

## **Summary of Historical Significance of Nine Focus Buildings**

### **Central Corridor Historic Properties Initiative**

#### **Heritage Conservation on the Green Line**

#### **Historic Saint Paul**

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Louis F. Dow Co./Dow Building, 2242 University Av. W., 1923, Toltz King & Day



c. 1925:





### **LOUIS F. DOW COMPANY/DOW BUILDING**

The Louis F. Dow Company Building at 2242 University Avenue West was built in 1923 and designed by the Saint Paul architecture and engineering firm Toltz King & Day. Located at the southeast corner of University and Hampden avenues, it is a contributing structure at the eastern end of the locally-designated University-Raymond Commercial Historic District.

The Dow Building is a three-story, reinforced concrete and brick structure with a raised basement. The east and south facades retain the original, large, multi-paned, steel sash windows. On the north (University Av.) and west elevations, window openings have been infilled with concrete block and small sliding windows. The building has elaborate terra-cotta detailing. The main entrance has been modernized. A parking lot is located at the rear of the site.

The Louis F. Dow Company was an advertising specialty firm. They promoted “Goodwill Advertising,” offering calendars, holiday cards, pencils, and other novelties used for business promotion. The firm was founded in the 1890s and had offices across the country. Printing, shipping, and offices were housed in this building.

In 1987, the building was converted from industrial use to small studios, workshops, and offices, as well as a few retail spaces. The 80,000 square-foot building has 55 tenants—many of them artists and creative enterprises.

The Louis F. Dow Company Building is significant as a major industrial building in the Midway, erected during the area’s burst of growth after World War I. Despite partial infilling of the window openings, many of the historic exterior features are intact. The building is significant in the areas of commerce, architecture, and engineering.

Wright, Barrett & Stillwell/Wright Building, 2233 University Av. W., 1912-13, J. Walter Stevens



circa early 1920s:





### **WRIGHT BARRETT & STILLWELL/WRIGHT BUILDING**

The Wright Barrett & Stillwell Building at 2233 University Avenue West was constructed in 1912-13 and designed by J. Walter Stevens. Located at the northeast corner of University and Hampden avenues, it is a contributing structure at the eastern end of the locally-designated University-Raymond Commercial Historic District. Prominent and prolific Saint Paul architect J. Walter Stevens designed many Lowertown warehouse buildings.

The building is set back more than 100 feet from University Avenue along a railroad spur. A parking lot occupies the southern half of the parcel. The three-story, brown brick, reinforced concrete building has a raised basement and a shallow, stepped parapet terminated by a corbelled brick cornice. The windows and entry were modernized when the building was converted from industrial to office use; the conversion was completed in 1987. The 72,000 square-foot building contains 29 office suites as well as 20 parking spaces in the lower level.

Constructed for \$50,000 as a warehouse and wholesale house, the building was owned by a firm that manufactured and distributed a variety of paper goods, including stationery, building and roofing papers, and their own product called "Wright's Indestructible Wall Board." The main office was in Lowertown at 220-226 E. Fifth Street.

By the early 1930s, the building was known as the Midway Industrial Building and was occupied by at least nine tenants, including ABC Corrugated Box Company, Fisk Tire Company, and Northwestern Jobbers Credit Bureau. By 1938 it was known as the Wright DeCoster Building and housed the Wright DeCoster Company, a manufacturer of sound equipment, and ten other businesses.

The Wright, Barrett, and Stillwell Building is locally significant as a well-conserved warehouse building from the early development of the Midway Industrial District. This early warehouse, a common and significant property type, was built by and for a firm engaged in the manufacture and distribution of building products, an important industry in the Midway. It features "fireproof" reinforced-concrete construction designed for large floor loads and was sited to be well-served by a spur from the Charles Street Lead of the Minnesota Transfer Railway (MTR). The property was developed during the early 1910s, a period of growth in the number of industries that would take advantage of the direct shipping services provided by the MTR. The building's area of significance is commerce.

Griggs, Cooper & Co. Sanitary Food Manufacturing Plant/Griggs Midway Building,  
1821 University Av. W. & 528-40 Fairview Av. N., 1911-25, Toltz King & Day



c. 1912?:



1955:



#### **GRIGGS COOPER & COMPANY/GRIGGS MIDWAY BUILDING**

The Griggs, Cooper & Company Sanitary Food Manufacturing Plant at 1821 University Avenue West occupies much of the block bounded by University, Fairview, and Thomas avenues and North Wheeler Street. The sprawling industrial complex comprises nearly 508,000 square feet of space. Designed by the Saint Paul architecture and engineering firm Toltz King & Day, it was constructed in 1911-12 with additions in 1921 and 1925. Originally a canning factory and candy and cracker manufacturing facility, the building was reportedly the world's largest canning factory when built.

The main building consists of one large, Y-shaped, industrial loft with three wings of three and four stories, which originally housed the cracker and candy factories and other food processing operations. The original wing, adjacent to University Avenue, was built to house the Sanitary Food Manufacturing Company Plant. The northeast and northwest wings were built as warehouses that provided space for other functions as well. The three wings of reinforced-concrete construction are similar in appearance and are unified by brick and exposed concrete exterior walls. All windows have been replaced. Window openings on the University Avenue elevation, the west elevation, and a small part of the east elevation of the south wing have been infilled with small fixed windows and large expanses of glass block. Surface parking lots are located to the south, west, and north of the main building.

The Sanitary Food Manufacturing Company was a subsidiary of Griggs, Cooper & Company. This facility processed or manufactured several "Home Brand" products in addition to crackers and candy, including coffee, tea, spices, extracts, preserves, and canned fruit and vegetables.

The main building was converted to office use in 1955 when Griggs Cooper ceased major operations here. The 1911-12 power plant to the east of the main building is still in use. A combined garage and repair shop building constructed in 1925 now houses a YMCA youth development center.

This sprawling complex is historically significant in the areas of commerce and industry as a Midway Industrial District factory. It reflects the goals of the "Model Factory Movement" and represents the important food processing and distribution industry in the Twin Cities. The vertically- integrated manufacturing, warehouse, jobbing, and distribution system developed by Griggs, Cooper & Company at the Company Sanitary Food Manufacturing Plant reflected the trend during the early twentieth century for American manufacturing firms to extend their control over natural resources at one end of the operation and distribution at the other end of the process. The plant also represents a common pattern of relocation in which firms established in the Lowertown area of St. Paul moved part or all of their operations to larger properties in the Midway Industrial District.

The plant incorporated up-to-date practices in factory layout and employee relations. The building and production layout incorporated a one-floor rationalized production process advocated by the field of Industrial Engineering for the cracker factory and perhaps other food processing operations. The property also reflects the goals of the "Model Factory Movement," which promoted the provision of amenities for workers in factories that included cafeterias, restrooms, excellent lighting and ventilation, and nearby green space as a means to attract and retain a workforce.



St. Paul Casket Co. Factory/Landfill Music & Book Building, 1222 University Av. W., 1922, Allen H. Stem



c. 1924:





### **SAINT PAUL CASKET COMPANY FACTORY**

Located at the southwest corner of University Avenue and North Griggs Street, the Saint Paul Casket Company Factory was designed by noted Saint Paul architect Allen H. Stem and built in 1922. Hess and Larson, in their book *St. Paul's Architecture*, call it the “most sophisticated and best preserved of the Midway’s towered commercial designs.”

The distinctive, four-story, 57,000 square-foot building has three stories above a raised basement exposed along University and Griggs avenues. The exterior design incorporates Gothic influences with elements that prefigure Art Deco. The building has a reinforced-concrete frame and structural clay tile floors, roof, and walls. Stucco covers all exterior surfaces. All window openings are filled with industrial steel sash with operable awning units. Shallow pierced balconettes at the raised first story mark the building’s corners. The central tower originally contained a water tank connected to the building’s automatic sprinkler system. The building, combining the common form of a multi-story industrial loft capped by a prominent water tower with a distinctive interpretation of Art Deco forms rendered in stucco, displays elements that became hallmarks of the Art Deco style such as vertical emphasis, facade setbacks, symmetrical massing, and a prominent tower. The St. Paul Casket Company Factory has been described as “one of the most architecturally distinguished buildings on this stretch of University Avenue” (SHPO Inventory Form RA-SPC-3903).

Many industrial properties developed in St. Paul during the early twentieth century were located near railroad lines and were linked to those lines with spurs. The St. Paul Casket Company was part of that pattern of development. A rail siding formerly entered the property south of the factory, where a parking lot is now located.

The St. Paul Casket Company used the building as a factory and showroom through the early 1950s. The Snyder's Drug Store Company used the building as a general office and warehouse facility during the 1950s. It currently is used primarily for storage, though also has a small retail store and office.

The St. Paul Casket Company Factory, historically significant in the area of industrial architecture, is an excellent example of industrial building design and construction during the 1920s in the Midway District of St. Paul. It incorporates many of the most common hallmarks of industrial building design of the time: a multi-story reinforced-concrete (fireproof) loft construction, pier-to-pier window openings filled with industrial steel sash, and a water tower rising above the main roof line. The building provided the St. Paul Casket Company with a modern manufacturing facility. It reflects one of the two main approaches to industrial building design of the time, one that relied on the expression of purpose, an engineering aesthetic, and avoidance of applied ornament. Stem's use of the engineering aesthetic, rather than the period-revival formalism often used by his fellow architects, resulted in a handsome building that expressed the spirit of industrial expansion of the early 1920s. Little other evidence of the 1920s industrial development of this section of University Avenue survives.

Brioschi-Minuti Co. Building, 908-10 University Av. W., 1922, Torello "T. J." Minuti, designer



c. 1925-26:



## **BRIOSCHI-MINUTI COMPANY BUILDING**

The Brioschi-Minuti Company Building at 908-910 University Avenue West, was erected in 1922 to house the architectural sculpture firm of Carlo Brioschi and Adolfo Minuti. The two-story, Beaux-Arts style commercial building was designed by Torello “T. J.” Minuti.

The brick façade features large show windows and numerous ornamental panels of unglazed terracotta or cast stone. Two urns still stand atop the building’s front corners. First floor doors and windows have been replaced, as have the original second-story industrial steel windows. The 8,200 square-foot building currently has a vacant retail space on the first floor and one apartment on the second floor. There is a small parking area to the rear with alley access.

The building originally housed the studio and showroom of the Brioschi-Minuti Company, a firm that produced architectural sculpture and ornamental plaster from 1910 until 1931. Carlo Brioschi (1879-1941) and Adolfo Minuti (d. 1931), both born in Italy, moved to Saint Paul in 1909 from New York City. They were encouraged to move to the city by Reed & Stem to work on the architectural firm’s St. Paul Hotel project. Other building projects on which the Brioschi-Minuti Company worked include the St. Paul Athletic Club, the St. Paul Cathedral, the Minnesota Historical Society Building, the State and Orpheum theaters and the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis, and Walter Library at the University of Minnesota. Carlos Brioschi was joined by his son Amerigo in the firm. Adolpho Minuti’s three sons, Augustus, Torello “T. J.,” and Lawrence also entered their father’s business. The Brioschi-Minuti Company was dissolved after Adolfo Minuti’s death in 1931. Brioschi Studios and Minuti Brothers—two separate businesses—continued to occupy the building for some time.

The Brioschi-Minuti Company Building is historically significant in the areas of art and architecture for its association with Adolfo Minuti and Carlo Brioschi, architectural sculptors who worked on many important public and private buildings in the Twin Cities. Two works executed by Carlo and Amerigo Brioschi, “The Spirit of Government,” panel in the House of Representatives Chamber in the Minnesota State Capitol and the statue of Christopher Columbus, are valued additions to the state’s seat of government and its grounds.

Architectural sculpture is a field that links the fine arts to building construction, and was an important and specialized component of the construction industry during a period when buildings had richly ornamented interiors. The work of firms such as the Brioschi Minuti Company enriched many prominent buildings built during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period of ornate building interiors.

The association of Carlos Brioschi and Adolfo Minuti with the work of prominent architects Clarence Johnston, Reed & Stem, and Emmanuel L. Masqueray suggests that their sculpture was of high quality and represented significant achievements in the field of architectural sculpture.



Victoria Theater, 825 University Av. W., 1915, Franklin Ellerbe



New Year's Eve 1933



## **VICTORIA THEATER**

The Victoria Theater at 825 University Avenue West was designed by prominent Saint Paul architect Franklin Ellerbe and built in 1915 as a silent movie theater. It was designated a heritage preservation site by the city of Saint Paul in 2011.

The two-story, 5,500 square-foot building has an elegantly detailed, Beaux-Arts style façade of brick and terra-cotta that may have been applied during the Roaring Twenties when the building was converted to a nightclub in 1925. The patterned brick and beaded terra-cotta are arranged in broad, rectangular, decorative patterns surrounding a square arch, or portal, 1.5 stories high. Portions of the 1915 and 1925 interiors remain intact.

The building, which occupies the entire parcel, is a registered vacant building and for sale.

The Victoria functioned as a movie theater for only five or six years. It reopened in 1925 as the Victoria Café, a dance hall featuring cabaret-style floorshows and Chinese cuisine. The café continued until approximately 1935. In 1936, the building was remodeled again by Joseph Muska to accommodate the Edison Lighting Studio, which remained here into the 1980s.

The Victoria Theater is historically significant in a number of respects. It is historically significant as Saint Paul's earliest, intact neighborhood theater, politically significant as a Prohibition-era nightclub, architecturally significant for its design and as a rare St. Paul example of the work of prominent St. Paulite Franklin Ellerbe, and culturally significant for a 1927 recording made here of *Moonshiner's Dance* which appeared on an important record in American musical history. The Victoria has substantial interest and value as the site of a Prohibition-era nightclub in St. Paul and vividly exemplifies consequential developments in the heritage and culture of St. Paul.

The Victoria was the subject of at least two Prohibition-era Federal actions that made front-page headlines across the region and were the subject of editorials in major newspapers. These Federal actions, including a high-profile raid, placed the Victoria at the center of tensions between local opinion and the 18th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The Victoria was therefore the site of interesting historical events in both the cultural development of the United States and the political history of the alcoholic beverage industry in St. Paul.

The Victoria Theater is also significant due to its unique and prominent role in *The Anthology of American Folk Music*, an important recording in American musical history. In 1927, as part of the first commercial label recording sessions held in the Upper Midwest, the house orchestra of the Victoria Café recorded *Moonshiner's Dance* for Gennett Records. This dance record was included on a 1952 collection of reissued commercial recordings, *The Anthology of American Folk Music*, which became an influential document in the development of post-WWII ideas and institutions of American folk arts. The Victoria recording is unique among the Anthology's 84 selections in that it is the only selection unambiguously from outside the American South and is the only cut featuring either jazz instrumentation or immigrant ethnic musical forms.

*Moonshiner's Dance* is a jazz-inflected polka instrumental with vocal interjections. Made several days after the close of the 1927 Minnesota State Fair, it suggests motifs of urban/rural encounter in

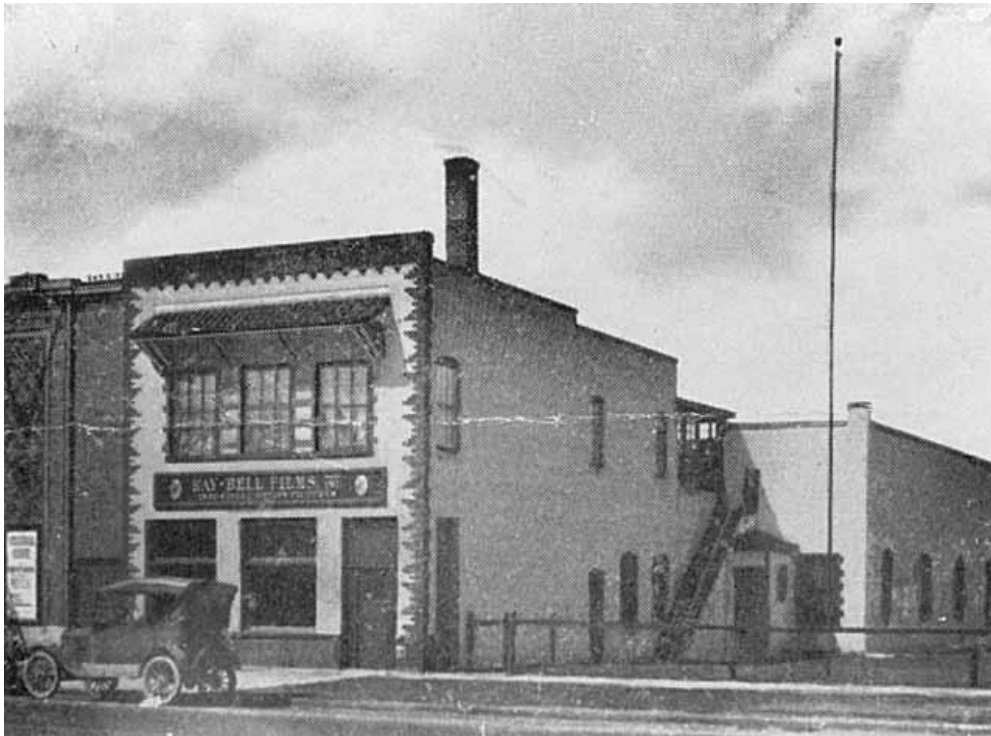
the Upper Midwest, and of overt defiance of the 18th Amendment. *Moonshiner's Dance* is therefore of interest as a representation of St. Paul's civic identity in a regional context. It is also unusual for its various suggestions of unseen stage activity such as storytelling by the company's dancers and choreography performed by the band, and is a rare and vivid window on the offerings of a St. Paul nightclub stage during Prohibition.

The building is also significant as one of only three other St. Paul theater buildings of this early date, of which the Victoria is unique in that much of its exterior and interior are intact, including its original screen and projection booth. The façade of the theatre is done in the Beaux Arts style, a style which was already popular for burlesque halls, operas, and other theaters, and which often incorporated great arches (or portals) dominating the façade. This grand portal concept derived from exposition buildings such as that of the Paris Exposition of 1889, the Petit Palais of 1900 (Paris), and the Festival Hall at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. The portal of the Victoria Theater is edged with a custom-fabricated, terra-cotta band, each piece of which is a remarkable expression of the esthetic of the turn of the century.

Rath, Mills & Bell Co./Ray-Bell Films Building, 823 University Av. W., 1915 with 1921 addition,  
Mark Fitzpatrick



c. 1928:



1925:



#### **RATH MILLS & BELL COMPANY/RAY-BELL FILMS BUILDING**

The Rath, Mills & Bell Company or Ray-Bell Films Building at 823 University Avenue West was designed by Saint Paul architect Mark Fitzpatrick and built in 1915, with a rear addition from 1921.

The two-story, stucco and brick building has a rather fanciful Mediterranean-inspired design whose details are obscured by a uniform coat of paint. The front is framed by a brick base, an intricate arrangement of keyed brickwork at the sides, and a corbelled brick parapet. The main wall surfaces are stuccoed. At the second story, three window openings are framed by keyed brick surrounds that are linked by brick bands. Above these windows is a hood that originally had clay tile roofing.

The building originally was home to an early, pioneering film production company. Otto Rath and Edward Seavolt formed the Rath-Seavolt Film Corporation in 1914 and moved into their motion picture manufacturing business to their new University Avenue building in 1915. Seavolt was apparently gone by the following year and the firm reincorporated in 1918 as Rath, Mills & Bell, Inc. In 1921, a large addition to the rear of the building was constructed to house the motion picture studio and equipment for film processing. The firm was reorganized as Ray-Bell Films, Inc. in 1925 (the new sign read "industrial motion pictures" beneath the firm name). Various parts of the building were used for offices, studios, a workroom, and film processing and drying.

The various incarnations of the film company specialized in films for business, industry, and organizations. Important early clients were the Minneapolis Community Fund and the Burlington, Great



Northern, and Northern Pacific railways, for which the company created the “Burlington Motion Picture Library.” The latter involved filming on location from Saint Paul to Seattle. When Reid Ray joined the company and it became Ray-Bell Films, it had begun to branch out with a wide variety of Minnesota-based industrial and business clients. Commercials for clients like hotels would be filmed in the studio, but much of the filming for companies like Caterpillar, McCormick-Deering, General Mills, Pillsbury, and Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing was done on location. Like the makers of commercial motion pictures, Ray-Bell offered full motion picture services to its clients, from planning, to production and direction, to distribution.

The company relocated to a new building with more facilities on Ford Parkway in 1935. By 1941, the front of the building had become a restaurant.

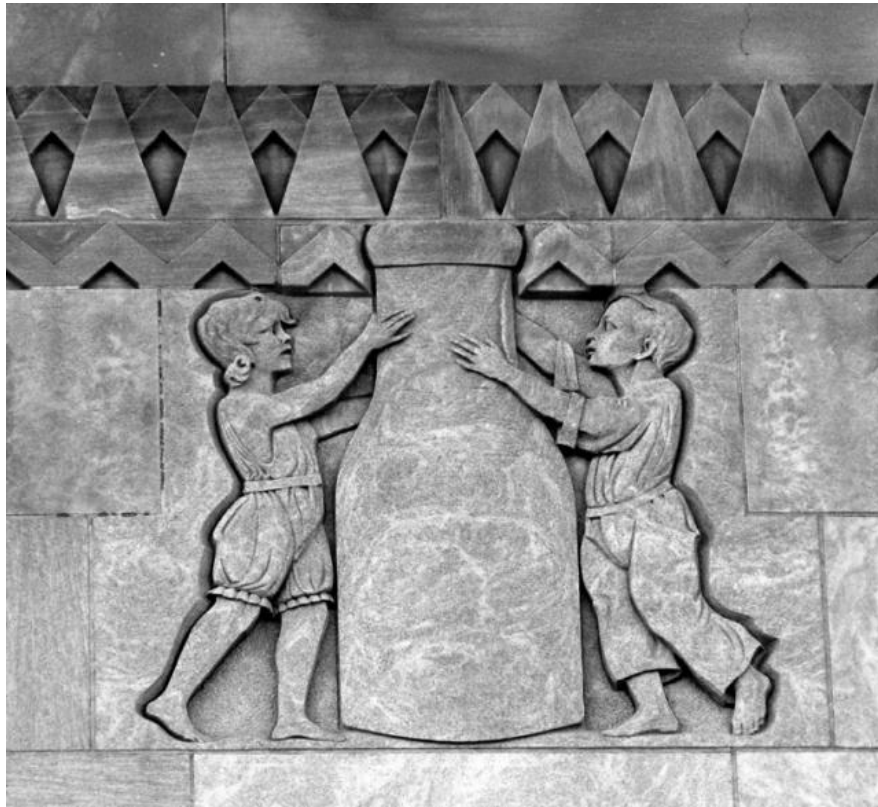
The 9,500 square-foot building currently has one apartment on the second floor, an Ethiopian restaurant at the front of the first floor, and commercial bakery at the rear of the first floor. A parking lot is located on the eastern part of the site.

Despite its relatively modest appearance today, the Raths, Mills and Bell, Inc. (Ray-Bell Films) Building has achieved significance in the area of communications as the home for some 30 years of a pioneering film production company that documented and promoted the work of many Minnesota-based organizations, businesses, and industries.

Minnesota Milk Co./Old Home Dairy Building, 370-78 University Av. W., 1912,  
1932 remodel by Charles Hausler



Detail above front entrance:



### **MINNESOTA MILK COMPANY BUILDING**

The Minnesota Milk Company Building at 370-78 University Avenue West was built in 1912 but the building one sees today is a 1932 remodel in the Art Deco style designed by prominent Saint Paul architect Charles Hausler.

The two-story building at the southwest corner of University and Western avenues has a limestone facade with a base of polished black granite. Characterized by narrow pilasters with ziggurat capitals, vertical bands of multi-light windows (now infilled with concrete block), a chevron frieze, and a square tower with a relief sculpture of two children flanking a milk bottle, the building is recognized as one of Hausler's distinctive Art Deco designs.

Hess and Larson, in *St. Paul's Architecture*, observe that "the new plant skillfully blends the concrete slab-and-pilaster look of Albert Kahn's factories [St. Paul's 1925 Ford plant in Highland Park] with the chevron friezes and ziggurat tower of Zigzag Moderne. It illustrates the facility with which a leading designer of the period could move from the picturesque historicism of the 1920s into the severe geometries of the newer fashions."

Hausler was Saint Paul's first City Architect from 1914 to 1923. He designed many schools, branch libraries, fire stations, and park buildings during his tenure with the city. He also designed the Minnesota Building at Fourth and Cedar Streets, a ten-story, Art Deco skyscraper completed in 1930.

The Minnesota Milk Company Building is significant in the areas of agriculture and industry as an urban dairy that promoted and distributed pasteurized milk products. It is one of few remaining early twentieth-century dairies in the city and the only building that can easily be distinguished as such. The remodeled building in the Art Deco style became a powerful advertising statement for the Minnesota Milk Company and its pasteurized milk products.

The building is currently vacant. Construction is expected to begin in August, 2013 on a full-block redevelopment project that will provide 57 units of affordable housing, including rehabilitation of the dairy building for retail uses on the first floor and 14 residential units on the second floor, and 43 residential units in adjacent new buildings.

Ford Motor Co./Ford Building, 117 University Av. W., 1913, Ford supervisory architect John Graham and Kees & Colburn



1936:





## **FORD MOTOR COMPANY BUILDING**

The Ford Motor Company Building at 117 University Avenue, built in 1913, was planned to be a sub-assembly plant for Model T automobiles and showroom. Its design is credited to Ford supervisory architect John Graham and the Minneapolis architectural firm Kees & Coburn.

The three-story, reinforced concrete, 59,000 square-foot building, measuring 100 by 150 feet, is located one-half block west of the Minnesota State Capitol and just east of Rice Street. The red brick façade is punctuated with white and green glazed terra-cotta detailing. All facing materials above the third story windows have been removed, including brick, terra-cotta, and a “Ford Motor Company” sign, presumably due to deterioration. Brick pilasters with terra-cotta capital blocks frame the entrance where two fluted Doric columns of cast stone support a terra-cotta entablature set just below the storefront cornice molding. Flanking the entry are large showroom windows and, at each end of the building, slightly shorter openings that originally contained garage doors. A unique feature of the building was a tile roof constructed such that cars could be tested on the rooftop (the walls extended nine feet above the roof). The side walls now are parged with concrete and encased in chain link fencing material.

The building began as sub-assembly plant and service center for Ford Model T automobiles. In 1912, only nine years after Henry Ford founded The Ford Motor Company in Detroit, plans were announced to build assembly plants in Minneapolis and St. Paul. It was part of a much larger scheme to decentralize manufacturing by creating numerous branch plants to facilitate both shipping and manufacturing. It was estimated that 500 cars would be assembled at the St. Paul plant in 1914. However, the Ford building in St. Paul was used primarily as a sales branch, tractor distributing agency, retail store, and storage space for new cars. The larger Minneapolis plant took on a larger assembly role—until the much larger, one-story St. Paul Ford plant in Highland Park opened in 1924, at which time assembly at the earlier Twin Cities factories ceased. Ford continued to use the University Avenue building as a sales and service center until 1934.

The building was vacant from 1937 through at least 1941. By 1947 it was occupied by a warehouse company and in 1951 it was converted to federal offices. In 1952, it was occupied by state offices, which remained for many years. The building continues to be owned by the state and has been vacant for a number of years.

The Ford Building, an early automobile branch assembly plant and dealership, is significant in the areas of industry and commerce—the production and distribution of automobiles in particular. Ford was the first automobile manufacturer with a production volume to support branch assembly plants—one of the company’s innovative production, distribution, and management developments. This building represents the decentralized system developed by Ford to assemble, sell, and service automobiles during the 1910s. It also represents the importance of the immediate adoption of the automobile in American life, as well as the significant role that the Ford Motor Company had in developing modern, rationalized industrial production and distribution networks.