

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received: FEB 28 1983
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Northern Pacific Railway Company's Como Shops Historic District

and/or common Burlington Northern Incorporated: Como Shops

2. Location

street & number 1269 DeCourcy Drive N/A not for publication

city, town St. Paul N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~ N/A

state Minnesota code 22 county Ramsey code 123

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Vacant

4. Owner of Property

name A.H.W. Corporation Attention: John Briscoe

street & number 1130 Northwestern Bank Building

city, town St. Paul N/A vicinity of state Minnesota

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ramsey County Courthouse

street & number 15 W. Kellogg Blvd.

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Sites Survey of St. Paul and Ramsey County has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 12/80-11/82 federal state county local

depository for survey records Ramsey County Historical Society, 75 West Fifth Street

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota 55102

7. Description

Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

Check one

unaltered

altered

Check one

original site

moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Como Shops of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company are located on a 51 acre semi-circular shaped parcel of land in the northwestern part of the City of St. Paul east of the former site of Midway Stadium, within the city's proposed energy park development. The shop buildings are separated from a residential community and Como Park on the north by the east/west grade of the Burlington Northern tracks. The buildings are between, though not immediately adjacent to, two major north/south thoroughfares, Snelling Avenue on the west and Lexington Parkway on the east. Immediately to the south is DeCourcy Drive. Except for its northern side, the site is surrounded by cleared but relatively unimproved land with industries at the perimeters.

The major buildings on the site were all constructed between 1885 and 1920, and are located along or near a 75 x 736 foot transfer table which ran perpendicular to the tracks on the north. Of the eight buildings standing on the site, five have been rated pivotal, and three rated supportive. The pivotal buildings include two large coach shops with additions, a large cruciform building which originally functioned as a car erection and woodworking shop, a blacksmith shop, and an office/storeroom building.

The utilitarian site layout has been complemented aesthetically by the use of similar building materials in cohesive styles. All of the pivotal buildings are constructed primarily of cream-colored Little Falls brick with Mankato limestone trim and hammered St. Cloud granite sills.¹⁰ All of the pivotal buildings except for the office/storeroom originally had monitors at the peaks of their low-pitched gabled roofs, however many of these original monitors have been removed. Other alterations have been made to windows, window openings, and car garage door openings. All of the original windows in the pivotal buildings were removed and replaced with glass bricks with one or two transparent panes inserted with the exception of the office/storeroom building. Major additions to the buildings, including those to the coach shops and office, were harmonious in style and massing. The addition to the blacksmith shop, however, is less sympathetic to the original buildings design because of a change in roofline.

At one time there were a number of additional buildings on the site (see razed building list). Most of these were open or enclosed wood frame structures situated at some distance from the transfer table, at the periphery of the shop complex. They were used as storage sheds for lumber, wheels, and other material associated with passenger and freight car construction and repair. Most of these structures were razed beginning in 1967 when declining passenger service led to the Northern Pacific Railroad's decision to gradually phase out work at the shops. Since 1967 the work force at the site has been reduced steadily, and some of the structures, including the blacksmith shop, have been closed. Though the buildings at the site have not received optimum use in recent years, the integrity of the exterior design of the majority of the buildings at the site has suffered less from a lack of maintenance than from the forementioned alterations which have been made over the years. The Como Shops were vacated by the railroad in March of 1982.

(see continuation sheets 1-9; page 10 for footnotes)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1885-1960s **Builder/Architect** Multiple

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Como Shops of the Northern Pacific Railroad played a significant role in the development of the railroad industry in the Northwest, and contributed to the growth of St. Paul's population from 41,473 in 1880 to 214,744 residents in 1910. The Como Shops are also significant in the history of the railroad industry in the United States. The Northern Pacific Railroad completed the nation's first line between St. Paul and Seattle in 1883, thus opening up a large portion of the northwestern United States to settlement. Established by the railroad in 1885, the Como Shops complex was used to build and service railroad passenger cars. It was the only passenger car shops complex which the Northern Pacific Railroad operated east of the Rocky Mountains.

In 1877, the Northern Pacific Railway Company purchased the majority of the stock of the Western Railroad Company of Minnesota. In 1882, the Northern Pacific began surveying land with the aim of establishing a line between St. Paul and Minneapolis. This survey was conducted fairly secretly in order to prevent land speculation in the area. The following year the Western Railroad Company of Minnesota became known as St. Paul and Northern Pacific Railroad Company, leased its tracks to the Northern Pacific Railroad for 999 years, and began work on the line to connect Minneapolis and St. Paul. At that time 200 acres of land were purchased along the future St. Paul and Northern Pacific track bed in the Lake Como area for the purpose of constructing the Como passenger car shops. By 1885 the Minneapolis-St. Paul line was completed and in the summer of that year construction of the Como shops commenced and the first phase of building at the site was completed by 1886.

The Como Shops were an impetus to the settlement of the surrounding areas since some of the workmen at the shops built houses in nearby residential neighborhoods, such as Frogtown. One source indicates that a large number of employees at the Northern Pacific's freight car shops in Brainerd, Minnesota, were transferred to the Como Shops when they opened, and some of them may have settled nearby. There were several other railroad construction and maintenance facilities in St. Paul in the late nineteenth century, including the St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba Shops near Jackson Street (extant), and the Chicago, St. Paul, and Omaha Shops near Randolph and Toronto Street (razed). These shops, together with supporting industries such as iron foundries and lumber mills which were established along track beds, provided employment for thousands of workers who settled in St. Paul in the late nineteenth century. Several of St. Paul's oldest neighborhoods, including the North End, Thomas-Dale, and West Seventh Street, became the homes of large numbers of railroad workers. It is estimated that by the 1880s one fourth of the city's labor force was employed by the railroads and their supporting industries.

(see continuation sheets p. 11-12; page 13 for footnotes)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet p. 14

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 21.6 acres

Quadrangle name St. Paul West Quad.

Quadrangle scale 7.5

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>7</u> <u>5</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>8</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	B	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>8</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>5</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	D	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>7</u> <u>7</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>5</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>
E	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>7</u> <u>7</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>7</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	F	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>7</u> <u>5</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>7</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>
G	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	H	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet p. 15

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Patricia Murphy, Survey Director Historic Sites Survey of St. Paul and Ramsey County	date	June, 1982
street & number	75 West 5th Street	telephone	(612) 222-0701
city or town	St. Paul	state	Minnesota 55102

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Russell W. Fridley
 title State Historic Preservation Officer date 2/15/83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

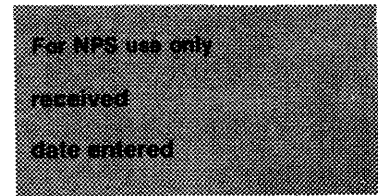
for Melissa Byers Entered in the date 3/31/83
 Keeper of the National Register National Register

Attest: date
 Chief of Registration

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The existing buildings on the site have been rated in the following categories: Pivotal, and Supportive. None of the extant buildings at the site have been categorized as intrusive. The buildings are listed by the original use for which they were intended. Subsequent uses are described within the text. The numbers assigned to each building correspond to the numbered buildings on the attached map and photographs. The following buildings once stood at the Como Shops but have been razed:

<u>Name, Date, Dimensions</u>	<u>Date of Demolition</u>
Engine House, 1885, 50 x 70'	Post 1967
Coal and Iron House, 1885, 25 x 100'	1982
Dry Kiln, 1885, 36 x 72' Boiler House for Dry Kiln, 1885, 18 x 35'	Post 1967
Freight Car Repair Shop, 1885, 1901, 70 x 321'	1982
Paint Stock Room, 1885, 30 x 60'	ca. 1911
Lavatory, 1885, 25 x 32'	1982
Oil House, 1885, 15 x 29'	ca. 1901
Original Chimney, 1885, 6 x 130'	ca. 1941
Lumber Shed and Lumber Shed E11, 1886, 40 x 200' and 40 x 60'	Post 1967
Lumber Shed, ca. 1902, approximately 40 x 175'	Between 1956-1967
Coal and Iron Store House (later known as Iron Racks), 1902 26 x 101'	Post 1967
Paint Storage Building, 1911, no dimensions available	1982
Paint Cellar and Platform, 1913, 12 x 105	Post 1967
Compounds Building, 1913, 25 x 35'	1982
Storage Shed, 1922, 30 x 154'	Post 1967
Lumber and Cement Shed, 1923, 30 x 100'	Post 1967
Lumber Shed, 1925, 40 x 200'	Post 1967
Sandblast House, 1927, 30 x 112'	1982
Lumber Shed, 1927, 32 x 100'	Post 1967
Lumber Shed, 1929, 32 x 100'	Post 1967
Covered Wheel Platform, 1943, 31 x 145'	Post 1967
Bridge and Building Storage Shed, ca. 1950, 30 x 75'	1982
Three Car Garage, ca. 1950, 40 x 50'	1982
Store Department Warehouse, ca. 1960, 40 x 120'	1982

Extant Buildings on the Site:

1. Woodworking and Car Erecting Shop

Date of Construction: 1885

Cost of construction: See below

PIVOTAL

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This cruciform-shaped building is the most prominent structure in the site. Its plan and form are the most complex of all the buildings at the Como Shops. The building is constructed of cream colored Little Falls brick with Mankato limestone trim, with sills and doorsteps of patent hammered St. Cloud granite. This two story, gabled roof building is 344' feet long, along its east-west axis, and the main body of the structure is 80' wide. It has two, two story wings both measuring 80 x 92' which form the crossing.

The central east-west portion of the building is not as tall as the transept-like wings yet both have low pitched gabled roofs crowned with monitors. There was a large boiler house with a smokestack located on the south side of the building, east of the crossing. The boiler house measured 50 x 66', and the smokestack was six feet in diameter, and 130 feet tall. Almost all of the window openings and doorways in the building had been filled in or inappropriately altered. The boiler house and smokestack were removed in 1982.

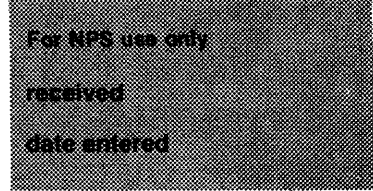
At the first floor level of the north and south exterior walls of the central core of the building (originally the car erecting shop and woodworking shop) is a series of paired segmental arched windows divided by brick piers which terminate in a brick belt course which divides the first and second floors. Above these windows are wider rectangular windows which are half the height of the segmental arched first floor windows, and which are not divided by brick piers. The east gable end wall of this east-west portion of the building consists of three bays divided by brick piers. The middle bay is narrower than the two end bays yet each has a large rounded arched entrance so that railroad cars could be brought into the building on tracks. The top half of each of the three archways has been filled in, and the lower half of each now functions as a doorway. There is a brick belt course running the length of this end wall, above the rounded arched doorways. There are no windows above the rounded arched doorways on the outer two bays, but above the central rounded arched doorway are three rounded arched window openings. The middle window is taller than windows which flank it. The west gable end wall of the main core of the building was similar in original design but has been altered somewhat differently. The northernmost rounded arched doorway was filled in and three windows inserted, the top half of the central bay was filled in though its lower portion still functions as a doorway, and the southernmost rounded archway has been filled in with two tall rectangular windows topped by a smaller rectangular window.

There are two transept-like wings projecting out from the central core of the building on a north-south axis. The gable end walls of the transept wings have tall, narrow segmental arched, vertically aligned window openings grouped in pairs and divided by brick piers which extend from the base up to the cornice level. The east and west side walls of the north transept each have three large doorways to allow cars to be brought into the building. Above the car entrances on this wing are segmental arched windows grouped in bays, with three windows over each side doorway, and two windows over the central doorway. The south transept has two doorways for railroad cars on the first floor of the east and west side walls, and its second story has four bays, each with a pair of segmental arched window openings divided by brick piers. It seems that all of the large railroad car doorways on this building were originally rounded arch in shape, though most have been altered over the years and some have been filled in.

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Originally this building contained the car erecting shop, woodworking shop, machine shop, tin shop, coach repair shop, cabinet shop, engine house, boiler house, smoke stack, shaving and dust tower, electrical plant, and a coal house.

Originally the car erecting shop and woodworking shop each occupied half of the total east-west axis portion of the building. The woodworking machinery for this shop was made by J.A. Fay & Company of Cincinnati, Ohio and was installed by Manning, Maxwell and Moore of New York.³ The first floor of the north transept was occupied by the coach repair shop and the second floor of this wing was occupied by the cabinet and upholstery department. The first floor of the south transept originally contained the machine shop, with the tin shop and electro-plating room on the second floor. The machine shop contained a 42" lathe for turning steel car and coach wheels, manufactured by the North Star Iron Works of Minneapolis, and also a hydraulic wheel testing machine, and a machine for boring car wheels which was made by the Niles Tool Works of Hamilton, Ohio. The machine shop also had an axle lathe made by the Betts Machine Company of Wilmington, Delaware.⁴

By 1967 some of the functions which were performed in the building had been changed. At that time the western portion of the central part of the structure served as the machine shop, and the eastern half was divided for use as the cabinet shop and the mill. The motor repair shop was then located on the first floor of the north transept with the air brake shop on the second story. The south transept then accommodated the wheel shop on the first floor, and the upholstery shop on the second level. By 1967 the power plant consisted of three coal fired stationary high pressure steam boilers each with a capacity of 305 horse power. Steam powered an air compressor and the fire pumps, and provided steam for heating and cleaning. The power plant was in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The AHW Corporation's renovation plans for this building call for a multi-purpose health and gymnasium facility for the residential complex which will be built nearby. The boiler house complex has been razed as part of this plan.

2. Paint Shop and Paint Shop Addition

Date of Construction: 1885 with 1911 addition

Cost of Construction: \$30,000 (1885); \$36,639 (1911)

PIVOTAL

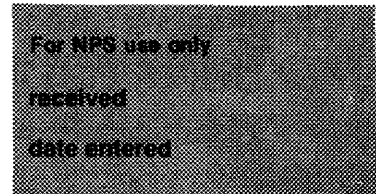
The paint shop, built in 1885 as part of the original complex, is located directly south of the cruciform building, immediately west of the transfer table. A large addition was made to the paint shop in 1911 which extends south from the original shop.

The original paint shop and its addition, like the cruciform building, are constructed of Little Falls cream colored brick with Mankato limestone trim. Both sections of the building are the same height and have low pitched gabled roofs, though the paint shop addition is 42 feet wider and a foot shorter than the original paint shop which measures 150 x 193', and which rests on a rubble foundation and has a concrete floor.

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The gable end wall of the original 1885 paint shop has seven bays, each with three tall and narrow segmental arched window openings. The bays are divided by brick piers which extend up to the cornice level. Above the middle window on the central bay is a bullseye window. The southern end wall of this building was originally very similar to the northernmost wall, but it has been obscured totally by the 1911 addition. The west and east facades of the original paint shop each have eight bays. On the west wall, all eight of these bays have large swinging double doors for the entrance and exit of railroad cars while the east wall has six such doorways. Originally all of these doorways were rounded archways, though several have been altered and are now rectangular in shape. The southernmost two bays on the east wall have segmental arched window openings. Between all of the car openings on both the east and west walls are large bullseye motifs. At one time there was a paint store-house located opposite the two bays which have segmented arched window openings. This building was razed circa 1911 for the extension of the transfer table. At the cornice level is a dentil course which runs the length of the building. The pitch and gravel covered gabled roof was originally topped by a monitor which was removed sometime after 1956. There are two rows of seven skylights on each side of the original monitor site, each measuring 6 x 8'.

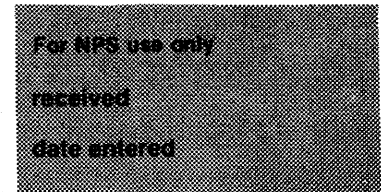
The paint shop addition was also constructed of cream colored brick though the bricks used are smaller than those in the original portion of the building. It has eight car openings on its western facade, and eight on the eastern facade adjacent to the transfer table. The car openings were all originally rounded arched but some have been altered and are now rectangular in shape. The southern facade of this portion of the building is very similar to the northern facade of the original section of the building but it is wider, has nine bays, and does not have a bullseye window. This portion of the building also had skylights and a monitor though the latter has been removed. The cream colored brickwork, the rhythmic sequences of segmental arched window openings and rounded arched doorways, and the low pitched gabled roofs are perhaps the most cohesive design elements of the structures adjacent to the transfer table.

The 1885 paint shop was used as the truck shop since at least 1940. Operations carried out in the truck shop were the removal and installation of trucks of passenger cars, repair and remodeling of truck frames, repair of brake rigging, repair of swing hangers and stabilizer bars, repair of Budd disk brakes and brake shoes, magnaflow testing of metal parts, and operation of the heavy duty cleaning vat. Two tracks were equipped with overhead cranes of five ton capacity, and one track had a monorail hoist of three ton capacity. A large hydraulic press was also employed for pressing bushings in and out of yolks, radials, couplers, and swing hangers.

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At some time before 1967 the paint shop addition was divided in half. The northern half was used as the paint shop, and the southern half became the trim shop. At this time the painting process was actually carried over into the southeastern end of the truck shop (originally the paint shop) where varnishing was done. The force assigned to the paint shop consisted of 22 men who worked in the varnish room, the wash rack area (where small items removed from the cars were handled separately), the spray booth (a travelling unit mounted on tracks and used for painting the cars themselves), and the wash tracks on the east side of the building where all cars, truck frames, car interiors, and other large items were washed. In the trim shop the trim on passenger cars was removed, repaired, and replaced, glass was cut and installed in sash units, and first aid kits and fire extinguishers were installed in company automotive vehicles.

It is intended that the paint shop and its addition be adapted for use as retail and commercial space. It will be a major part of the commercial retail complex. The exterior of the building and its additions will be left basically intact.

3. Blacksmith Shop

Date of Construction: 1885 and 1917 addition

Cost of Construction: \$9,000 (1885); \$4,700 (1917)

PIVOTAL

The blacksmith shop is located north of the new car shop, and east of the coal and iron house. The exterior form of this one story building, with its rows of tall interior end wall chimney stacks, is related more directly to the function of the structure than is the exterior form of any other building at the site. The series of chimneys on the north and south walls of this building and the use of decorative brickwork give the building the picturesque quality and sharm of some English Queen Anne structures, even though the designer probably had little other than utilitarian considerations in mind. The chimneys give this building a very different flavor than any of the others at the complex. This shop, like many others at the site, is constructed of Little Falls cream colored brick with Mankato limestone trimmings, and St. Cloud granite sills. The original portion of the building measures 65 x 100' while the addition on the east side measures 65 x 50'. The original portion of the building has a Mansard-type roof with chimneys rather than dormers, interspersed at regular intervals. The buildings's addition has a fairly steeply pitched gabled roof topped by a gabled roof monitor.

The north and south walls of this building are nearly identical. The 1885 portion of the building is seven bays wide. Each bay with the exception of the outer bays has two segmental arched window openings divided by brick piers which are topped by tall brick chimneys jutting up from the Mansard roof. At the cornice level on these two walls is a dentil-like course of brickwork, topped by a projecting brick beltcourse. The twelve tall square chimney stacks feature vertical bands, extending up three-fourths of their height to a band of corbelled brickwork. The vertical bands are then capped by another band of projecting brickwork. The north and south walls of the 1917 addition on the east side of the building are also nearly identical. Each is four bays wide with two large slightly recessed rectangular window openings in the central two bays, and one large slightly recessed rectangular window opening in each end bay. There are three simple square chimney stacks on each wall which project above the roofline over the expanse of brickwork between the bays.

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The 1885 western facade of the blacksmith shop is a parapet wall which forms a peak, giving the illusion of being the facade of a gabled roof building, though actually it conceals the Mansard roof. This facade has three bays which are divided by brick piers which extend up to the slightly corbelled brickwork at the cornice level. The center bay has a large rounded arched railroad car doorway, topped by three smaller rounded arched windows the middle one of which is taller than those flanking it. The other two segmental arched window openings.

The eastern facade of the blacksmith shop addition has three bays, divided by brick piers, and elaborate zigzag brickwork at the cornice level. There is a large rounded arched railroad car entrance in the central bay, topped by a small square window. The adjacent bays each have three rectangular windows.

Originally twelve fires were kept burning in this structure. It also possessed a 1000 pound steam hammer manufactured by the Morgan Engineering Company of Alliance, Ohio. The 1917 addition to the blacksmith shop expanded the number of chimneys to eighteen. The primary function of the blacksmith shop was to repair and manufacture iron and steel parts which would not be purchased or repaired economically elsewhere. Typical operations included straightening and buildup of breakbeams and levers, manufacture of grab irons and buffer pins, buildup and annealing of stabilizer bars, swing hangers, and draw bars, cutting and shearing of steel plate and bar stock, and repairing chains, sharpening picks and bars. By 1967 the shop had a force of only eleven workers, and in 1969 the building was closed. The AHW Corporation's plans call for adapting the building for use as restaurant or dinner theater.

4. Office and Store Room

Date of Construction: 1885 with 1920 addition
Cost of Construction: \$12,000 (1885); \$8,000 (1920)

PIVOTAL

The office and store room is a long two story rectangular building constructed of Little Falls cream colored brick and located northwest of the cruciform building and adjacent to the main railroad tracks which form the northern edge of the Como Shops site. This low pitched gabled roof building is 40' wide, and originally measured 82' long. The 1920 addition on the east side of the original building extended its length to 292'. The main entrance to the building is located at the center of the symmetrical west end of the original structure. It is flanked by two brick piers which extend up to the roofline to form the base of a flared brick parapet. There are brick piers at the corners of this facade which extend up to a corbelled brick cornice. All of the windows and the doorway on this facade were originally segmental arched, with brickwork simulating a keystone-effect. All of the window and door openings have been altered, though several of the segmental arches are still visible. There is a wooden platform and loading dock at this end of the building which is approached by ramps.

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The north and south side walls of the original structure are each five bays wide with the bays divided by brick piers. On the first floor, most of the bays have two tall and narrow segmental arched window openings. On the second story it appears that each bay originally had two adjacent rectangular window openings grouped under a segmental arch but most of these have been altered or replaced. There are two doorways on the north side of the original structure, and three on the south side. Both the north and south original side walls have a brick dentil course near the cornice level.

The storeroom addition of 1920 measures 20 x 210' and is twice as long as the original building. Though it is the same height and width, it is less ornate than the original structure and lacks the segmental arched window and door openings. The north and south walls of the addition are ten bays wide, and each bay has a pair of rectangular windows on both the first and second floor. There are three doors on the south facade of the building.

The office and storeroom and its addition were used for office space, and for storage of records and supplies for the Como Shops complex and several other Northern Pacific Railroad facilities in the Twin Cities. In 1967 the building was known as the District Store, and 31 people were employed there. Future plans for this building are uncertain, although the AHW Corporation may convert it for use as an office building.

5. New Car Shop and New Car Shop Addition

Date of Construction: 1901 with 1911 addition

Cost of Construction: \$53,000 (1901); \$29,438 (1911)

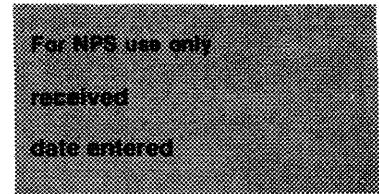
PIVOTAL

The new car shop and its addition located immediately east of the transfer table, are similar in scale and detailing to the paint shop (1885) and its addition (1911). The original one story portion of this cream colored brick structure dates from the year 1901 when the second phase of construction was undertaken at the Como Shops. The freight car repair shop addition and the transfer table were also constructed in 1901. The original new car shop building measures 190 x 215', while the addition made to the south in 1911 measures 190 x 177'. The north facade of the original new car shop addition. Each is nine bays wide, with three segmental arched window openings per bay, and with brick piers between bays. The east and west side walls of the original new car shop are each nine bays wide. Originally each bay had a rounded arched doorway for passenger cars, though many have been altered. This building has a low-pitched gabled roof which originally had a monitor which was removed sometime after 1956. It retains its eight original rectangular skylights.

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In 1911 a gabled roofed addition was constructed on the south side of the new car shop at the same time that the adjacent transfer table was extended, and the paint shop addition was constructed on the other side of the transfer table. The new car shop addition is the same width as the original car shop but is shorter in length and height. Like the paint shop addition, the south facade of the new car shop addition has three segmental arched windows per bay, and it is nine bays wide. The east and west side walls each have seven rounded arched passenger car entrances which have been altered as elsewhere in the site. The addition has a low-pitched gabled roof with rectangular skylights is one of the few buildings on the site which still has its original monitor.

Railroad records indicate that this facility was used for the construction of new cars, though by 1967 the west side of this building contained the electric shop, the east side of the building accommodated the pipe and tin shop, and the addition housed the coach shop. The new car shop and its addition are to be renovated for commercial and retail use as part of the complex.

6. Transfer Table

Date of Construction: 1902 with 1911 extension
Date of Construction: \$9,100 (1912), \$3,955 (1911)

SUPPORTIVE

The transfer table is an open air area with seven parallel rails on the ground, running its length. It is located between the cruciform building and paint shop and its addition on the west, and the freight car shop, coal and iron shop, and the new car shop and its addition on the east, and runs along a north-south axis. Railroad cars were placed on the transfer table and then shifted to the appropriate shop where they would be rolled in for service. The original transfer pit was built at the same time as the new car shop was constructed in 1902. It measured 75 x 528' and facilitated access to the freight car shop, the car erection and woodworking shop (the cruciform building), the paint shop, and the new car shop. In 1912 it was extended by 208' in order to serve the newly completed paint shop addition and car shop addition. The transfer table will remain in place and be integrated into the complex development plan.

7. Laboratory

Date of Construction: 1913 (1st story); 1927 (2nd story)
Cost of Construction: \$5,850 (1913)

SUPPORTIVE

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The two story cream colored brick laboratory is located in the northwestern portion of the Como Shops site, between the office and store room to the east, and the compounds building to the west. Built originally as a one story structure, the top story was added circa 1927. Before this building was constructed, the laboratory was located in the original coal and iron storage house (later the plating shop). The laboratory measures 24 x 75', and has a more steeply pitched gabled roof than many of the other building on the site, giving it a vertical emphasis. All of the windows are rectangular, and there are eight bays on the north and south walls, and two bays on the east and west gable ends.

Materials were tested at the laboratory, under the supervision of the Engineer of Tests. This buildings is slated for renovation to possible office or storage space as part of the development.

8. Record Storage Building

Date of Construction: 1913

Cost of Construction: \$21,524

SUPPORTIVE

The two story record storage building is located at the northwestern corner of the site, along the main Northern Pacific railroad track line, east of the compounds building. It is the largest brick building which was built at the Como Shops after 1911, and measures 52 x 128'. Since the building was used for storage, it has few windows. The long north and south walls of the building consist of seven bay expanses of brick, relieved only by brick piers between bays, stepped decorative brickwork at the cornice level, and three small square ventilators at the base of each bay, above the watertable. The east and west gable ends each have three bays, divided by brick piers, and have stepped zigzag brickwork at the cornice level. There is a doorway at the center of the east facade, and two rectangular windows have been inserted in the northernmost bay on this wall. This building is to be renovated for use as possible office or storage space for the AHW Corporation's planned housing complex on the site.

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- ¹List compiled largely from various maps and aerial photographs of the site.
- ²Industrial Engineering Department, Northern Pacific Railway, Report # 1E-8, Como Shops and Store, St. Paul, August, 1967, Exhibit 2. Northern Pacific Railway Papers. "Presidential File." Locator #1.E.14.1B.
- ³"Northwestern Railroad Shops. No. 1. The St. Paul and Northern Pacific Shops at Como," The Northwestern Railroader, vol. 2, no. 11 (March 16, 1888), (St. Paul: Northwestern Railroad Publishing Co.), p.9.
- ⁴"Northwestern Railroad Shops. No. 1. The St. Paul and Northern Pacific Shops at Como," p.9.
- ⁵"Northwestern Railroad Shops. No. 1. The St. Paul and Northern Pacific Shops at Como," p.9.
- ⁶"President File" microfilmed index. Northern Pacific Railway Papers.
- ⁷"Northwestern Railroad Shops. No. 1 The St. Paul and Northern Pacific Shops at Como," p.9.
- ⁸"General Manager Files," Locator #11.F.7.8F, file 709, recommendation date March 24, 1904. Northern Pacific Railway Papers.
- ⁹"Chief Engineer File," Locator #10.B.1.5B, "Specification for the Car Shops upon the 'Como Property,'" 1884. Northern Pacific Railway Papers.
- ¹⁰Bricks were supplied by the Odilon Duclos Brickyard and Martin Scott Brickyard from Little Falls.

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The primary function of the Como Shops was to erect and maintain passenger cars. At the turn of the century it was estimated that passenger cars needed to be serviced every eighteen months on the average. A major function of the shops was also the conversion of "betterment" of passenger cars as innovations in design were introduced.

The Como Shops were characterized by mechanical diversity. Cars were brought in for overhaul and were totally disassembled. Every part was inspected, cleaned, and repaired--wheels, trucks, general woodwork, upholstery, and metal--and plating plumbing, electricity, and painting were done.

In 1885 when the Como Shops opened, most railroad companies, including the Northern Pacific, used sleeping cars and more lavish coaches built and owned by the Pullman Company of Pullman, Illinois. More modest coaches, many used only for day trips, were constructed at the Como Shops. An average Northern Pacific passenger coach in the late 1880s was of wood frame construction on a steel underframe with eight wheels per car. Cars were heated by a wood stove at each end and ventilated through the clerestory windows along roof of the car. The cars seated approximately fifty people and interior furnishings included varnished wood panelling and upholstered seats. Until 1887 cars were lit by kerosene, but electric lighting was required after that date. Most cars had a brightly colored exterior and many were both numbered and named, frequently in honor of railroad-founded towns. By the late 1880s the use of the enclosed vestibule and diaphragm allowed passengers to move between cars while the train was in motion. This invention corresponded with the introduction of dining cars on many trains which freed the trains from making frequent stops at dining facilities along the route.

There were three major phases of construction at the Como Shops site. In 1885 the car erection and woodworking shop, paint shop, freight car repair shop, blacksmith shop, and office were constructed. In 1902 a new coach shop and transfer table were constructed, and major alterations were made to the freight car repair shop. In 1911, major additions were made to the paint shop and coach shop, and the transfer pit was extended between these two buildings. It should be noted that additions were also made to the office and blacksmith shop in 1917.

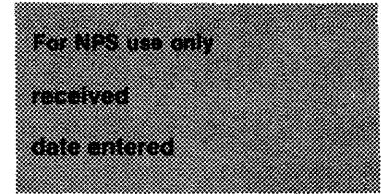
Even though three significant periods of building took place at the shops, a functional uniformity was maintained regarding building site location. Almost all of the structures at the Como Shops complex are rectangular in shape and are located either parallel to the Northern Pacific tracks which run east and west on the northern border of the site (i.e., the car erection and woodworking shop and the office store) or perpendicular to these tracks, focusing around the transfer table (i.e., the paint shop and its addition, and the coach shop and its addition). Unlike many local industrial sites that have buildings constructed over a period of time, at the Como Shops there is an intriguing compatibility of building materials and style, even though the buildings vary considerably in scale and original use. Those buildings which were constructed at the site after 1913 tended to diverge from this pattern although they were primarily ancillary structures such as the record storage building and laboratory which were located at some distance from the major buildings and transfer table at the center of the complex. The 1913 buildings tended to be smaller and of a different colored brick, and in most cases, are not comparable in style.

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The continual decline in railroad passenger travel foretold the demise of the Como Shops, and in 1967 the Northern Pacific Railroad's Industrial Engineering Department prepared a one volume report which examined the functions of the Como Shops. In this report it was suggested that the shops be phased out of operation gradually to make way for future industrial development of the property.

This was achieved both by retiring certain machines and duties, and through employee attrition. By 1969, the Northern Pacific had only 198 passenger cars in service. In contrast, in 1937 there were 692 passenger cars in service, and in 1912 there were 1,161.⁶ On March 2, 1970, the Northern Pacific merged with the Great Northern and Burlington lines to form the Burlington Northern Railroad. Subsequently some of the passenger cars which had been serviced previously at the Como Shops could be serviced at shops owned previously by the other railroad. When the initial plan for phasing out the Como Shops was issued in 1967 it was intended that they would be vacated by 1980. (This plan was about a year behind schedule, as they were not totally closed down until March of 1982.)

The site of the Como Shops and its surrounding acreage has been targeted by the Port Authority of the City of St. Paul as part of an extensive 218 acre energy efficient industrial development known as Energy Park. Recently the AHW Corporation (which specializes in centralized property development, marketing, management, and maintenance and is a subsidiary of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation) announced plans for a \$70,000,000 development on a 53.5 acre site including the Como Shops, within the 218 acre Energy Park. The AHW Corporation's plans call for renovating most of the buildings at the Como Shops to adapt them for use as retail and commercial space, and also will entail the construction of 950 new housing units adjacent to the site. Those buildings scheduled for rehabilitation are the car shops, the cruciform building, the blacksmith shop, the office and storage building, and the record storage building and laboratory.

(see page 13 for footnotes)

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¹Carl Zapffe, Brainerd, Minnesota: 1871-1946 (Brainerd: Brainerd Civic Association, 1946), p. 42.

²Virginia B. Kunz, St. Paul: Saga of an American City (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, 1977), p. 41.

³"Northwestern Railroad Shops. No. 1. The St. Paul and Northern Pacific Shops at Como," The Northwestern Railroader, vol. 2, no. 11 (March 16, 1888), (St. Paul: Northwestern Railroad Publishing Co.), p. 9.

⁴Industrial Engineering Department, Northern Pacific Railway, Report #1E-8, Como Shops and Store, St. Paul, August, 1967, p. 18. Northern Pacific Railway Papers. "Presidential File." Locator #1.E.14.1B.

⁵"Northwestern Railroad Shops. No. 1. The St. Paul and Northern Pacific Shops at Como," p. 9.

⁶Louis Tuck Renz, The History of the Northern Pacific Railroad (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1980), Appendix C, p. 275.

⁷Industrial Engineering Department, Northern Pacific Railway, Report #1E-8 Como Shops and Store.

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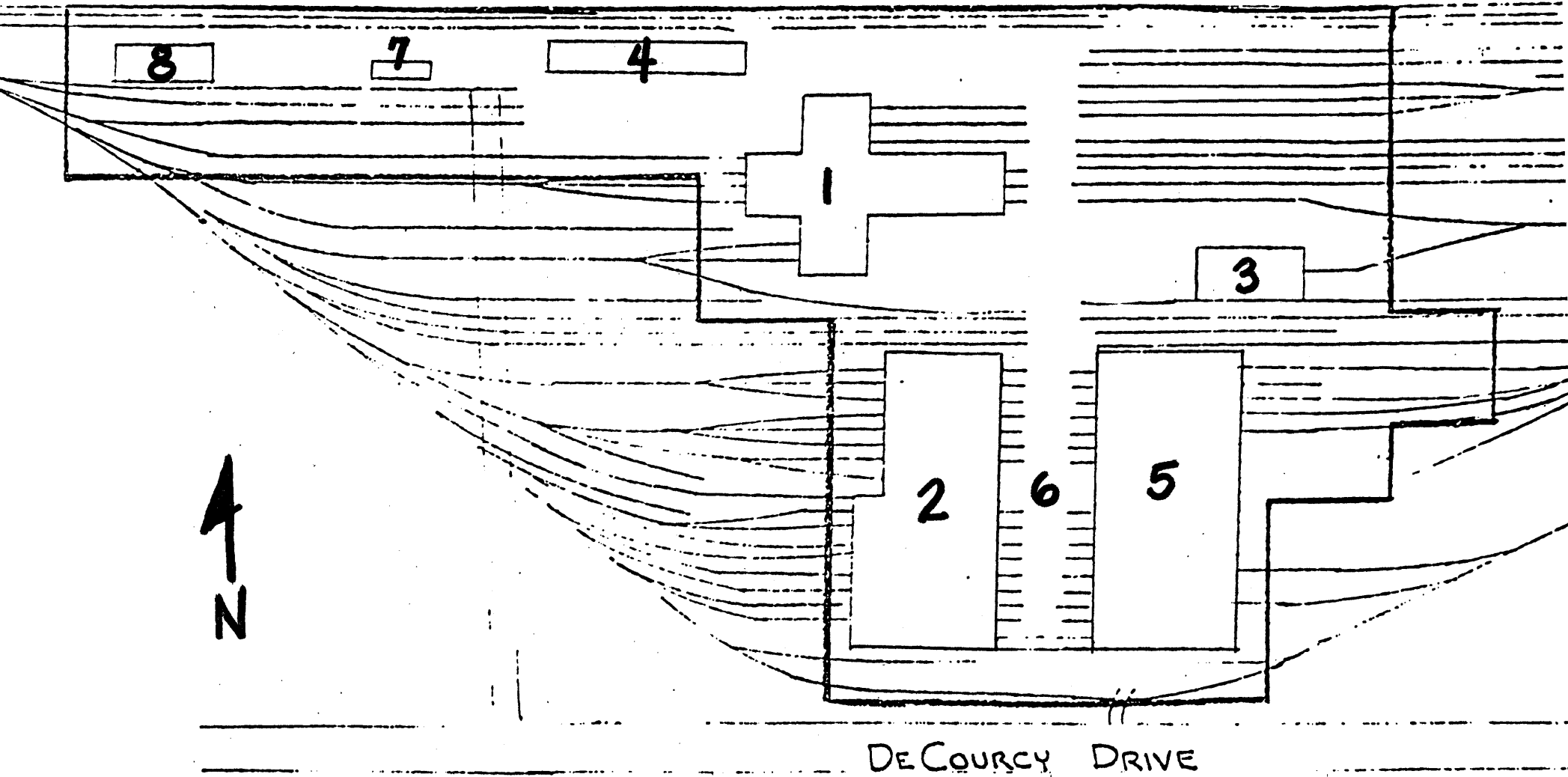
date entered

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification:

Beginning at the intersection of a line forming the northern extension of the centerline of Albert Street with a line that is 100 feet south of the centerline of Jessamine Avenue running parallel with the centerline of Jessamine Avenue; thence southerly along the northern extension of the centerline of Albert Street 225 feet to its point of intersection with a line 166.75 feet north of the western extension of the centerline of Orchard Avenue running parallel with the centerline of Orchard Avenue; thence easterly along said line 835 feet to its point of intersection with a line forming the northern extension of the centerline of Short Line Street; thence southerly along the northern extension of the centerline of Short Line Street 200 feet to its point of intersection with a line forming the western extension of the centerline of Orchard Avenue; thence easterly along the western extension of the centerline of Orchard Avenue 175 feet to its point of intersection with a line 150 feet west of the northern extension of the centerline of Syndicate Street running parallel to the centerline of Syndicate Street; thence southerly along said line 525 feet to its point of intersection with a line 100 feet south of the western extension of the centerline of Hatch Avenue running parallel with the centerline of Hatch Avenue; thence easterly along said line 575 feet to its point of intersection with a line 230 feet west of the northern extension of the centerline of Griggs Street running parallel with the centerline of Griggs Street; thence northerly along said line 275 feet to its point of intersection with a line 231.15 feet south of the western extension of the centerline of Orchard Avenue running parallel with the centerline of Orchard Avenue; thence easterly along said line 165 feet to its point of intersection with a line 70 feet west of the northern extension of the centerline of Griggs Street running parallel with the centerline of Griggs Street; thence northerly along said line 100 feet to its point of intersection with a line 125 feet south of the western extension of the centerline of Orchard Avenue running parallel with the centerline of Orchard Avenue; thence easterly along said line 135 feet to its point of intersection with a line 70 feet east of the northern extension of the centerline of Griggs Street running parallel with the centerline of Griggs Street; thence northerly along said line 150 feet to its point of intersection with a line forming the western extension of the centerline of Orchard Avenue; thence westerly along the western extension of the centerline of Orchard Avenue 125 feet to its point of intersection with a line 70 feet west of the northern extension of the centerline of Griggs Street running parallel with the centerline of Griggs Street; thence northerly along said line 425 feet to its point of intersection with a line 100 feet south of the centerline of Jessamine Avenue running parallel with the centerline of Jessamine Avenue; thence westerly along said line 1750 feet to the point of beginning.

THE COMO SHOPS

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA



(Solid line=boundaries of proposed Como Shops Historic District)

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

for Keeper Melvin Lyman
1/19/89

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**Note: These changes apply to
Northern Pacific Railway Company
Shops Historic District in Ramsey
County, Minnesota.**

REFERENCE NUMBER: 83000937

STATE: MINNESOTA

COUNTY: Ramsey

RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC):

CITY:

VICINITY OF:

ADDRESS: vicinity of Energy Park Dr. and Bandanna Blvd.

CERTIFICATION DATE:

REMOVED DATE:

COMMENTS:

Nina M. Archabal

Nina M. Archabal
State Historic Preservation Officer

JUN 17 1988
Date