

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Propertyhistoric name Walsh Buildingother names/site number N/A**2. Location**street & number 189-191 E. 7th St.☐ not for publication N/Acity, town St. Paul☐ vicinity N/Astate Minnesota

code

MN

county

Ramsey

code

123

zip code

55101**3. Classification**

Ownership of Property

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

Noncontributing

10 buildings sites structures objects10 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official Nina M. Archabal

Date

State Historic Preservation OfficerState or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/specialty stores

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/specialty stores

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian

other: Romanesque Revival

Italian Renaissance

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation limestone

walls brick

roof asphalt

other cast iron piers

sheet metal lintel and cornice

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Walsh Building is a three-story brick store and flats building located at the north corner of Seventh St. and Temperance in an area near the northern edge of downtown St. Paul that has been substantially redeveloped in modern times. The major, narrower, facade on Seventh St. is made up of two store fronts on the street level and seven bays of windows on the two apartment levels. The secondary facade on Temperance Street begins with a largely blank first story punctured by three small windows and terminated by a double store front at the rear corner. Structurally, the block is a hybrid of loadbearing walls and iron frame faced on the street exposures with red pressed brick and a variety of trimming materials. The exposed course of the foundation is of Kasota stone; the window sills, the springers of the second-story arcade, a fanciful corner tourelle, and an extensive amount of carved window ornament is of pale Lake Superior brownstone; and a number of other applied details are of cast or pressed iron.

The first-floor front on both exposed elevations is of iron column and I-beam construction, permitting large glass display fronts for all four stores. A central entry leading to the apartments above divides the two store fronts on Eighth Street. All of the exposed iron structural members embracing the store fronts are cast in a decorative manner. The columns at the west corner of the block and on either side of the central entry are flattened and cusped to suggest fluted pilasters; those creating the corner for the inset store entries are attenuated cylinders. Both carry false capitals cast in a chevron pattern. The exposed south corner of the building is supported by a heavy cylindrical column with an applied "capital" in the composite order. Tin sheeting with a large ogee molding continuously covers the I-beam on both facades.

The apartments on the second and third floor are lit through continuous banks of high, closely placed windows. All of the windows are rectangular and double-hung. Those on the second story are also dressed with semicircular heads to create the effect of an arcade. The arches are trimmed with an egg-and-dart molding beneath and a narrow drip molding above that terminates in a small acanthus leaf; the tympana are covered with galvanized iron pressed into a foliate pattern. A projecting triangular pediment crowns the central second-story window on the Eighth Street facade. This pediment rests on fluted consoles and its tympanum is carved in a fleur-de-lis design. The window directly above is also specially treated with a narrow pediment carved in a sunburst pattern.

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These special treatments dramatize the distinctive function of the two central windows as staircase and hall lights. A narrow drip molding clusters the remaining third story windows; those on the Temperance Street facade are paired, while those on the Eighth Street facade are grouped in threes. These drip moldings terminate in scrolled acanthus leaf carvings. The Eighth Street tryptichs on the third story are further embellished with a carved brownstone and raised brick crown over the central lights.

A projecting brick string course marks the transition to the third story. Projecting brick courses also initiate a simple corbelled frieze that terminates in a sheet metal modillioned cornice. A brick parapet rises above the cornice; many of its face brick have been omitted to create a pattern vaguely resembling machicolations. At the exposed corner, a tourelle springs from a corbelled base at the level of the string course. Up to the level of the cornice it is sculpted of brownstone; above, the stone gives way to sheet metal. The final embellishment is a slight raising of the parapet at the center of each facade to accommodate a cast iron nameplate bearing the inscription "Walsh."

The rear (northeast) facade of the building reduces all of the layers of wall finish to a simple corbelled frieze without a cornice. The windows on that side are also unadorned rectangles with relieving brick segmental arches. The barely visible northwest wall is completely planar and lit only on the front of the third story with simple rectangular windows.

The Walsh Block appears today much as it did shortly after construction. An ongoing sympathetic restoration has removed plywood window and door sheathing and replicated elements deteriorated past the point of recovery. The corroded sheet metal girder facings and the cornice have been matched as closely as feasible with new materials; the same holds for the wood sheathing of the storefront walls beneath the display windows and around the inset doors. The only ornamental component totally missing prior to restoration was the metal tourelle finial; its replacement by a ball poised on a cone is speculative though sympathetic. An overhead door at the east corner of the building is also a modern, though not recent, alteration; but neither opening nor door are conspicuous elements in the building's design. Each of the storefronts appears originally to have been excavated directly beneath the display windows to permit direct access to basement storage via sidewalk doors. The latter were removed many years ago and all of the holes in sidewalk and building filled with cement. These are the only known unreversed alterations to an unusually intact, highly ornamented 1880s commercial block.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
architecture

Period of Significance
1888

Significant Dates
1888

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Bassford, E.P.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Walsh Building is architecturally significant both as an outstanding example of an important but now rare building type in St. Paul and as a premier specimen of the work of one of St. Paul's most important early architects, E. P. Bassford. By the late 1880s, much of downtown St. Paul, in particular East Sixth and Seventh Streets, was crowded with narrow brick storefront and flats buildings. Deterioration of these small multi-purpose properties was initiated by the restructuring of downtown commerce toward the end of the nineteenth century and exacerbated by changing residential patterns after World War I, producing a widespread pattern of vacancy and neglect. As a result, the Walsh Building's peers were easy targets for post-World War II urban renewal projects. The Walsh Building was probably spared because of its detachment from the commercial rows and the targeted renewal sectors closer to the river. It was one of the most highly ornamented of the smaller downtown blocks even in its time, and has come down to us as one of the most ornate and best preserved of the buildings of its type remaining in the city. Its architect, E. P. Bassford, dominated his profession locally from the beginning of his independent practice in 1872 until the rise to prominence of academically trained architects in the early 1890s. This was one of the most ornamented designs of Bassford's career, and displays his effort to incorporate elements of late Victorian styles whose local champions were already starting to displace him.

The Walsh Building was put up as rental property for Colonel Vincent D. Walsh of West Feliciana, Louisiana. Walsh had already built the ten-store Cumberland Block (demolished) to the northwest of the Walsh Building site in 1886. The phenomenal growth rates of St. Paul and Minneapolis in the early 1880s had been widely noted, and Walsh erected his two projects just as the proliferation of downtown businesses was cresting. Dozens of drygoods, grocery, and hardware establishments were densely bunched on Seventh Street just below the Walsh properties, and it must have seemed certain to the absentee investor that the commercial core of the city would soon envelop his new buildings. However, continued northwestern expansion failed to materialize, and the commercial core developed to the southeast

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instead as St. Paul underwent a dramatic transformation from locally oriented mercantile trades to large-scale warehousing for the upper plains states. As a result, the immediate neighborhood of the building remained devoted to its initial use as a sort of horse and wagon center well into the 1890s. Livery stables were sandwiched between the two Walsh properties, a feed store was across Eighth Street, and Hardenburg's thriving saddle and harness factory did business down the street until the dawn of the automotive era. The Walsh Building stood like a gold crown in a jaw of decaying teeth.

The detachment of the building from the long Seventh Street rows, its corner site, and giddy (as it now appears) optimism regarding the future of its block probably all contributed to the investor's willingness to erect an expensive building. From the very first, the building belonged in a class with the much larger department stores, office buildings, and banks on Cedar and Wabasha Streets to the south and west. A few equally exuberant storefront buildings were constructed with slender main facades: the Espy Building (demolished) on Fifth and the O'Connor Building (extant) on Seventh were probably the best of these. But each also housed offices rather than apartments. The only surviving store and apartment blocks that match the exuberance of the Walsh Building are much larger commercial blocks on West Seventh, well away from the downtown core.

Edward Payton Bassford, the architect of the Walsh Building, dominated his profession in St. Paul for almost two decades. Born in Calais, Maine on June 7, 1837, Bassford initially worked as a carpenter, probably in his father's successful house-building business. In his early 20s, he went to Boston to apprentice under architect Charles Painter. The young Bassford was listed as "architect and builder" in the 1860 census. After a short stint of service in the Civil War, Bassford returned to Maine to begin his architectural career in earnest with Thomas J. Sparrow of Portland. Later in the same year, 1866, he emigrated to St. Paul and set up a combined architectural and contracting business with a P. Donovan. In 1869, he was engaged by St. Paul's leading pioneer architect, A. M. Radcliffe, with whom he stayed until setting up independent practice in 1872.

Bassford's practice was immediately successful. By 1875 he had achieved the commissions for two first-class out-state hotels, the St. James in Red Wing and the Nicollet House in St. Peter (both NRHP). His largest local commission of the period was Commodore Davidson's Centennial Building at Fifth and Jackson, a four story office block with facades of 145 and 110 feet. He also continued his father's predilection for detached residential building, and erected many of the early residences on Summit Avenue. The Ramsey County Historic Site Survey uncovered none of these local pre-1880 projects; they are presumed razed or altered past recognition.

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Bassford's major successes of the 1880s were competitive designs for the new City Hall in 1884 and the Germania Life building in 1889 (both demolished). These two projects stood at either end of a radical transformation of his stylistic vocabulary. The winning city hall design was a hybrid of Second Empire features with the conventional courthouse classicism of the post-Civil War period. During the course of construction the design was brought up to date by the introduction of romanesque arcades into the tower and the unification of the entry bays under great relieving arches. In the Germania Life Building, probably Bassford's finest project, these arches were united into giant arcades which became the leading motif of the design.

The 1890s brought in the largest of Bassford's commissions, the half million dollar Walter Wood Harvester Works on the East Side. But like much of his 1890s work, this factory complex showed a decline in Bassford's interest in scalar relationships and detail and is indistinguishable from dozens of other planed down Chicago School factories and warehouses of the period.

The Walsh building belongs to the most complex and exuberant phase of Bassford's career, when a number of large commissions were coming in and the local appetite for ornamental detail was at its zenith. It evidences Bassford's attention to the new craze for Romanesque window treatments and ornament, but remains at core stubbornly anti-Richardsonian. The building is not clearly articulated into separate volumes, the ground floor is given separate treatment, and even the ornament stubbornly clings to earlier patternbook forms. In fact, much of the foliate ornament seems to be of a piece with the window and door ornament of Bassford's father's houses built over 30 years before. Like much of late Victorian construction, the Walsh Building was likely created in purposeful oblivion of the date and locale of its design sources. It was one of Bassford's most concerted efforts to work with modern structural and compositional devices without giving up the fascination for energetic surface play and variegated material that puts his most interesting buildings beyond the reach of clear stylistic categories.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- "Death Summons E.P.Bassford," The St. Paul Pioneer Press, July 20, 1912, 4.
"E.P.Bassford," The Western Architect, 2 (September 1903), 16.
Granger, Susan, draft NRHP nomination for the Walsh Block prepared for the Ramsey County Historic Site Survey, October 1981.
Hess, Jeffrey A., and Larson, Paul Clifford, ms. of Architectural History of St. Paul, in preparation.
Larson, Paul Clifford, "H. H. Richardson Goes West: The Rise and Fall of an Eastern Star," The Spirit of H.H. Richardson on the Midland Prairies, ed. by P.C. Larson (Ames, Iowa: State University of Iowa Press, 1988),
Lathrop, Alan, "Edward Payson Bassford, Architect (1837-1912)," Architecture Minnesota (January-February 1977), 37-41.
WPA Newspaper Survey Files for Ramsey County, City of St. Paul, 1941, type-script in MHS Archives and Manuscripts, St. Paul.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State historic preservation office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other

Specify repository:

Ramsey County Historic Site Survey

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A 115 49 28710 4977 290
Zone Easting Northing
C _____

B _____
Zone Easting Northing
D _____

N/A ☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies city lot 8, excluding southwesterly part measuring 107-21/100 feet on southeasterly line and 104-08/100 feet on northwesterly line, Block 7, V.D. Walsh's Rearrangement of Hoyt's Addition.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the parcel of land that has been historically associated with the property less a side lot to the east which was sold off in the 1950s and is now occupied by a one-story house.

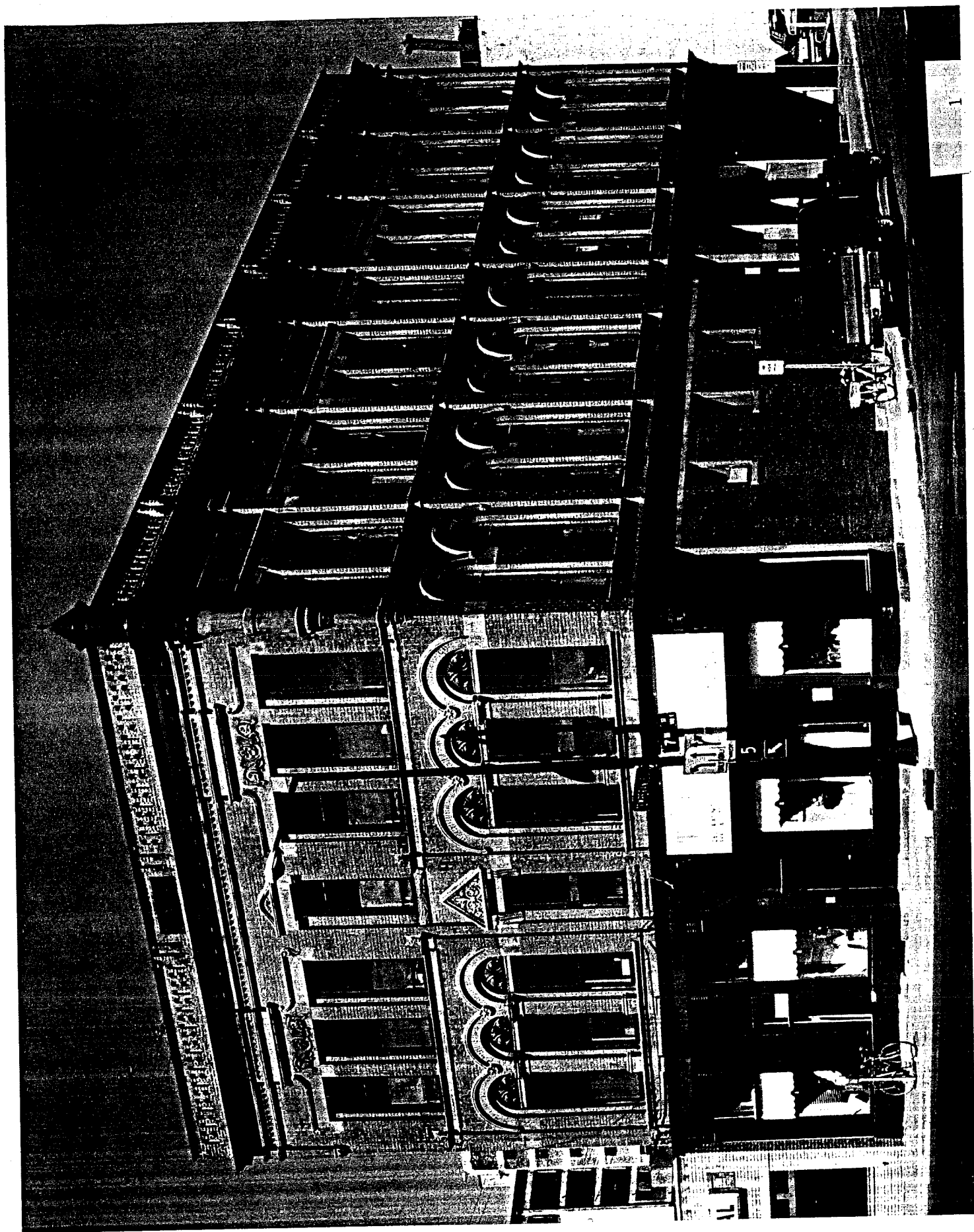
☐ See continuation sheet

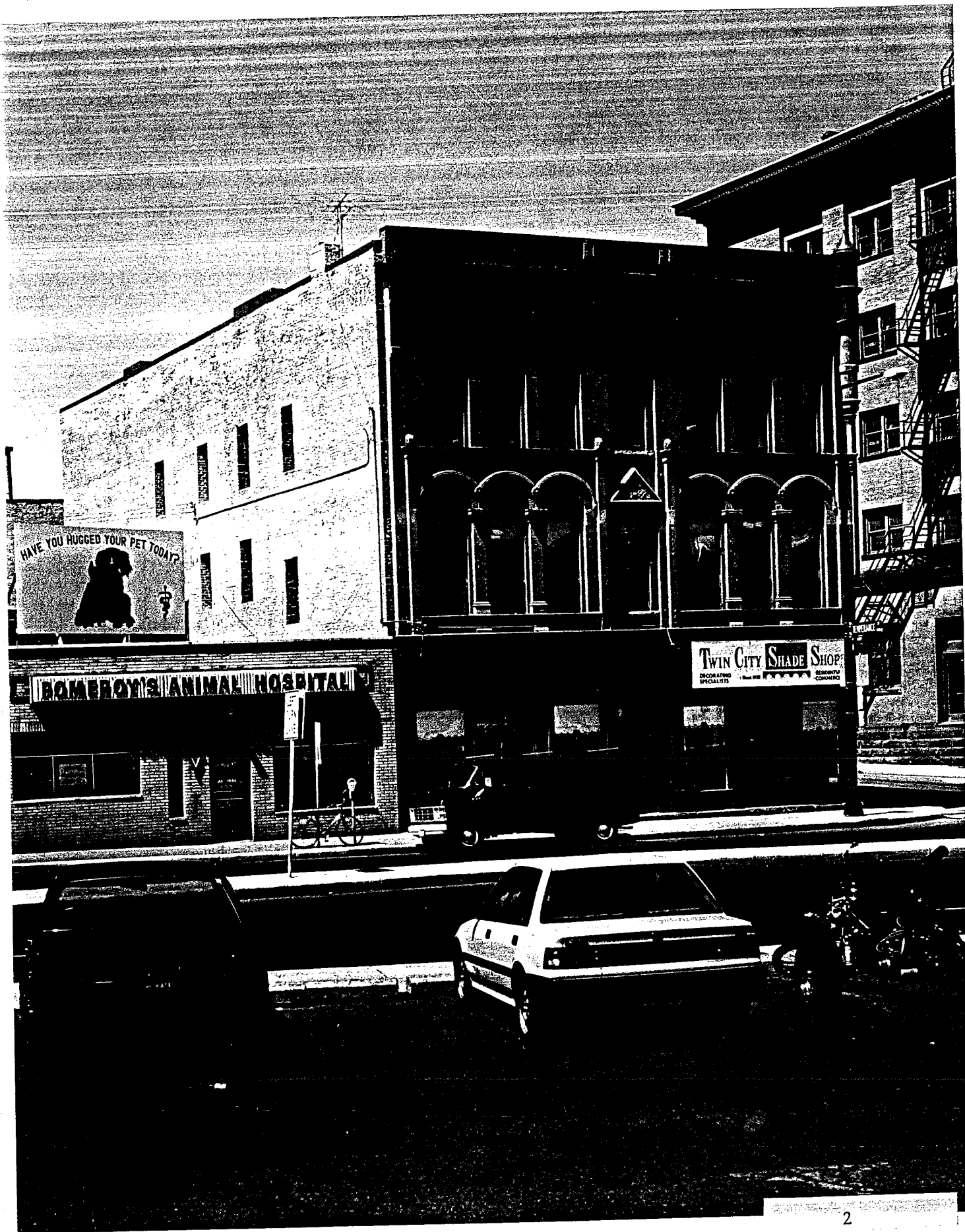
11. Form Prepared By

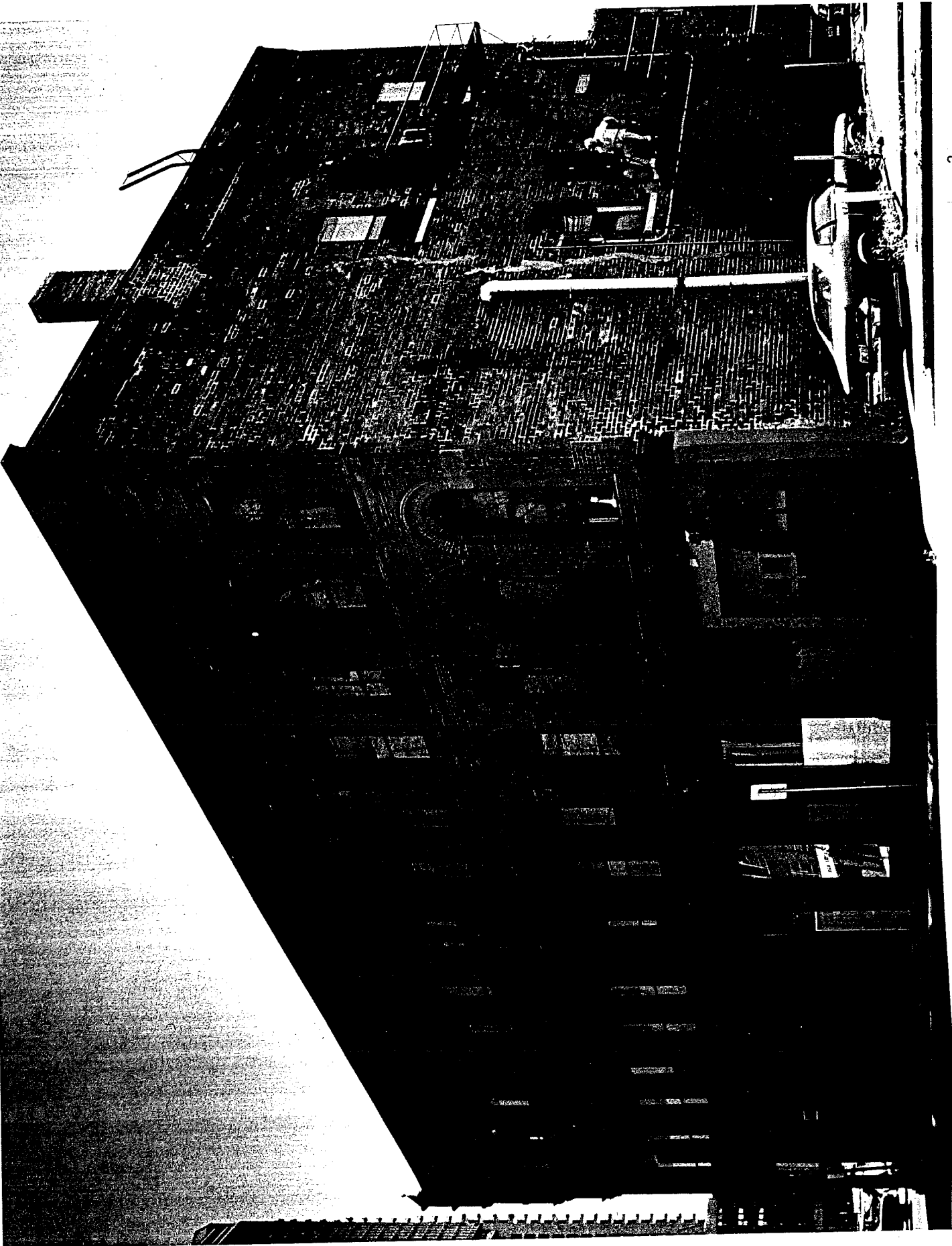
name/title Paul Clifford Larson date November 21, 1988
organization N/A telephone 612 641-0915
street & number 1181 Raymond Avenue state Minnesota zip code 55108
city or town St. Paul

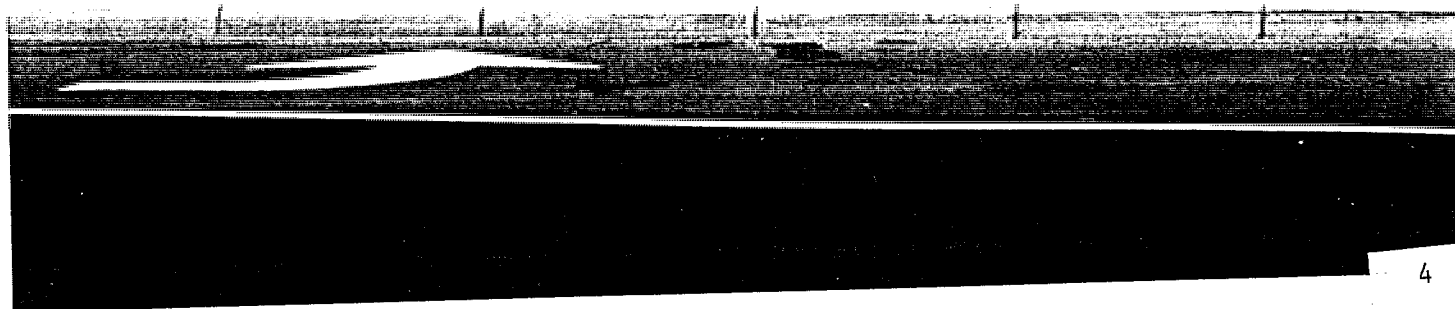
KEY TO PHOTOGRAPHS

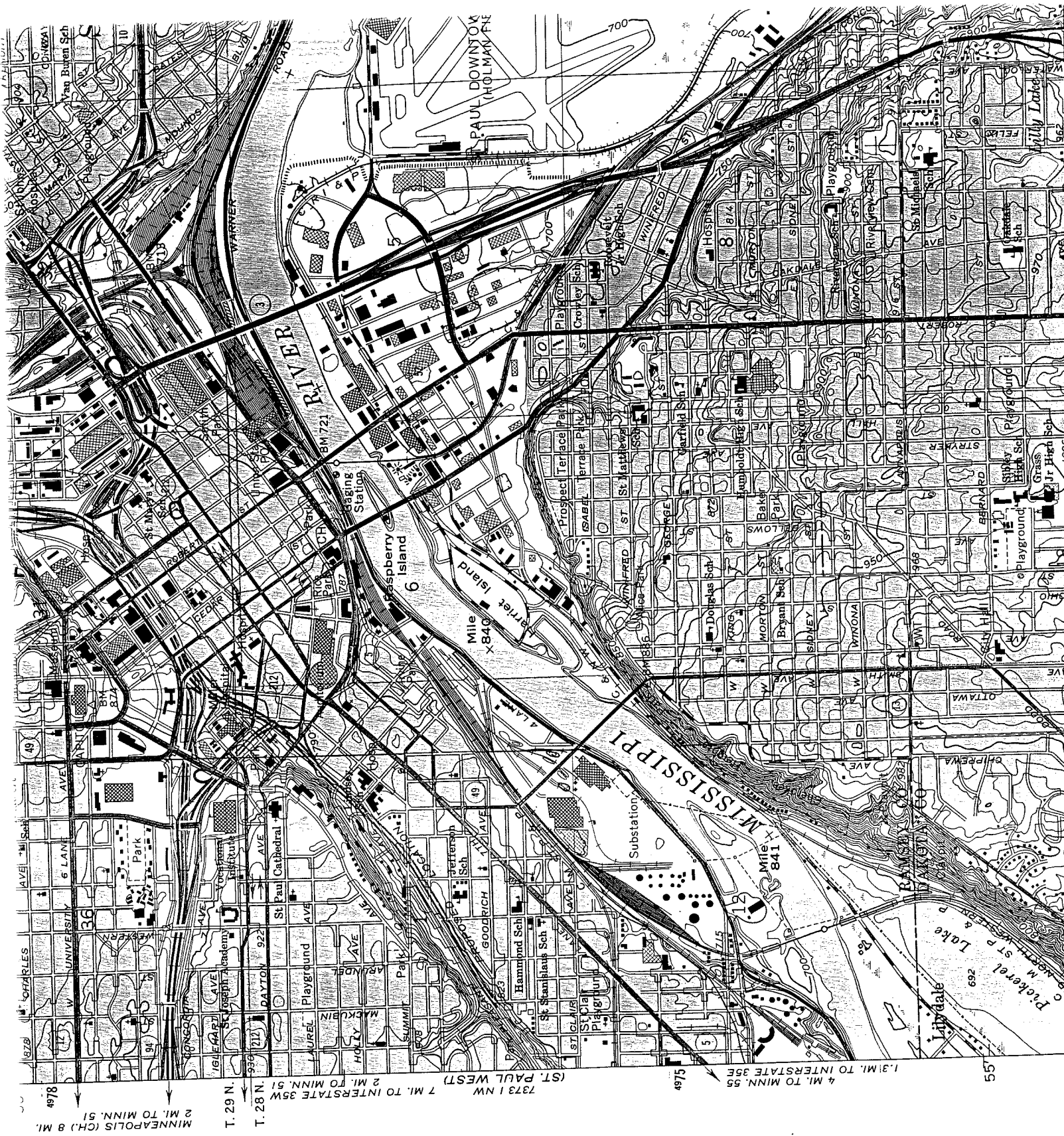
1. Walsh Building
St. Paul, Mn.
Photographed by Paul Clifford Larson
August, 1988
35 mm. negative held by photographer
St. Paul file, #C20
camera facing west
2. Walsh Building
St. Paul, Mn.
Photographed by Paul Clifford Larson
July, 1988
35 mm. negative held by photographer
Walsh Building file, #A8
camera facing south
3. Walsh Building
St. Paul, Mn.
Photographed by Paul Clifford Larson
July, 1988
35 mm. negative held by photographer
Walsh Building file, #A30
camera facing north
4. Walsh Building
St. Paul, Mn.
Photographed by Paul Clifford Larson
July, 1988
35 mm. negative held by photographer
Walsh Building file, #A3
camera facing northwest











LS4 Building Co.,
Paul, Ramsey Co.,

MN

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