

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 29 1985  
date entered SEP 26 1985

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

1. Name

historic Minneapolis Armory

and/or common Minneapolis Armory

2. Location

street & number 500-530 Sixth Street South N/A not for publication

city, town Minneapolis N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota code 22 county Hennepin code 053

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name State of Minnesota, Military Affairs Department

street & number 20 West Twelfth Street

city, town Minneapolis N/A vicinity of state Minnesota

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds, Hennepin County Government Center

street & number 300 South Sixth Street

city, town Minneapolis state Minnesota

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? N/A yes  no

date N/A N/A federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Minneapolis Armory Building is located in the Minneapolis central business district on a block of land 330 feet square. The block is bounded by Fifth and Sixth Streets South and Fifth and Portland Avenues. The building's exterior dimensions are 330' x 215'. The length of the building covers the entire block, from sidewalk to sidewalk, between Fifth and Sixth Streets, with the main entrance on Sixth Street. The Fifth Avenue and Portland Avenue sides of the building are set back 58 feet from the sidewalks, allowing for lawn and several trees. Basement ramps, providing entrance for motorized equipment, are built on the Fifth and Portland Avenue sides of the structure. The building, constructed in 1935-36, is divided into two sections: an 85-foot high vaulted drill hall, 270 feet (nine bays) by 206 feet at the Fifth Street end of the block, and a four storey office building, or headhouse, 60 feet by 206 feet at the Sixth Street end of the block.

The exterior surfaces of the building are of ashlar coursed granite for the foundation, textured buff brick laid in a running bond for the walls, and Mankato stone trim. The overall massing of the building, the use of rounded corner bricks and rounded cut stone on all the exterior corners, and the overall lack of decoration point to the influence of PWA Moderne architectural style on the building. The only ornamentation is on the Sixth Street side of the office building. This appears in the form of two main entrances, each of which is flanked by rounded pilasters having granite bases, brick shafts, and Mankato stone capitals, all occurring in the same vertical plane. Each entrance is surmounted by a raised carving of an eagle with a 14-foot wind span. Below the eagle are three decorative bronze screens with the word "Armory" carved in raised letters below. Inset at ground level, each entrance has four bronze three panel doors. A circular cartouche, a facsimile of the "U. S. Minn." collar ornament worn by the National Guardsmen, is centered on the Sixth Street side of the drill hall roof. The remaining ornamentation for the building is derived from the simple division of the bays by compound rectangular pilasters. Each bay is then further divided by simple brick pilasters and windows. The drill hall utilizes industrial steel awning windows and the office building has 3/3 double hung windows with wooden frames. Centered in front of the Sixth Street side of the building is a raised concrete island on which are mounted two 4.7-inch cannons given by the United States Government for the purpose of decoration. The cannons, which were made by hand, are original models of artillery that were never put into production. A 75-foot flagpole has the island as its base.

The Armory's structure is a combination of structural steel and reinforced concrete design. Spread footings support the reinforced concrete walls and columns of the drill hall. Eight three-hinged steel arches spaced 30 feet, center to center, support the drill hall roof. The shoes of the trusses are supported at the first floor level by reinforced concrete columns set inside the basement wall. Reinforced concrete columns also support balconies that run along the two sides and the Sixth Street end of the drill hall on the building's interior. These balconies have a total seating capacity of 4,500 persons.

(see continuation sheet)

# 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** 1935-36 **Builder/Architect** P. C. Bettenburg  
 Walter H. Wheeler, engineer

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Minneapolis Armory is primarily significant as an outstanding example of the PWA Moderne style of architecture in Minnesota. Designed by St. Paul architect, P. C. Bettenburg, the building was constructed in 1935-36 to provide quarters for 27 artillery, infantry, and naval units of the Minnesota National Guard and Naval Militia. The structure is also significant for its innovative reinforced concrete floor system which uses the Wheeler Shear Head, invented and patented by Minneapolis engineer Walter H. Wheeler, to produce smooth ceiling slabs.

The Moderne style of architecture has its roots in the German design school, the Bauhaus, founded by Walter Gropius in 1919. To the Bauhaus architects and industrial designers, simplicity was the catchword, and form followed function. The art movements of cubism and futurism also contributed to the Moderne mode. From these origins emerged the two distinct facets of the Moderne: the Zigzag Moderne with its vertical schemes and emphasis on symmetry, balance, and stylized ornamentation, and the Streamline Moderne, an outgrowth of the machine aesthetic with emphasis on asymmetrical compositions of volumes and elevations, the horizontal in surfaces, and the use of the parabolic curve. The objectives of the Moderne were efficiency, economy, and right appearance. The PWA Moderne style combines elements from both the Zigzag and the Streamline and blends them with the formal proportions of the Neo-Classical Revival mode. PWA Moderne is most closely associated with the architecture of Federal government buildings but was also used for private commercial structures. The Minneapolis Armory, with its rounded corner bricks, rounded cut stone on all exterior corners and rounded pilasters on the Sixth Street facade along with its use of recessed industrial steel awning windows, symmetrical form, and classical horizontal proportions exemplifies the PWA Moderne style at its best.

The architect, P. C. Bettenburg, was educated at St. Thomas College and Military Academy, St. Paul. He practiced architecture and engineering in St. Paul and Little Falls and held the rank of major in the Minnesota National Guard. During World War II, Bettenburg served as a U. S. Army infantry regimental commander in North Africa and in Europe. At the close of the war, he returned to St. Paul and resumed his architectural practice with the firm of Bettenburg Townsend Stolte and Comb Associates. This firm is credited with the master plan and most of the buildings for the Camp Ripley Military Reservation along with several religious and school buildings in St. Paul. Bettenburg used his National Guard rank to gain commissions for more than twenty known armories in the state; among these are the armories at St. Paul and West St. Paul (1958) and St. Cloud (1960). At the time of his death in 1963, Bettenburg had reached the rank of major general in command of the Viking Unit, Minnesota National Guard.

(see continuation sheet)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet page 6.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2.5

Quadrangle name Minneapolis South

Quadrangle scale 7.5' Series

UTM References

A 

1	5	4	7	9	2	4	0	4	9	8	0	0	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 1 through 10 Block 92 Town of Minneapolis

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

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

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

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title John Douglas Mecum and Muriel Nord

organization City of Minneapolis

date May, 1985

organization Heritage Preservation Commission

street & number 210 City Hall

telephone 612-348-6538

city or town Minneapolis

state Minnesota

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Russell W. Fridley*

Russell W. Fridley

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 8/5/85

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

~~Entered in the~~  
National Register

date 9-26-85

*Helene Byers*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The Fifth Street end of the drill hall is of structural steel infilled with windows. The floors of the drill hall and office building are of a special flat-slab construction in which all column capitals, beams and dropped panels are eliminated by using a structural steel column-head assembly concreted into the slab. This patented "smooth ceilings" flat-slab system was devised by Walter H. Wheeler, a Minneapolis engineer, who was the structural engineer for the Armory. This system produced a 12½ inch thick floor for the drill hall that is supported by steel columns spaced 30 feet center to center. The drill hall has a full basement that was used for storage and service of motorized equipment. One large section of the basement was fitted with water, sewer, and gas lines to permit quick installation of living and cooking facilities for extra troops in case of an emergency. Within the first floor of the office building is a trophy room with examples of Federal Art Project murals by Elsa Jenne and Lucia Wiley. There is a small ballroom and gymnasium on the third floor of the office building which is spanned by steel beams at the roof level.

In 1960, two 39' x 56' garage structures were added. These garages are set back one bay from the Fifth Street end of the building on the Fifth and Portland Avenue sides. The construction materials of these two additions match those of the original building but use square cut corners.

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The structural engineer, Walter H. Wheeler, was consulting architect and engineer to the Minnesota State Armory Building Commission and a partner in the Minneapolis firm of Wheeler Tillittand Associates. Wheeler invented and patented the Wheeler Shear Head, a structural steel column head assembly enclosed within a reinforced concrete floor slab, therefore eliminating the need for column capitals, beams, and dropped panels. The smooth ceiling obtained with this special type of flat-slab design is adaptable to all types of buildings, simplifies construction, eliminates wasted space, and reduces the cost of fire-proff buildings.<sup>1</sup> The first application of the Wheeler Shear Head was the U. S. Appraisers Building, Baltimore (1934). Floors of the Minneapolis Armory's drill hall and office building were an early local application; the flat ceiling construction of the drill hall allowed maximum clearance for army trucks and other motorized equipment serviced and stored in the basement garage.

Two examples of Federal Art Project murals are still existent in the Armory's trophy room. Created in 1937, these murals employ the fresco technique of painting on freshly spread moist plaster, using earth pigments mixed with water.

The mural entitled "History of the National Guard" was painted by Lucia Wiley. In this composition the large central figure of a National Guardsman is surrounded by individual narrative scenes depicting National Guard contributions in both war and peacetime. At the time this work was undertaken, Wiley, an established artist and a leader in efforts to revive the art of fresco painting in Minnesota, also served as a supervisor on government sponsored art projects. In addition to her work for the Armory she created murals for post offices in Long Prairie and International Falls and in Oregon, Illinois, and Wisconsin.<sup>2</sup> Adjacent to Wiley's work in the trophy room is a second fresco called "Early Minnesota," painted by Elsa Jemne. This mural portrays a female Minnesota seated among her natural resources of grain, forest, water, and iron ore. The scenes encircling her illustrate the industries evolving from these natural resources, and early Minnesota history is delineated by figures of Indians and early French settlers.<sup>3</sup> Like Wiley, Jemne received numerous commissions through government sponsored art project programs in the 1930s. She painted section murals in the Ely and Hutchinson post offices and for the Women's City Club (now Minnesota Museum of Art) in St. Paul. Jemne also did portrait and landscape work and illustrated children's books. One person shows of her work were presented by the Walker Art Center in 1957 and by the Women's City Club in 1961.

The Public Works Administration (PWA) was established in 1933 under the National Industrial Recovery Act and continued until 1943. The main purpose of the creation of the PWA was to increase employment of labor in the construction of permanent and useful public projects and in the building industries and the factories which supply building materials. The character of the architecture, the materials used and the type of construction were left entirely to the

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private architects and engineers employed by the owners on Non-federal projects and those employed by the Federal agencies on Federal projects. The PWA acted somewhat in the role of a bank or a large building and loan association. It was authorized to make loans and grants-in-aid to states, municipalities, and other public bodies; to allot funds to a limited extent to other Federal agencies for construction projects; and, for a time, to make loans to private corporations. Altogether it was responsible for building more than 34,000 projects at a total cost of about \$6 billion. The Minneapolis Armory was built at a project cost of \$932,453.00 with funds provided by a loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, Washington, D. C., and a thirty percent PWA grant.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the Minneapolis Armory, other notable local existent PWA projects are: Pioneer Hall, a men's dormitory, University of Minnesota, (1934) and the Sumner Field Housing Project (1936-38) and the Pig's Eye Sewage Treatment Plant, sited on the Mississippi River in St. Paul (1938) which provides complete sewage disposal for both Minneapolis and St. Paul. In Minnesota, PWA-financed projects of special engineering or architectural merit include: Dam Number 5-A, Upper Mississippi Navigation Project, Winona (1936); Minnesota State Hospital for Mental Diseases, Moose Lake (1938); Village Hall, Bovey (1935); Community Building, Ely (1938); public libraries at Rochester (1937) and at Elbow Lake (1934); and the Hibbing Memorial Building, Hibbing, (1935). Armories (all designed by Bettenburg) were built at Albert Lea (1940), Brainerd (1936), Moorhead (1935), and at Camp Ripley (1937).<sup>5</sup>

Twenty-seven units of the Minnesota National Guard and Naval Militia were the initial occupants of the Minneapolis Armory. These included headquarters for the 59th Field Artillery Brigade (General John Vessey, Jr., a Minneapolis native and current chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, began his military career as a private in that headquarters), and for the 68th Infantry Brigade, the entire 151st Field Artillery Regiment, several companies of the 135th Infantry Regiment, and the 9th Battalion of the Minnesota Naval Militia.<sup>6</sup>

Historically, the building's two primary tenants, the 135th and the 151st, were also the state's most distinguished. Both had become identified with Minneapolis and both traced their roots to the Civil War. The 135th (previously designated as the 1st Infantry Regiment and, during the Spanish-American War, the 13th) was the state's oldest Guard unit and also the senior volunteer regiment in the Union Army during the Civil War. Its charge on Cemetery Ridge during a critical moment in the Battle of Gettysburg is recognized as one of the most courageous in American military history. Its actions during the Spanish-American War and the Phillipine Insurrection were particularly noteworthy. As part of the crack 42nd "Rainbow" Division during World War I, the achievements of the 151st Artillery in France became renowned. Its guns fired almost continuously during the closing four months of the war.

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Its commander, Colonel George Leach, returned a war hero and later became a four-term mayor of Minneapolis. Both organizations went on during World War II to garner still more accolades in North Africa and in Italy as elements of the Minnesota-originated 34th Division.



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Footnotes: 8. Significance

1. Wheeler, Walter H. "Steel and Concrete Construction Combined in Armory," Engineering News-Record, January 23, 1936, p. 125.

2. Cohn, Syma. "Women Artisits in Minnesota: The WPA," text for video presentation, pp. 3 and 4. Minneapolis: Women's Art Registry of Minnesota, 1978.

3. Ibid.

4. Short, C. W., and R. Stanley Brown. Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies Between the Years 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1939, p. 98.

5. Ibid.

6. With second and third floor balconies designed to resemble the bridge of a ship, the Minneapolis Armory was one of the few landlocked armories built to also accomodate the needs of a naval militia headquarters.

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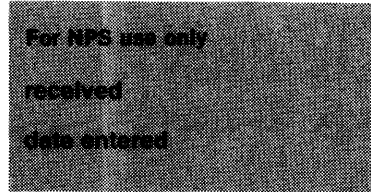
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Cohn, Syma. "Women Artists in Minnesota: The WPA," text for video presentation. Minneapolis: Women's Art Registry of Minnesota, 1978.

Grief, Martin. Depression Modern. New York: Universe Books, 1975.

Gebhard, David, and Tom Martinson. A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

Short, C. W., and R. Stanley Brown. Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies Between the Years 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1939.

Smith, J. W. "Profile of a Style: Art Deco," Minneapolis Tribune, August 22, 1982.

Wheeler, Walter H. "Steel and Concrete Construction Combined in Armory," Engineering News-Record, January 23, 1936.

Data on the history of the Minnesota National Guard and Naval Militia was provided by Jack K. Johnson, Associate Academic Dean, College of Liberal Arts, Hamline University, St. Paul, and historian for the Minnesota Army National Guard.

Newspaper clippings file, Minneapolis Armory, Minneapolis History Collection, Minneapolis Public Library.

Architects' Biographical files, Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, St. Paul.

Telephone interview with James C. Tillitt, Tillitt & Associates, Inc., Engineers, Minneapolis, December 5, 1983.

Telephone interview with Gordon Comb, Minneapolis, former partner of P. C. Bettenburg, December 6, 1983.

Building permit records. Minneapolis Department of Inspections.