



## CPED STAFF REPORT

Prepared for the Heritage Preservation Commission  
 HPC Agenda Item #9  
 July 28, 2015  
 BZH-28747

### HERITAGE PRESERVATION APPLICATION SUMMARY

*Property Location:* 600 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE & 649 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE  
*Project Name:* Electric Steel Elevator Demolition  
*Prepared By:* Lisa Steiner, City Planner, (612) 673-3950  
*Applicant:* Riverland Ag Corp  
*Project Contact:* Craig Reiners, Riverland Ag Corp & Doug Johnson, Oliver Real Estate Services  
*Ward:* 2  
*Neighborhood:* Prospect Park – East River Road  
*Request:* To demolish all existing structures on the subject property.  
*Required Applications:*

<b>Demolition of Historic Resource</b>	To allow for the demolition of all existing structures on the property.
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### HISTORIC PROPERTY INFORMATION

<b>Current Name</b>	Electric Steel Elevator
<b>Historic Name</b>	Electric Steel Elevator
<b>Historic Address</b>	6th Ave SE & 26 <sup>th</sup> Ave SE / 2510 Marshall Ave SE / 600 25 <sup>th</sup> Ave SE / 602 25 <sup>th</sup> Ave SE
<b>Original Construction Date</b>	1901: Original 12 silos, workhouse, cooper house, coal shed, steel car sheds 1903 & 1906: 10 additional silos 1916: Office building 1938: Concrete workhouse addition
<b>Original Architect</b>	1901: Minneapolis Steel & Machine Company 1903 & 1906: Minneapolis Steel & Machine Company 1916: Unknown 1938: Minneapolis Steel & Machine Company
<b>Original Builder</b>	1901: American Bridge Company 1903 & 1906: Minneapolis Steel & Machine Company 1916: Unknown 1938: R.J. Keehn Company
<b>Original Engineer</b>	1901: CAP Turner 1903 & 1906: Minneapolis Steel & Machine Company 1916: Unknown 1938: Unknown
<b>Historic Use</b>	Grain elevator
<b>Current Use</b>	Vacant
<b>Proposed Use</b>	Demolition – no development plan following demolition

<b>Date Application Deemed Complete</b>	June 24, 2015	<b>Date Extension Letter Sent</b>	Not applicable
<b>End of 60-Day Decision Period</b>	August 23, 2015	<b>End of 120-Day Decision Period</b>	Not applicable

## SUMMARY

**BACKGROUND.** On June 11, 2015, Veit & Company submitted a wrecking permit to demolish the existing grain elevators, grain bins, office and shop buildings, and remove all of the foundations on the Electric Steel Elevator property. On June 17 and 18, 2015, CPED staff informed the applicants that the demolition of the Electric Steel Elevator would require a Demolition of Historic Resource application because it may meet at least one of the criteria for designation within [Section 599.210](#) of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances. Craig Reiners of Riverland Ag Corp and Doug Johnson of Oliver Real Estate Services submitted the Demolition of Historic Resource application on June 24, 2015 to pursue the wrecking permit.

**PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND SURROUNDING AREA.** The Electric Steel Elevator at 600 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and 649 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE is located within the Southeast Minneapolis Industrial area (SEMI). The combined lot size is 208,570 square feet or 4.79 acres. The property includes approximately 1,500 linear feet of railroad siding including three railroad tracks and a spur track that serves the site. West of the property, there are a number of surface parking lots and the University of Minnesota football stadium. To the east of the property are two concrete grain elevator complexes. Rail yards are located directly to the north of the property. Land owned by the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad and the Burlington Northern Railroad Company separates the subject property from the University of Minnesota Transitway to the south. The Stadium Village light rail station is located about a quarter-mile to the southwest of the property.

**BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS.** The existing structures on the Electric Steel Elevator site were constructed in several phases between 1901 and 1938. The original steel workhouse, cooper house, coal shed, steel car sheds, and twelve of the steel grain bins were constructed in 1901. Ten additional tanks (five per side) were added in 1903 and 1906. An additional ten tanks completed bin construction by 1914. In total, there are 32 existing steel grain bins on the property. In 1938, the reinforced concrete workhouse was constructed directly west of the original steel workhouse.<sup>1</sup> (See appendix for historic photos and some of the original architectural drawings of the property.)

In 2003, Hess, Roise and Company completed a National Register assessment to determine the eligibility of properties in the SEMI for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. That document described the various buildings on the subject site, which have not been significantly altered since the survey was completed, as follows:

### **Steel Workhouse**

*This workhouse consists of a gable-roofed steel building with shed-roofed extensions on its north and south facades. Single-story shed-roofed bays shelter large railroad track entrances on the east and west sides of the building. A one-story, shed-roofed addition covers railroad tracks on the workhouse's south side. The workhouse has a number of steel-frame pivoted windows as well as several blocked window openings. A bracket projecting from the building's west gable end was once used to hoist materials to two double-door openings high up on the west facade. A conveyor gallery on the west facade connects with an adjacent concrete workhouse, and a conveyor gallery on the south facade extends to the grain tanks to the south. The steel*

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<sup>1</sup> Hess, Roise and Company, "Southwest Minneapolis Industrial Area (SEMI) Survey - Electric Steel Elevator - HE-MPC-3607," *The Junction of Industry and Freight: The Development of the Southeast Minneapolis Industrial Area, A National Register Assessment*, Prepared for the Minneapolis Community Development Agency: February 2003.

workhouse was part of the initial 1901 construction and was listed as having a 220,000-bushel capacity according to a Sanborn atlas from that year. The first floor originally functioned as a shipping and receiving level where grain entered and exited the workhouse. Railcars, and later trucks, dumped grain into pits beneath the workhouse. The grain was then weighed and conveyed to the "legs" of the workhouse, bucket conveyors that elevated the grain to the fourth floor, or "headhouse." Headhouses typically contained cleaning machinery, which was used to improve the quality of grain by removing weed seed, dirt, and under- or over-sized kernels. The third floor of the workhouse contained scales for weighing the grain. From here, grain was conveyed to the external steel bins, the adjacent concrete workhouse, or workhouse bins located beneath the scales. Railcars and trucks on the first floor were loaded by grain directed by spouts from bins above. It is likely that the workhouse functions in the same way today [in 2002 at the time of survey], though some of its cleaning functions may have been taken over by the adjacent concrete workhouse.

### **Reinforced-Concrete Workhouse**

This reinforced-concrete workhouse was built in 1938 when Russell-Miller owned Electric Steel and used a good deal of the elevator's storage capacity for the company's private use. The workhouse had a capacity of 250,000 bushels, but served primarily as a cleaning house for grain entering the complex. The structure's flat roof holds a one-story, gable-roofed gallery covered with corrugated metal siding, pierced by a number of steel-framed windows. Flat- and bed-roofed additions are on the gallery's north side. The east end of the gallery extends to the adjacent steel workhouse. The first floor of the concrete workhouse is slightly inset from the rest of building above, and includes a number of window openings and a single entry. The workhouse's many window openings vary in size, and include six-, nine-, and forty-light sash. Two corrugated-metal galleries atop the steel grain tanks to the south appear to terminate at the south side of the concrete workhouse."

### **Steel Grain Tanks**

This grain tank complex includes six rows of steel tanks, arranged on a north-south axis. Two rows of six grain tanks built in 1901 are flanked by rows of five tanks built in 1903 and 1906. Another row of five tanks was added to each side by 1914, bringing the total number of tanks to thirty-two. The two original rows of tanks are each topped with a corrugated-metal and steel gallery that connects them to the steel workhouse. The most southwesterly bin of this group has a shed-roofed, steel-frame car shed that is open to rail traffic on both its west and east ends, and may also be accessible to trucks. Here, the grain is deposited in pits below the shed. The grain is then conveyed through a tunnel beneath the grain tanks to the steel workhouse, where it is elevated, cleaned, and distributed. It is unclear whether grain could also be loaded into a waiting railcar or truck from this car shed. The 1903 and 1906 grain tanks are somewhat shorter than the 1901 tanks and lack conveyor galleries. They are fed, instead, by spouts angled down from the top of the 1901 bins or from the two outer rows. The circa 1914 grain tanks also have corrugated-metal and steel-frame galleries, and are connected to the steel workhouse by several short, perpendicular conveyor galleries. A row of vents lines the south sides of the grain bins.

### **Office Building**

This two-story, flat-roofed, brick office building has two additions north and northeast of the original structure. It is unclear when these additions were added to the original building. Each of the four facades of the original office building is accented by four pilasters that rise slightly

above the structure's parapet, which is now covered by metal siding. The structure's windows include original two-over-two sash and one-over-one replacements with concrete or brick sills. On the first floor of the south (front) facade, the central bay is open and the others are covered with metal siding. A stair provides access to a second-story entryway on the building's west side, which also holds a door opening on the first floor. A somewhat shorter, two-story, flat-roofed brick addition covers most of the building's north facade. The addition's north facade has a parapet capped with tile. A metal stairway provides access to the second-floor entryway. The addition's large window openings are filled with glass block, with a hopper light at the center. The windows have brick sills. There is a one-story, brick addition with a flat roof connected to the east facade of the two-story addition. This structure also has a parapet capped with tile on its north facade, as well as a small entryway on its east facade. Its glass-block windows are barred.

### **Cooper House**

This one and one-half story, gable-roofed, brick building has a gable-roofed metal clerestory. The building's roof is corrugated metal with metal soffits. The structure's west end is connected to the steel workhouse. The windows are generally steel sash replacements that are smaller than the original window and door openings. Each window has a brick or concrete sill and a lintel of vertical bricks. A large entryway is on the north side of the east facade. A one-story, shed-roofed, brick addition projects from the building's east facade just south of a large entryway. The addition has a metal double-door on its north side, and two steel windows on its east side. A second shed-roofed brick addition is attached to the south side of the first addition. It has a single, two-over-two window with a brick sill, and several blocked window and door openings. Both additions have corrugated metal roofs with metal fascia. A third, one-story, brick addition with a shed roof adjoins the south side of the original structure. It also has a steel-sash window with a brick sill, as well as a corrugated metal roof with metal fascia. A building permit describes this building as a cooper house, but this seems unlikely. If grain was not stored in bulk in railcars or bins, it was stored in sacks. Barrels were an early storage container for flour; terminal elevators were not built to handle flour shipments. The structure was later described, probably more accurately, as a millwright shop and storehouse.<sup>2</sup>

**PROPERTY HISTORY.** The 2003 National Register Assessment of the property also provided the following thorough history of the property:

*The Electric Steel Elevator Company was incorporated in 1901 with \$200,000 of capital. The original incorporators were Lewis S. and George M. Gillette, James L. Record, Charles E. Thayer, M. B. Koon, James Quirk, and Edward A. Everett. Record and the Gillettes also organized the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company. The Electric Steel Elevator Company immediately commissioned the American Bridge Company, with C. A. P. Turner as the engineer, to construct twelve steel grain tanks in a cluster 102 feet wide, 324 feet long, and 80 feet tall, and a 64-foot wide, 84-foot long, 165-foot-tall steel workhouse. American Bridge also built a 42-foot wide, 65-foot long, 26-foot-tall brick "cooper house," a brick coal shed, and two steel car sheds for the young company. The tanks were arranged in two rows of six tanks, each with a capacity of 26,000 bushels of grain. By 1902 the company had made an agreement with the one of the largest flour milling companies at Saint Anthony Falls, the Washburn-Crosby Company to store*

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

*Canadian wheat in at least one and possibly two of its new tanks. The wheat would later be ground into flour at the Washburn-Crosby 'E' Mill.*

*In 1903 and again in 1906, the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company constructed single rows of five cylindrical grain bins, each 50 feet in diameter and 60 feet tall, on either side of the 1901 tanks. The 1906 bins had stone foundations. Each tank had a 100,000-bushel capacity, raising the elevator's total capacity to over 2.7 million bushels of grain. While the company continued to build up its own plant, it also gained a broader influence within the SEMI. Lewis Gillette and Charles Thayer teamed up again during 1906 to purchase the L. T. Sowle Elevator, located southeast of the Electric Steel, and form the Delmar Elevator Company. In 1907 a 450-foot-long conveyor, supported by three steel piers and capable of moving 20,000 bushels of grain a day, was built to link the Electric Steel Elevator to the nearby Archer-Daniels Linseed Company mill. Later, other conveyors from Electric Steel sent wheat to the Russell-Miller flour mill, barley to the Electric Malting Plant (now Kurth Malting), and linseed to both the Spencer-Kellogg and Sons Linseed Oil Mill and the Archer-Daniels Linseed Company mill, making the Electric Steel a receiving or "captive" elevator for many of the industries at the south end of the SEMI. In a 1912 Sanborn map, the steel conveyors resemble spokes on a wheel, with the Electric Steel as the central hub.*

*In 1912, the Russell-Miller Company acquired the Electric Steel Elevator, and by the end of 1914 ten 80-foot-tall grain tanks capable of holding a total of 1.25 million bushels had been added to the complex, bringing the total capacity to 4 million bushels. This made it the largest in the West. Electric Steel probably continued to supply other industries in the SEMI with grain rather than be solely dedicated to the medium-sized Russell-Miller flour mill, which processed a maximum of 6,500 bushels per day. A 1951 Sanborn map shows only the overhead conveyor to the Russell Miller plant still in place; it has since been removed. Other companies that once were linked to the elevator, like Kurth Malting and Archer-Daniels (then Archer-Daniels-Midland or ADM), began to add their own storage in the 1920s. A reinforced-concrete workhouse with a 250,000-bushel capacity was built just west of the steel workhouse in 1938, bringing the total capacity of the complex to over 4.2 million bushels. Peavey Company took control of the elevator in 1954 when it acquired Russell-Miller.<sup>3</sup>*

**APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL.** The applicant is proposing to demolish all structures on the subject properties. The grain elevator is currently owned by Riverland Ag Corp, part of Ceres Global Ag Corp. The elevator ceased operations on November 20, 2013. The applicant has plans to sell the land to the University of Minnesota.

The University of Minnesota Board of Regents Facilities and Operations Committee voted to approve the authorization of the purchase of the subject property for \$1,450,000 plus reimbursement of the seller's cost to demolish the elevators and building structures situated on the 4.79 acres, which is estimated at \$578,000. As a bargain sale/partial donation transaction, Riverland Ag Corp would donate to the University part of the property's value at the date of closing, which the seller estimates at \$1,050,000. (See the docket for that meeting [at this link](#) and a copy of the relevant materials in the appendix.) The materials state that the current owner of the property, Riverland Ag Corp, contacted the University to advise that the property is no longer needed for its business operations and was for sale. Demolition of the structures is the responsibility of the current owners, Riverland Ag Corp. The

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

documents note that after demolition, the property “will remain vacant until the University determines the appropriate use or uses of the land.”

Prior to demolition, the applicant is proposing to commission a photo documentation study of the Electric Steel Elevator and would donate it to the Minnesota Historical Society.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS.** One letter in opposition to the proposed demolition was received as of the writing of this report and is attached in the appendix. Any additional correspondence received prior to the public meeting will be forwarded on to the Heritage Preservation Commission for consideration.

## ANALYSIS

### DEMOLITION OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

The Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, Title 23, Heritage Preservation, Chapter 599 Heritage Preservation Regulations states that before approving the demolition of a property determined to be a historic resource, the commission shall make findings that the demolition is necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property, or that there are no reasonable alternatives to the demolition. In determining whether reasonable alternatives exist, the commission shall consider, but not be limited to the significance of the property, the integrity of the property and the economic value or usefulness of the existing structure, including its current use, costs of renovation and feasible alternative uses. The commission may delay a final decision for up to 180 days to allow parties interested in preserving the historic resource a reasonable opportunity to act to protect it.

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development has analyzed the application to allow the demolition of all structures on the Electric Steel Elevator site based on the following [findings](#):

### SIGNIFICANCE

In CPED’s review, the subject property does appear eligible for local designation, as analyzed below. The property was also determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places on March 23, 2004, based on the National Register’s Criteria A and C.

**Criterion #1: The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history.**

The Electric Steel Elevator was a significant grain elevator in Minneapolis and played an important role in the function of nearby mills. The 1912-1930 Sanborn map, 1938 aerial images, and historic photographs (see appendix) show that corrugated iron and steel conveyor galleries connected the Electric Steel Elevator externally to the Russell-Miller Mill and the Spencer-Kellogg and Sons Linseed Oil Mill to the west, the Archer-Daniels Linseed Company to the southeast, and the Pioneer Malting Company to the west. These overhead conveyors are now gone, as are the majority of the other noted mills. In 1920, the *Grain Dealers Journal* noted that the Electric Steel Elevator had the largest storage capacity in Minneapolis at 4 million bushels (see appendix for excerpt).<sup>4</sup>

The Electric Steel Elevator has been determined eligible for National Register listing under Criterion A, which applies to properties that are “associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.”<sup>5</sup> This criterion is very similar to local designation

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<sup>4</sup> “The Grain Handling Facilities of Minneapolis,” *Grain Dealers Journal*, September 25, 1920.

<sup>5</sup> National Register Criteria for Evaluation, [http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15\\_2.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_2.htm)

criterion #1. The *Grain Elevators in Minnesota* National Register multiple property documentation form prepared in 1989 notes that for grain elevators to be “eligible under Criterion A, a terminal grain elevator must have been involved in a particularly meaningful way with a significant development in the grain industry, grain trade, a transportation and shipping nexus, and/or a major processor.”<sup>6</sup>

The *National Register Assessment* notes that the Electric Steel Elevator complex “has statewide significance under this requirement. In addition to its service as a terminal elevator, Electric Steel was historically an integral component in the operations of the linseed, malting, and flour milling interests in the SEMI. This district held an important concentration of the grain storage and processing facilities that made Minneapolis a major center of agribusiness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.”<sup>7</sup>

After a period of intensive development in the SEMI area, changes to the national transportation network soon began to shift freight to other cities like Buffalo and Saint Louis rather than to Minneapolis. In 1922, “the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) ruled that railroad freight rates, held artificially low to keep river commerce between the Twin Cities and Saint Louis competitive, would be allowed to rise. Soon it was cheaper to ship grain to Buffalo and Saint Louis than to Minneapolis. Buffalo claimed first place in national flour production in 1930, ending fifty years of Minneapolis’s dominance in the industry.”<sup>8</sup>

The Electric Steel Elevator complex is associated with this period which exemplifies broad patterns of economic history, particularly that of Minneapolis’ dominance in the grain and flour industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when the Electric Steel Elevator was constructed and utilized as both a terminal elevator and captive elevator supplying nearby mills, and had the largest capacity of any elevator in the city. The property appears eligible for local designation under Criterion #1.

**Criterion #2: The property is associated with the lives of significant persons or groups.**

The Electric Steel Elevator does not appear to be associated with the lives of significant persons or groups. This criterion typically applies to properties which are associated with particular people because the properties are their residences, offices, or business headquarters. Staff found no record of any significant people associated with the elevator complex. While the property is associated with master engineer C.A.P Turner, the property is not likely eligible for designation under this particular criterion, but rather under Criterion #6. A complete analysis of possible significance under this criterion would be conducted as part of a designation study.

**Criterion #3: The property contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city or neighborhood identity.**

The Electric Steel Elevator is associated with the identity of the SEMI area. The *National Register Assessment* notes that “Industry was naturally drawn to the SEMI, which offered cheap land and proximity to rail service. In addition, the railroads that passed through the SEMI to the western frontier enabled farmers to cultivate new land.... By 1892 the Northern Pacific Railroad, the Manitoba, the Chicago Saint Paul Minneapolis and Omaha (known as the Omaha), the Chicago Saint

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Frame, “Grain Elevators in Minnesota,” National Register of Historic Places: Multiple Property Documentation Form: 1989, Page F-3.

<sup>7</sup> Hess, Roise and Company, “Southwest Minneapolis Industrial Area (SEMI) Survey - Electric Steel Elevator - HE-MPC-3607.”

<sup>8</sup> Hess, Roise and Company, Page 11.

Paul and Kansas City (CStP&KC), and the Milwaukee Road all ran through the SEMI.”<sup>9</sup> In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the SEMI area had become an industrial center and the “primary area for new terminal grain elevators that reflected important new architectural and technological changes.”<sup>10</sup>

The Electric Steel Elevator was a terminal grain elevator, which tended to develop on points of transfer on paths from large grain producing to large grain consuming areas. The primary function of terminal grain elevators is to store grain, improve the quality of the grain, and serve the marketing process by supplying the product to millers, manufacturers, or others.<sup>11</sup>

Grain elevators were dominant in the area, creating what a writer described in 1911 as “an unbroken skyline of grain elevators.”<sup>12</sup> “Over the years, the SEMI included examples of nearly every grain elevator design popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, though only two types, steel and reinforced concrete, are present today.”<sup>13</sup>

However, since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, changes in grain and related agricultural businesses have led to the SEMI area’s decline as an industrial center. Many of the grain elevators in the area had already been demolished by the time the *National Register Assessment* was completed in 2003. The document notes that “Most of the processing facilities have been demolished, and massive elevators now sit vacant or underutilized. Although the string of structures that remain still communicate the district’s grain-handling heritage, the density of the district has been significantly compromised by demolition in recent decades. Once a solid wall of elevators and mills, the district now resembles a gap-toothed smile.”<sup>14</sup>

The Electric Steel Elevator appears eligible for local designation under Criterion #3 based on its association with the identity of the SEMI area.

**Criterion #4: The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction.**

The National Register multiple property documentation form, *Grain Elevators in Minnesota*, noted that “All steel elevators erected during the pioneering period (1900-1918) are significant.”<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the *National Register Assessment* states that “Dating from 1901, Electric Steel is one of the few extant steel elevators in the country, and is hence nationally significant.”<sup>16</sup> The 1997 *Preliminary Evaluation of Historic Resources in the SEMI* specifies that “The Electric Steel Elevator is significant not only in Minneapolis, but nationally as one of the premier examples of steel construction in elevator development.”<sup>17</sup>

The Electric Steel Elevator “dates from a period of great experimentation in storage facilities as grain became commoditized and traded in a national market.”<sup>18</sup> The Electric Steel Elevator “was among the earliest elevators to utilize steel grain tanks in an era when elevators were experimenting

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Landscape Research, “Preliminary Evaluation: Historic Resources in the Southeast Minneapolis Industrial Area,” Submitted to the Minneapolis Community Development Agency: 1997, Page 12.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Frame, Page E-3.

<sup>12</sup> Hess, Roise and Company, Page 11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Frame, Page F-4.

<sup>16</sup> Hess, Roise and Company, Page 31.

<sup>17</sup> Landscape Research, Page 31.

<sup>18</sup> Hess, Roise and Company, Page 31.

with new construction methods.”<sup>19</sup> An inventory of grain elevators in Minneapolis revealed that the twelve 1901 steel bins and ten 1903-1906 bins are the oldest known grain elevator bins of any type or material that remained in the city at the point the inventory was completed in 1997.<sup>20</sup> (See appendix.)

The *National Register Assessment* determined that the Electric Steel Elevator was significant under National Register Criterion C, which is for properties that “embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.”<sup>21</sup> The assessment elaborates, stating:

*The most important steel design in the SEMI, the Electric Steel Elevator, was built in 1901 and is an early example of several advances in the evolution of grain storage. In addition to being fireproof, its cylindrical steel bins were more stable than square bins. Also, the problem of fitting round bins into a rectangular house was solved by leaving the bins completely exposed, an innovation that allowed the almost infinite addition of new bins. The Electric Steel Elevator, six tanks at the Kurth Malting Elevator, and four tanks at Delmar Elevator No. 2 are the only extant examples of this design within the SEMI, and the Electric Steel is by far the best example.*<sup>22</sup>

Aside from its steel design, the Electric Steel Elevator is also a significant extant terminal elevator type. “The terminal elevator is the largest and most complex of all grain elevators. It is intended to accumulate large amounts of grain from smaller lots, usually brought to it in railcars, to store the grain, and to transfer it out in similar or larger lots. To accomplish this, the terminal elevator will have complicated handling facilities and usually very large, even immense, storage capacities.”<sup>23</sup> All structures “from the original workhouse, tanks, cooper house, coal shed and additions since then are believed to be extant, making the Electric Steel Elevator the most complete terminal elevator complex on the SEMI site.”<sup>24</sup> *Grain Elevators in Minnesota* further notes that “All steel terminal elevator construction of any type dating from this early experimental period (c 1895- c 1920) is eligible [for the National Register].”<sup>25</sup> This would also meet Criterion #4 for local designation.

The first steel terminal elevator in Minneapolis was the Pioneer Steel elevator at 2547 Fifth Street NE which was constructed in 1899. That elevator was determined to be eligible for the National Register but was razed in 1995. The site now houses a self-storage facility. The 1989 *Grain Elevators in Minnesota* report notes that the Electric Steel Elevator and Pioneer Steel Elevator [which had not yet been razed at the time of the report] were both “very early steel elevators and very significant.”<sup>26</sup> Another of the identified national “classics” of steel construction was the Electric Elevator in Buffalo, New York, which was razed in 1984.<sup>27</sup>

The Electric Steel Elevator has also been noted to be significant for its form. It “was one of the first in which the storage tanks stood individually, without being enclosed in a structure, as had

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> City of Minneapolis, Grain Elevator Inventory: 1997.

<sup>21</sup> National Register Criteria for Evaluation.

<sup>22</sup> Hess, Roise and Company, Page 16.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Frame, Page F-1.

<sup>24</sup> Landscape Research, Page 30.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Frame, Page F-6.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, E-22.

<sup>27</sup> Landscape Research, Page 31.

previously been the case. With unenclosed bins and a separate workhouse, Electric Steel represented a more modern form of terminal elevator.”<sup>28</sup>

Steel was soon replaced by reinforced concrete as the material of choice for grain elevator construction. Although in 1920, “the *Grain Dealers Journal* declared that ‘at no other market is the age of steel so liberally exemplified in elevator architecture,’”<sup>29</sup> reinforced concrete quickly took over as the dominant material for new elevators.<sup>30</sup> “Concrete quickly came to dominate all other construction materials chosen for terminal elevators and grain bins in the SEMI. From at least 1909 until the last grain bin was constructed in 1957, nearly every new elevator and storage bin was made out of reinforced concrete.”<sup>31</sup> This was largely because concrete grain bins and elevators could be built for between 10 and 25 percent less than steel grain elevators and bins by 1911.<sup>32</sup>

Considering these previous studies regarding National Register eligibility and additional staff research, the Electric Steel Elevator appears eligible for local designation under Criterion #4. Additional analysis as part of a designation study could also determine whether the Electric Steel Elevator is now the last remaining example of a steel terminal grain elevator in the country.

**Criterion #5: The property exemplifies a landscape design or development pattern distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design or detail.**

The property does not exemplify a landscape design or development pattern distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design or detail. Although the development pattern of the industrial properties along the railroad does speak to the history of the area, the Electric Steel Elevator property on its own likely does not exemplify this development pattern without considering the other properties in the area. An analysis of possible significance under this criterion would be conducted as part of a designation study.

**Criterion #6: The property exemplifies works of master builders, engineers, designers, artists, craftsmen or architects.**

The Electric Steel Elevator complex was noted in the *National Register Assessment* to be significant under Criterion C of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation for its association with the American Bridge Company and C.A.P Turner. Incorporated in 1900 by J.P. Morgan, the American Bridge Company became a subsidiary of the United States Steel Corporation and became dominant in the industry after acquiring 24 fabricators. The first bins of the Electric Steel Elevator date from this formative period of the American Bridge Company.<sup>33</sup>

The first structures constructed on the Electric Steel Elevator complex were designed by C.A.P Turner, who briefly worked for the American Bridge Company. (See drawings in appendix.) Turner was a nationally prominent engineer and architect who remains best known for his design for the mushroom column and innovations with reinforced concrete.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Frame, Pages E-20-21.

<sup>30</sup> Landscape Research, Page 31.

<sup>31</sup> Hess, Roise and Company, Page 16.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Frame, Page E-24.

<sup>33</sup> Hess, Roise and Company, “Southwest Minneapolis Industrial Area (SEMI) Survey - Electric Steel Elevator - HE-MPC-3607,”

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

The property is also associated with the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company which “made several additions to the Electric Steel Elevator in 1903, 1906, and 1907... By 1924 the company had become one of the largest industrial institutions in Minnesota.”<sup>35</sup> The Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company erected several steel elevators in Minnesota and throughout the country. A number of their plans are held in the Northwest Architectural Archives. The *Grain Elevators in Minnesota* National Register multiple property documentation form notes that “steel elevators were built by many contractors, but in Minnesota steel fabrication was the specialty of the Gillette Herzog Company and the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company.”<sup>36</sup> Gillette Herzog was listed as the steel manufacturing company on the original 1901 plans for the Electric Steel Elevator (see appendix), but the importance of this company has not been explored in previous studies of the property.

The property appears eligible for local designation under Criterion #6.

**Criterion #7: The property has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.**

The subject property may yield information important in history, but the destruction of the subject buildings would need to occur in order to investigate this possibility. An analysis of possible significance under this criterion would be conducted as part of a designation study.

## INTEGRITY

The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Regulations recognize a property's integrity through seven aspects or qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The subject property retains the integrity required to be designated as an individual local landmark.

**Location:** Location is the place where the historic property was constructed. The structures on the Electric Steel Elevator complex remain in their original location, indicating the property maintains integrity of location.

**Design:** Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. A property's design reflects historic functions and technologies as well as aesthetics. As noted above, the Electric Steel Elevator design is very significant for many reasons. Design also applies to the way in which buildings, sites, or structures are related. One study noted that all structures “from the original workhouse, tanks, cooper house, coal shed and additions since then are believed to be extant, making the Electric Steel Elevator the most complete terminal elevator complex on the SEMI site.”<sup>37</sup>

Because these structures remain, and because the property continued to be used as a grain elevator as recently as 2013, the Electric Steel Elevator property still can communicate the functions of the site and the interrelationship of the various structures. Some minor modifications have taken place over time. The *National Register Assessment* noted that “Concrete has been added to the interiors of some tanks, for example, to build up the flat bottoms into a funnel form to facilitate emptying. These modifications are minor, however, given the property's scale and the degree of its significance; the district retains good integrity.”<sup>38</sup> The 1901 drawings of the steel workhouse (see appendix) reveal

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<sup>35</sup> Hess, Roise and Company, Page 30.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Frame, Page F-3.

<sup>37</sup> Landscape Research, Page 30.

<sup>38</sup> Hess, Roise and Company, “Southwest Minneapolis Industrial Area (SEMI) Survey - Electric Steel Elevator - HE-MPC-3607,”

few major changes to the design and a 1936 survey of the site and 1938 aerial image (see appendix) shows that little has changed over time other than the addition of the concrete workhouse. The property retains integrity of design.

**Setting:** Setting is the physical environment of a historic property. The surrounding area has changed from an area almost exclusively populated with mills and grain elevators but remains generally industrial in nature. Many of these former structures have been demolished, particularly in the last fifteen years. Setting often reflects the basic physical conditions under which a property was built and the functions it was intended to serve. The extensive rail yards are still present to the north of the property, which communicate the significance of the development and construction of grain elevators along rail lines. Although the setting is changing from one dominated by grain elevators, the property still retains integrity of setting as the property itself has not been altered.

**Materials:** Materials are the physical elements that were combined during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. As noted above, the steel material of the grain bins and elevator is extremely significant, as this property may be one of the last extant structures of its kind in the state and perhaps the nation. The material of the 1938 concrete workhouse addition is likely less significant but still speaks to the shift in grain elevator construction to almost exclusively reinforced concrete after the early twentieth century.

**Workmanship:** Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history. Integrity of workmanship is evident in the construction of all existing structures on the site.

**Feeling:** Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character. The Electric Steel Elevator retains its integrity of feeling, as it still evokes the feeling of a historic grain elevator complex.

**Association:** The property's integrity of association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. The property retains its integrity of association with the Electric Steel Elevator operations, one of the last remaining steel terminal elevator complexes and an elevator which once had the greatest capacity of any grain elevator in Minneapolis. The complex has been noted to be the most complete terminal elevator complex in the SEMI area as all of the buildings essential to the site's function remain intact. Therefore, the property retains its integrity of association with the Electric Steel Elevator operations.

## **UNSAFE OR DANGEROUS CONDITION**

The applicant's primary motive for demolition of all structures on the property is their concern for public safety on the now vacant site. The elevator ceased operations on November 20, 2013, and the owners took several months afterwards to secure the facility in an effort to keep out trespassers. These security methods included installing chain link fence with barbed wire, as well as installing mesh steel grates on the inside of the chain link fence to further dissuade potential trespassers. The safety ladders attached to the sides of the elevators were caged and locked. Additionally, "No Trespassing" signs are posted on the property and video cameras were also installed. The applicant has indicated that posting security guards on the site was not practical or economically viable. The applicant states that despite all their efforts to secure the site, individuals still manage to circumnavigate these measures and trespass on the property.

The concern is real and is a significant public safety issue to consider. Grain elevator accidents have occurred several times throughout history in Minneapolis. A *Star Tribune* article recently summarized a history of grain mill injuries and deaths.<sup>39</sup> The Electric Steel Elevator property was not designed to accommodate the general public. While employees of the former facility were well trained and understood the hazards of the facility, trespassers would be unaware of the facility's many hazards and could therefore be at significant risk in the property.

The applicant concludes that "Not wanting to provide further encouragement to yet another crop of young urban explorers Riverland Ag has made the decision to remove the fruit of enticement and demolish the structures that clearly have outlived their usefulness in today's economy. It is time to accept that [to] demolish these structures is the only viable alternative."

While the risk of these types of vacant buildings is certainly understood and acknowledged, particularly in the context of the history of grain elevator accidents in the city and the concern of the owners that an accident would occur on their property, it does not appear that the sole fact that the site is now vacant warrants an unsafe or dangerous condition. A potential alternative remedy may be additional security rather than demolition of the historic structures. The demolition is not the only means necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property as vacancy on its own does not equate to an unsafe or dangerous condition.

## REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO DEMOLITION

The applicant asserts that demolition is the only viable alternative. The applicant states that their company has explored the option of long-term storage to numerous end users such as Anheuser-Busch, Grain Millers, MillerCoors, but they contend that they were unsuccessful due to the inbound and outbound rail rate structure which makes this uncompetitive.

The applicant notes that both Minneapolis and Buffalo, New York have spent extensive time and resources studying potential alternative uses for their many grain elevators. The applicant states that there are very few examples of economically viable options and that none retain the architectural character of the original structure. Three examples of reuse were noted; the Calhoun Isles Condominiums in Minneapolis, a hotel in Akron, Ohio, and a hotel in California (see applicant's materials in the appendix).

Staff found some additional examples of grain elevator conversions in a 2012 article from *The Atlantic: City Lab* though perhaps due to the rarity of steel grain elevators, all of the examples in the article were reinforced concrete elevators.<sup>40</sup> One nearby example of the reuse of a metal grain elevator workhouse building is in Stillwater, Minnesota. In 2013, the Commander Grain Elevator workhouse building in Stillwater was renovated into a bar and café.<sup>41</sup> There are certainly more examples of adaptive reuse of grain elevators throughout the country, and further study could determine whether similar opportunities would reasonably exist for the Electric Steel Elevator. Staff acknowledges that adaptive reuse of the structures would likely take a creative proposal, particularly considering the uniqueness of the steel elevator and bins.

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<sup>39</sup> Eric Roper, "A brief history of Mpls. grain mill deaths and injuries," *Star Tribune*, June 26, 2015. <http://www.startribune.com/a-brief-history-of-mpls-grain-mill-deaths-and-injuries/310087981/>

<sup>40</sup> Mark Byrnes, "The Toughest Re-Use: Grain Elevators," *The Atlantic: City Lab*, June 15, 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Mary Divine, "Stillwater: New restaurant Tin Bins to open in old grain elevator," *Pioneer Press*, April 3, 2013. [http://www.twincities.com/ci\\_22934808/stillwater-new-restaurant-tin-bins-open-old-grain](http://www.twincities.com/ci_22934808/stillwater-new-restaurant-tin-bins-open-old-grain)

It is also important to note that if the property were to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the owner could pursue state and federal tax credits for a rehabilitation of the existing structures, which could provide up to a 40 percent tax credit for the project.

Former planning processes conducted by the City have also explored potential alternative uses and provide policy guidance for the property's future use. First, the *SEMI / Bridal Veil Refined Master Plan* from 2001 envisioned that demolition of some of the existing grain elevators and silos in the SEMI area would be necessary in order for the area to redevelop. However, the plan noted that "several of the elevators, silos and buildings throughout the study area are of potential historical significance...Further research is required on several of these structures to determine their historical value."<sup>42</sup> The plan recommended the development of a major park with ponds and recreational amenities just to the west of the Electric Steel Elevator, to be used as a dedicated public space for stormwater collection, historic celebration, and recreation. The plan recommended one potential scenario with particular incorporation of the Electric Steel Elevator (emphasis added):

*One of the park scenarios is to focus on the Peavey Electric Elevators [Electric Steel Elevators] and the existing array of grain elevators located immediately to the east. The feasibility of maintaining and celebrating the Peavey Electric Elevators [Electric Steel Elevators] should be studied. **Ideally, when these elevators are abandoned, they could be stabilized and maintained, to be saved and celebrated as ruins.** The land around the elevators should be excavated to create a pond. The result will become a picturesque "ruin" of these "castles of industry" floating on islands in Granary Pond and silhouetted against the skyline of the City. The "ruins" would remain the tallest buildings in the district, and they would be visible from University Avenue as well as the new streets extending north from University Avenue.<sup>43</sup>*

The plan has been implemented in part as a stormwater retention pond now exists on the City-owned property to west of the subject property and the remaining Russell-Miller buildings have since been demolished, although the latter was replaced with a surface parking lot. However, the plan also notes:

*The Refined Master Plan assumes the following regarding reuse and demolition of existing buildings: 1) Provided a building contains a use consistent with the Refined Master Plan, it should continue; 2) If a building is underutilized or vacant, it should be adapted for a new use consistent with the Refined Master Plan; or 3) If no appropriate reuse can be found, the building could be demolished to allow for a new use on site that is consistent with the Refined Master Plan. All federal, state and local regulations regarding historic preservation must be followed.<sup>44</sup>*

The future land use of this property is identified as Industrial in the *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*. It is also located within an identified Industrial Employment District in the *Industrial Land Use and Employment Policy Plan*. Areas within Industrial Employment Districts have strong policy guidance in the comprehensive plan to remain industrial in nature.

The *Stadium Village University Avenue Station Area Plan* was completed in 2012 and includes the subject property within its study area. The overall goal for the area stated in the plan is to "transform the [SEMI] area from an underutilized rail and grain storage yard to a biomedical technology campus to

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<sup>42</sup> Southeast Minneapolis Industrial (SEMI) / Bridal Veil Refined Master Plan: 2001, Page 9.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 32-33.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 34.

complement nearby University research activity.”<sup>45</sup> The plan references the many studies that have identified the Electric Steel Elevator property as eligible for national or local designation, and also notes that the prevalence of individual historic resources in the area “will and should be a consideration when pursuing the redevelopment of the area. This is especially true in industrial areas, where single-purpose structures like grain elevators are often hard to adaptively reuse, and will need creative solutions in the face of potential redevelopment. This is particularly true in the SEMI area north of the transitway.”<sup>46</sup> The plan also identifies the future land use of this property as industrial/office.

The applicant is proposing to demolish all of the structures and sell the property to the University. No plans for the future use of the property were submitted; the land would remain vacant until the University identifies a use for the land. The applicant has not provided evidence that they have fully explored alternatives to demolition. Reasonable alternatives to demolition may exist. The property could be stabilized, maintained, and secured as plans are developed.

### **ECONOMIC VALUE OR USEFULNESS OF THE EXISTING STRUCTURE**

The applicant has explained that the terminal grain elevator business in the City of Minneapolis has been declining for the last 60 years. They state that “the reluctance of the railroads to competitively price grain handling at the smaller centrally located terminal grain elevators has forced these less efficient facilities to close. Railroads today have targeted high volume elevators capable of loading and unloading unit trains of 52 and 110 car trains in less than 15 hours. The centrally located terminal grain elevators throughout Minneapolis were designed to handle much smaller number of rail cars and do not currently have the track capacity nor the land to expand the track capacity to handle these unit trains.”

Additionally, the applicant states that the modernization of the facility in order to compete in the current automated grain handling economy was too costly to justify. The applicant indicates that Riverland Ag Corp conducted an engineering study and determined that they would need to invest \$16 million to automate operations and improve grain handling capabilities.

Hennepin County Assessor records indicate that the market value of the 600 25<sup>th</sup> Ave SE property (with the majority of the structures) is \$999,100 and the market value of the building is \$1,000, for a total market value of \$1,000,100. Further, the smaller 649 26<sup>th</sup> Ave SE property has a market value of the land is \$130,700 and the market value of the building is \$1,000, for a total market value of \$131,700. In sum, the market value of the two properties is assessed at \$1,131,800.

As noted above, the University of Minnesota Board of Regents Facilities and Operations Committee voted to approve the authorization of the purchase of the property from Riverland Ag Corp for \$1,450,000 plus reimbursement of the seller’s cost to demolish the elevators and building structures, which is estimated at \$578,000. As a bargain sale/partial donation transaction, the seller would donate to the University part of the property’s value at the date of closing, which the seller estimates at \$1,050,000.

As described in the Reasonable Alternatives to Demolition section above, if the property were to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places, a substantial rehabilitation, perhaps for a new use, could be eligible for state and federal tax credits, which could provide up to a 40 percent tax credit. Grain elevators have been adaptively reused in Minneapolis and in other cities throughout the country.

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<sup>45</sup> Stadium Village University Avenue Station Area Plan: 2012, Page 20.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 30-31.

Without a proposal or a thorough exploration for reuse of the existing structures, it is impossible to conclude that there is no economic value or usefulness of the existing structures.

## FINDINGS

1. The subject property is a historic resource.
2. The existing structures on the Electric Steel Elevator site were constructed in phases between 1901 and 1938.
3. The Electric Steel Elevator ceased operations on November 20, 2013.
4. The property was determined eligible for the National Register on March 23, 2004, based on Criteria A & C of the National Register of Historic Places.
5. The property is eligible for local designation under Criteria 1, 3, 4, and 6.
6. The Electric Steel Elevator was historically an integral component in the operations of the linseed, malting, and flour milling interests in the SEMI.
7. All original structures on the site are extant, making the Electric Steel Elevator complex the most complete terminal elevator complex in the SEMI.
8. The property is one of few, if any, remaining steel terminal elevator complexes in the country.
9. The Electric Steel Elevator complex retains the integrity required to be designated as an individual local landmark, as evident in its retention of all seven aspects of integrity.
10. The demolition is not necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property as vacancy on its own does not equate to an unsafe or dangerous condition.
11. The applicant is proposing to demolish all the structures and sell the property to the University of Minnesota. No plans for the future use of the property were submitted; the land would remain vacant until the University identifies a use for the land. The applicant has not provided evidence that they have fully explored alternatives to demolition. Reasonable alternatives to demolition may exist. The property could be stabilized, maintained, and secured as plans are developed.
12. Without a proposal or a thorough exploration for reuse of the existing structures, it is impossible to conclude that there is no economic value or usefulness of the existing structures.
13. The commission may delay a final decision for up to 180 days to allow parties interested in preserving the historic resource a reasonable opportunity to act to protect it.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt staff findings for the application by Riverland Ag Corp for the properties located at 600 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE & 649 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE:

### A. Demolition of Historic Resource.

Recommended motion: **Deny** the demolition of historic resource application for the property located at 600 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE & 649 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE; **establish** interim protection; and **direct** the Planning Director to prepare or cause to be prepared a designation study.

## ATTACHMENTS

### CPED Materials

1. Zoning map
2. Current aerial maps
3. Copy of original building permit – 1901
4. Original drawings - 1901
5. Historic photos – 1906-1914
6. Excerpt from *Grain Dealers Journal*, 1925
7. Sanborn maps
8. 1936 survey
9. 1938 aerial image
10. 1991-2014 aerial imagery showing evolution of surrounding area
11. Communication with SHPO confirming National Register eligibility
12. Copy of SEMI Survey form for Electric Steel Elevator (SHPO Inventory HE-MPC-3907)
13. City of Minneapolis Inventory of Grain Elevators - 1997

### Materials Submitted by Applicant

1. Written description and findings submitted by applicant
2. Survey
3. Photos
4. University of Minnesota Board of Regents Docket Item Summary
5. Chronology of construction

### Correspondence

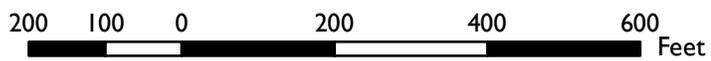
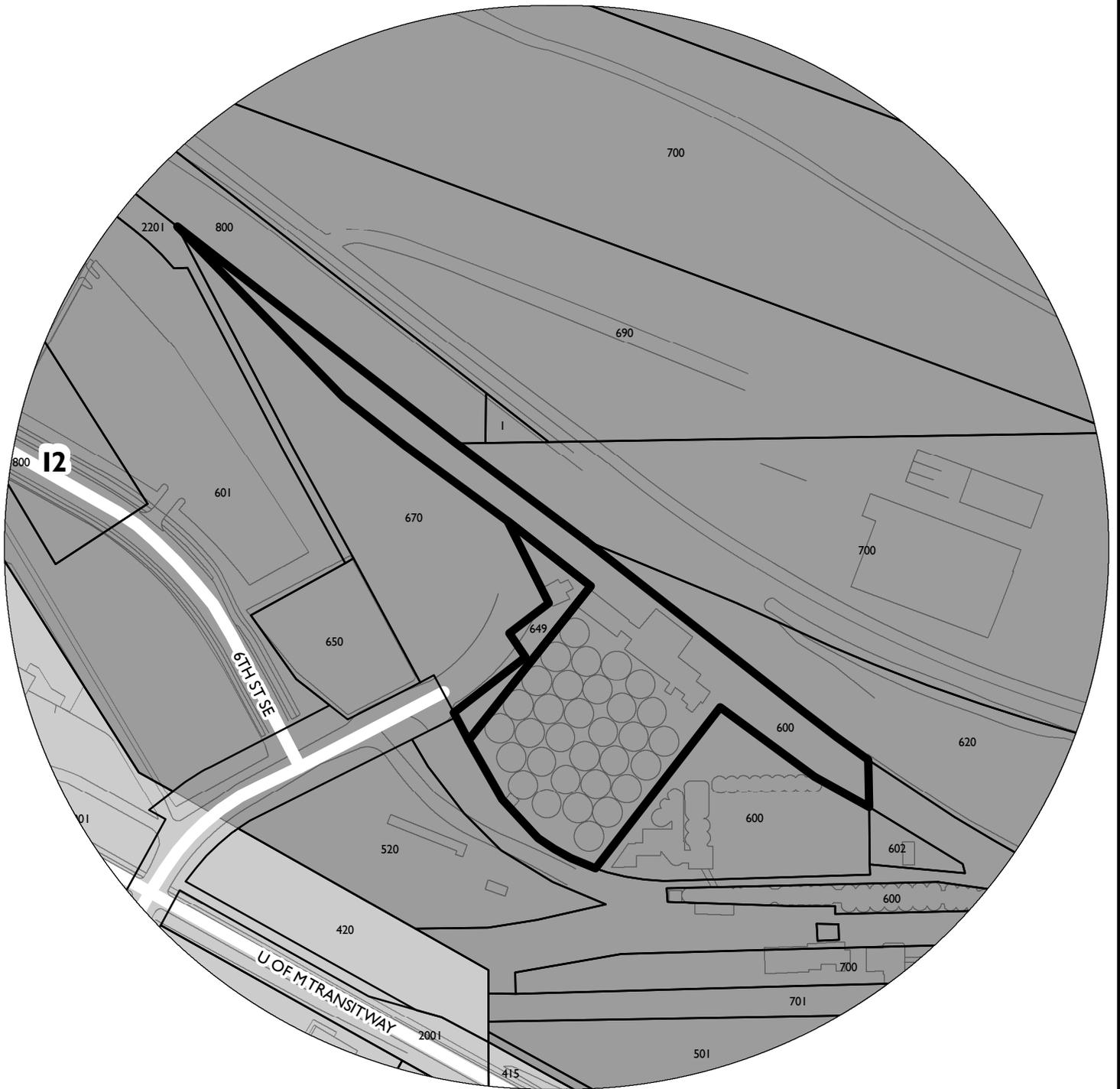
# CPED Materials

**Riverland Ag Corp**

**2nd**

NAME OF APPLICANT

WARD



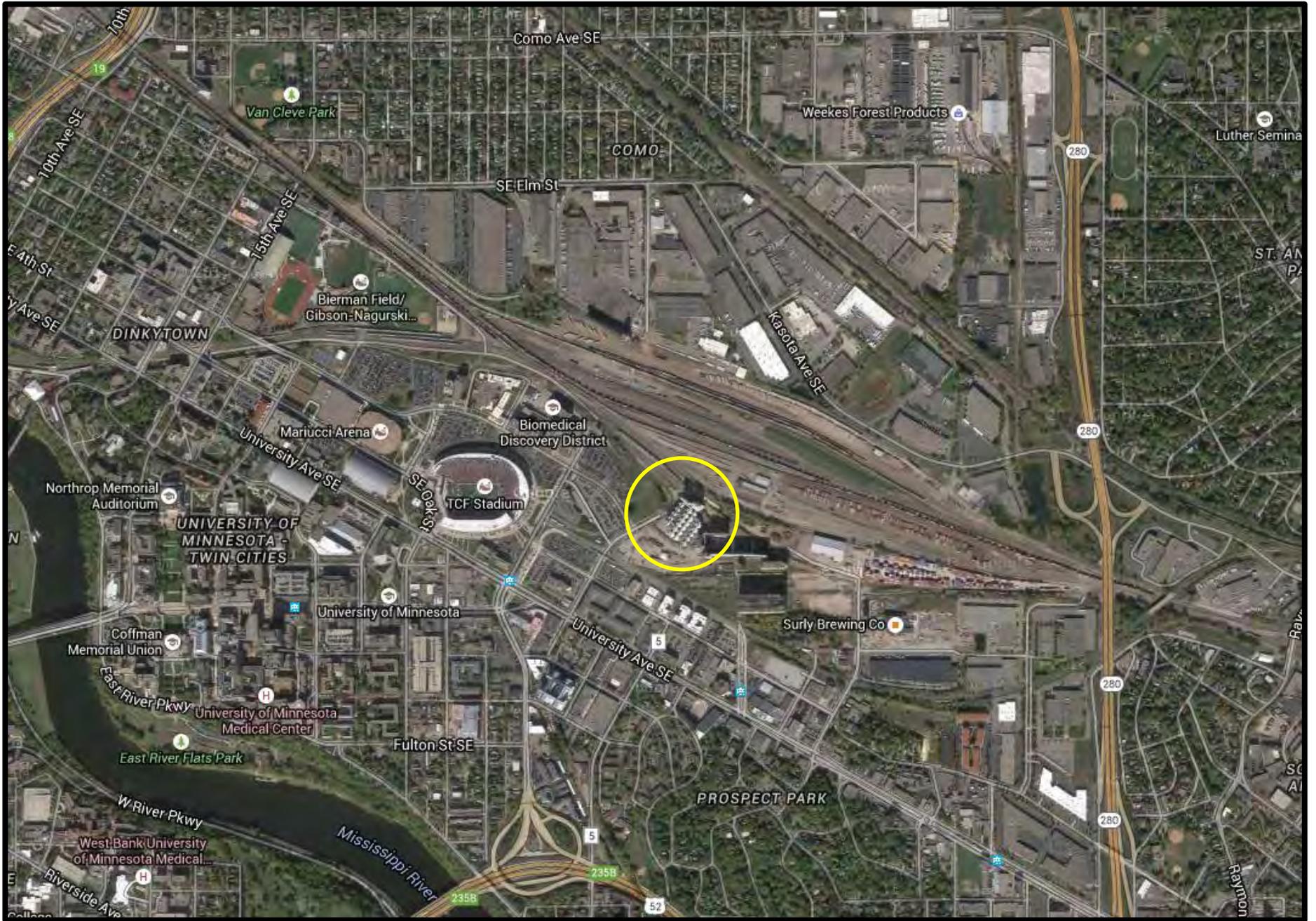
PROPERTY ADDRESS

**600 25th Avenue SE & 649 26th Avenue SE**

FILE NUMBER

**BZH-28747**

# LOCATION MAPS





Original

# PERMIT TO BUILD OUTSIDE OF FIRE LIMITS.

NO. 48197

Office Electric Steel Elevator Co.

Office of the INSPECTOR OF BUILDINGS,

Architect C. P. A. Turner.

Minneapolis, Minn., 4/17/1901

Builder American Bridge Co.

## PROPOSED LOCATION OF BUILDING.

No.	Street	Part of Lot	Lot	Block	Town, Addition or Subdivision	Ward
6 <sup>th</sup>	St. and 26 <sup>th</sup> Ave. S.E.		5		Andri's Sub. #21.	2 Plate 61.

## DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING

Front	Depth	Height	Stories	Build of	Manner of Construction	To be Used as	To be Completed	Estimated Cost	Wiring Application No. F 5719.578	Plumbing Application No. D 5757.
42	65	76		Steel	Elevator	Warehouse	9/1/1901	\$133,000.		
96	84	112		Brick	Coal shed					
102	324	80		(12) Steel	Grain Tanks					
14	42	28		Car shed	Steel					
14	42	28		"	"					

Permission is hereby granted to Electric Steel Elevator Co. to erect the building described in the statement hereto attached. This permit is granted upon the express condition that the person to whom it is granted, and his agents, employes and workmen, in all the work done in, around and upon said building, and any part thereof, shall conform in all respects to the ordinances of the City of Minneapolis, regarding the construction, alteration, repair and removal of buildings in the city limits; and this permit may be revoked at any time upon violation of any of the provisions of said ordinances.

Gas. C. [Signature] Inspector of Buildings.

## AGREEMENT.

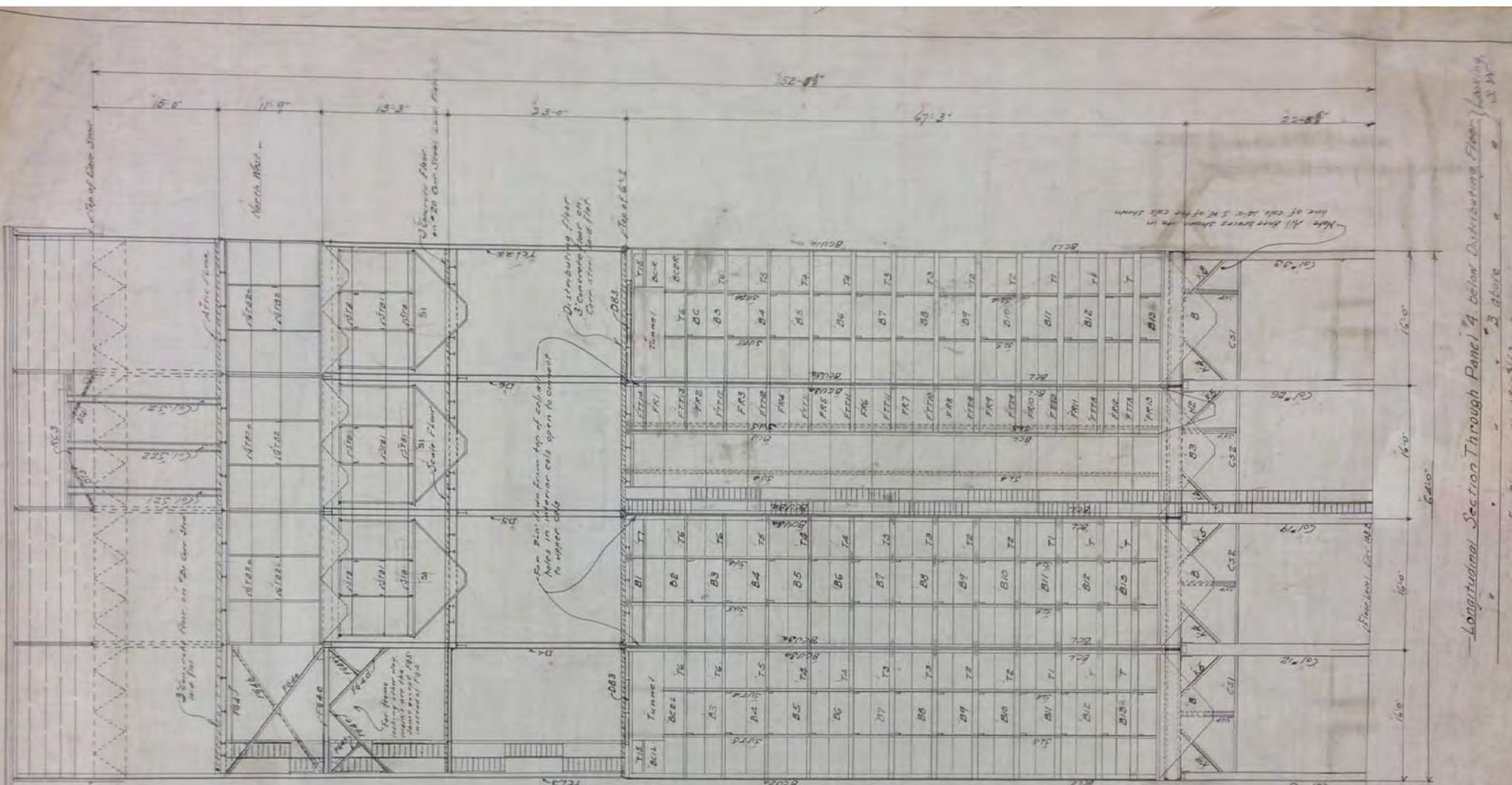
In consideration of the issue and delivery to me by the Inspector of Buildings of the City of Minneapolis, of Building Permit No. 48197, I hereby agree to do the proposed work in accordance with the description set forth in the application and statement hereto attached and in the plans and specification of which said application are a part and according to the provisions of the ordinance entitled, "An Ordinance to Regulate the Construction, Repair and Removal of Buildings in the City of Minneapolis" and amendments thereto.

Dated Minneapolis, Minn., 4/17/1901

[Signature]  
[Signature]





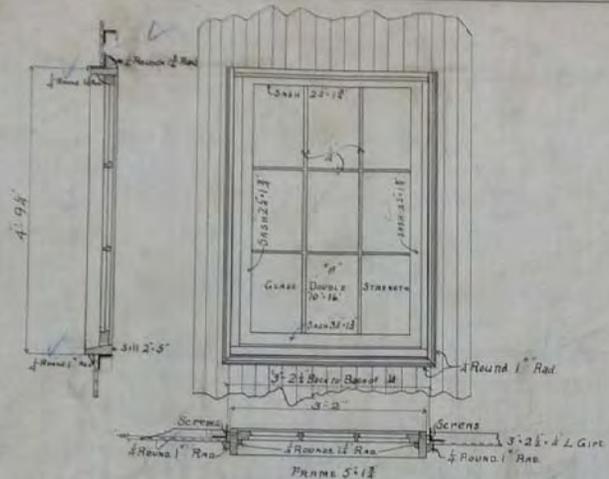


ERECTION PLAN -  
-FOR-  
GRAIN ELEVATOR  
-FOR-

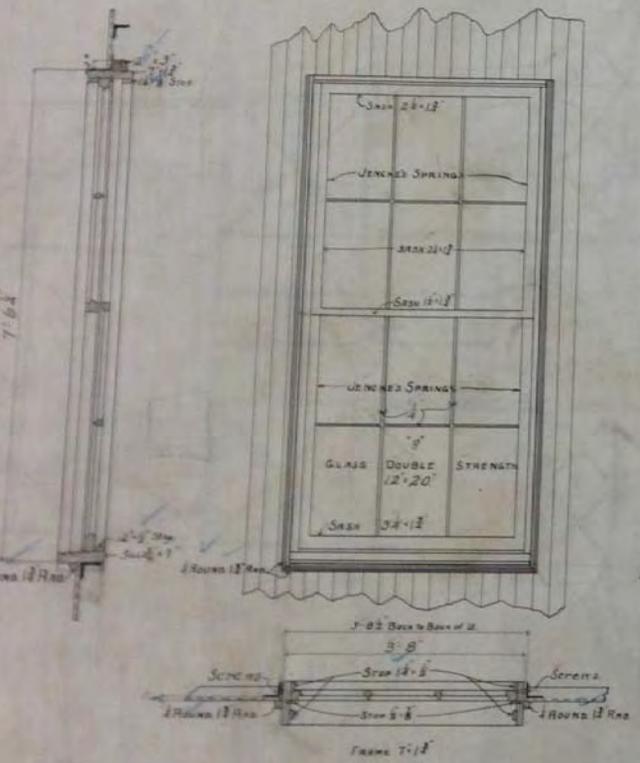
ELECTRIC STEEL ELEVATOR CO.  
THE GILLETTE-HERRICK MFG CO. INC.  
Des Moines, IOWA  
Contract No. 1882  
Date 1901  
By E. B. ...  
Checked by ...

G340 1901

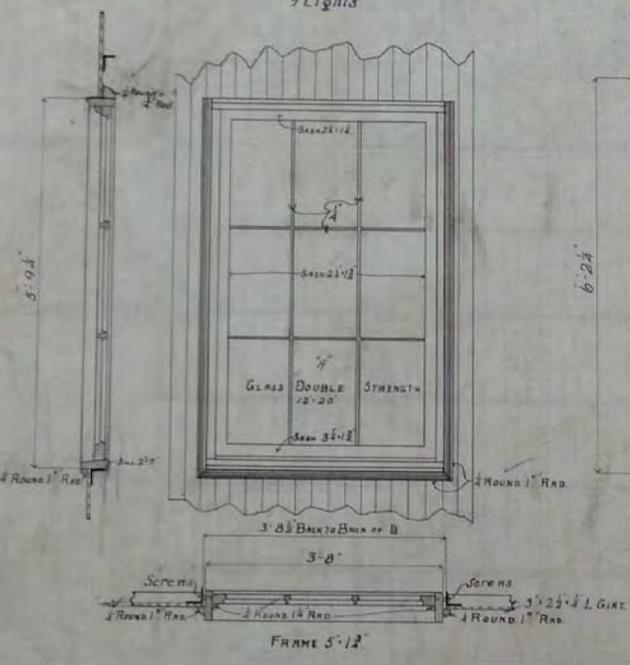
Longitudinal Section Through Panel #4, below Distributing Floor (Laying out)  
3 above  
For Plan, see sheet 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.



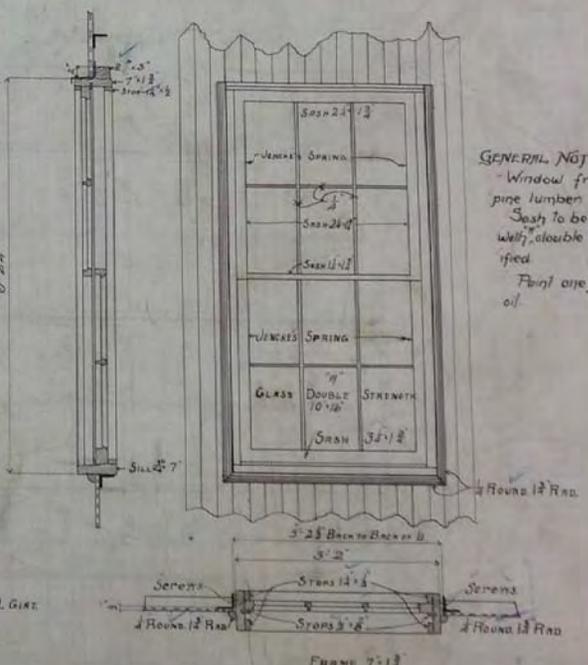
MAKE 14 WINDOWS THUS, WITH FRAMES MARK U1  
9 Lights



MAKE 16 WINDOWS THUS, WITH FRAMES MARK L  
12 Lights



MAKE 7 WINDOWS THUS, WITH FRAMES MARK L7  
9 Lights



MARK U  
MAKE 36 WINDOWS THUS, WITH FRAMES  
12 Lights

GENERAL NOTE  
Window frames to be made of clear pine lumber  
Sash to be of No 1-12 stock well glazed with double strength glass of sizes specified  
Paint one good coat of White Lead and oil.

DETAILS OF WINDOWS  
FOR  
GRAIN ELEVATOR

THE ELECTRIC STEEL ELEVATOR CO  
THE GILLETTE-HERZOG CO. MPLS, MINN.  
APPROVED *W. J. Turner* ENGINEER  
COPY 1902 SHEET 69 DRAWING 726  
DRAWN BY *W. J. Turner* CHECKED BY *W. J. Turner*  
G 340. Req. 439. 1901.

51 = 100

ERECTION PLAN

-FOR-

GRAIN ELEVATOR

-FOR-

ELECTRIC STEEL ELEVATOR CO.

THE GILLETTE HERZOG MFG. CO. MPLS

Approved. C. P. Turner Engineer.

Contract No 1982

Sheet No 59

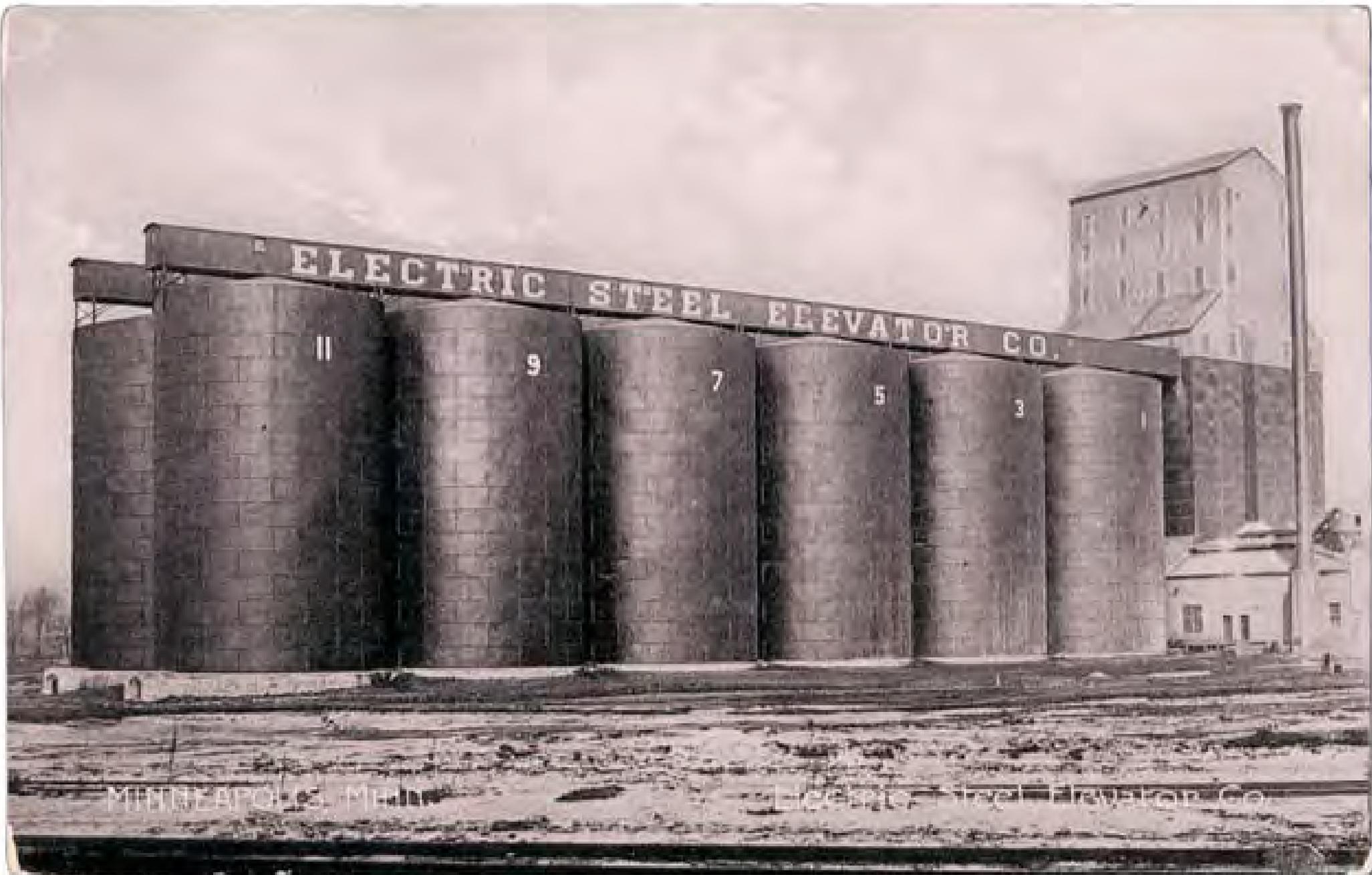
Dr. by. O. H. N.

Tr o o o o

Checked by H. K. Aug 23 1901 Draw. No 430

**G 340**

**1901**



ELECTRIC STEEL ELEVATOR CO., MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

5117

ELECTRIC STEEL ELEVATOR CO.

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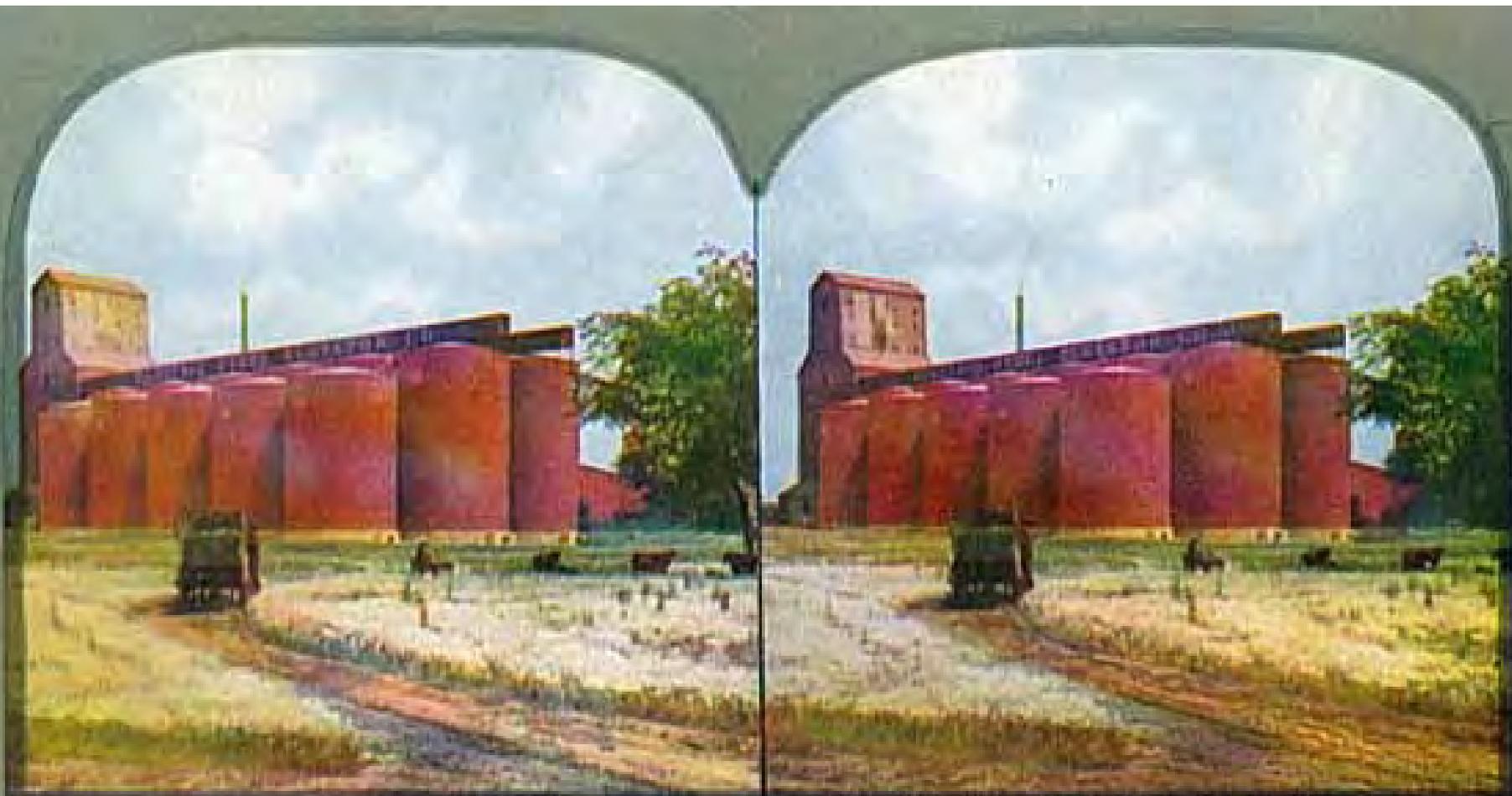
5

3

Minnesota Historical Society - c. 1909







1113 The Great Elevators that Store the Western Wheat Crop, St. Anthony Park, St. Paul, Minn.



SWETT 105

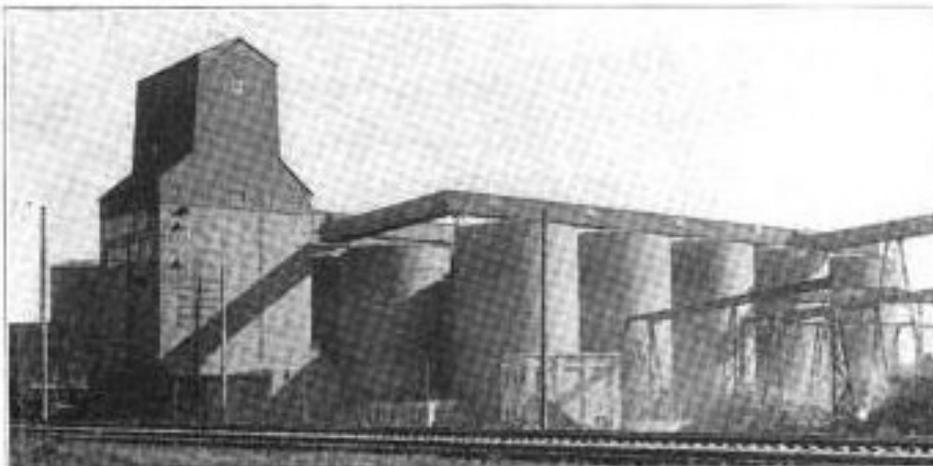
100780



Minnesota Historical Society- noted as c. 1925, but likely prior to 1914







Electric Steel Elevator, Minneapolis, Minn.

### **ELECTRIC STEEL ELEVATOR.**

The Electric Steel Elevator has the largest storage capacity, 4,000,000 bus. In 8 hours 55 to 60 cars can be unloaded thru the 4 receiving sinks served by the two elevator legs of 8,000 bus. per hour capacity each. Other legs are cleaner leg, screenings leg and seed leg. Grain is weighed in 3 hopper Fairbanks Scales of 12,000 lbs. capacity. Cleaning is done thru 2 invincible Separators, and 2 Monitors, a scourer being used to break flax balls.

The car pulper is driven by belt the other machines by rope transmission from the steam power plant. Six belts 36 inches wide and reaching 375 ft. are used to fill and empty the various tanks, of which there are 32. All are 50 ft. in diameter. Ten are 65 ft. high and the remainder 90 ft. high.

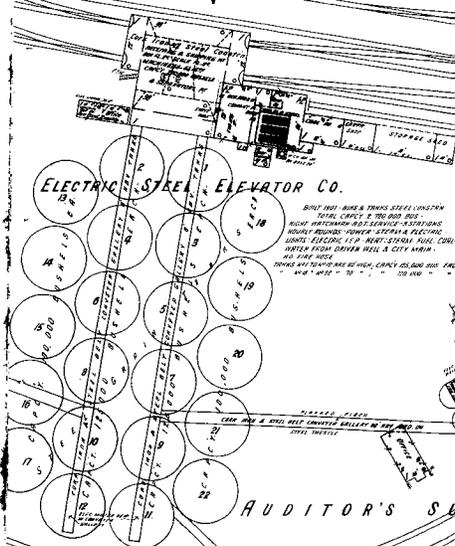
The working house is 60x75, 175 ft. high, and contains 22 bins.

The plant was erected by the American Bridge Co. The inside walls of the tanks have been worn smooth and shiny. Some of the equipment has given long service; the rope transmission was on for 14 years, and some of the conveyor belts lasted 20 years. Conveyors reach the nearby plants of the Occident Mill and the Pioneer Maltng Co., and flaxseed is handled for Spencer Kellogg & Sons. P. Stanson is superintendent.

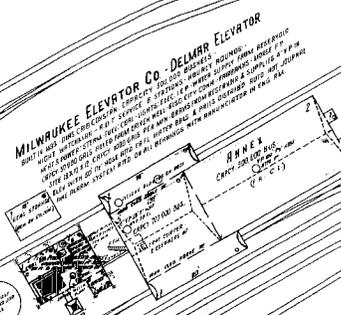
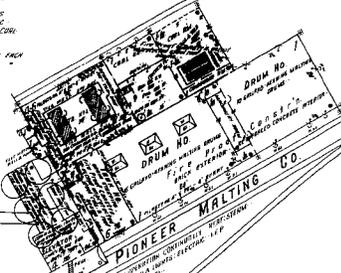


948

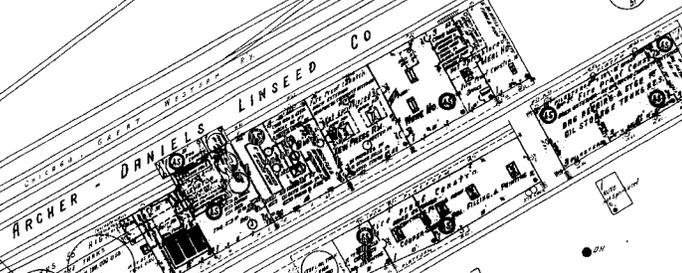
Electric Steel Elevator



DRUM NO. 1  
DRUM NO. 2  
DRUM NO. 3  
DRUM NO. 4  
DRUM NO. 5  
DRUM NO. 6  
DRUM NO. 7  
DRUM NO. 8  
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DRUM NO. 26  
DRUM NO. 27  
DRUM NO. 28  
DRUM NO. 29  
DRUM NO. 30  
DRUM NO. 31  
DRUM NO. 32  
DRUM NO. 33  
DRUM NO. 34  
DRUM NO. 35  
DRUM NO. 36  
DRUM NO. 37  
DRUM NO. 38  
DRUM NO. 39  
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DRUM NO. 48  
DRUM NO. 49  
DRUM NO. 50



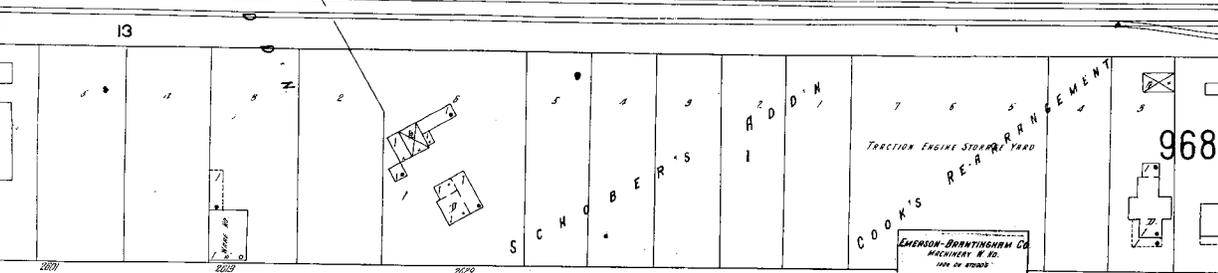
AUDITOR'S SUBDIV. No. 21



PLANT IN OPERATION CONTINUOUSLY - ALL SERVICES THROUGH  
 POWER PLANT EQUIPPED WITH STEAM POWER STEERING ELEC.  
 LIGHTS ELECTRIC AND GAS. WAGON WAREHOUSE AND SPRINGERS TRUCKS EXCEPT  
 FOR AM. BELM. AUTO SALES WAGON WAREHOUSE. A BARGE NO. NOT LISTED  
 EQUIPPED WITH WAGON WAREHOUSE EQUIPMENT. IN 2013-1924  
 WAGON WAREHOUSE & 12' PRIMARY SUPPLY WAGON WAREHOUSE TRUCK CARP.  
 USED FOR STORAGE OF 11' 10" HIGH YELLOW WAGON WAREHOUSE  
 SECONDARY SUPPLY & 12' HIGH WAGON WAREHOUSE TRUCK CARP.  
 IN 1912 FOR 12' HIGH WAGON WAREHOUSE TRUCK CARP. IN 1912  
 WAGON WAREHOUSE TRUCK CARP. IN 1912

947

949



TRACTION ENGINE STORAGE YARD  
 REAR  
 COOK'S  
 EMERSON-BIRMINGHAM CO.  
 MACHINERY - 10' 20"  
 1912

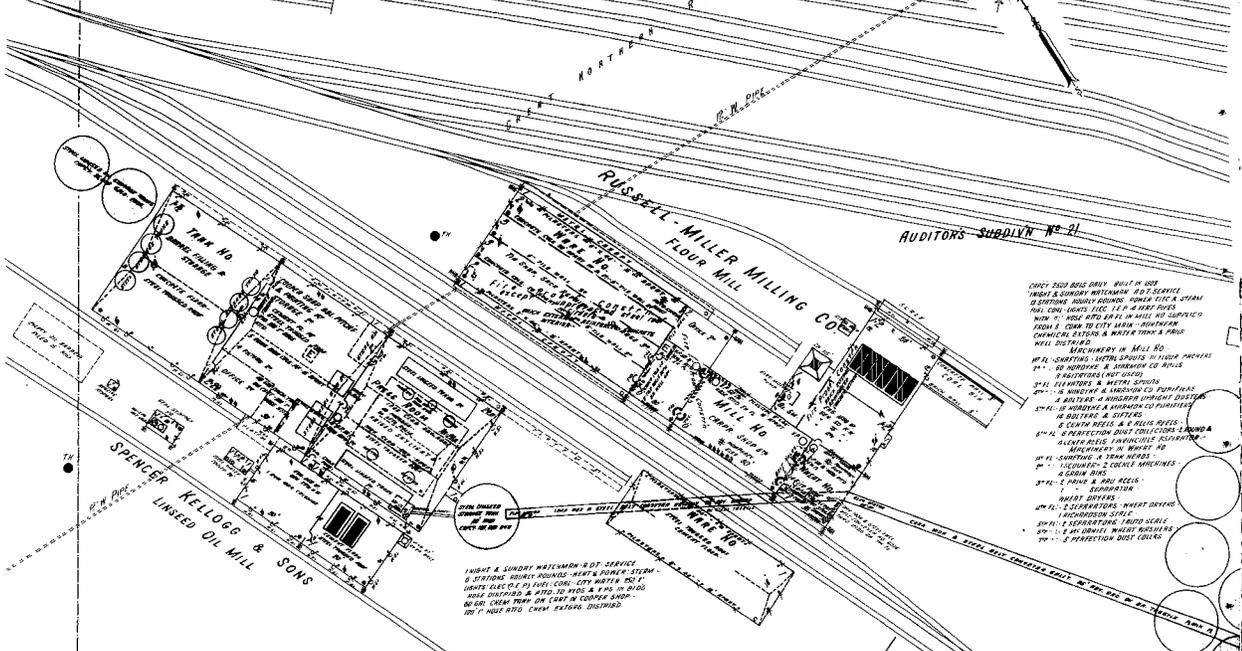
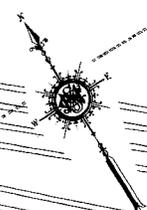
968

Scale of Feet.

4TH 967ST. S. E.

947

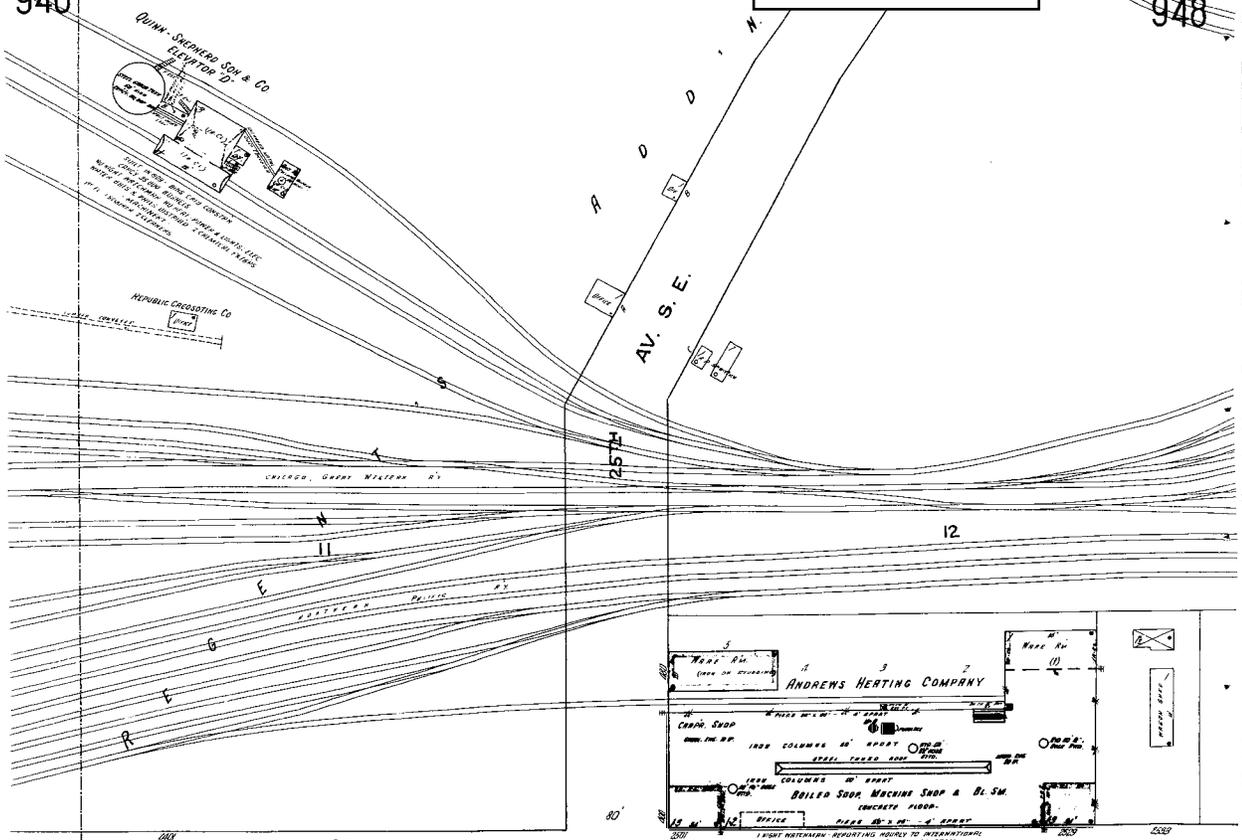
984



946

Electric Steel Elevator

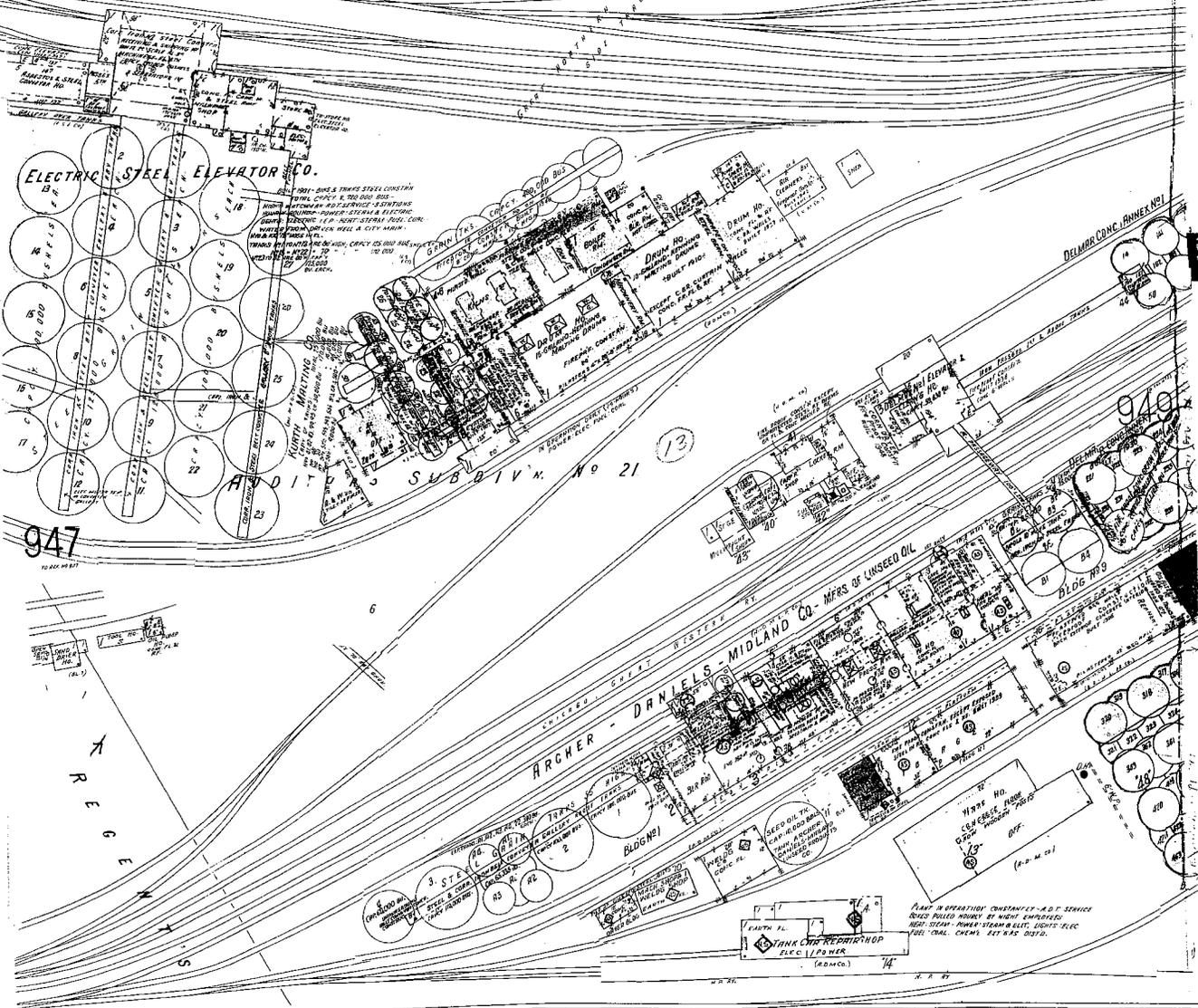
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966 ST. S. E.

4TH

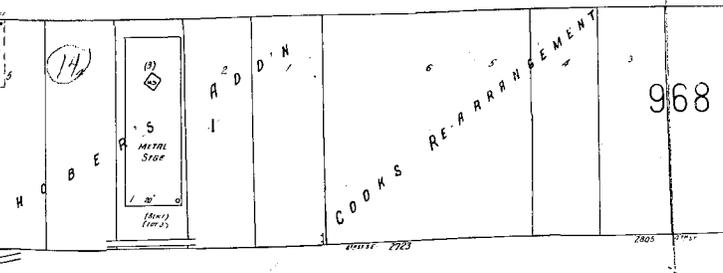
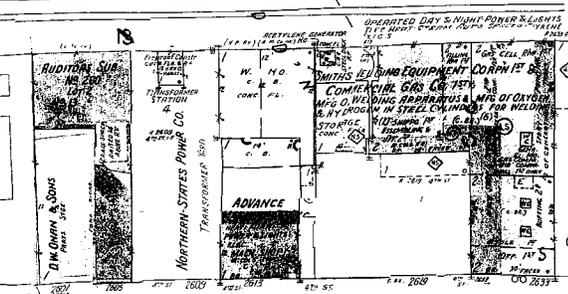
Electric Steel Elevator



947

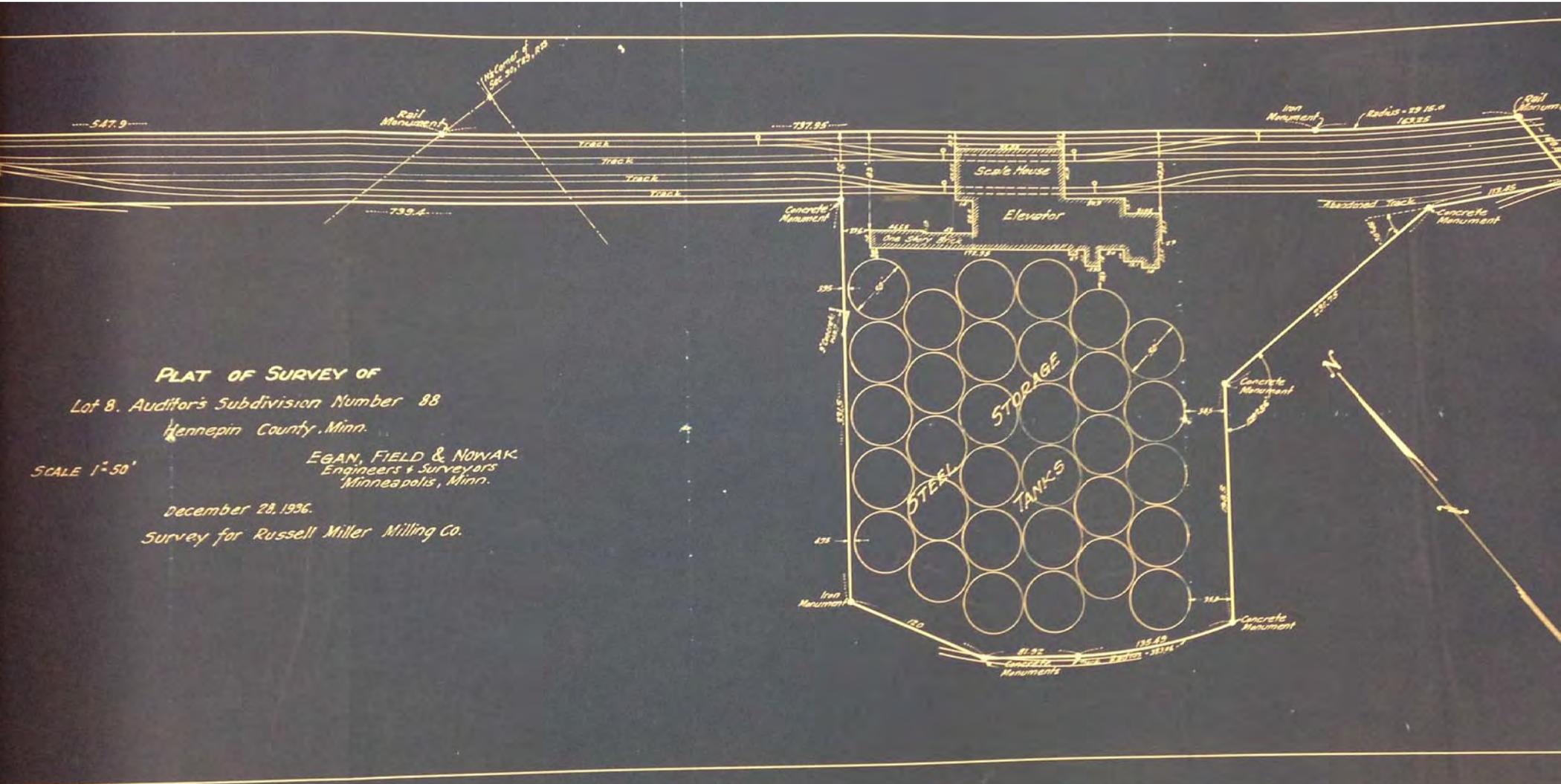
949

968



Scale of Feet. 0 50 100 150

967 ST. S. E.



**PLAT OF SURVEY OF**  
 Lot 8, Auditor's Subdivision Number 88  
 Hennepin County, Minn.

SCALE 1"=50'

EGAN, FIELD & NOWAK  
 Engineers & Surveyors  
 Minneapolis, Minn.

December 28, 1936.

Survey for Russell Miller Milling Co.

MP 6-517

Electric Steel Elevator



MARSHALL

1641

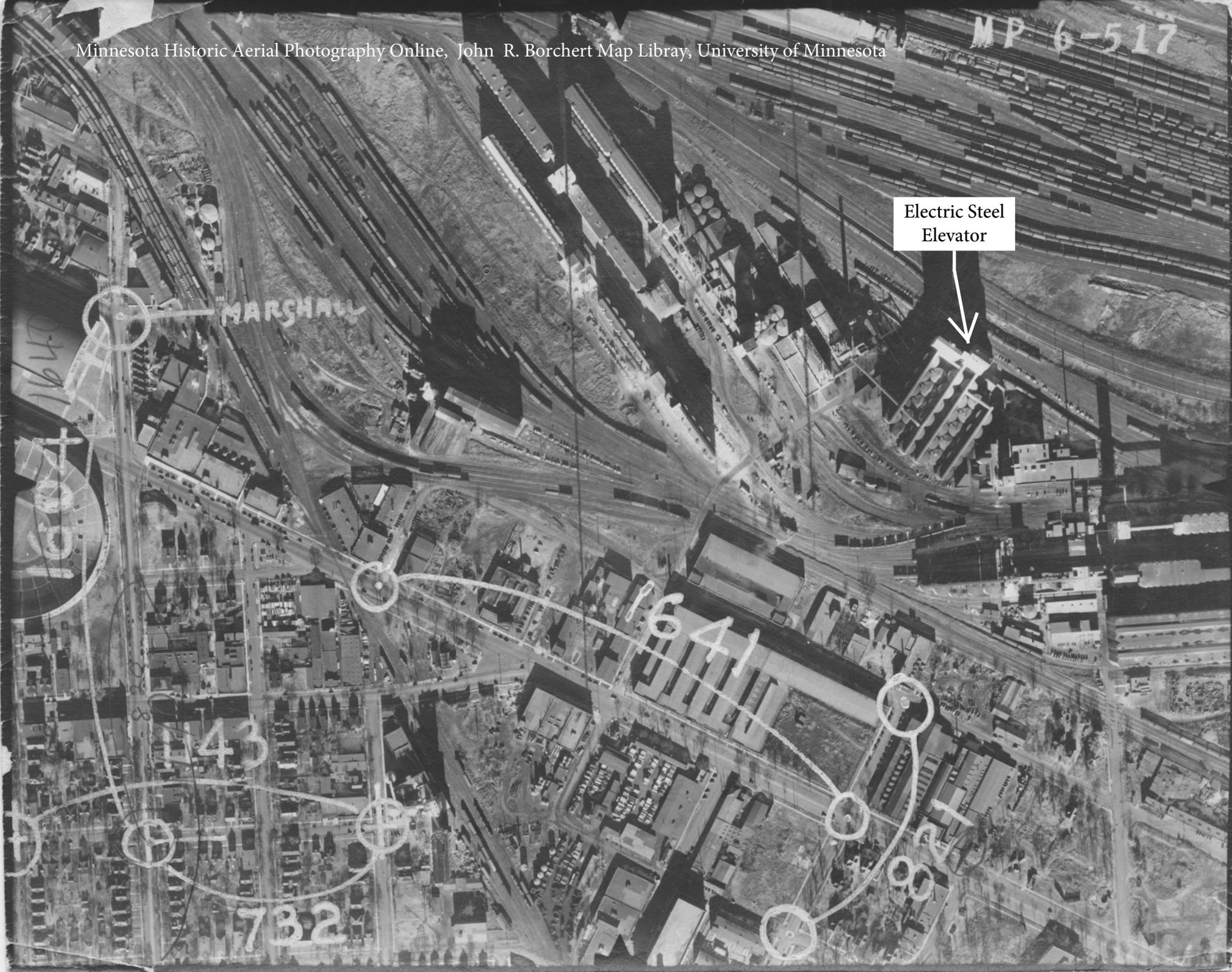
1501

1641

443

732

1521



Recent Aerial Imagery Showing Evolution of Surrounding Area - Google Earth



Legend

600 25th Ave SE

1991

SE 23rd Ave  
25th Ave SE

25th Ave SE

Google earth  
Image U.S. Geological Survey



400 ft

2003



600 25th Ave SE

25th Ave SE

6th St SE

SE 22d Ave



Legend

2006



600 25th Ave SE

25th Ave SE

Google earth  
Image U.S. Geological Survey

400 ft



Legend

2008



600 25th Ave SE

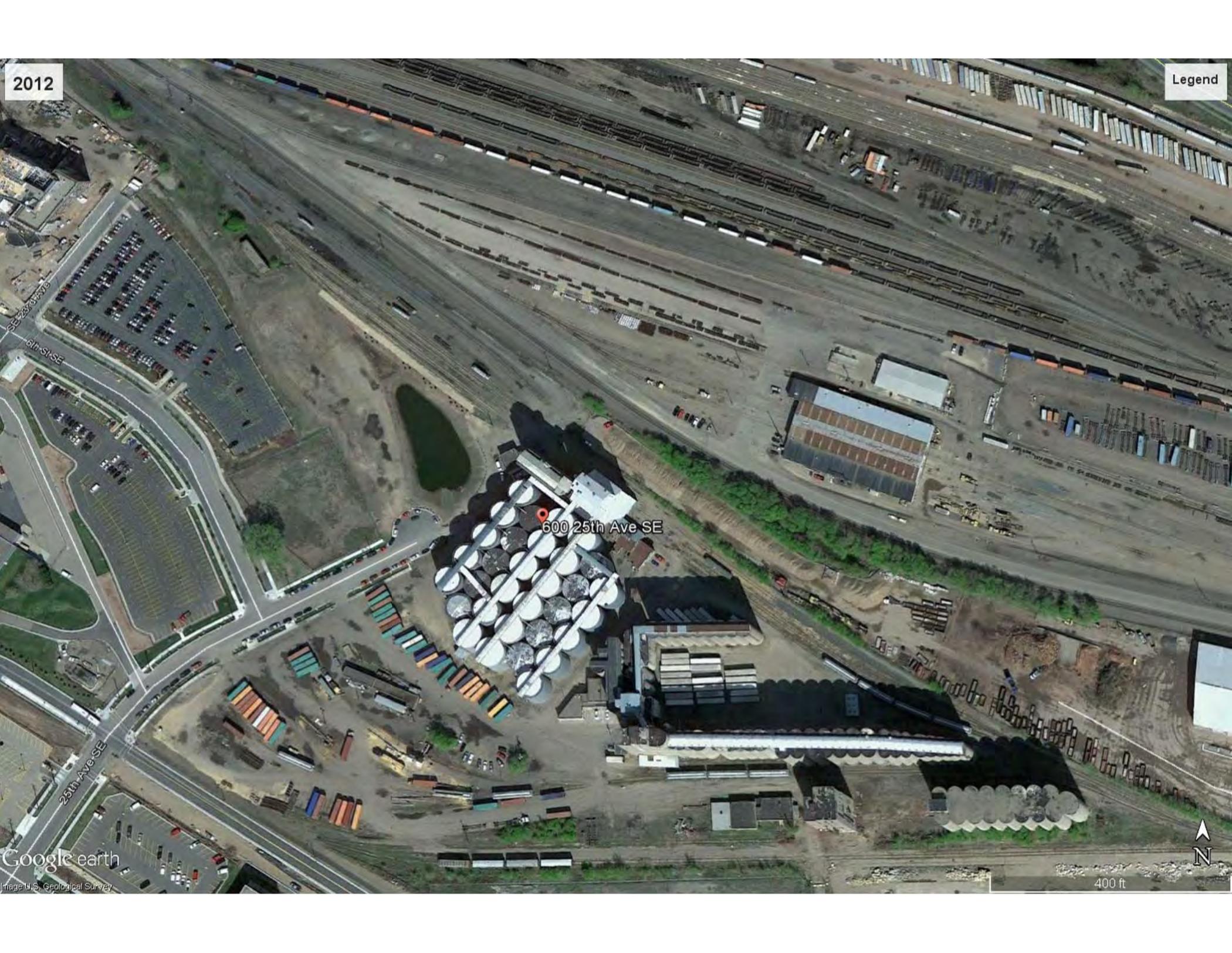
Google earth

Image U.S. Geological Survey

400 ft

Legend

2012

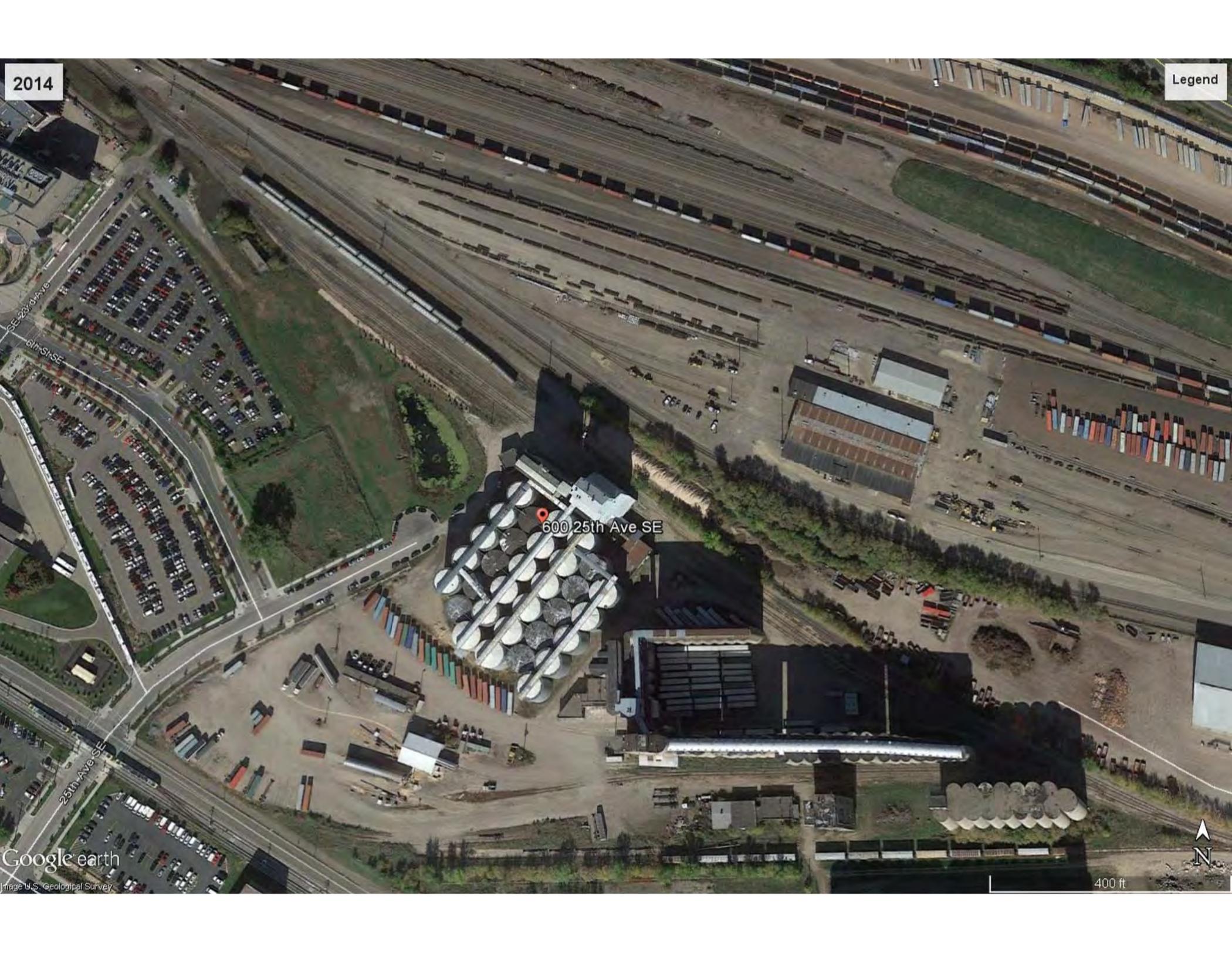


600 25th Ave SE

Google earth  
Image U.S. Geological Survey

400 ft

2014



600 25th Ave SE



**Steiner, Lisa**

---

**From:** Thomas Cinadr <thomas.cinadr@mnhs.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 13, 2015 8:41 AM  
**To:** Steiner, Lisa  
**Subject:** Electric Steel Elevator  
**Attachments:** HE-MPC-3607.pdf

The inventory form for the above property is attached. The property was determined eligible to the National Register on March 23, 2004.

***Tom Cinadr***  
Survey and Information Management Coordinator  
Minnesota Historic Preservation Office  
Minnesota Historical Society  
345 Kellogg Blvd. West  
St. Paul, MN 55102

651-259-3453

# Southeast Minneapolis Industrial Area (SEMI) Survey

Prepared for the Minneapolis Community Development Agency

Site Name: Electric Steel Elevator

Inventory Number: HE-MPC-3607

Address: 600 25th Avenue SE and 649 26th Avenue SE

Historic Name: Electric Steel Elevator

Quad:

Current Name: Electric Steel Elevator

Saint Paul West

Township: Range: Section:

UTM Coordinates:

29N 23W 30

15 482868 4980294

PID: 30-029-23-12-0004; 30-029-23-12-0005

## Historic Context(s):

As Minneapolis grew from a frontier town to a major milling center, its need for grain and an infrastructure to handle it also grew. In 1867, Minneapolis millers formed the Millers' Association to buy wheat directly from farmers to ensure that their mills had a ready supply. Minneapolis passed Saint Louis as the nation's leading flour milling center in 1880. In the following year, business leaders formed the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce to better regulate the buying and selling of grain. From the 1880s on, Minneapolis began to develop large storage elevators, known as terminal elevators, for storing grain.

## Description:

(see continuation form)

## History/Significance:

(see continuation form)

## References:

(see continuation form)

## NR Eligible/Criteria:

Eligible/Criteria A and C

Designation Status: Not listed

Prepared by: Charlene Roise, Robert Ewings, and Nathan Weaver Olson

Date: July 2002



# Southeast Minneapolis Industrial Area (SEMI) Survey

Prepared for the Minneapolis Community Development Agency

Site Name: Electric Steel Elevator

Inventory Number: HE-MPC-3607

## Description

The Electric Steel Elevator District is located on the south side of the SEMI between the north end of 25th Avenue SE and the southern edge of the east-west right-of-way of the Burlington Northern (the former Great Northern) Railroad. The Electric Steel complex was built in several phases, beginning in 1901 with the steel workhouse and railcar shed that adjoins the Burlington Northern tracks, twelve steel grain tanks to the south, and a several brick structures to the east. More tanks were added on either side of the original twelve in 1903 and 1906. Ten more, five per side, completed tank construction at Electric Steel by 1914. The reinforced-concrete workhouse just west of the steel workhouse was built in 1938.(1)

## Steel Workhouse

This workhouse consists of a gable-roofed steel building with shed-roofed extensions on its north and south facades. Single-story shed-roofed bays shelter large railroad track entrances on the east and west sides of the building. A one-story, shed-roofed addition covers railroad tracks on the workhouse's south side. The workhouse has a number of steel-frame pivoted windows as well as several blocked window openings. A bracket projecting from the building's west gable end was once used to hoist materials to two double-door openings high up on the west facade. A conveyor gallery on the west facade connects with an adjacent concrete workhouse, and a conveyor gallery on the south facade extends to the grain tanks to the south. The steel workhouse was part of the initial 1901 construction and was listed as having a 220,000-bushel capacity according to a Sanborn atlas from that year. The first floor originally functioned as a shipping and receiving level where grain entered and exited the workhouse. Railcars, and later trucks, dumped grain into pits beneath the workhouse. The grain was then weighed and conveyed to the "legs" of the workhouse, bucket conveyors that elevated the grain to the fourth floor, or "headhouse." Headhouses typically contained cleaning machinery, which was used to improve the quality of grain by removing weed seed, dirt, and under- or over-sized kernels. The third floor of the workhouse contained scales for weighing the grain. From here, grain was conveyed to the external steel bins, the adjacent concrete workhouse, or workhouse bins located beneath the scales. Railcars and trucks on the first floor were loaded by grain directed by spouts from bins above. It is likely that the workhouse functions in the same way today, though some of its cleaning functions may have been taken over by the adjacent concrete workhouse.

## Reinforced-Concrete Workhouse

This reinforced-concrete workhouse was built in 1938 when Russell-Miller owned Electric Steel and used a good deal of the elevator's storage capacity for the company's private use. The workhouse had a capacity of 250,000 bushels, but served primarily as a cleaning house for grain entering the complex. The structure's flat roof holds a one-story, gable-roofed gallery covered with corrugated-metal siding, pierced by a number of steel-framed windows. Flat- and shed-roofed additions are on the gallery's north side. The east end of the gallery extends to the adjacent steel workhouse. The first floor of the concrete workhouse is slightly inset from the rest of building above, and includes a number of window openings and a single entry. The workhouse's many window openings vary in size, and include six-, nine-, and forty-light sash. Two corrugated-metal galleries atop the steel grain tanks to the south appear to terminate at the south side of the concrete workhouse.

# Southeast Minneapolis Industrial Area (SEMI) Survey

Prepared for the Minneapolis Community Development Agency

Site Name: Electric Steel Elevator

Inventory Number: HE-MPC-3607

## Steel Grain Tanks

This grain tank complex includes six rows of steel tanks, arranged on a north-south axis. Two rows of six grain tanks built in 1901 are flanked by rows of five tanks built in 1903 and 1906. Another row of five tanks was added to each side by 1914, bringing the total number of tanks to thirty-two. The two original rows of tanks are each topped with a corrugated-metal and steel gallery that connects them to the steel workhouse. The most southwesterly bin of this group has a shed-roofed, steel-frame car shed that is open to rail traffic on both its west and east ends, and may also be accessible to trucks. Here, the grain is deposited in pits below the shed. The grain is then conveyed through a tunnel beneath the grain tanks to the steel workhouse, where it is elevated, cleaned, and distributed. It is unclear whether grain could also be loaded into a waiting railcar or truck from this car shed. The 1903 and 1906 grain tanks are somewhat shorter than the 1901 tanks and lack conveyor galleries. They are fed, instead, by spouts angled down from the top of the 1901 bins or from the two outer rows. The circa 1914 grain tanks also have corrugated-metal and steel-frame galleries, and are connected to the steel workhouse by several short, perpendicular conveyor galleries. A row of vents lines the south sides of the grain bins.

## Office Building

This two-story, flat-roofed, brick office building has two additions north and northeast of the original structure. It is unclear when these additions were added to the original building. Each of the four facades of the original office building is accented by four pilasters that rise slightly above the structure's parapet, which is now covered by metal siding. The structure's windows include original two-over-two sash and one-over-one replacements with concrete or brick sills. On the first floor of the south (front) facade, the central bay is open and the others are covered with metal siding. A stair provides access to a second-story entryway on the building's west side, which also holds a door opening on the first floor. A somewhat shorter, two-story, flat-roofed brick addition covers most of the building's north facade. The addition's north facade has a parapet capped with tile. A metal stairway provides access to the second-floor entryway. The addition's large window openings are filled with glass block, with a hopper light at the center. The windows have brick sills. There is a one-story, brick addition with a flat roof connected to the east facade of the two-story addition. This structure also has a parapet capped with tile on its north facade, as well as a small entryway on its east facade. Its glass-block windows are barred.

## Cooper House

This one and one-half story, gable-roofed, brick building has a gable-roofed metal clerestory. The building's roof is corrugated metal with metal soffits. The structure's west end is connected to the steel workhouse. The windows are generally steel sash replacements that are smaller than the original window and door openings. Each window has a brick or concrete sill and a lintel of vertical bricks. A large entryway is on the north side of the east facade. A one-story, shed-roofed, brick addition projects from the building's east facade just south of a large entryway. The addition has a metal double-door on its north side, and two steel windows on its east side. A second shed-roofed brick addition is attached to the south side of the first addition. It has a single, two-over-two window with a brick sill, and several blocked window and door openings. Both additions have corrugated-metal roofs with metal fascia. A third, one-story, brick addition with a shed roof adjoins the south side of the original structure. It also has a steel-sash window with a brick sill, as well as a corrugated-metal roof with metal fascia. A building permit describes this building as a cooper house, but this

# Southeast Minneapolis Industrial Area (SEMI) Survey

Prepared for the Minneapolis Community Development Agency

Site Name: Electric Steel Elevator

Inventory Number: HE-MPC-3607

seems unlikely. If grain was not stored in bulk in railcars or bins, it was stored in sacks. Barrels were an early storage container for flour; terminal elevators were not built to handle flour shipments. The structure was later described, probably more accurately, as a millwright shop and storehouse.(2)

## History/Significance

The Electric Steel Elevator Company was incorporated in 1901 with \$200,000 of capital. The original incorporators were Lewis S. and George M. Gillette, James L. Record, Charles E. Thayer, M. B. Koon, James Quirk, and Edward A. Everett. Record and the Gillettes also organized the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company. The Electric Steel Elevator Company immediately commissioned the American Bridge Company, with C. A. P. Turner as the engineer, to construct twelve steel grain tanks in a cluster 102 feet wide, 324 feet long, and 80 feet tall, and a 64-foot wide, 84-foot long, 165-foot-tall steel workhouse. American Bridge also built a 42-foot wide, 65-foot long, 26-foot-tall brick "cooper house," a brick coal shed, and two steel car sheds for the young company. The tanks were arranged in two rows of six tanks, each with a capacity of 126,000 bushels of grain. By 1902 the company had made an agreement with the one of the largest flour milling companies at Saint Anthony Falls, the Washburn-Crosby Company to store Canadian wheat in at least one and possibly two of its new tanks. The wheat would later be ground into flour at the Washburn-Crosby 'E' Mill.(3)

In 1903 and again in 1906, the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company constructed single rows of five cylindrical grain bins, each 50 feet in diameter and 60 feet tall, on either side of the 1901 tanks. The 1906 grain bins had stone foundations. Each tank had a 100,000-bushel capacity, raising the elevator's total capacity to over 2.7 million bushels of grain. While the company continued to build up its own plant, it also gained a broader influence within the SEMI. Lewis Gillette and Charles Thayer teamed up again during 1906 to purchase the L. T. Sowle Elevator, located southeast of the Electric Steel, and form the Delmar Elevator Company. In 1907 a 450-foot-long conveyor, supported by three steel piers and capable of moving 20,000 bushels of grain a day, was built to link the Electric Steel Elevator to the nearby Archer-Daniels Linseed Company mill. Later, other conveyors from Electric Steel sent wheat to the Russell-Miller flour mill, barley to the Electric Malting Plant (now Kurth Malting), and linseed to both the Spencer-Kellogg and Sons Linseed Oil Mill and the Archer-Daniels Linseed Company mill, making the Electric Steel a receiving or "captive" elevator for many of the industries at the south end of the SEMI. In a 1912 Sanborn map, the steel conveyors resemble spokes on a wheel, with the Electric Steel as the central hub.(5)

In 1912, the Russell-Miller Company acquired the Electric Steel Elevator, and by the end of 1914 ten 80-foot-tall grain tanks capable of holding a total of 1.25 million bushels had been added to the complex, bringing the total capacity to 4 million bushels. This made it the largest in the West. Electric Steel probably continued to supply other industries in the SEMI with grain rather than be solely dedicated to the medium-sized Russell-Miller flour mill, which processed a maximum of 6,500 bushels per day. A 1951 Sanborn map shows only the overhead conveyor to the Russell-Miller plant still in place; it has since been removed. Other companies that once were linked to the elevator, like Kurth Malting and Archer-Daniels (then Archer-Daniels-Midland or ADM), began to add their own storage in the 1920s. A reinforced-concrete workhouse with a 250,000-bushel capacity was built just west of the steel workhouse in 1938, bringing the total capacity of the complex to over 4.2 million bushels. Peavey Company took control of the elevator in 1954 when it acquired Russell-Miller. ConAgra currently owns the property.(6)

# Southeast Minneapolis Industrial Area (SEMI) Survey

Prepared for the Minneapolis Community Development Agency

Site Name: Electric Steel Elevator

Inventory Number: HE-MPC-3607

The National Register multiple property documentation form for "Grain Elevators in Minnesota," prepared by Robert Frame in 1989, states: "To be eligible under Criterion A, a terminal grain elevator must have been involved in a particularly meaningful way with a significant development in the grain industry, grain trade, a transportation and shipping nexus, and/or a major processor." The Electric Steel Elevator District has statewide significance under this requirement. In addition to its service as a terminal elevator, Electric Steel was historically an integral component in the operations of the linseed, malting, and flour milling interests in the SEMI. This district held an important concentration of the grain storage and processing facilities that made Minneapolis a major center of agribusiness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Electric Steel Elevator District also qualifies under Criterion C for "embody[ing] distinctive characteristics of terminal elevator design and engineering or represent[ing] significant phases in the evolution of terminal elevator engineering and construction." The elevator was described by architectural historian Reyner Banham as one of three "classic" elevators for the early period of steel elevator construction. The other two, the Electric Elevator (Buffalo, New York, 1897) and the Pioneer Steel Elevator (Minneapolis, 1901), have been demolished, leaving Electric Steel as the only one of the trio to survive. Hence, it is of national significance.(7)

The complex is also significant under Criterion C for its association with the American Bridge Company and C. A. P. Turner. Incorporated by J. P. Morgan in 1900, the American Bridge Company became a subsidiary of the United States Steel Corporation in the following year. American Bridge quickly acquired twenty-four fabricators, becoming dominant in the industry. The first bins of the Electric Steel Elevator date from this formative period. The bins were designed by C. A. P. Turner, who worked briefly in Minneapolis for a division of American Bridge before opening his own consulting practice in 1901. The Minneapolis city directory of that year lists his experience with "Buildings, Bridges, Manufacturing Plants, Grain Elevators, Warehouses, Mining Buildings, Sugar Mills, and Sugar Machinery." Turner, a nationally prominent engineer and architect, was soon to gain additional fame with his design for the mushroom column and other innovations with reinforce concrete.(8)

The Electric Steel Elevator District has undergone changes over the years. Concrete has been added to the interiors of some tanks, for example, to build up the flat bottoms into a funnel form to facilitate emptying. These modifications are minor, however, given the property's scale and the degree of its significance; the district retains good integrity.

Although Minneapolis's role in the nation's grain trade declined as the twentieth century progressed, the industry remains an important element of the city's economy today. As a result, the district's period of significance should extend to 1953, the fifty-year cut-off established by National Register guidelines.

## Sources

(1) Building records cited in building descriptions are from the "Grain Elevator Inventory," prepared by Judy Cedar, Minneapolis Community Development Agency, in 1997, for the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Committee. See also, Insurance Maps of Minneapolis, MN (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1912, 1951), vol. 8.

(2) William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991), 111; Permit B48917, City Inspections Department, Minneapolis; Insurance

# Southeast Minneapolis Industrial Area (SEMI) Survey

Prepared for the Minneapolis Community Development Agency

Site Name: Electric Steel Elevator

Inventory Number: HE-MPC-3607

Maps of Minneapolis, MN.

(3) "Flaxseed Flows Thru Long Chute To Oil Mill," *Minneapolis Journal*, January 6, 1907; J. A. A. Burnquist, *Minnesota and Its People* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1924), 128, 131-132; "Bonds Approved," *Minneapolis Journal*, March 21, 1902.

(4) "Long Gallery Planned," *Minneapolis Journal*, October 19, 1906; "Capacity to Be 4,000,000," *Minneapolis Journal*, July 14, 1914.

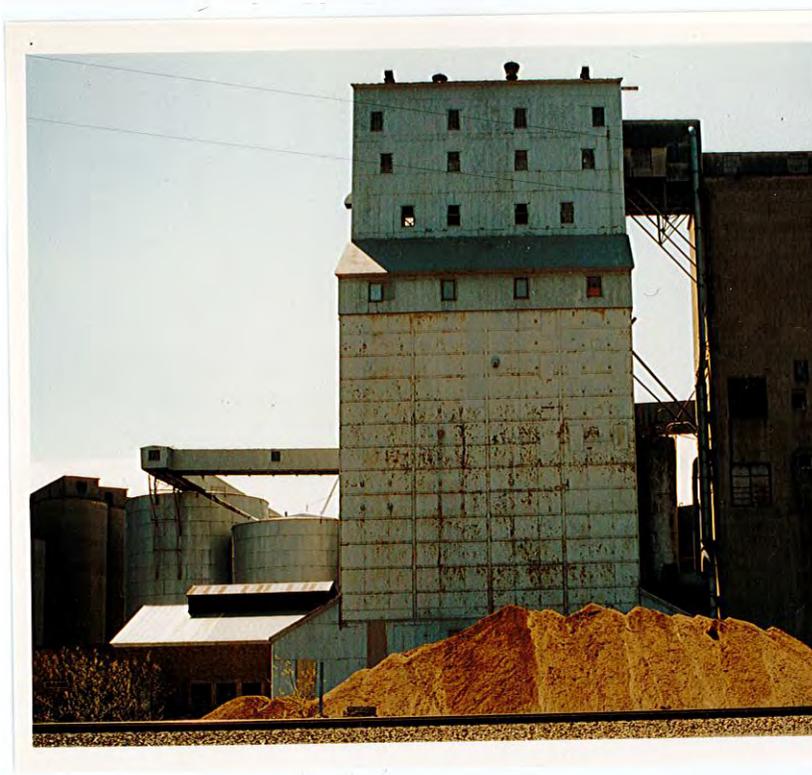
(5) "New \$250,000 Mill To Grind Big Crop," *Minneapolis Journal*, August 13, 1912; "Capacity to Be 4,000,000."

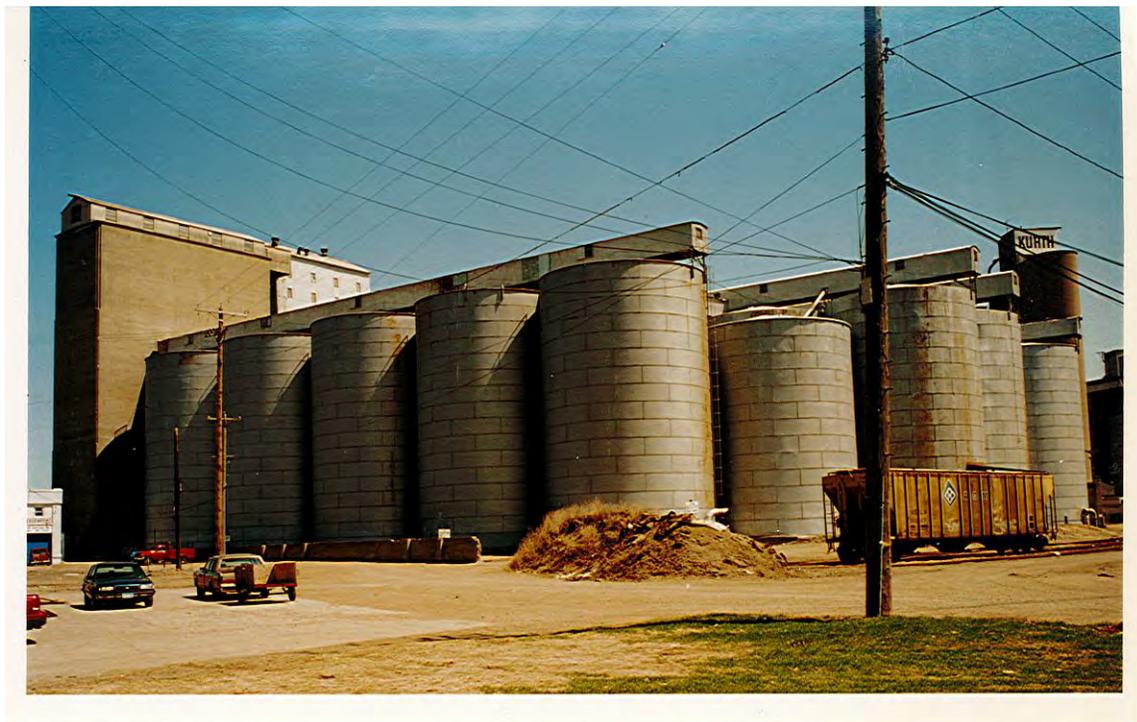
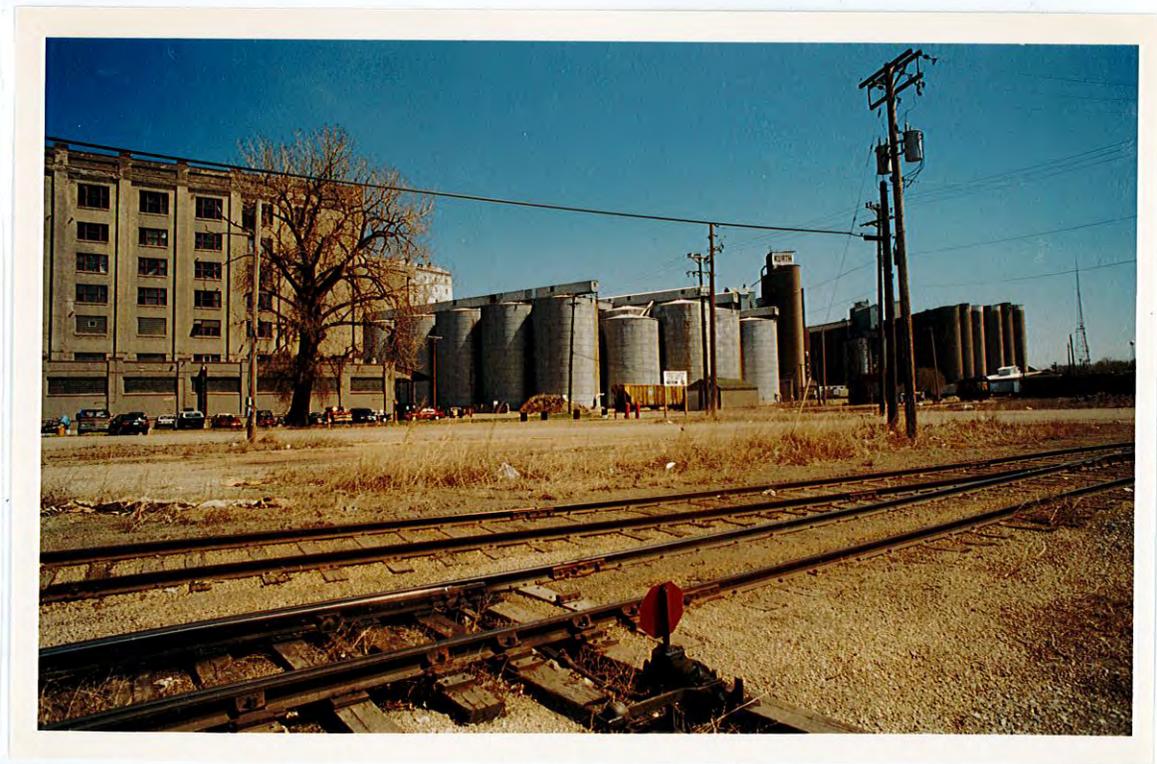
(6) Robert M. Frame III, "Grain Elevators in Minnesota," September 30, 1989, F-3, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, available at the State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

(7) *Ibid.*, F-8; Reyner Banham, *A Concrete Atlantis: U. S. Industrial Building and European Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1986), 124.

(8) Victor C. Darnell, *A Directory of American Bridge-Building Companies, 1840-1900* (Washington, D.C.: Society for Industrial Archaeology, 1984), 85-86; entry for Claude Allen Porter Turner in *Who Was Who in America*, vol. 3 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis Company, 1980), 865; *Davison's Minneapolis Directory* (Minneapolis: C. R. Davison, 1901), 1848.

City of Minneapolis Inventory of Grain Elevators : 1997  
Photos of the Electric Steel Elevator







# Materials Submitted by Applicant

## **II. Executive Summary**

Riverland Ag Corp is seeking to demolish its Electric Steel Grain elevator and sell the vacant land to the University of Minnesota for future development. In the past year and a half since the elevator has ceased operation and shuttered, the structure has become an enticement to trespassing urban explores and graffiti artists that are impossible to keep out. This 104 year old structure is a very dangerous environment for the kids and young adults to be exploring unaccompanied, especially at night without the proper lighting and safety equipment that is expected of employees. The company has spent hundreds of man hours and thousands of dollars to erect, inspect and repair chain link and barbed wired fences, as well as locked, bolted, caged and welded openings, and a security camera system. It is Riverland Ag's concern that it is only a matter of time before someone is hurt and disabled, or worse, falls to their death in this unsafe environment.

The Electric Steel Elevator has a long and rich history in Minneapolis. We understand the engineering significance of this structure and would like to see it celebrated. Unfortunately, we also have come to realize an economically viable alternative use for this facility is not likely after spending many hours of searching the internet and only finding few examples of adaptive reuse. Communities such as Minneapolis and Buffalo, NY have struggled for many, many years to find alternative uses for these abandoned structures without success.

So rather than mothballing this facility for the next 5, 10 or 25 years as others have done in Minneapolis, Buffalo, NY and other parts of the country waiting for a reuse alternative, Riverland Ag is offering to photo document the facility and donate the report to the Minnesota Historical Society's Mill City Museum. In reality, Riverland Ag's leadership feels strongly that having photos of the structure exhibited through the Mill City Museum will expose more of the public to the uniqueness of the Electric Steel elevator than will ever occur as it sits abandoned, unoccupied and forgotten.

Time is Riverland Ag's concern. The duration this facility continues to sit vacant, attracting the young urban explorer, it is only a matter of time before someone is critically hurt or worse, dies. This is unacceptable for our company's directors and senior leadership. We ask that you accept the reality that there is no viable reuse for this facility and permit the demolition of the facility as soon as possible.

### **III. Economic Analysis of Operating the Electric Steel Elevator**

The terminal grain elevator business within the city of Minneapolis has been in decline for the past 60 years for a variety of economic reasons. More recently the reluctance of the railroads to competitively price grain handling at the smaller centrally located terminal grain elevators has forced these less efficient facilities to close. Railroads today have targeted high volume elevators capable of loading and unloading unit trains of 52 and 110 car trains in less than 15 hours. The centrally located terminal grain elevators throughout Minneapolis were designed to handle much smaller number of rail cars and do not currently have the track capacity nor the land to expand the track capacity to handle these unit trains.

The company has explored leasing the facility for long term storage to numerous end-users such as Anheuser-Busch Inbev, Grain Millers, MillerCoors, etc. but were unsuccessful as the inbound and outbound rail rate structure makes it uncompetitive.

In addition to the changing railroad business and the impacts its pricing has had on the industry, modernization of these operations are difficult to justify. Having been designed and built in 1901, the Electric Steel Elevator manual operations is no longer competitive in today's automated economy. Riverland Ag Corp conducted an engineering study and determined it would need to invest \$16 million to automate operations and improve grain handling capabilities. Unfortunately this investment cannot be justified for this smaller elevator as compared to much larger operations elsewhere in the country. This cost of modernization does not address the railroad issues raised earlier.

Given the lack of commercially viable alternatives for this facility, Riverland Ag Corp closed the elevator in November 2013.

#### IV. Public Safety

The operations of the Electric Steel facility ceased operations on November 20, 2013. At the time Riverland Ag took several months to properly secure the facility in an effort to keep out the public. Unfortunately it didn't take long for the "urban explorers" to discover the shuttered elevator and begin their quest for adventure. With the ever increasing trespassing, graffiti and vandalism, Riverland Ag stepped up its efforts to keep these individuals out.



*The base of each of the 32 storage bins are covered with graffiti (Urban Art?)*



*Graffiti at the top of the head house*

The maintenance staff for Riverland Ag have spent many hundreds of hours installing chain link fence with barbed wire to keep people out. When that didn't work, they added mesh steel grates on the inside of the chain link fence so they may think twice about climbing over the fence if they would find it difficult to get out. They caged and locked the bottom portions of the safety ladders attached to the sides of the elevators. And yet these individuals still manage to find a way to circumnavigate these measures.



And Riverland Ag posted the City of Minneapolis required no trespassing signs required to prosecute the offenders, which have failed to prevent the on-going trespassing that persists yet today.



These young urban explorers are so bold and determined they post their exploits on the internet, bragging with photos and videos of their conquests as if it is just another mountain to climb or rapids to run. I invite you to view this link to see for yourself the virtual fame these individuals seek with each trespassing act they so willingly make with no regard to other's property or their own safety.

<http://tcur.org/?p=157>

Our concern is not necessarily the trespassing or the graffiti, but safety! This Electric Steel Elevator is over 100 years old and was not designed to accommodate the general public. The men and women that worked in these facilities were well trained and supervised by experts with many years of experience looking out for each and every employee's health and welfare. In the final years of the operation as the demand for this operation waned, it became harder for the owner to justify keeping up the maintenance of the facility. Hazards existed that the experienced staff understood and could navigate, but to the young naïve urban explorers, these hazards are potentially life threatening. Keep in mind that these individuals tend to trespass at night, relying on the light of the moon or flashlights, encountering hazards they know little about.



*Low ceilings and obstacles are everywhere throughout the facility*



*Open stairs with low railings and deteriorated wood floor boards*

So, how do you ever protect these individuals from harm's way when the maliciously push through barbed wire and chain link fences, climb the open stairs 120 feet to the top of the elevators, cut open floor hatches to gain access to walk the top of the grain bins?



Installing video cameras didn't stop them. Posting security guards wasn't practical or economically viable. But one does have to stop and ask how far does a responsible property owner have to go to prevent these individuals from a compromising circumstances that could be potentially fatal? Climbing across the tops of the grain bins without safety harnesses is an act of recklessness and poor judgement that could and has resulted in serious injury and death.



*Graffiti at 120 feet accessible only by crossing the tops of the grain silos*

Not wanting to provide further encouragement to yet another crop of young urban explorers Riverland Ag has made the decision to remove the fruit of enticement and demolish the structures that clearly have outlived their usefulness in today's economy. It is time to accept that demolish these structures is the only viable alternative.

**V. Alternatives to Demolition**

Riverland Ag Corporation understands the community’s interest in grain elevators and the impact the grain industry has had on the region’s economy. We accept that a 114 year old structure has historic significance both economically and architecturally. Given our senior management’s long tenure in the industry we too would love to see a part of our history preserved for our children and grandchildren to appreciate.

Before we made the decision to demolish the structure we looked around the country to see what alternatives exist that we might consider. Minneapolis and Buffalo, New York are the two communities that have spent extensive time and resources over the last 30 years exploring alternative uses for these structures. Unfortunately, there are very few examples of economically viable options, and none have retained the architecturally historical character of the original structure. In our search we find only three obvious examples, all of which are constructed of concrete. Minneapolis has the Calhoun Isles condominiums, Akron, Ohio has the Quaker Square hotel, and Irvine, California has the La Quinta hotel.



*Calhoun Isle Condominium – Minneapolis, MN*



*Quaker Square Hotel - Akron, Ohio*



*La Quinta Hotel - Irvine, CA*

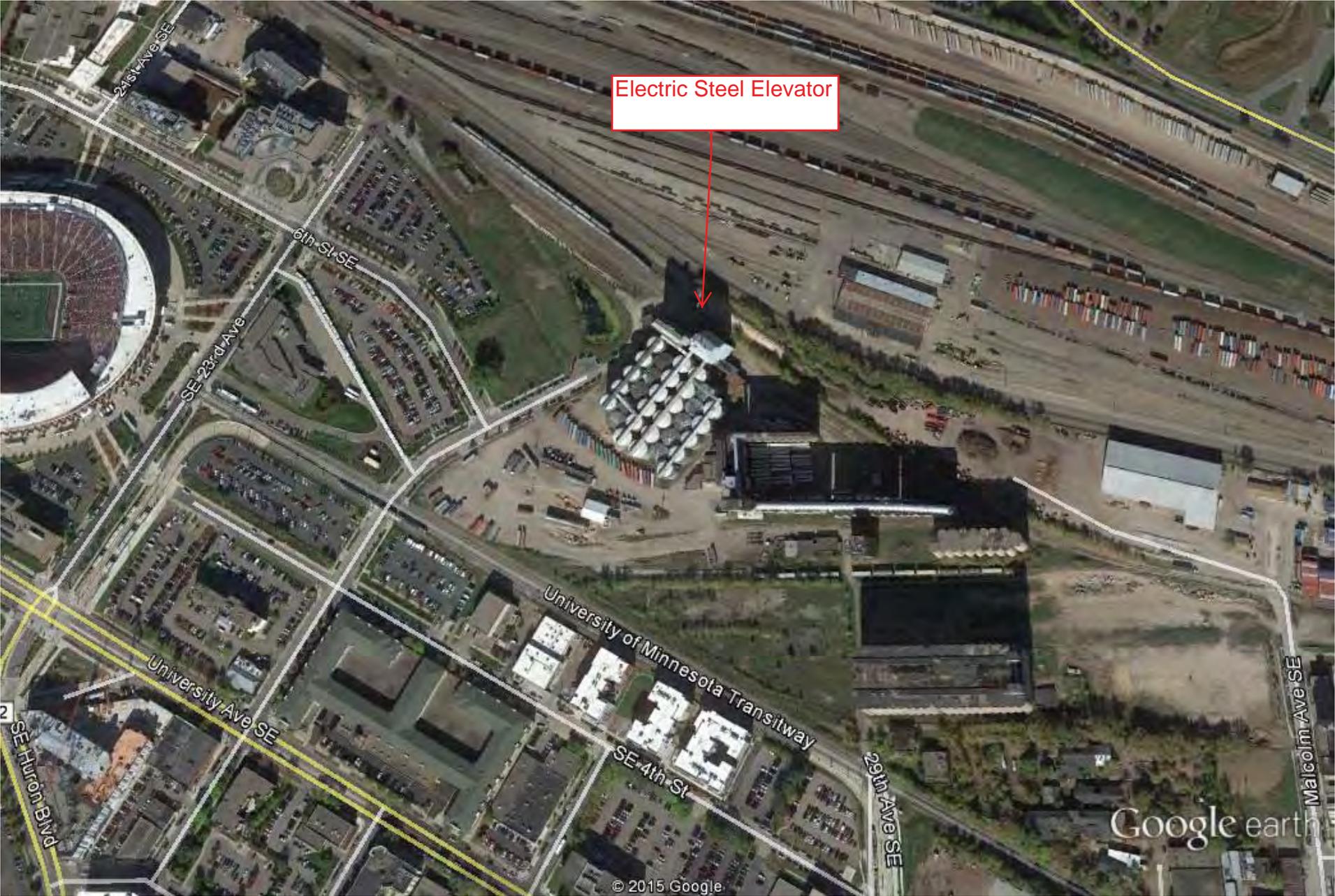
In 1989 Robert M Frame, III, a Minneapolis architectural historian, now with the engineering firm Mead & Hunt, wrote a paper on the reuse for the WCCO elevator. While that elevator complex has been incorporated into the Mill City Museum with some minor aspects of reuses, a significant portion, including the silos, remain vacant and unused. And yet after 26 years since the elevator ceased operation and that study conducted, this concrete elevator, like many others throughout the Twin Cities and Buffalo, NY, stands abandoned without an economically viable alternative for reuse.

A national registry assessment report for the Southeast Minneapolis Industrial (SEMI) district commissioned by the City of Minneapolis Community Development Agency and prepared by Hess, Roice and Company in 2003 identified the Electric Steel elevator as historically significant and qualifies to be included in the National Register of Historic Places. We are not challenging this report's findings. We are proud to have had a small part in the elevator's history. But to put the demolition on hold and conduct further adaptive reuse studies continues to put the young trespassers at risk with each passing day the structure stands. We are requesting the structure be demolished as soon as possible.

It is time to move on and not stand in the way of progress that is knocking on the door of this site. The University of Minnesota continues to grow and is eyeing to incorporate a portion of this deteriorating industrial area into its campus. The Prospect Park 2020 Framework study, dated March 2012, identified the area surrounding the Electric Steel Elevator site as a commercial real estate research development park. With the new construction of modern day warehouse buildings and the Surly Brewery at the east end and the University of Minnesota at the west end, this area begs to be redeveloped to serve the modern economy. The Electric Steel elevator, which encompasses most of its 4.9 acres, is now standing in the way of growth for the City of Minneapolis.

As an alternative to the unlikely adaptive reuse for this structure, Riverland Ag Corp will commission a photo documentation study and donate it to the Minnesota Historical Society's Mill City Museum. We have had an initial conversation and proposal from Mead & Hunt and Hess, Roice and Company and will explore our options with other firms for the Heritage Preservation Commission's input and consideration. Our desire is be proactive and work with the HPC to preserve the structure through professional photography.





Google earth

feet  
meters











Approved



# BOARD OF REGENTS DOCKET ITEM SUMMARY

Facilities & Operations

June 11, 2015

Agenda Item: Real Estate Transaction

Review       Review + Action       Action       Discussion

This is a report required by Board policy.

Presenters: Pamela Wheelock, Vice President, University Services  
Susan Carlson Weinberg, Director of Real Estate

### Purpose & Key Points

In accordance with Board of Regents Policy: *Reservation and Delegation of Authority*, review and approve the following Real Estate Transaction:

A. Purchase of 600 25th Avenue SE and 649 26th Avenue SE, Minneapolis (Twin Cities Campus)

The University will purchase the subject property for the sum of \$1,450,000 plus reimbursement of seller's cost to demolish the elevators and building structures situated on the 4.79 acres estimated at \$578,000. The seller will donate to the University part of the property's value at the date of closing, which the seller estimates at \$1,050,000. Closing would occur on or before June 30, 2015.

Additional details of this transaction and its financial impact are described in the transaction information pages in the docket.

### Background Information

Board of Regents Policy: *Reservation and Delegation of Authority* states that "The Board reserves to itself authority to approve the purchase or sale of real property with a value greater than \$1,250,000, or larger than ten (10) acres," and "leases of real property, easements, and other interests in real property if the initial term amount to be paid by or to the University exceeds \$1,250,000, consistent with Board policies."

### President's Recommendation

The President recommends approval of the following Real Estate Transaction:

A. Purchase of 600 25th Avenue SE and 649 26th Avenue SE, Minneapolis (Twin Cities Campus)

**PURCHASE OF 600 25TH AVENUE SE and 649 26TH AVENUE SE, MINNEAPOLIS  
(TWIN CITIES CAMPUS)**

**1. Recommended Action**

The President recommends that the appropriate administrative officers receive authorization to purchase the property at 600 25th Avenue SE and 649 26th Avenue SE, Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota.

**2. Location and Description of the Property**

The subject property consists of approximately 4.79 acres and is located at 600 25th Avenue SE and 649 26th Avenue SE, Minneapolis, north and east of and across 25th Avenue SE from the property in the East Gateway District owned by the University at 650 25th Avenue SE.

The legal description of the property: Lots 8 and 9, Auditors Subdivision No. 88, Hennepin County, Minnesota.

The property is known as the White Box Commodities / Electric Steel Elevator site, with 32 steel elevators previously used for grain storage that are vacant and empty, various obsolete building structures and approximately 1,500 lineal feet of railroad siding that includes three railroad tracks and a spur track that serves the site. All elevators and other building structures will be removed by the current owner.

**3. Basis for Request**

The purchase of this property is an opportunity purchase. The current owner of the subject property, Riverland Ag Corporation, contacted the University to advise that the property is no longer needed for its business operations and was for sale.

**4. Details of Transaction**

The transaction for the University's acquisition of the property will be a bargain sale/partial donation transaction. The University will pay \$1,450,000 in cash at closing and reimburse the seller for the seller's cost to demolish the elevators and other buildings structures on the property, estimated at \$578,000, of which \$100,000 is the contingency amount; and the seller

will donate to the University part of the property's value at closing, which the seller currently estimates at \$1,050,000. The closing is expected to occur on or before June 30, 2015.

#### **5. Use of Properties**

The property at 600 25th Avenue SE and 649 26th Avenue SE, Minneapolis will remain vacant until the University determines the appropriate use or uses of the land.

#### **6. Environmental**

The University has completed a Phase I environmental site assessment and an asbestos / hazardous materials survey, and will complete prior to the closing a limited Phase II environmental site assessment to confirm the property is in acceptable environmental condition.

#### **7. Source of Funding**

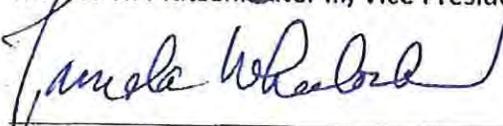
The University will issue debt to purchase the property at 600 25th Avenue SE and 649 26th Avenue SE, Minneapolis.

#### **8. Recommendations**

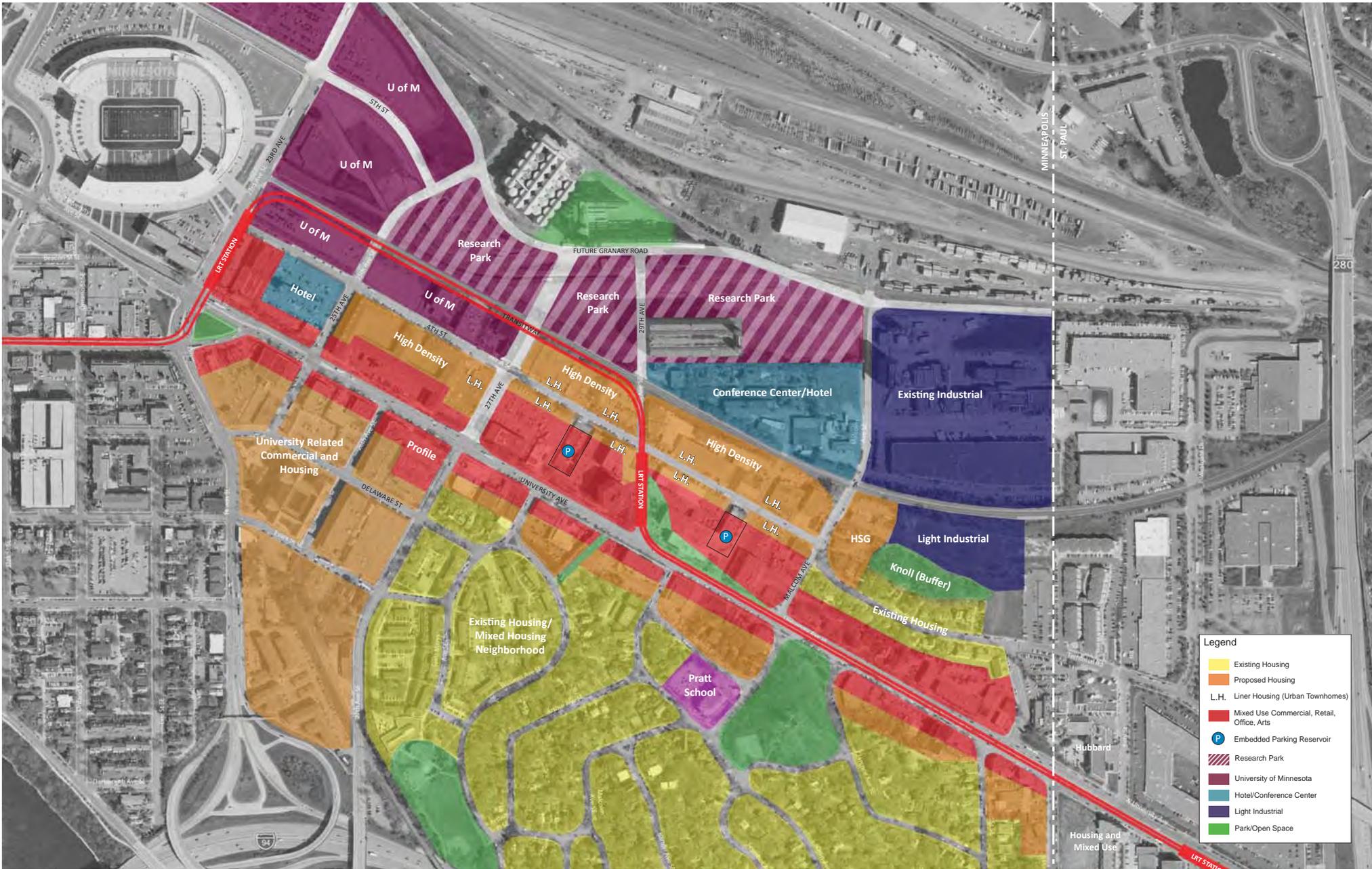
The above-described real estate transaction is appropriate:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Karen Hanson, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard H. Pfutzenreuter III, Vice President for Finance and CFO

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Pamela Wheelock, Vice President for University Services





**Concept D- Land Use**

## Electric Steel Elevator Chronology of Construction



Original silos and work house as originally constructed in 1901



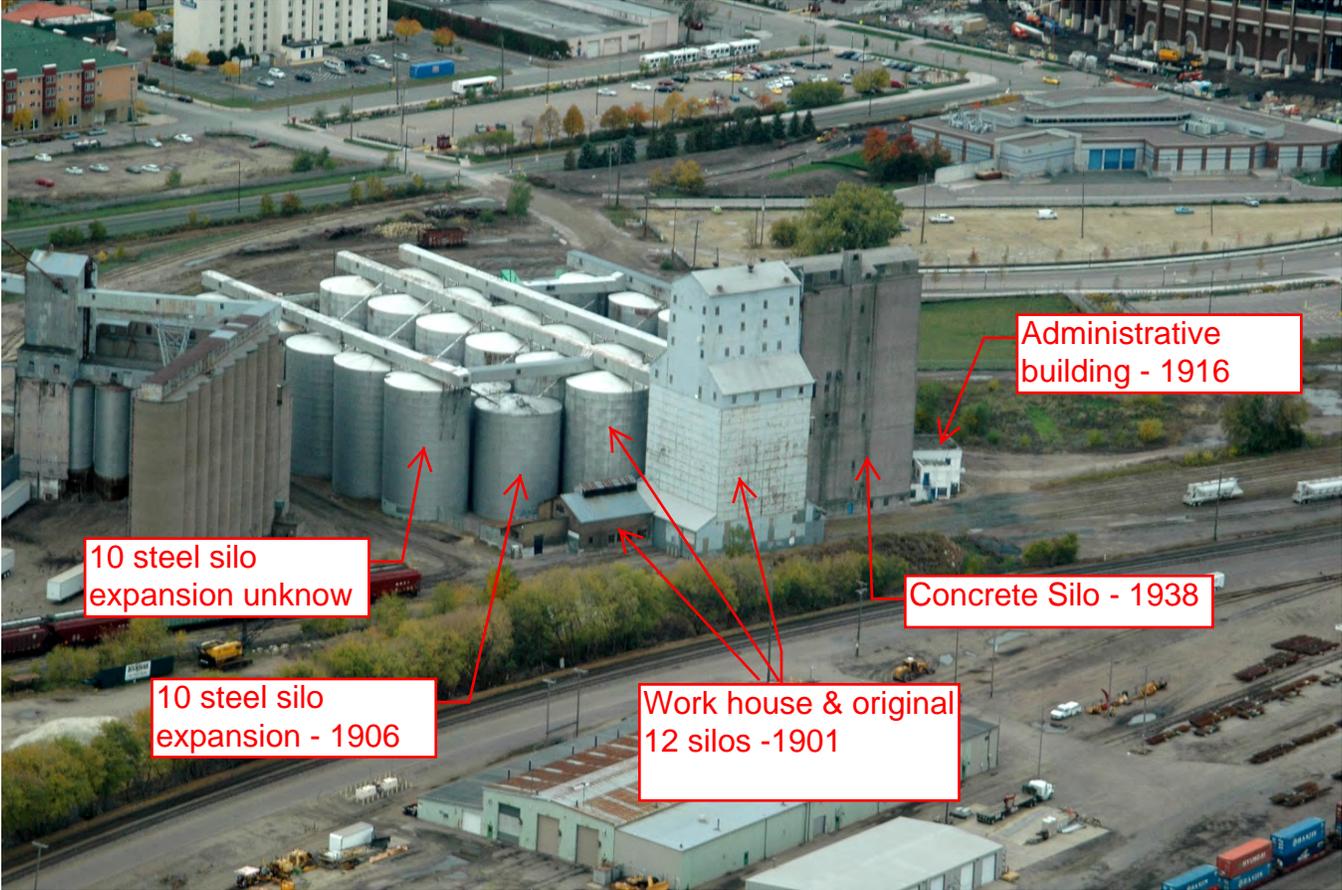
The two rows of shorter tanks, on either side of the original 12 tanks, were constructed in 1906. It is unknown when the two outside rows of taller tanks were constructed.



Concrete Administration Building built in 1916



Concrete Silo addition built in 1938



10 steel silo  
expansion unknow

10 steel silo  
expansion - 1906

Work house & original  
12 silos -1901

Concrete Silo - 1938

Administrative  
building - 1916

# Correspondence

**From:** Doug Johnson  
**To:** ["cam.gordon@minneapolismn.gov"](mailto:cam.gordon@minneapolismn.gov); ["Robin.garwood@ci.minneapolis.mn.us"](mailto:Robin.garwood@ci.minneapolis.mn.us)  
**Cc:** [creiners@riverlandag.com](mailto:creiners@riverlandag.com)  
**Subject:** Electric Steel Elevator  
**Date:** Friday, June 19, 2015 11:44:00 AM

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Council Member Gordon and Mr. Garwood, I wish to thank you for taking time to meet with Craig Reiners, CEO of Riverland Ag Corp, and myself this past Wednesday to discuss the application we plan to submit on Tuesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> for the demolition of the Electric Steel Elevator. As you may recall from our conversation, Riverland Ag Corp as owner of the elevator is deeply concerned with the safety of the kids and young adults that actively trespass and vandalize the property. This facility is unsafe for all but the most highly trained and skilled employee of our Riverland Ag and we fear a repeat of the unfortunate event that most recently occurred at the Bunge Elevator. It is the firm's desire to clear the site and sell the land to the University of Minnesota.

We also discussed the unlikelihood of adaptive reuse for this structure. As an alternative to waiting for years or decades before an economically viable alternative is found, we will be proposing a photo documentation of the structure.

We appreciate your support and look forward to working with each of you in our efforts to expedite Riverland Ag Corp's request for demolition through the City's review process.

Thank you!

Doug

**Douglas L. Johnson** | Principal  
Oliver Real Estate Services, Inc.  
4775 Dodd Road | Eagan, MN 55123  
Voice: 952-240-4062 | Fax: 651-454-1180  
[djohnson@OliverRES.com](mailto:djohnson@OliverRES.com)

Visit our web site at [www.OliverRES.com](http://www.OliverRES.com)



Please consider the environment before printing this email

From: [jonewix@aol.com](mailto:jonewix@aol.com)  
To: [Doug Johnson: pperriastaff@gmail.com](mailto:pperriastaff@gmail.com)  
Cc: [creiners@riverlandag.com](mailto:creiners@riverlandag.com)  
Subject: Re: Hi from Prospect Park  
Date: Monday, June 15, 2015 9:29:55 PM

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Hi Doug,

Thanks for contacting me.

How soon were you expecting to meet with us? Our typical meeting schedule would have the Zoning committee assembling either the first or second week of July. With the 4th of July on a Saturday, I'm not sure how that will affect Zoning committee members' ability to meet before or after the 4th, but I can make the inquiry and get back to you.

If it is imperative that you meet with us before then, I would also have to know the approximate date when you would prefer to meet to see if I can gather committee members to review the project.

Regarding the demolition, will it include the entire large structure? Or, are you only referring to the north end of the bldg?

Thank you.

John Wicks  
Zoning and Project Review Chairperson

-----Original Message-----

From: Doug Johnson <[djohnson@oliverres.com](mailto:djohnson@oliverres.com)>  
To: PPERRIA Staff <[pperriastaff@gmail.com](mailto:pperriastaff@gmail.com)>; John Wicks <[jonewix@aol.com](mailto:jonewix@aol.com)>  
Cc: Craig Reiners <[creiners@riverlandag.com](mailto:creiners@riverlandag.com)>  
Sent: Mon, Jun 15, 2015 8:39 pm  
Subject: RE: Hi from Prospect Park

Hi John...I have been retained by Ceres Ag Corporation to oversee the demolition of the Electric Steel Elevator. Ceres Ag and the University of Minnesota have come to terms for the sale of the land. Ceres Ag is required to remove the improvements from the site before the sale. We have retained the services of Veit Construction to take down the elevator and restore the site, which the University has no immediate plans to redevelop. Ceres Ag will be submitting the Heritage Preservation application for demolition next week to meet the submittal to the HPC at its July 28<sup>th</sup> meeting. We understand that we are to notify your organization of our plans and would appreciate the opportunity to meet with your committee to provide the back ground on Ceres Ag's decision to demolish the structure and sell the land.

For your reference, I have attached an aerial site plan locating the Electric Steel Elevator just east of the University of Minnesota.

If it would be helpful to provide information in advance of your committee meeting, please let me know. I look forward to meeting with you and your committee on July 7<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you!

Doug

Douglas L. Johnson | Principal  
Oliver Real Estate Services, Inc.  
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Visit our web site at [www.OliverRES.com](http://www.OliverRES.com)



Please consider the environment before printing this email

**From:** PPERRIA Staff [<mailto:pperriastaff@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, June 15, 2015 5:22 PM  
**To:** John Wicks  
**Cc:** Doug Johnson  
**Subject:** Re: Hi from Prospect Park

Hi John,

Earlier today Doug Johnson called on behalf of the person who owns the Electric Steel Elevator, or the concrete silos closest to the U of M in Prospect Park on 25th & 4th. The owner has been moving forward with demolishing the elevators in order to sell the land to the University, and would like to speed this process up after the unfortunate death of a student at the Bunge elevator last week.

I asked Mr. Johnson if he would be interested in attending the July 7th Zoning and Project Review meeting and he said he was available. Please confirm with him and myself if he can have time on the agenda.

Thanks,  
Jessica

On Mon, Jun 15, 2015 at 3:03 PM, Doug Johnson <[djohnson@oliverres.com](mailto:djohnson@oliverres.com)> wrote:

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Douglas L. Johnson | Principal  
Oliver Real Estate Services, Inc.  
4775 Dodd Road | Eagan, MN 55123  
Voice: [952-240-4062](tel:952-240-4062) | Fax: [651-454-1180](tel:651-454-1180)  
[djohnson@OliverRES.com](mailto:djohnson@OliverRES.com)

Visit our web site at [www.OliverRES.com](http://www.OliverRES.com)



Please consider the environment before printing this email

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Jessica Buchberger  
Community Outreach Coordinator  
PPERIA  
[pperriastaff@gmail.com](mailto:pperriastaff@gmail.com)  
Office: 612-767-6531

July 20, 2015

**Letter of Condemnation Re: Application for Demolition of Electric Steel Elevator**

Dear Heritage Preservation Commission,

I write to you to condemn the application for demolition of the Electric Steel Elevator complex as a concerned resident of the Prospect Park neighborhood and National Historic District, and as a licensed Architect in the State of Minnesota. I believe the Electric Steel Elevator to be historically significant and worthy of our best efforts to protect and revitalize. I believe the applicant's argument regarding safety to be one of convenience. I believe professionally that there is potential adaptive reuse of the elevator complex that would contribute significantly to the University District, be realized in the near term, and be profitable to current owner. I believe our community is in jeopardy of losing the physical fabric of the heroic industry that was the foundation of Minneapolis, and that a SEMI Area Grain Elevator Study and Comprehensive Plan are immediately called for.

Electric Steel Elevator is a nationally significant example of early steel grain elevator designed by master engineer C.A.P. Turner, and remains to this day structures of awe-inspiring architectural merit. Having just been decommissioned from active use on November 20, 2013, they are in sound structural condition.

Safety is an argument of convenience in order to sell the property devoid of structures. In the wake of the recent Bunge tragedy, the Bunge property has infilled large holes in the elevator walls that allowed entry, has had fencing repaired, and has had masking trees removed. Yet that property still does not deploy reasonable means of surveillance and control such as cameras, beam detection, and sensor-activated lighting. The Bunge site was not secure. By comparison, the owners of the Electric Steel Elevator have done somewhat better than that with only four cameras and fencing. Still, adding inexpensive yet active measures such as beam detection and sensor-activated lighting are further deterrents. Additionally, the applicant has not presented data regarding a record of break-ins occurring unchecked. Still the issue of future, vibrant use persists.

Admittedly, mothballing huge properties constitutes a hardship on owners who have reasonable property rights. Yet there are reasonable and culturally powerful alternatives to demolition. My office [MSR Design] is in the Historic Mill Ruins—part of which is repurposed grain elevator. The practice has notable experience in adaptive reuse of historic structures including the Mill City Museum, City House on the Saint Paul Riverfront, and numerous structures of the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, also on the National Register of Historic Places. These three examples, in addition to being historic assets, were derelict and scheduled for demolition. When advocacy, investment and creativity converged, all adapted to become vibrant places, cultural assets and to contribute gainfully to the economies of their cities. Likewise, alternatives to demolition of the Electric Steel Elevator can be in the interest of the current owners while preserving our shared heritage and actually adding to the culture of our City. Adaptive reuse can be more profitable to the owners than demolition especially with the application of historic tax credits.

Lastly, there is a larger District of historic elevator structures at stake with this action. Approximately half of the original complement of grain elevators in the SEMI area are razed already. I call on the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission to request of CPED a comprehensive study of the elevators left in the SEMI area before more are demolished. The purpose of the study is to plan bona fide development with economics in mind, and to thereby redefine these colossal symbols of our community's economic genesis as treasures rather than perceived pariah. I am willing to predict that if a truly collective, albeit massive, effort by private, government and University partners is mounted, that this district will be a destination and economic engine in the City of Minneapolis.

Sincerely,

Eric Amel, AIA, Architect