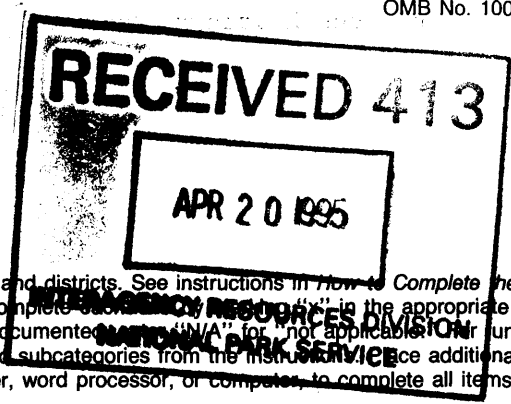


6015

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each section in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Enter additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.



1. Name of Property

historic name Dawson Armory and Community Building

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 676 Pine Street not for publication N/A

city or town Dawson vicinity N/A

state Minnesota code MN county Lac qui Parle code 073 zip code 56232

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Ian R. Stewart 4/6/95
Signature of certifying official/Title Ian R. Stewart Date
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

Edson H. Beall for Signature of the Keeper Entered in the National Register Date of Action 5-18-95

Dawson Armory and Community Building

Lac qui Parle, Minnesota

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Defense: Arms storage

Government: City hall

Social: Meeting hall

Recreation and Culture: Auditorium, Sports facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and culture: Sports facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals;

Late Romanesque Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Wood

other Limestone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is: N/A

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance

1923-1945

Significant Dates

1923

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Lewis, C. E.

Carson, J. W.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. one-half acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.) Dawson, Minn. 1967

1 1 4 7 3 2 3 8 0 4 9 7 9 9 9 0
Zone Easting Northing
2

3 Zone Easting Northing
4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Granger and Kay Grossman
organization Gemini Research date February 15, 1995
street & number 15 E. Ninth Street telephone (612) 589-3846
city or town Morris state MN zip code 56267

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

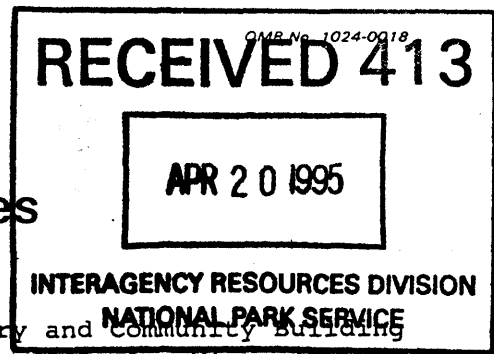
name
street & number telephone
city or town state zip code

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet



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Dawson Armory and Community Building
Dawson, Lac qui Parle, Minnesota

7. DESCRIPTION

The Dawson Armory and Community Building is located at the northeastern corner of Pine and Seventh Streets, one-half block west of Dawson's main commercial thoroughfare. The building stands near the center of Dawson, a community of approximately 1,670 people which is located in Lac qui Parle County in west central Minnesota. The armory and community building is surrounded by Dawson's Carnegie Library (built in 1918, listed on the National Register in 1985) across Pine Street to the south, the current Dawson city hall adjacent to the north, main street commercial buildings across the alley to the east, and turn of the century woodframe houses and a small church building across Seventh Street to the west. The building fills most of its 26,000-square-foot site. There is an asphalt-paved parking lot located on the northern portion of the property.

The Dawson Armory and Community Building is a modest, late example of the Romanesque Revival style. The Romanesque Revival is more usually associated with 19th century buildings, but was often used for the design of early 20th century armories because of its defensive, fortress-like associations. The Dawson Armory was built in 1923 by Dawson contractor J. W. Carson from designs by Minneapolis engineer C. E. Lewis. The building measures approximately 116 feet wide by 110 feet deep and has a poured concrete foundation. Load-bearing masonry walls are faced with smooth, reddish-brown brick with light mortar joints. The building is divided approximately in half, with the southern half consisting of administrative offices and the northern half comprised of a large drill hall and gymnasium/auditorium with a stage and balcony. The southern portion has a flat roof and the northern portion has a gabled, asphalt-shingled roof which is supported by 70-foot-long steel trusses. There are six ventilators at the ridge of this roof, three of which date from circa 1930 and three of which date from circa 1987. There is a basement under the southern and western portions of the building. The basement windows were originally multi-paned but have been filled with brick.

Early photographs indicate that the building was originally surrounded by small areas of grassy lawn. A few deciduous shrubs were planted around the base of the building. Sidewalks were located along the southern and western sides of the property. Along the inner edge of the sidewalk there was a low fence comprised of iron posts which supported a hanging iron chain. The fence was removed circa 1940. Today, west of the main entrance there is a steel flagpole with a fluted concrete pedestal which rests on a double-circular base. The flagpole was installed circa 1940.

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Dawson, Lac qui Parle, Minnesota

The main (southern) facade of the building is a symmetrical, three-part composition consisting of a central, recessed entrance area which is flanked by wings, each three bays wide, which project forward a distance of approximately 12 feet. There are decorative squares of limestone set into the brickwork near the cornice level. At the top of the building is a brick parapet wall with stone coping, and near the base of the building is a band of decorative brickwork at the watertable level. The building has rectangular window openings with brick sills which were originally fitted with multi-paned double-hung sash. The window openings are now filled with dark brown aluminum one-over-one sash which was installed circa 1987. The first story windows in the western wing are topped by rounded arches which are filled with brick patterning. The rounded-arched motif is repeated in three garage door openings in the first story of the eastern wing. These openings have limestone springing blocks and keystones. They were originally filled with multi-paned garage doors and multi-paned transom lights. Today the rounded arches are filled with circa 1987 garage doors and plywood panels above the transoms.

The main entrance area consists of a slightly projecting entrance bay which is flanked by buttresses that are capped by a band of smoothly-dressed yellow limestone. Above the entrance is a large limestone rectangle which reads "ARMORY". There was originally a flagpole rising from the parapet wall at center of the entrance bay. The entrance originally consisted of a set of hardwood, paneled double-leaf doors with multi-paned sidelights. The current set of dark brown aluminum double-leaf doors with large-paned sidelights was installed circa 1987. Leading to the main entrance is a broad concrete sidewalk and poured concrete steps with low side walls. One of the concrete squares in the sidewalk bears the imprint "J. W. Carson Contractor Dawson 1923". Flanking the entrance are two wall-mounted metal lamps with white glass shades. These lamps are apparently a replacement of original lamps which were hung in the same location.

On the western facade of the building is a second entrance to the drill hall and gymnasium/auditorium. The entrance is located within a gabled arched projection which repeats the pitch, parapet walls, and coping of the drill hall roof. The entrance bay is marked by brick buttresses with limestone caps that flank a rectangular door opening which is set beneath a wide segmental arch of brick. Above the entrance is a trio of small rounded-arched windows. A set of double-leaf glass and aluminum doors was installed in the entrance circa 1987. Poured concrete steps with low side walls lead to the entrance.

The northern and eastern facades of the building consist of broad brick-veneered surfaces that are punctuated by rectangular window openings, most of which are arranged in groups of two and three. On the northern facade is a large rectangular garage door opening with a poured concrete

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Dawson, Lac qui Parle, Minnesota

lintel and a circa 1987 garage door. There is a smaller service entrance with hinged, wooden double-leaf doors and a poured concrete sill on the eastern facade. There are two areas of brickwork on the northern facade which suggest that window openings were changed near the northeastern corner of the building and at the position of the northern garage door. There is a brick interior endwall chimney on the eastern facade.

The exterior of the building is in good condition. New roof shingles, windows, and doors were installed circa 1987.

The interior of the armory and community building is largely intact. Most of the interior rooms have wooden flooring, simple pine or fir trim which is lightly stained and varnished, plaster-covered walls, and cast iron radiators. The building was originally heated with a coal-fueled steam heating system. Most windows have simple pine or fir sills. Several of the interior rooms have linoleum tiles covering the wooden floors, suspended acoustical tile ceilings, and hanging fluorescent lights which date from the 1960s through the 1980s. A few of the rooms have circa 1970 pressed wood paneling on the walls. Most of the interior rooms have paneled pine or fir doors, some of which have square panes of glass. The double-leaf doors at the top of the stairs leading to the second story offices have been replaced recently with hollow-core doors.

The administrative portion of the interior is divided into a central lobby and six offices and utility rooms on the first floor, and nine offices and utility rooms on the second floor arranged in an axial plan along a long hallway. The northern portion of the building consists of a 70-foot by 100-foot drill hall and gymnasium/auditorium which has a 24-foot deep stage at the eastern end and a balcony at the western end. The auditorium was designed to seat 1,000 people and the balcony seats 400 people.

The drill hall and gymnasium/auditorium has pedestrian entrances on the southern and western walls, and a large garage door on the northern wall. It has wooden flooring, plaster-covered walls, simple pine or fir woodwork, and a Celotex tile ceiling which was installed in 1940. The ceiling was originally open to the roof trusses. The three-foot-tall stage at the eastern end has varnished wood wainscoting on the facade, a proscenium arch, a wooden stage floor, and velour curtains and rigging which were originally supplied by A. E. Kvaam and Universal Scenic Studio Inc. The balcony has two entrances--one from a split stairway in the western entrance foyer and one from the second floor offices at the balcony's southern end. The balcony hangs from the roof trusses by iron posts. It has simple pine benches and wainscoting applied to the facade. The western entrance foyer has plaster walls, two narrow poured concrete stairways leading to the balcony, and two narrow poured concrete stairways leading to the basement. There are

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Dawson, Lac qui Parle, Minnesota

double-leaf doors leading into both the gymnasium and the balcony from the western foyer.

The main entrance lobby has plaster walls and ceiling, pine or fir woodwork, and wooden flooring. There are double-leaf doors which lead into the gymnasium/auditorium and a rounded-arched ticket window located east of the doors. The ticket window retains a varnished wooden counter and a plate glass window which is covered by an iron grill and has a circular opening to speak through and a curved opening to pass tickets through. Behind the window is a small closet-like ticket room. There is a large bulletin board between the ticket window and the gymnasium/auditorium entrance. The main lobby's most prominent feature is a split stairway which leads to the second story offices. The stairway has lightly stained and varnished risers and treads, a simple balustrade, and square newel posts. The split stairway joins at a wide landing and continues as one stairway to the second floor.

At the southeastern corner of the first story, east of the lobby, is a three-bay garage with plaster walls and ceiling and a poured concrete floor. Six steel I-beams support the three vehicle bays within the garage.

West of the main entrance lobby are several offices which originally served the City Clerk, the city council, and Guard personnel. These rooms include the current Orderly Room, the Commander's Office, and a conference room. There is a vault with a massive iron door in the Orderly Room which was furnished by contractor J. W. Carson for \$125.

The second story has several small rooms which included an office for the City Marshall. This floor also originally contained a suite of four rooms which served as the American Legion club rooms and included a main club room, a large reading room, a cloak room, and a kitchenette. The First Sergeant's Office, the Library, the Officers' Dressing Room, the Retention Room, and other offices have more recently been located on the second floor. At the southeastern corner of the second story, above the garage, is a large meeting room known as the Day Room which was also used for public meetings.

Some of the building's interior rooms have early fixtures, all of which are very simple in design and materials. For example, the Officers' Dressing Room has four wooden clothing lockers and an early sink and shelf. The Retention Room has a long, enameled porcelain sink and the bathroom adjacent to the First Sergeant's Room has a shower and early fixtures. The public bathrooms have simple varnished wooden stalls. While the majority of the interior light fixtures have been replaced, a few of the rooms have original lights. For example, in the ceiling above the lobby is a fixture with a schoolhouse-type globe and nearby there is a fixture with a spherical globe above the southern stair landing. The library at the western end of the second story has a hanging fixture with a schoolhouse-type globe. There are similar fixtures in the western entrance foyer.

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Dawson, Lac qui Parle, Minnesota

The basement of the building has approximately 16 small rooms, a large dining room, and a large club room. Most of the rooms have poured concrete walls and floors. At the northwestern corner is the kitchen, which has early sinks and cupboards. Along the southern side of the building are small utility rooms including the locker rooms, a shower room, the Communications Room, a supply room, and the Arms Room. The latter has a double-layered metal security door. The armory's 75-foot-long indoor rifle and pistol ranges were also located in the basement.

The interior of the building is in fair condition. While the floors and woodwork appear to be in good condition, the plaster walls and ceilings are damaged in many interior spaces.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Dawson Armory and Community Building is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C (distinct characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction) in the area of Architecture, and under Criterion A (significance to the broad patterns of our history) in the area of Social History. Architecturally, the building is significant as an intact, representative, and distinctive example of Minnesota's so-called "middle period armories" which date from the decade after World War I. The Armory and Community Building is significant as the building which, after 1923, served as the center for city government, military affairs, and as Dawson's principal public social, cultural, and recreational facility. The property is significant within the statewide historic context entitled "Railroads and Agricultural Development 1870-1940."

The Dawson Armory and Community Building is an intact example of Minnesota's middle period armories, a group of armories which represent an important, standardized property type whose design features evolved as a result of events in political, military, social, and architectural history. The Dawson building has features which are both typical and strongly representative of the middle period armories, and features which are distinct from other middle period armories in the state.

Volunteer militia units had been organized in various Minnesota cities since the mid-19th century and had served in the Civil War, the U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict, the Spanish-American War, and in various strike-breaking and civil disaster capacities. Guard units were authorized and financed in partnership by both the federal and state governments. The nation's guard units were standardized under the Dick Act of 1903 which required that the states' units be organized, equipped, armed, and trained

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similar to the regular federal army. The Dick Act increased Federal funding to the states' units.

Minnesota's first armories were built circa 1881 in Winona and Minneapolis. The State did not begin to finance armory construction until after the turn of the century. Prior to this time, many units drilled and trained in commercial buildings, dance halls, and basements. The few official, separate armory buildings in the state were financed locally and often privately. A major State bill to fund the erection of armories passed in 1913.

Minnesota's middle period armories were built following the reorganization of the Minnesota National Guard soon after World War I. When local National Guard units were mobilized for the war, the recruitment and training of replacement troops became a priority. In 1916 the National Defense Act increased Federal funding for the National Guard by nine-fold and increased Federal control over the Guard's training and organization. The Amended National Defense Act of 1920 again reorganized the guard forces allocated to each state and sought to further professionalize the Guard based on the experiences of World War I. New training requirements were specified and Federal allocations were increased for training, wages, supplies, and equipment in exchange for State financing of armory buildings. In Minnesota, National Guard troop numbers increased substantially as several new units were formed (including Dawson's Company "K" of the Fifth Minnesota Infantry) and existing units were reorganized. The 1920 reorganization resulted in a Minnesota National Guard of 73 units stationed in 36 communities. In 1925 the Guard had approximately 5,100 members in the state. The construction of armory facilities during the period 1919-1929 paralleled this reorganization and funding (Murphy 1986, 64-69; Minnesota Adjutant General 1940; Burns and Martens 1994, 16-17).

DAWSON'S "MIDDLE PERIOD" NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY

Minnesota's historic armories, built between circa 1881 and 1945, have been divided by historians into three periods. The so-called middle period armories were constructed between 1919 and 1929. During those years, 25 armories were constructed in the state--more armories than during any other period. The early period, which dates from circa 1881 to 1918, saw the construction of 20 armories, and five armories were built during the late period, which dates from 1930-1945 (Burns and Martens 1994, 8). Middle period armories were studied by Burns and Martens who closely examined seven middle period armories and reviewed eight additional middle period armories and a number of armories from the early and late periods for comparative purposes (Burns and Martens 1994). The study identified the architectural attributes common to middle period armories and investigated the factors that led to their design and construction.

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Dawson, Lac qui Parle, Minnesota

By January of 1923 the State of Minnesota had allocated funds for 23 new armories and had spent about two-thirds of the money (Burns and Martens 1994, 17). Dawson's building was among those under construction during this period. Most of the middle period armories were built in the two areas of the state which were most recently settled, southwestern/west central Minnesota and northcentral/northern Minnesota. Located in Lac qui Parle County, the Dawson Armory and Community Building was located in the former region, and was joined by new armories constructed in nearby southwestern Minnesota communities such as Appleton, Jackson, Luverne, Madison, Montevideo, Windom, and Worthington (Burns and Martens 1994, 19).

Middle period armories share several design characteristics. For example, middle period armories were most often designed in one of two styles--a so-called "medieval revival" and Romanesque Revival. The medieval revival armories favored "picturesque references to traditions of warfare" such as castle-like massing, crenelated parapets, corbelled brickwork, corner towers, and central entrances resembling drawbridges (Burns and Martens 1994, 23). The Romanesque Revival armories were often less dense in massing and less foreboding in design, but continued to use characteristic rounded arches and other references to European stylistic precedents. Middle period armories differ from early period armories which were strongly "medieval" in style, and from late period armories which were generally Art Deco or Moderne in style. Middle period armories represent an unusually late use of the Romanesque Revival, however, which was carried into the 20th century because of its castle or fortress-like, defensive motifs and associations. Many middle period armory designs reflect a transition in public buildings from a strongly-styled design with historical references to a design in which the form and function of the facility's components is emphasized. Dawson is an example of the Romanesque Revival style mixed with design elements which hint of the Art Deco and Moderne styles which would mark public buildings in subsequent decades. The Dawson building is well-proportioned and more stylistically successful than most middle period armories. It is a good example of the middle period armories' transition from academic revival designs to the eventual sculptural simplicity and sophistication of late period armories.

Most middle period armories resulted from a pragmatic approach to design and construction born by the need for the State to construct as many armories as possible, as quickly as possible, with limited funds. Most exhibit a conservative use of materials with brick and concrete used more often than stone. Like the building at Dawson, most middle period armories were constructed by local architects and contractors. However, the State Armory Board apparently exercised considerable control over the final designs. In some cases, architects' original stylistic elements were apparently removed by the Board or simplified to cut costs. Burns and Martens suggest that engineers and military planners, rather than architects, led the design and

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planning of middle period armories (Burns and Martens 1994, 25, 29). The Dawson building is more sophisticated in design and less utilitarian than many of the state's other middle period armories, suggesting that the architect had some success in blending quality of design with the Guard's need for economy. The interior of the Dawson building contains interesting evidence of these measures. While the central public lobby has a large, dominant stairway which is more elaborate than the foyers of most middle period armories, and while the drill hall and gymnasium/auditorium has both a balcony and stage, the woodwork, light fixtures, and other interior features are almost Spartan, with very simple lines, relatively inexpensive wood trim with no molding or ornamentation, and evidence of very simple construction techniques.

The Dawson Armory and Community Building was designed by C. E. Lewis, an engineer with the Minneapolis firm of Lang, Raugland, and Lewis. Lang, Raugland, and Lewis were among the approximately one dozen firms which designed Minnesota's middle period armories. In addition to the Dawson Armory, the firm designed armories in Benson, Stillwater, Worthington, Moorhead, Hastings, Luverne, and Faribault which were built between 1921 and 1923. C. E. Lewis was the "field representative and liaison with the communities for most of the firm's armory work (Burns and Martens 1994, 72). Burns and Martens consider the Dawson Armory to be one of the two most "stylistically sophisticated" and "functionally complex" of the firms' armories (Burns and Martens 1994, 73). Lang, Raugland, and Lewis also designed a school at Hibbing and several churches and residences in Minneapolis in the 1920s, and a number of commercial buildings in the Midwest in the 1930s. Minor post-1929 modifications to the Dawson Armory were designed by Philip C. Bettenburg who served as the National Guard's principal designer between the mid-1920s and the 1950s.

Middle period armories, like those of the early and late periods, were designed to house the local National Guard's administrative offices, as well as providing troop training facilities like drill halls, shooting ranges, and communications rooms, and support services including locker rooms, showers, kitchens, dining rooms, and areas for the storage and maintenance of arms, ammunition, supplies, equipment, and vehicles.

Middle period armories are designed with a distinct separation between administration areas and the drill hall, and the drill hall is more dominant in middle period armories than in early period designs. In most cases, the drill hall of middle period armories is situated in line with the axis of the front entrance hall, with an axial line running from the front entrance to the rear of the drill hall. The Dawson Armory is one of few exceptions to that trend. In Dawson, the drill hall runs perpendicular to the central entrance axis. The Dawson drill hall and gymnasium/auditorium also has a

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Dawson Armory and Community Building
Dawson, Lac qui Parle, Minnesota

separate (western) entrance, further emphasizing its separation from the administrative area.

Like the armories of the early and late periods, the middle period armories were generally built of brick with reinforced concrete structural systems and with steel trusses supporting the clear span, barrel-vaulted drill hall roofs. The Dawson building is one of few which do not have a barrel-vaulted drill hall roof, but rather have a gabled roof over this space.

The administrative offices in middle period armories are often arranged symmetrically on either side of the central entrance hall. The Dawson building is typical, with approximately four offices and utility rooms located on either side of the central foyer and stairwell on both floors of the building and in the basement. These administrative and utility rooms are similar in size and shape in most middle period armories; their size was presumably dictated by function.

Like the building at Dawson, most middle period armories were constructed for the joint purpose of providing a National Guard training facility and military club, along with a facility for civic and recreational activities. This sharing of functions was not new to middle period armories, but had been common in Minnesota since the 19th century when armories were locally (rather than State) funded and when raising funds through the leasing of auditorium or gymnasium space and the sponsoring of recreational and cultural events was an essential fiscal task of the Guard. The National Guard also promoted the shared use of facilities as a way to increase cooperation between the Guard and local communities. While most middle period armories were planned to be multi-functional, however, the maximum State contribution of \$25,000 was not sufficient in most cases to build more than a basic Guard training building. It was usually only in communities like Dawson, where the City contributed an additional \$20,000, that stages, balconies, and other public recreational facilities were incorporated into the design (Burns and Martens 1994, 19).

Most middle period armories, including the building at Dawson, were constructed to also provide club rooms for veterans' groups such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the American Legion (which had just been formed at the end of World War I). In most towns, like in Dawson, the VFW and American Legion eventually built or leased separate facilities, presumably because fund-raising through the operation of social clubs where alcohol was served (after the repeal of Prohibition in 1933) could not occur at the armory.

DAWSON'S COMMUNITY CENTER

In addition to its architectural significance and its role within Minnesota's statewide National Guard movement, the Dawson Armory and Community Building

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is significant as the building which served as Dawson's principal public cultural, social, and recreational facility.

Dawson is located in a largely rural, agricultural area. Lac qui Parle County was settled relatively late in comparison to other parts of west central Minnesota. It did not receive its first rail line until 1884 when the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway constructed tracks running from Minneapolis, through southwestern Minnesota and Lac qui Parle County, and then straight west into South Dakota. The existence of the rail line led to the establishment of most of the county's townsites, including Dawson in 1884. Dawson was founded by a group of investors including St. Paul banker William Dawson (the town's namesake) who formed a townsite development company to plat the town along the rail line. Beginning in 1885, when Dawson incorporated as a village, residents of Dawson and the nearby town of Madison each attempted to win the county seat and its associated honor, commerce, and populace from Lac qui Parle village, an earlier townsite which had been bypassed by the railroad. Dawson lost the battle to Madison, but remained the second-largest town in Lac qui Parle County. Since the 19th century, the county's economy has been based on the production, marketing, and processing of agriculture, supplemented by an extensive recreational pheasant, goose, and duck hunting industry.

Dawson competed with many other communities for one of the State's proposed post-1916 armory buildings, seeking the infusion of State and Federal dollars and the asset which an important public building could provide. Communities like Dawson sought the prestige, economic boost, and sense of permanence which the existence of an armory could give a town, particularly on the sparsely-settled prairie. They needed the public auditoriums, gymnasiums, and meeting spaces which armories could provide. In many cases, like in Dawson where Company K was organized in October of 1920, National Guard companies were formed shortly before facilities were constructed. Towns competing for armories were required to contribute \$1,000 and a building site, while the State provided a construction allocation which usually did not exceed \$25,000.

Residents of Dawson and the city government recognized the need for a centrally-located facility for municipal, cultural, and recreational activities, and agreed to supplement the \$25,000 State appropriation with local monies. At a November, 1921, city council meeting, a resolution was adopted to issue municipal bonds in the amount of \$20,000 for the armory construction. The public approved the bond issue overwhelmingly at an election held on December 9, 1921, with 263 voters in favor of the project and 65 opposed. In December of 1921 and January of 1922 the council passed further resolutions to finalize the venture by making application to the State Board of Investment for a loan and to construct "a joint armory and Municipal City Hall building by the State of Minnesota and said City of

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Dawson jointly". These resolutions were brought before the voters on January 30, 1922, and were again passed.

In May of 1922, an initial three lots in Block 51 of the City of Dawson were purchased from a local attorney for \$3,000 as the site. The site was prominently located on an important block in the center of Dawson, one-half block west of the main commercial street. It was located across the street to the north of Dawson's brick, Classical Revival style Carnegie Library which had been completed just five years before through the lobbying efforts of the local community and a grant from the Andrew Carnegie Corporation.

In May of 1922, bids were accepted from contractor J. W. Carson of Dawson for \$40,490, and from the architectural firm of Lang, Raugland, and Lewis of Minneapolis for architectural services. During the construction, the city council worked in cooperation with the State Armory Board, submitting all bids and resolutions to the Board for their approval. It wasn't long, however, before the City of Dawson began to encounter financial problems with the State, which was over-extended by the simultaneous construction of so many armories. The December 30, 1922, issue of the Dawson Sentinel reported,

J. W. Carson, local contractor, has received only \$10,000 of more than \$40,000, representing the contract price of the local armory and community building, as a result of blundering on the part of the State Military Board. Even \$1,000 of the sum raised by a local bond issue is held back, in addition to the \$25,000 to be paid by the State. Mr. Carson, who received his last payment in June, is only one of many contractors in different parts of the state, who are embarrassed by the failure of the Military Board to furnish money" (Dawson Sentinel, December 30, 1922).

The newspaper took to task the Military Board and the State of Minnesota for its poor planning. The December 30th article continued,

The law authorizes the construction of three armories a year. This law has been on the statute books since the 'memory of man runneth not to the contrary.' There is a standing tax levy to pay the \$25,000 contributed by the State for each armory, a total of \$65,000 per year. For many years the money went begging. But when the boys came back from the war, conditions changed. Local companies were organized in many places, and many communities made applications for armories, among them Dawson. It was promised more than a year ago that Dawson would be one of the three cities that would participate in the 1922 quota. Instead of three, the board let contracts for the construction of armories in every part of the state, and planned to issue certificates of indebtedness to the extent of more than \$200,000 at a recent meeting. However the board struck a 'snag' [when its] legal authorities advised it that it had already oversubscribed its legal limit when recently it

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issued \$227,000 in certificates. It is evident that the Military Board has committed a serious blunder, which the legislature will be called on to rectify when it meets. It is supposed that the legislature will authorize the issuance of the certificates necessary to fulfill the obligations of late. After that it will probably repeal the armory law, which has been on the statute books since 1903 (Dawson Sentinel, December 30, 1922).

The joint venture was eventually successful, and the building was constructed at a cost of approximately \$52,000. The Sentinel triumphantly reported that, "The citizens of Dawson have every reason to be proud of this building, which after working so hard to get, we can now use for a community center", and continued, "the new building is without a doubt, one of the finest buildings in this section of the state" (Dawson Sentinel, May 24, 1923).

The opening of the new armory and community building in May of 1923 was quite a sensation in Dawson, with all local businesses closing early on the day of the ceremony. Judge Oscar Hallam, former justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court and a candidate for the U.S. Senate, gave the keynote address. Admission was 50 cents, with the proceeds to be used "to buy chairs for the armory. Until these can be procured, planks will have to be used for seats" (Dawson Sentinel, May 24, 1923). Music was furnished by the battalion band of Madison, and Major Ronningen of Madison and Colonel Walsh of St. Paul also spoke to the large gathering. The grand opening was memorable, but it became more so when the electricity failed. The Sentinel reported, "The local armory and community building was officially opened Saturday evening. . . . Just as the program began, the electric lights went off and the armory was in darkness. Two automobiles were run into the armory, after considerable delay, and these furnished light until the power came on" (Dawson Sentinel, May 31, 1923).

The armory and community building originally housed offices for city officials, the city marshal, the city council meeting chambers, and the offices and equipment of the Dawson Fire Department. As the city's primary civic building for many years, it was used for elections and public hearings. In addition to its municipal role, the armory, along with the post office, represented the most prominent symbol of the federal government in the community.

In some Minnesota towns, middle period armory buildings did not actually serve as the primary community center because there were other gymnasiums, auditoriums, and stages in local opera halls or public schools to serve the purpose (Burns and Martens 1994, 24). In Dawson, however, the armory and community building was the only large meeting place in the town.

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Educational, social, and commercial events were held there, including high school graduation services, lectures and plays, carnivals and trade shows.

The October 24, 1923, minutes of the Dawson City Council reflect the broad use of the building by local groups. Rates were set at the meeting and operating costs were divided among the groups using the facility. The city council and the local National Guard unit each paid 25 dollars a month, and the American Legion 10 dollars per month, toward janitorial fees. The American Legion also paid 75 dollars "for the season to help pay for coal and the heating of the building." Rates were set for the use of the building: Shows, 25 dollars per night, three nights, or if more, 20 per night; school entertainments, 15 dollars per night; lectures, 15 dollars per night; dances 25 dollars per night; dances put on by the guard unit 10 dollars per night; dances put on by the Legion, 15 dollars per night; basketball games, 15 dollars per night; basketball practice, 1 dollar per night (City Council Minutes, October 24, 1923).

As the city's and public school's auditorium, the building was the site of high school operettas and plays such as the glee club's "Feast of the Red Corn" and the senior class play "Fifty-Fifty" which were presented to "sold-out" crowds in the spring of 1924. The building was used for baccalaureate and graduation services at which notable speakers such as I. M. Cochran of Carleton College addressed the gathering in 1924. The building served Dawson well as a sports facility for high school and professional sports including special events such as the "Whiz Bang Globe Trotters" which played against a local team in 1927. All indoor high school sporting contests were held there until the construction of a new Dawson High School in the mid-1950s.

The armory and community building also housed industrial and trade shows, including an "Auto Show, Style Revue, and Merchants' Display" which was held March 24 and 25, 1927. The Sentinel anticipated the event as follows:

The biggest community event of the season will take place at the Dawson armory Thursday and Friday of next week when the doors open for the great Auto Show, Style Revue and Merchants' Display staged this year as a second annual event. From all appearances this year's show will eclipse the highly successful shows of last year, staged then for the first time here. The automobile display this year will feature the newest, or 1927 models which have so many splendid features that description is almost impossible. The style revue this year which is again featured by the Olson Company will be remarkable. . . . The assistance of A. M. A. Hanson, local jeweler, and Miss Meille Fons, local milliner, has been called in by the Olson Company in completing the different attire of the twenty-four living models who will pass in revue before the audiences on both nights. Booths on the floor of the

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armory will be used for display of all kinds of merchandise by local dealers (Dawson Sentinel, March 17, 1927).

The building was home to the Oscar Lee post of the American Legion and the Legion Auxiliary. These two groups held all of their meetings and events in the armory beginning in 1923, as well as all Memorial Day services. Lieutenant-Colonel Ezra Cleman of the 135th Minnesota Infantry, national chaplain of the American Legion, spoke at Memorial Day services in 1924 which 400 people attended. The procession, as described in the May 29, 1924, Sentinel, indicates the involvement of the community in these services:

Members of the G.A.R. [Grand Army of the Republic], W.R.C. [Women's Relief Corps], American Legion and Auxiliary have joined in plans to observe Memorial Day. All are invited to take part in the procession at the armory. Following is the order of the procession: Dawson band, Company K, Grand Army of the Republic, Women's Relief Corps, World War veterans, Auxiliary to the American Legion, sons of veterans, decoration girls and boat girls, boy scouts, all civic orders that will join in the parade, school children, citizens on foot and in automobiles (Dawson Sentinel, May 29, 1924).

The building was also home to Dawson's own Company K of the Minnesota National Guard. Company K was officially recognized in October of 1920 and had 89 personnel in 1923. Joel Stageberg was elected the first Captain, Andrew Amundson was the First Lieutenant, and Obert Thompson was the Second Lieutenant in 1920. Company K used the Dawson Armory and Community Building for routine training exercises, fund-raising activities, community benefit events, and as a social hall.

Armories like Dawson's were also used for the training and mobilization of the Guard troops called for active duty at the outset of World War II. Minnesota's 8,000 National Guardsmen, including Company K, were activated during late 1940 and early 1941. The void in the local militia was then filled by the Minnesota State Guard which was formed in 1940 and which by February of 1941 had 4,000 troops statewide (Murphy 1986, 71). The Dawson Armory and others in the state were also used in the extensive effort to recruit and train newly-enlisted personnel for the war. Burns and Martens suggest that "for veterans of the war and their families alike, the armory buildings in each community afford an identifiable 'site' marking the transition point from civilian to military life" (Burns and Martens 1994, 18).

Middle period armories such as the building at Dawson eventually became outdated as the size of local National Guard units increased (Burns and Martens 1994, 22). For example, in the 1920s a typical Minnesota National Guard company was comprised of 66 officers and men, but by 1945 the average

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company was comprised of 135 personnel. The size and amount of military equipment necessary for training also increased and some armories had to be modified. The Dawson Armory, however, remained basically intact and was used by the National Guard until 1992. It is still used as a community recreational center.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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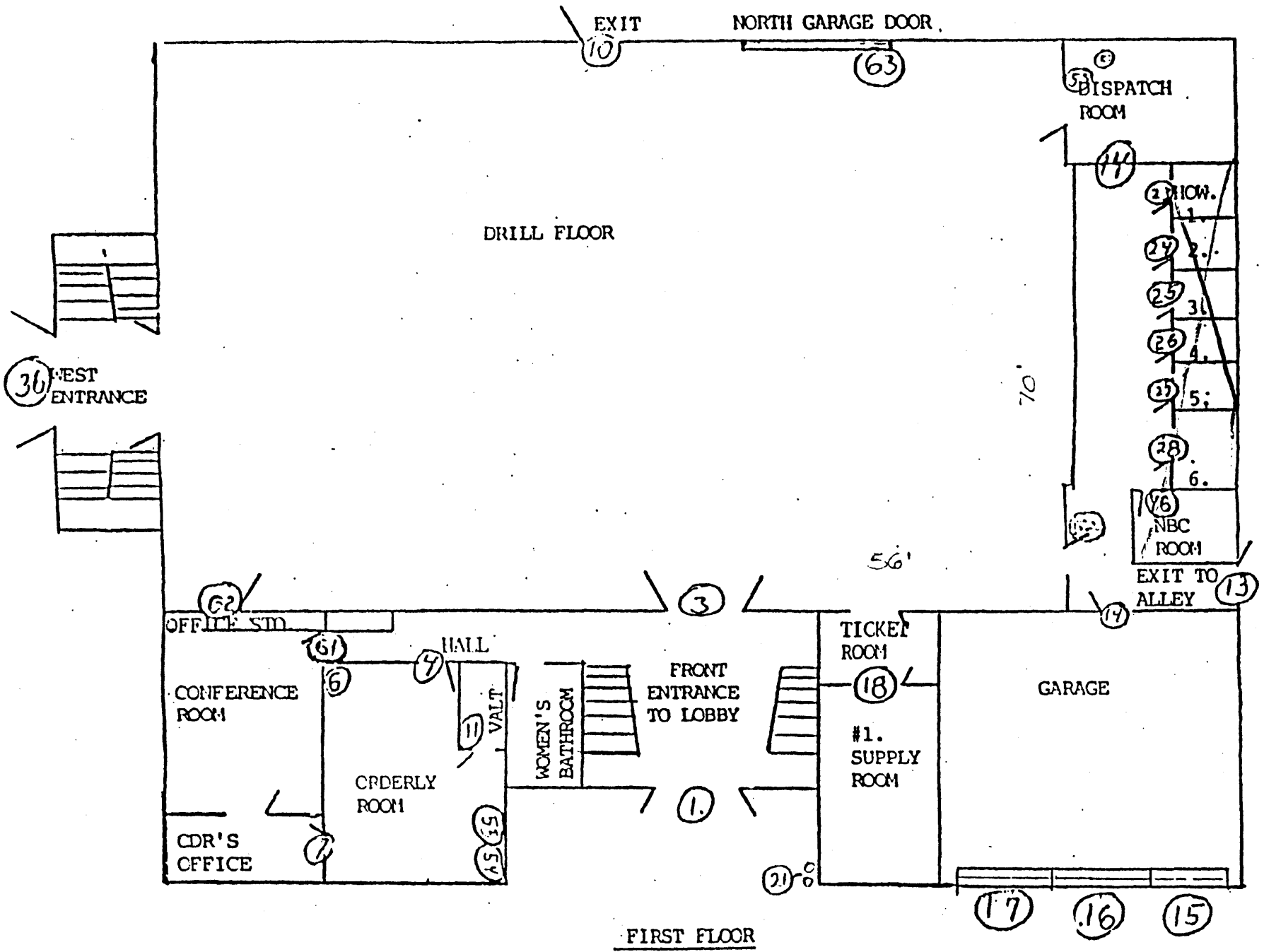
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots Five (5) through Twelve (12), Block Fifty-one (51), City of Dawson.

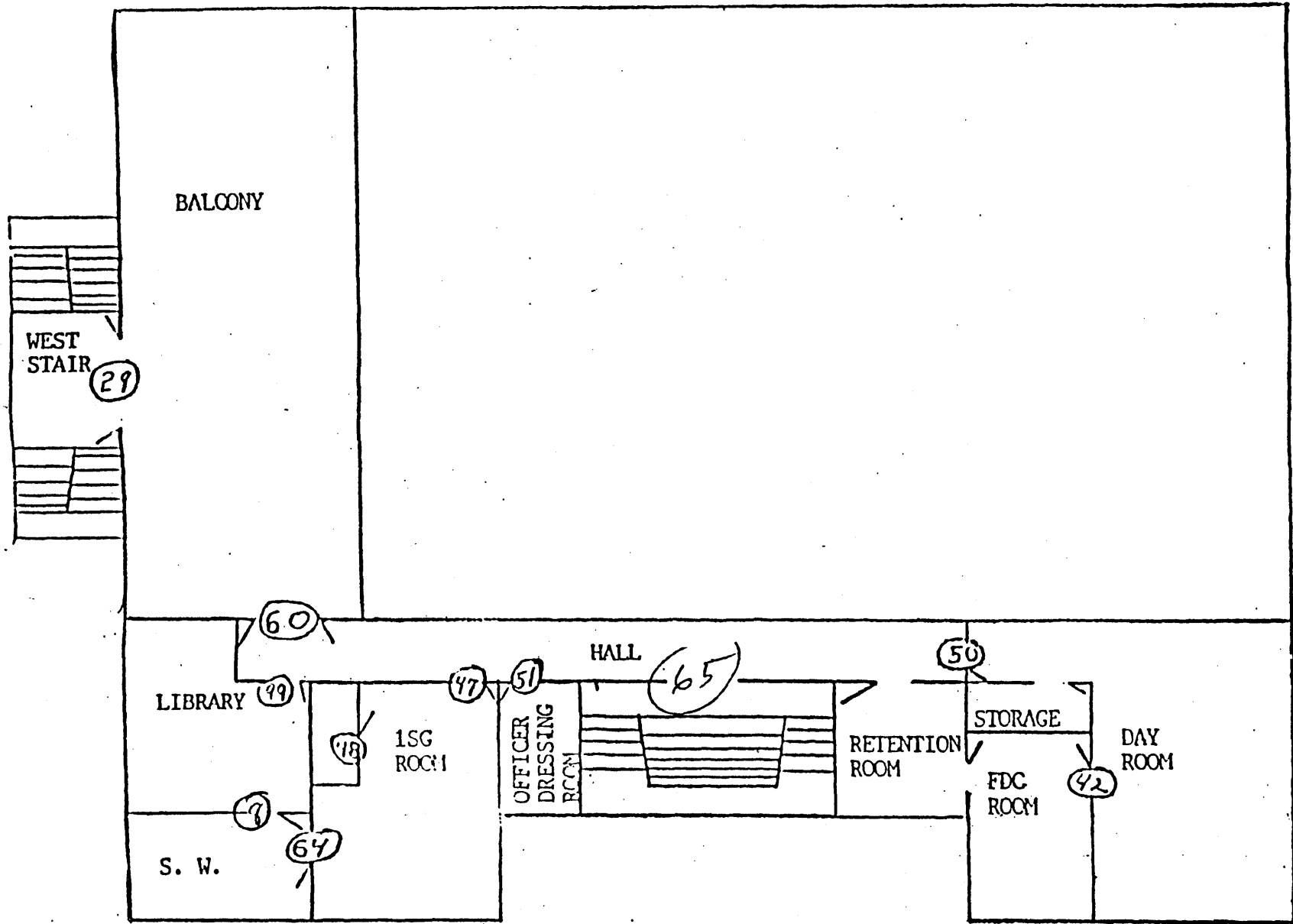
Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the nominated property includes the parcel historically associated with the Dawson Armory and Community Building.



Dawson Armory and Community Building
 Dawson, Lac qui Parle Co., MN

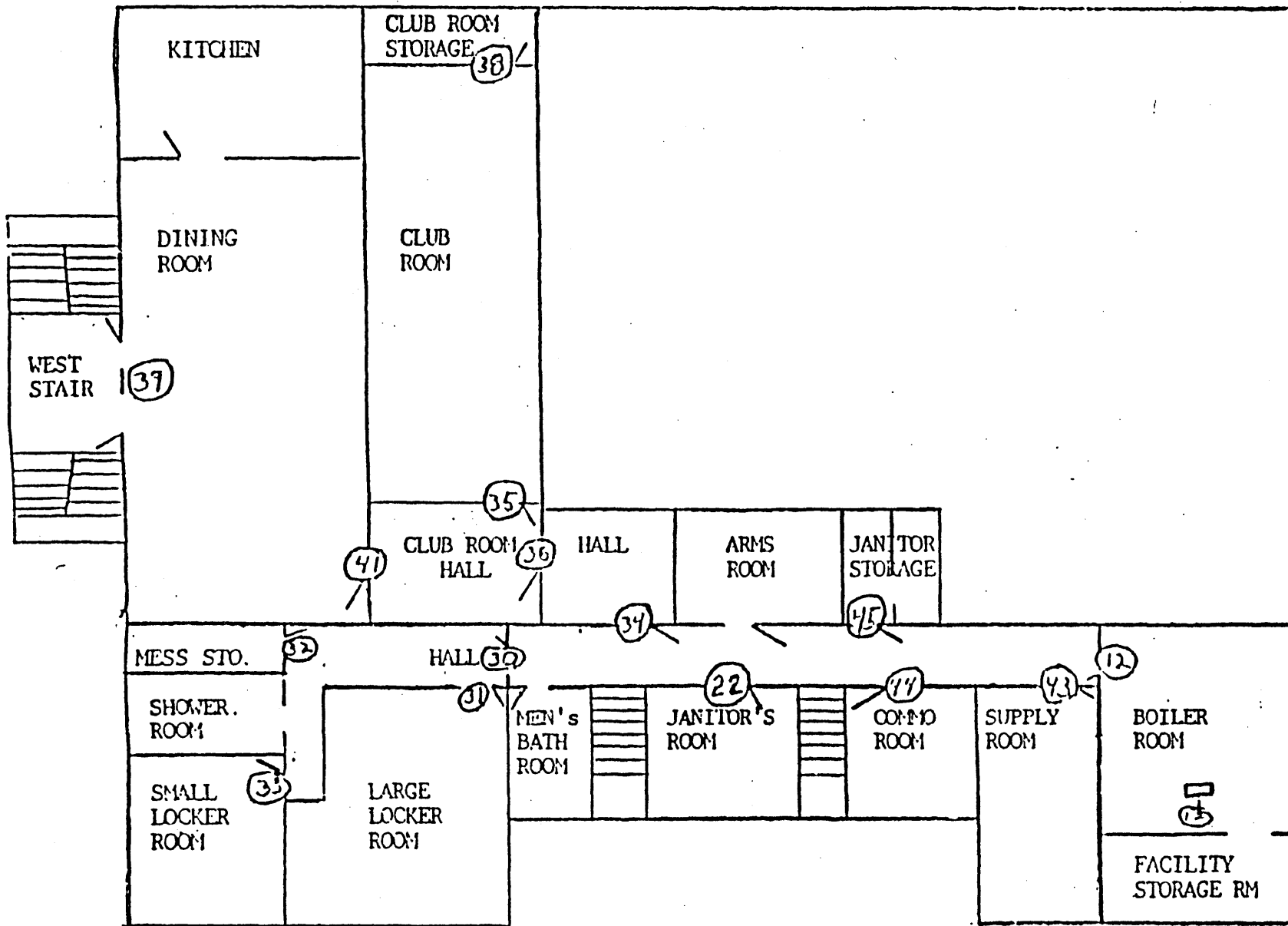
NORTH



2nd FLOOR

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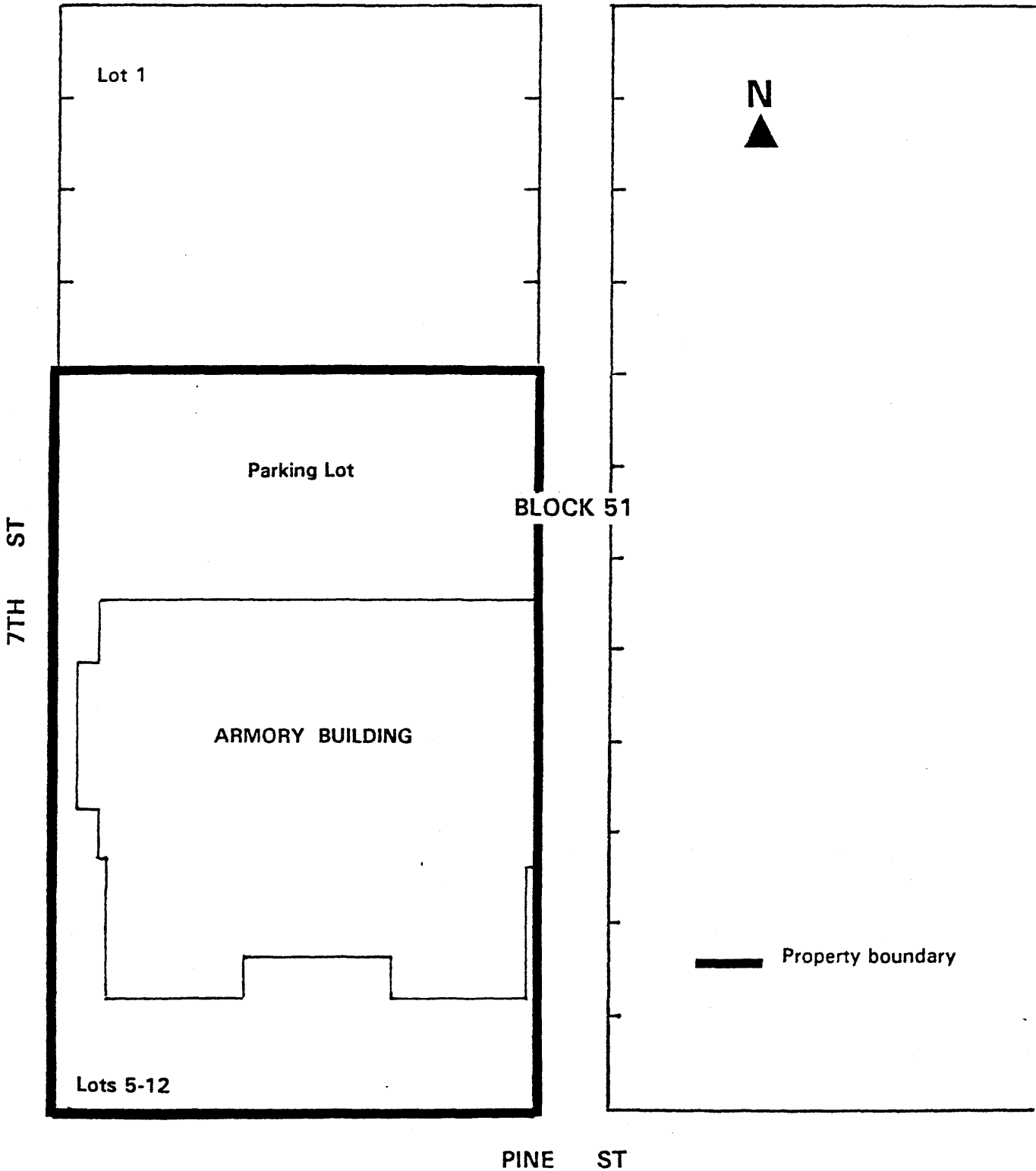
NORTH



BASEMENT FLOOR

Dawson Armory and Community Building
Dawson, Lac qui Parle County

CHESTNUT ST



SCALE : 1" = 40'