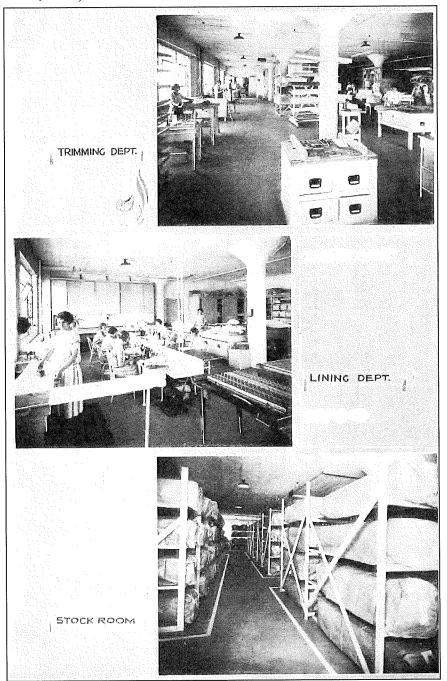
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**Figure 12.** St. Paul Casket Company Building, trimming and lining departments and stock room (500 Years, 1927).

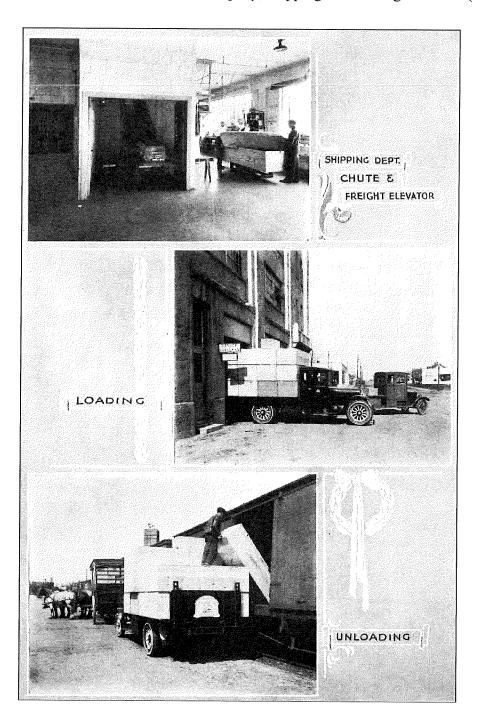


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Figure 13. St. Paul Casket Company, shipping and loading activities (500 Years, 1927).



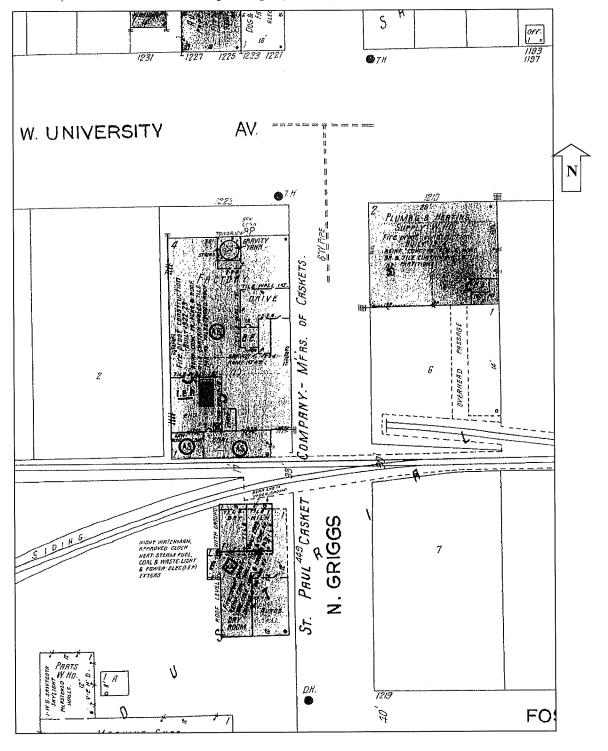
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**Figure 14.** St. Paul Casket Company at University Avenue and Griggs Street (*Insurance Maps of St. Paul, Minnesota* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1926), vol. 3, sheet 337).



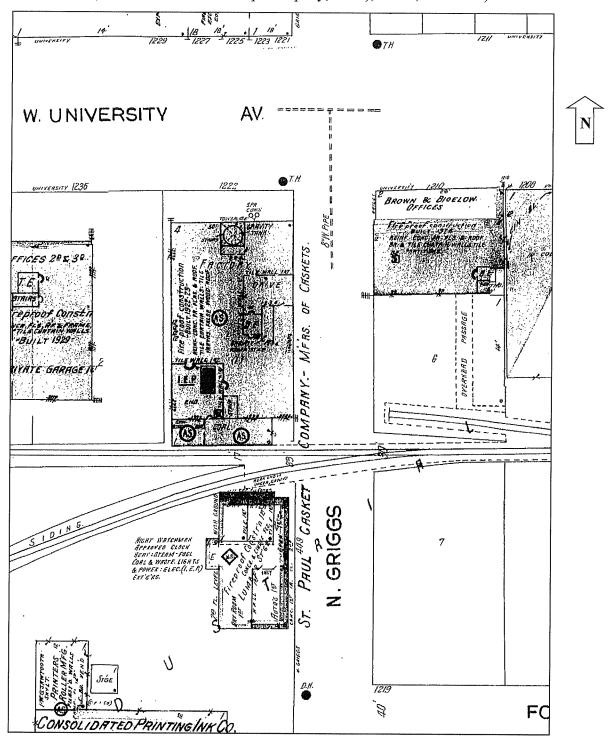
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**Figure 15.** St. Paul Casket Company at University Avenue and Griggs Street (*Insurance Maps of St. Paul, Minnesota* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1950), vol. 3, sheet 337).



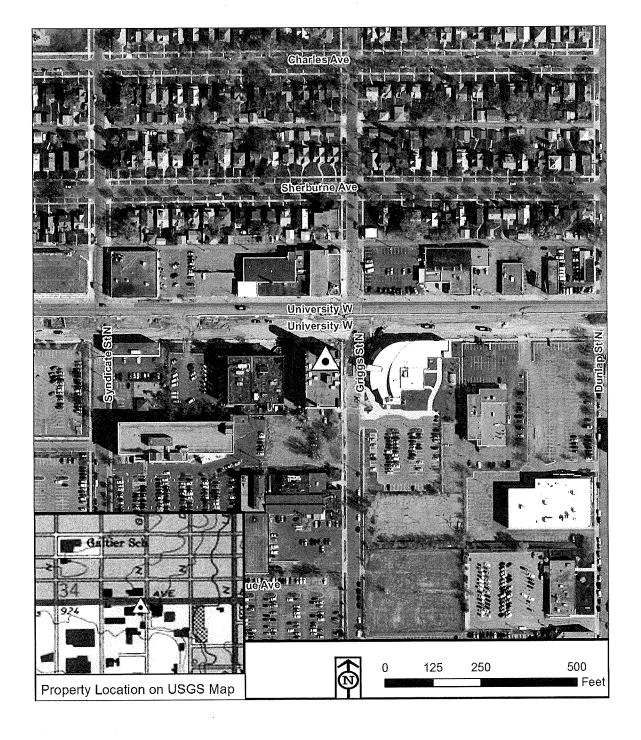
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**Figure 16.** Large scale map, depicting entire nominated property within the full extent of the USGS map (Basemap adapted from ArcGIS Esri aerial photography and USGS topographic map).



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Photo 1. St. Paul Casket Company Building, east elevation (left) and north façade (right), facing southwest



Photo 2. St. Paul Casket Company Building, north façade (left) and west elevation (right), facing southeast



Photo 3. St. Paul Casket Company Building, south elevation (left) and east elevation (right), facing northwest



Photo 4. St. Paul Casket Company Building, north façade, facing south



Photo 5. St. Paul Casket Company Building, west elevation (left) and south elevation (right), camera facing north



Photo 6. St. Paul Casket Company Building, east elevation (left) and north façade (right) detail, facing southwest



Photo 7. St. Paul Casket Company Building, north façade detail and tower, facing southwest



**Photo 8:** St. Paul Casket Company Building, interior view of Level 2 historic terrazzo floor, facing south looking downwards.



**Photo 9.** St. Paul Casket Company Building, interior view of Level 2 historic ceiling detailing, facing southwest looking upwards.



**Photo 10**: St. Paul Casket Company Building, interior view of cast iron railings in main stairwell facing south looking downwards.

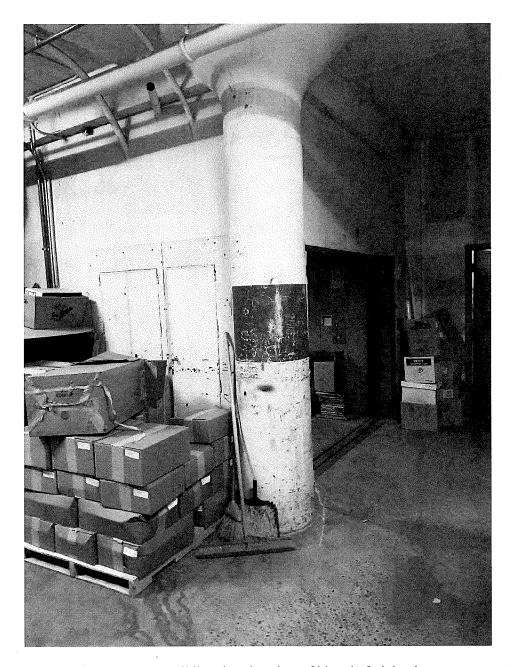


Photo 11: St. Paul Casket Company Building, interior view of historic freight elevator at ground level facing northwest.



**Photo 12:** St. Paul Casket Company Building, interior view of fourth floor from looking northeast at former production floor, note columns, original sprinkler lines, and yellow workspace demarcation lines.