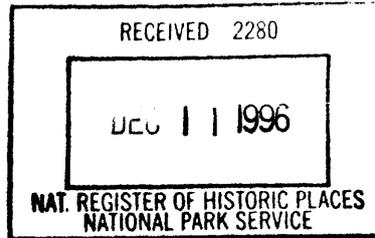


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



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 item by marking "x" 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. Place 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 St. Peter Armory

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 419 South Minnesota Avenue  not for publication N/A

city or town St. Peter  vicinity N/A

state Minnesota code MN county Nicollet code 103 zip code 56082

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* 11/27/96  
Signature of certifying official/Title Ian R. Stewart Date  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
State of 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* 1.9.97  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

St. Peter Armory  
Name of Property

Nicollet County, Minnesota  
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

Social: meeting hall

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: business office

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals:

Late Gothic Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Limestone

roof Metal

other

**Narrative Description**

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

St. Peter Armory  
Name of Property

Nicollet County, Minnesota  
County and State

**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)

Social History

Architecture

Military

**Period of Significance**

1912-1946

**Significant Dates**

1912

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Denson, James F. (architect)

Fredricksen, Ole (builder)

**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:

Nicollet County Historical Society

St. Peter Armory  
Name of Property

Nicollet County, Minnesota  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 5	4 2 3 6 3 0	4 9 0 7 9 2 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, 1996

street & number 15 E. 9th 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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St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota

## 7. DESCRIPTION

The St. Peter Armory is located in the central business district of the city of St. Peter, a community of approximately 9,400 residents in Nicollet County in south central Minnesota. The armory stands on the eastern side of South Minnesota Avenue, the city's main commercial thoroughfare. Rather than being situated on a corner lot which is typical for Minnesota armories, the armory is located one lot north of the corner of the block. The building fills most of its 9,000 square foot site and was built close to the southern edge of the lot. There are commercial buildings north of the property and across Minnesota Avenue to the west, a 1903 Carnegie Library (listed on the NRHP on 5-19-83) south of the property, and houses across the alley to the east.

The armory property has small areas of grassy lawn on the western and southern sides of the building and a service alley along its northern side. There are deciduous boulevard trees and a concrete public sidewalk along Minnesota Avenue. North of the armory's main entrance is a tall metal flagpole with a simple round poured concrete base. The flagpole was probably installed in the 1950s. Evergreen shrubs currently flank the entrance. Photographs from the 1910s and early 1920s show that there were originally small patches of grassy lawn surrounding the building. A 19th century cannon originally stood in front of the building and there was no flagpole in the yard. There are no trees or shrubs in front of the armory in the historical photographs.

St. Peter's armory was built in 1912-1913 and is mildly Gothic Revival in style. It is an excellent example of Minnesota's "early period" armories and represents a transition in armory design which moved away from the heavy, fortress-like designs common to earlier armories toward the more simple designs which characterize the armories of the 1920s. The building was designed by St. Paul architect James F. Denson and built by St. Peter contractor Ole Fredricksen.

The armory is a two story building which measures approximately 60 feet wide by 100 feet long. It has a rectangular plan with a two story headhouse at the main facade and a rear drill hall. It has a poured concrete foundation and load-bearing masonry walls. The main facade is faced with smooth reddish-brown brick (possibly Menominie pressed brick) with white mortar joints and local Kasota limestone trim. The side and rear walls are faced with orange-colored brick. The headhouse has a flat roof and the drill hall has a vaulted roof which is covered with sheet metal roofing with raised seams. There is a brick chimney near the northeastern corner of the building.

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The main facade of the armory, which faces west, is a symmetrical composition of two brick corner towers which flank a slightly-recessed central entrance bay. The corner towers are broad in massing, approximately 34 feet tall, and topped by crenelated parapets. The central bay is topped by a gabled parapet wall which is approximately 32 feet tall. There was originally a 20-foot-tall flagpole rising from the peak of the central bay. The windows on the main facade are recessed slightly. The towers have small square windows at the first story and trios of narrow rectangular windows which together form larger office windows at the second story. There are similar windows on the sides of the towers. The central bay has a large segmental arched window at the second story which is comprised of three tall, narrow windows which are divided by brick mullions. The windows are multi-paned and are set into openings which have brick sills.

The main entrance is located within a shed-roofed brick foyer which is supported by four battered, buttress-like piers. Letters reading "ARMORY" were originally affixed at the cornice level of the foyer and there were two small globe lamps attached to the wall flanking the entrance. The rectangular entrance opening was originally filled with massive double-leaf wooden doors which had few very small windows. The entrance is now filled with new glass and metal double-leaf doors, a transom light, and sidelights. On either side of the entrance are large Kasota limestone panels which bear the inscriptions "Co. K. 2nd Inf." and "M.N.G.". A set of broad poured concrete steps with three simple metal handrails leads up to the entrance. These steps were installed in 1941-1942 to replace the original poured concrete steps which had low brick and poured concrete plinths.

The five-bay side walls have large segmental arched window openings with bracketed brick sills. The window openings are now filled with wood. The side wall bays are divided by shallow buttress-like piers. The basement of the armory has square windows openings, now filled with brick. There were originally metal bars over the basement windows on the main facade.

The first floor of the armory originally contained the company room, an officers' room, and a bathroom (all in the headhouse) and a rear drill hall. The interior had plastered walls and birch wood trim. The drill hall has a reinforced concrete floor covered with hardwood flooring and a clear span ceiling which is supported by metal trusses which are approximately 14 feet apart.

The second story consisted of two offices and a bathroom in the headhouse which were originally left unfinished due to budget constraints, and a balcony which looked down onto the drill floor. The second story offices were finished in 1919.

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The basement originally contained a locker room, shower room, supply room, material room (which doubled as a dining room), boiler room, coal room, a 7-foot by 60-foot rifle range, and a 12-foot by 75-foot bowling alley. Portions of the basement were originally left unfinished until 1919. The stairways in the building are constructed of reinforced concrete.

Repairs and improvements were made, possibly in the 1930s, when new concrete floors were laid in the supply room, material room, and bowling alley. Steel bars were placed on the material room windows. A loading dock and new stairway were built on the northern side of the building at the supply room and on the eastern side at the drill hall. A 1/2" "nu-wood" ceiling was installed in the drill hall. In addition, plaster was repaired, interior rooms were painted, windows were caulked, and exterior woodwork was painted. Philip C. Bettenburg, the Minnesota National Guard's principal engineer and architect during the 1920s through the early 1960s, drew the plans for these improvements.

In the fall of 1940 the armory was repainted and its woodwork refinished. In 1941 several more changes were made to the building. Most importantly, a flat-roofed, 61-foot by 48-foot rear garage was added which extended the building to the alley. The addition had two 12-foot-wide vehicle entrances with four-leaf doors on the northern side and large rectangular window openings with brick sills and steel multi-paned sash. During the same remodeling project, the basement bowling alley was converted to a rifle range and the previous rifle range eliminated to widen the basement hallway. A new kitchen was added and an enlarged dining area was created from the former material room. The supply rooms and ordnance room at the northern end of the basement were remodeled. The basement windows were filled with brick. On the main facade, the concrete steps were replaced and new wooden doors were installed. Changes were made to the entrances at the sides and rear of the building. P. C. Bettenburg again designed the alterations. In 1951 the steam heating system was remodeled from plans by Bettenburg, Townsend, and Stolte. In the 1950s the kitchen was remodeled and a classroom was created in the basement.

After the National Guard sold the armory, the interior was renovated in 1992 to convert the building to office space. The basic room arrangement remains but most of the original interior finish work and fixtures have been covered or removed. For example, in the drill hall the hardwood floors are now covered by carpeting, the original woodwork has been removed, a false ceiling has been installed, and a small office has been created in the northwestern corner. The floor of the rear garage has also been covered with carpeting and the garage doors have been replaced with large windows. Some of the partitioning in the basement has been changed. The second story balcony has been converted to a storage area but the bleachers remain.

The exterior of the building is basically intact.

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St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota

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### 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The St. Peter Armory, built in 1912-1913, is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A (significance to the broad patterns of our history) in the areas of Military and Social History and under Criterion C (distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction) in the area of Architecture. The armory is significant as the first State-owned armory to be completed in Minnesota and as one of the state's oldest extant armories. Architecturally, the building is significant as an excellent example of Minnesota's so-called "early period armories" which pre-date World War I and as an intact example of an important transition in historic armory design. The building is also important because it served as the center of military affairs in St. Peter and as an important social and recreational center. The property is significant within the statewide historic context entitled "Railroads and Agricultural Development 1870-1940" and within the "Cultural Development and Public Life" context established by the St. Peter Heritage Preservation Commission.

#### MINNESOTA'S EARLY ARMORIES

The St. Peter Armory is historically significant as the first armory in Minnesota to be completed under the jurisdiction of the Minnesota Board of Armory Supervisors and as one of the oldest extant armories in the state.

Volunteer militia units had been organized in various Minnesota cities during the 1850s and had served in conflicts such as the Civil War and the U. S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862. Minnesota's first armories were built in Winona (razed) and Minneapolis (razed) around 1881 at the same time that the first significant numbers of armories were being built nationwide. The state legislature formalized the National Guard and began to allocate funds to guard units in an 1883 state law known as the Military Code. During the 1880s and 1890s the state's guardsmen were called to help control civil unrest and to assist with accidents and natural disasters. In 1898 more than 1,200 Minnesota guardsmen were mustered for service in the Spanish-American War. At that time most guard units had little equipment and were training in meeting halls, commercial buildings, dance halls, or in basements. Minnesota's few armories which were built around the turn of the century included armories in Duluth (circa 1896, razed), Red Wing (1901, a combined armory and Masonic Hall), Owatonna (1901, razed), and St. Paul (1903, razed).

The National Guard was strengthened under the Dick Act of 1903 which sought to transform the states' guards into a reserve which could more effectively back up the nation's regular troops. The Dick Act was passed in response to

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deficiencies in the U.S. armed forces identified during the Spanish-American War, and to concerns that the U.S. would be drawn into future international conflicts. The Act required that the states' militias be organized, equipped, and trained like the Regular Army. It increased federal control over operations and increased annual federal grants to the states for guard units. The Minneapolis Armory, built in 1905-07 (razed), was one of the first armories in Minnesota to be built with partial state funding following passage of the Dick Act (Murphy 1989, 68). A second federal law passed in 1908 (also sponsored by Congressman Charles Dick) increased funding for the Guard. Provisions of the Dick Act were translated at the state level with legislation passed in 1908.

Minnesota had very few armories until these measures instituted the state funding of armories and the creation of the Minnesota Board of Armory Supervisors in 1911. The Board was created by the state legislature to oversee the construction of armories across the state. The Board was authorized to build three armories per year. The legislature at first appropriated \$10,000 to each new armory and increased this amount to \$15,000 in 1913. Armory construction costs were to be shared equally between the State and the host city. Armories built before 1911 generally had been financed with municipal money and through private fundraising.

The Dick Act and its companion bills in Congress and the state legislature stimulated the first boom in armory construction in Minnesota. The first money was appropriated in the fiscal year ending July 31, 1911 to build armories in Austin, Redwood Falls, and Zumbrota, and in the year ending July 31, 1912 to build armories in Princeton, St. Peter, and Minneapolis (apparently improvements to the 1905-1907 building). The first of these five armories to be completed and dedicated was the St. Peter Armory which was dedicated on March 24, 1913 (Kolb 1982). Approximately 21 new armories were built between 1912 and 1916, primarily in cities located in the southern half of the state:

Austin	1912-1913
St. Peter	1912-1913
Zumbrota	1912-1913
Princeton	1913
Redwood Falls	1913
Faribault	1914
Madison	1914
Mankato	1914
New Ulm	1914
Pine City	1914
Worthington	1914

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Crookston	1914-1915
Fairmont	1914-1915
Olivia	1914-1915
Anoka	1915
Duluth	1915
Northfield	1915
Owatonna	1915
Rochester	1915
Winona	1915
Crosby	1916

The St. Peter Armory is one of the most intact of the first five armories built by the State of Minnesota under its armory construction program. The Zumbrota Armory (1912-1913) has been altered with a large addition on the main facade, the Austin Armory (1912-1913) has been demolished, and the Redwood Falls Armory (1913) has been incorporated into a downtown shopping mall. Of the first five armories built under the program, the St. Peter (1912-1913) and the Princeton (1913) armories are the most intact. Many of the state's other pre-1917 armories have been altered or demolished.

## ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Architecturally, the St. Peter Armory is significant as an excellent example of Minnesota's so-called "early period" armories, the group of armories which were built before 1919. (Armories built between 1919 and 1929 in Minnesota have been classified by historians as "middle period" armories and those built in the 1930s as "late period" armories.)

Stylistically, the St. Peter Armory has a mildly Gothic Revival or Medieval-influenced design. An overwhelming number of the nation's pre-World War I armories, including those in Minnesota, were constructed in the "Medieval Revival", "Military Gothic", or so-called "castellated" style which had been popular in armory design since the 1880s.

Castellated armories were symbolic fortresses with thick and often battered walls, turrets and towers, crenelation, lancet-like windows, and sometimes even moats and drawbridges. Their design was intimidating and authoritarian during a time when (beginning with a major railroad strike of 1877) state militias were most often used by state governments to break strikes and to maintain civic order during riots (Fogelson 1989, 149, 154-157).

While armories designed in this mode were built in the Midwest until World War I, a movement away from the castellated style had begun on the East Coast by 1905 and 1906. Some architects began to design armories which seemed less forboding and began to downplay, rather than exaggerate, references to the medieval military. The massing of the buildings became lighter and walls

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were less often battered, windows became larger to let in more light and air, and drill halls became an increasingly important part of the design rather than being hidden behind battlements. The trend to subdue military motifs in armory design continued through the 1920s when Minnesota's "middle period" armories were built. By the time the Art Deco and Moderne style armories of the 1930s were constructed, such references were nearly gone or very stylized.

This shift in armory design was a response to several forces. One was pressure from the very popular Classical Revival style which, by 1905, was being used for banks, libraries, city halls, and other prominent structures in nearly every U.S. community. Not only were armory designers influenced by Classical symmetry and simplicity, but they were being asked to design armories which would be more compatible with nearby Neo-Classical public buildings (Fogelson 1989, 206). In addition, the function of armories changed after about 1900 as they became host to more civilian and community functions rather than being used solely for arms storage and military training. Architects began to design armories which were less intimidating and more hospitable (Fogelson 1989, 208, 211).

A few examples of the more exaggerated castellated form were built in Minnesota including the St. Paul (1903, razed) and Minneapolis (1905-1907, razed) armories. The armories in New Ulm (1914, listed on the NRHP on 12-31-79), Madison (1914, extant), Mankato (1914, extant), and Rochester (1915, listed on the NRHP on 12-02-80) also incorporate fairly elaborate turrets, towers, and lancet-like windows in their designs. While most early period armories in Minnesota followed the convention of Medieval Revival designs, there were rare exceptions such as the Zumbrota Armory (1912-13, extant) which has a Renaissance-inspired design (much of which is obscured by an addition to the main facade).

The St. Peter Armory, built in 1912-1913, is an excellent and basically intact example of the transition in armory design away from the strongly castellated form toward the less picturesque and seemingly more functional designs which characterize the "middle period" armories of the 1920s.

While the design of the St. Peter Armory incorporates Medieval motifs, the overall effect is simpler and less exaggerated than the castellated armories of the previous 30 years. Rather than ornamental turrets, for example, the building has wide, square corner towers which house the offices. The crenelation at the top of the towers is stylized, and the dominant window at the center of the main facade is expansive. While the headhouse is the most important element in the design, the drill hall is not hidden from view and has large segmental arched window openings.

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Minnesota's early period armories, like the St. Peter Armory, were planned by the Minnesota Board of Armory Supervisors which selected armory sites and approved architectural drawings and specifications. The early period armories were designed by a variety of architectural firms hired by the Board. (It was not until the 1920s and 1930s that armories tended to be designed by just a few firms, or by the National Guard's own architect.)

The St. Peter Armory was designed by James F. Denson, a St. Paul architect who is not well known. Denson apparently practiced architecture in St. Paul beginning around 1909 and was at one time a member of the firm Postle, Mahler, and Denson. Denson's only other known design in the state is the Finch Building, a wholesaler's headquarters built in 1911 at 366 Wacouta Street in St. Paul. It is not known whether Denson designed any other armories in the state.

The armory was constructed by one of St. Peter's leading building contractors, Ole Fredricksen. Fredricksen was a Norwegian immigrant who had moved to St. Peter in 1888 at the age of 20. He began his construction business in partnership with John Iverson in 1898 and became sole owner in 1900. During his long career Fredricksen constructed many of the city's most important public and commercial structures. Those buildings include the M. L. Clark paint store (1900), the Carnegie Library (1903), the International Order of Foresters Hall (1904), Ludke Opera House (1905), the St. Peter Creamery (1907), the Nicollet County Jail (1907), the St. Peter High School (1907), the St. Peter Fire Hall (1908), and the Nicollet County Courthouse Annex (1917). He also built one 75-foot section of the Kunsbruck Hotel, buildings for the Lampert Lumber Company, the first section of the Seitzer Garage, the Hughes Garage, the Haughdahl Oil Station, and at least 160 residences (St. Peter Herald, Oct. 1, 1930).

In addition to being stylistically important, the St. Peter Armory is an excellent and intact example of typical early period armory design and construction. Its size, cost, room arrangement, and interior features are characteristic of the state's early period armories. For example, like most of the state's 1911-1918 armories, St. Peter's was built of brick with some reinforced concrete structural elements, and with steel trusses supporting the clear span, barrel-vaulted drill hall roof. Like most early period armories, the St. Peter Armory was designed to house the local National Guard's administrative offices, as well as providing a drill hall and shooting range, and support services including locker rooms, showers, a kitchen, a dining room, and storage rooms for arms, ammunition, supplies, equipment, and vehicles. (A garage for vehicles was not added until 1941-1942.) The St. Peter Armory has a typical, distinct separation between the administration area, or headhouse, and the rear drill hall. The headhouse contains a characteristic arrangement of offices symmetrically located on either side of a central entrance and stairhall. The rest of the

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first floor is devoted to the drill hall, and the arms storage and support service rooms are located in the basement.

### MILITARY AFFAIRS

St. Peter's Company K of the Second Infantry Regiment, Minnesota National Guard, was formed on February 28, 1908. The 64-member company was one of nine new units formed in 1907-1908 to bring the Guard's infantry regiments into conformance with those of the Regular Army. The officers in 1908 were Captain Oliver J. Quane, First Lieutenant Francis Magner, and Second Lieutenant Charles A. Key. Non-commissioned officers were E. E. Miller, first sergeant; Charles C. Volk, quartermaster sergeant; Wilton B. Stone, Emmett J. Slater, Maurice Peterson, and August LaCroix, sergeants; and F. S. Key, Alphonse Weisgerber, Leo H. Kneip, Carl Gustafson, and Ralph E. Holmberg (Kolb 1982). Prior to the completion of the armory, Company K drilled in the second story hall of the McConville Building in downtown St. Peter.

Company K joined a National Guard force in Minnesota which consisted of three regiments of infantry and one regiment of artillery. Company K became part of the Second Infantry Regiment which consisted of units based in such southern Minnesota cities as Austin, Fairmont, Faribault, Madison, Mankato, New Ulm, Northfield, Owatonna, Redwood Falls, Winona, and Worthington.

Several previous volunteer militia units had been organized in St. Peter. A militia unit was formed in 1857 in St. Peter and nearby Traverse des Sioux in response to conflicts between Dakota Indians and Euro-American settlers near Spirit Lake, Iowa. A local guard unit known as Company E existed in St. Peter as early as 1861 when it was commanded by Captain Asgrim K. Skaro. In 1862 Captain William B. Dodd recruited 140 local volunteers to help defend nearby New Ulm during the U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862. A local unit of the Second Infantry, Minnesota National Guard, was organized in St. Peter on March 20, 1883 and led by Captain J. C. Donahower, a Civil War veteran. This group disbanded in 1893 and there was no military organization in St. Peter for 15 years until the formation of Company K in 1908 (Ackermann 1935, 169-170; Wettergren 1978; Kolb 1982).

Company K began to plan for the construction of an armory almost immediately after forming in 1908. On May 7, 1909, the St. Peter Herald reported that a special armory fund was being established. In 1911 a state allocation was promised and the plans of architect James F. Denson were chosen, presumably by the State Board of Armory Supervisors. At some point in the planning process the plans were redrawn to accommodate a reduced budget. The armory was shortened in length and the finishing of the basement and second story offices was postponed until 1919 (St. Peter Free Press, May 3, 1919). Company K received the plans in November of 1911 and the Board of Armory Supervisors advertised the letting of construction bids in March of 1912.

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Construction of the armory began in June of 1912. The original construction cost approximately \$19,000. The State appropriated \$15,000, Company K raised \$1,000 to obtain the appropriation, and St. Peter residents contributed about \$3,000. The site on Minnesota Avenue was purchased by the City for \$1,250 and donated to the project. Captain O. J. Quane was the local commanding officer at the time the armory was built.

The armory was formally dedicated on March 24, 1913 by Governor A. O. Eberhart. The event included a dinner for the governor at the Hotel Nicollet; a dedication ceremony, reception, and military ball in the drill hall; and a midnight banquet for the governor, again at the Hotel Nicollet. Dignitaries included the governor and his wife, various state senators and representatives, the National Guard's Adjutant General F. B. Wood, additional National Guard officers from the state organization, and military officers from St. Peter and surrounding towns.

In June of 1916, on the eve of U.S. involvement in World War I, Congress passed the National Defense Act which increased federal funding for the Guard, further extended federal control over operations, and provided more training of the Guard by Regular U.S. Army personnel. A few days later, Minnesota's National Guardsmen were mobilized to Llano Grande, Texas, during the U.S.-Mexican border conflict. The Second Minnesota Infantry, including the St. Peter guardsmen, served until early 1917.

During the summer of 1917 the guardsmen were again mustered for active service in World War I. The Second Infantry was mobilized on June 15, 1917. The men were drafted into federal service and in October the Second Infantry was redesignated as the 136th Infantry of the 42nd Division of the Army for the duration of the war. The St. Peter men were among approximately 8,000 Minnesota guardsmen to serve in World War I. Beginning in the spring of 1917 the St. Peter Armory was also used by the Minnesota Home Guard which had been organized to replace the guardsmen who had been called out of state.

In 1919, after years of petitioning by local residents, the state legislature appropriated funds to complete the basement and finish the second floor offices of the armory. However, the legislature declined to fund a \$15,000 addition to the building which would add a vehicle garage.

Following World War I, the state's National Guard underwent one of its several reorganizations as the relationship between the National Guard and the Regular Army continued to evolve. This latest reorganization was spurred by a 1920 amendment to the 1916 National Defense Act which was designed to increase the Guard's role in the nation's defense. The St. Peter Armory became home to Company D of the 205th Infantry Regiment. In 1923 the St. Peter unit was one of 73 National Guard units headquartered in 36 communities

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in the state.

The Minnesota National Guard was called to duty at least 30 times between World War I and World War II (Kunz 1958, 163). For example, the state's guardsmen, including Company D from St. Peter, were called to strike duty during the Minneapolis truckers' strike of 1934. The St. Peter company was called to assist when 16 inmates escaped from the Minnesota Security Hospital in St. Peter in 1936. The National Guard also provided disaster relief during fires, tornadoes, and floods and stood guard during Presidential visits to the state. In St. Peter, the local company marched regularly in parades, civic celebrations, and funeral processions. The members of Company D (and before them Company K) attended annual summer training camp at Camp Lakeview at Lake City until 1933 when they began training at the Guard's newly-established Camp Ripley north of Little Falls. Among the leaders of the local National Guard unit was Captain Cliff Nutter who commanded the unit from 1921-1940. Other longtime officers included First Lieutenant Harold Frey who served 40 years, First Lieutenant Carl Benson who served for many years before 1940, Captain Clifford J. Drenttel who served from circa 1935-1967, and Chief Warrant Officer Linden C. "Bud" Bartlett who served 42 years (Wettergren 1978).

The St. Peter Armory also played a pivotal local role during World War II. Early in 1940 in preparation for the war, the St. Peter unit was changed from an infantry unit to Battery B, First Battalion, 215th Coast Artillery (Anti-aircraft). The company was one of three artillery anti-aircraft regiments which comprised the new 101st anti-aircraft brigade. The company began to train with 90 millimeter caliber anti-aircraft guns and was mobilized from the armory when they were called for active duty. Minnesota's 8,000 Guardsmen were activated during late 1940 and early 1941. St. Peter's unit was called on January 6, 1941, sent to Camp Haan, California, and then to Kodiak, Alaska, where they manned anti-aircraft guns to help defend the Aleutian Islands. Most of the St. Peter guardsmen served for nearly five years until the fall of 1945.

After the unit was mobilized, the armory was used by the Minnesota State Guard (first called the Minnesota Defense Force) which was formed in 1940 to fill the void in the local militia. By February of 1941 the State Guard had 4,000 troops statewide (Murphy 1986, 71). During this period, in 1941-1942, a garage was finally added to the rear of the armory in a \$24,808 W.P.A. construction project.

The St. Peter Armory and others in the state were also used in the extensive effort to recruit and train newly-enlisted men and women who served in World War II. Burns and Martens suggest that armories like the St. Peter Armory are important "for veterans of the war and their families alike . . . [because] the armory buildings in each community afford an identifiable

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'site' marking the transition point from civilian to military life" (Burns and Martens 1994, 18).

After the war, the National Guard was again reorganized and strengthened. Between 1947 and 1959 the St. Peter unit was designated a Service Battery, First Battalion, 125th Field Artillery, of the newly-created 47th or "Viking" Division. They were activated during the Korean Conflict on January 16, 1951. Most of the St. Peter guardsmen returned between August of 1952 and January of 1953. During the 1950s the armory was used for weekend classes of the Minnesota Military Academy. Between February of 1959 and January of 1968 the local unit was designated as Battery A, 151st Field Artillery and in January of 1968 it was redesignated as a Service Battery, First Battalion, 125th Field Artillery.

## COMMUNITY ROLE

The National Guard armory also served as a military club for the members of Company K, in addition to being used for infantry training and practice. This was typical of the nation's armories where social and recreational activities for guard units were used to promote allegiance to the unit and to encourage other local men to join the organization. The St. Peter Armory was also the center for the activities of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #1220, the William R. Witty American Legion Post #37, and for their respective auxiliaries. (The Veterans of Foreign Wars was organized nationally in 1899 after the Spanish-American War and the American Legion was organized nationally in 1919 after World War I.)

Before it was built, the St. Peter Armory was viewed by local residents as a significant public building which would be an asset to the city. This was typical of the sentiment in most Minnesota communities which were competing for state funding for a National Guard armory. Already standing immediately south of the proposed armory site was St. Peter's new Classical Revival style Carnegie Library (1903, listed on the NRHP on 5-19-83). The St. Peter Herald reported in 1911 that "When the armory is erected it is planned to place it on a line with the public library, so that the view from the latter will not be obscured. It will be built in the center of the plot, leaving a strip of lawn on all sides of the building, and it will be possible to arrange the structure so that it will be well lighted and ventilated. It is planned to erect a massive, imposing structure which will add much to the appearance of Minnesota Avenue" (St. Peter Herald, Aug. 11, 1911).

The dual role of armories as military posts and community centers had been common in Minnesota since the late 19th century when armories were funded locally (rather than by the State) and when the local guard depended on the income from leasing the auditorium or gymnasium space. The National Guard also promoted the shared use of armories as a way to increase cooperation

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between the Guard and local communities. In many cities, the armory drill hall was one of the largest public spaces in town.

The St. Peter Armory served as one of St. Peter's principal social and recreational facilities for approximately 65 years. Trade shows, conventions, sporting events, dances, roller skating, and educational activities were frequently held there. Local historian Bob Wettergren referred to the armory in 1978 as "once the hub of Community events" (Wettergren 1978).

The local National Guard unit eventually outgrew the St. Peter Armory. After World War II the size of guard units in the state was increased from an average of 66 to 135 men. In addition, the amount and size of military equipment grew. The Guard eventually replaced most of its so-called "60-man" armories like St. Peter's. The St. Peter Armory was used by the National Guard until about 1983 when a new armory was completed at the northern edge of the city. The former armory is now a sales office for an athletic equipment manufacturer.

## SUMMARY

In summary, the St. Peter Armory is historically and architecturally significant both locally and statewide. It is important as one of Minnesota's oldest extant armories, as one of the first armories built in Minnesota with state funds, and as an excellent example of early period armory design. It served as the center for military affairs in St. Peter through several armed conflicts and was frequently used for community social and recreational events.

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## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

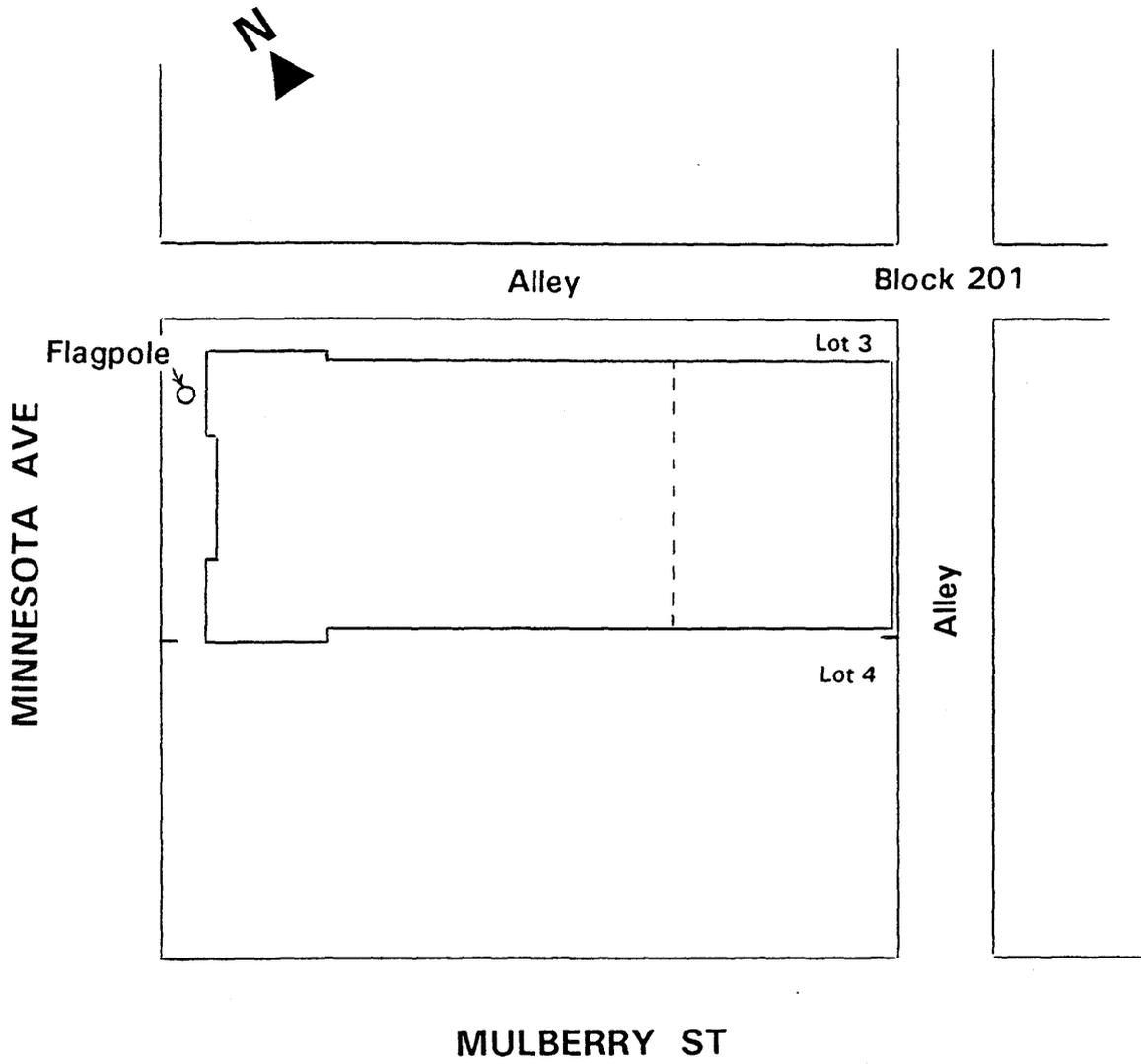
### Verbal Boundary Description:

Lot Three and the North 10.5 feet of Lot Four, Block 201, City of St. Peter.

### Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the nominated property includes the parcel historically associated with the St. Peter Armory.

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Scale 1" = 41.6'