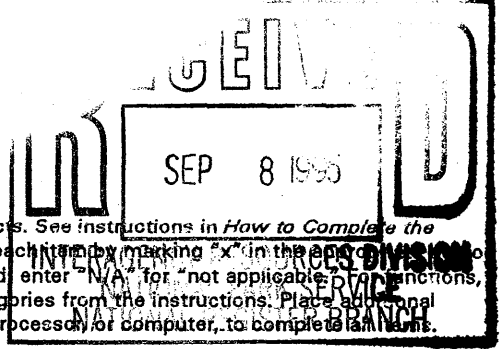


1163

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 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Duluth Vessel Yard

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. Location

street & number Corner of Ninth Street S. and Minnesota Avenue  not for publication

city or town Duluth  vicinity

state Minnesota code MN county St. Louis code 137 zip code 55802

#### 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.)

A. Justin Emmons Corps Federal Preservation Officer, 9.7.95  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

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

Ian R. Stewart 1/5/94  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

#### 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Entered in the National Register  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action  
OCT 23 1995

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	
5	1	buildings
1	-	sites
3	-	structures
1	-	objects
10	1	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/water-related and  
 Industry/waterworks/storage =  
 vessel yard providing equipment storage  
 and maintenance

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/water-related and  
 Industry/waterworks/storage =  
 vessel yard providing equipment storage  
 and maintenance

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Early Twentieth Century Utilitarian  
 Other: Modern (World War II) Utilitarian

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
 walls Brick  
 roof Bituminuous Material, Gravel  
 other Glass Block  
 Structural Clay Tile

Narrative Description

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

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) Duluth Vessel Yard is located on Minnesota Point, Duluth Harbor, Duluth, Minnesota. Located on approximately 2.2 acres of land at the intersection of Ninth Street South and Minnesota Avenue, the COE vessel yard complex consists of a cluster of six buildings and a slip (two piers and a sliphead) (Figures 1 and 2). The vessel yard provides mooring facilities and storage and maintenance areas for the floating plant operated by the COE. All associated buildings can best be described as utilitarian in architectural classification. Four of the six buildings were built during a 1940-41 construction

**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:

- 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.

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Community Development and Planning

Conservation Politics/Government

Engineering Transportation

Maritime History

Transportation Conservation

Engineering

**Period of Significance**

1941-48

**Significant Dates**

1903/04, 1910, 1924/27, 1940/41, 1948

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository:

U.S. COE Office - Duluth, Minnesota

COE Duluth Vessel Yard  
Name of Property

St. Louis County, Minnesota  
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.2

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	5
---	---

 Zone     

5	6	9	2	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

 Easting     

5	1	8	0	3	9	5
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

 Northing

3 

--	--

 Zone     

--	--	--	--	--	--

 Easting     

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

 Northing

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 Christopher Marzoni/Historic Preservation Planner; C. Stephan Demeter and Gary G. Robinson/Historians

organization Commonwealth Cultural Resources Group, Inc. date April 6, 1993

street & number 2530 Spring Arbor Road telephone (517) 788-3550

city or town Jackson state Michigan zip code 49203

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 additional items)

Property Owner

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

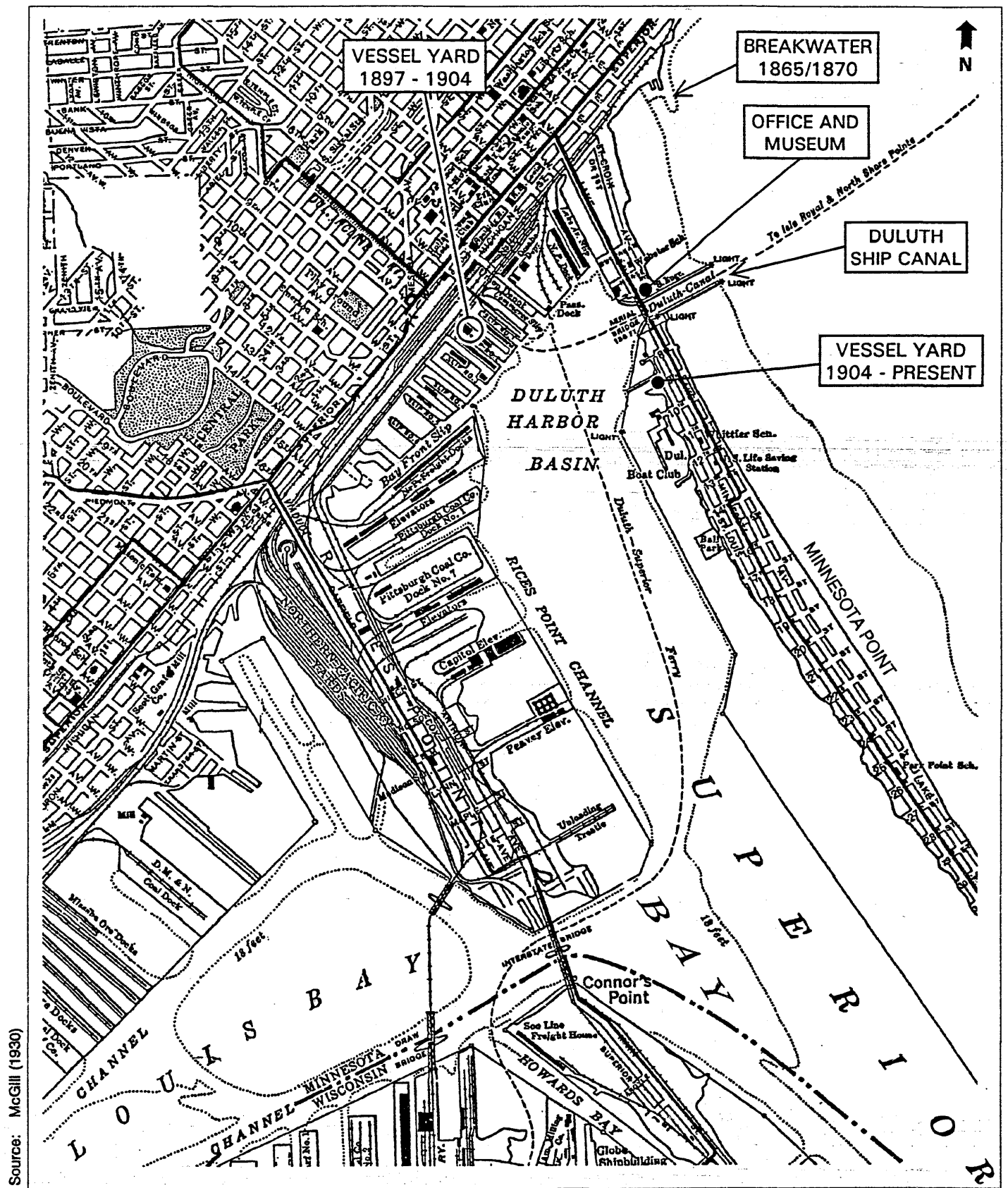
name U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

street & number DETROIT DISTRICT POST OFFICE BOX 1027 DETROIT, MI 48231-1027

city or town DETROIT, MI 48231-1027 zip code 48231-1027

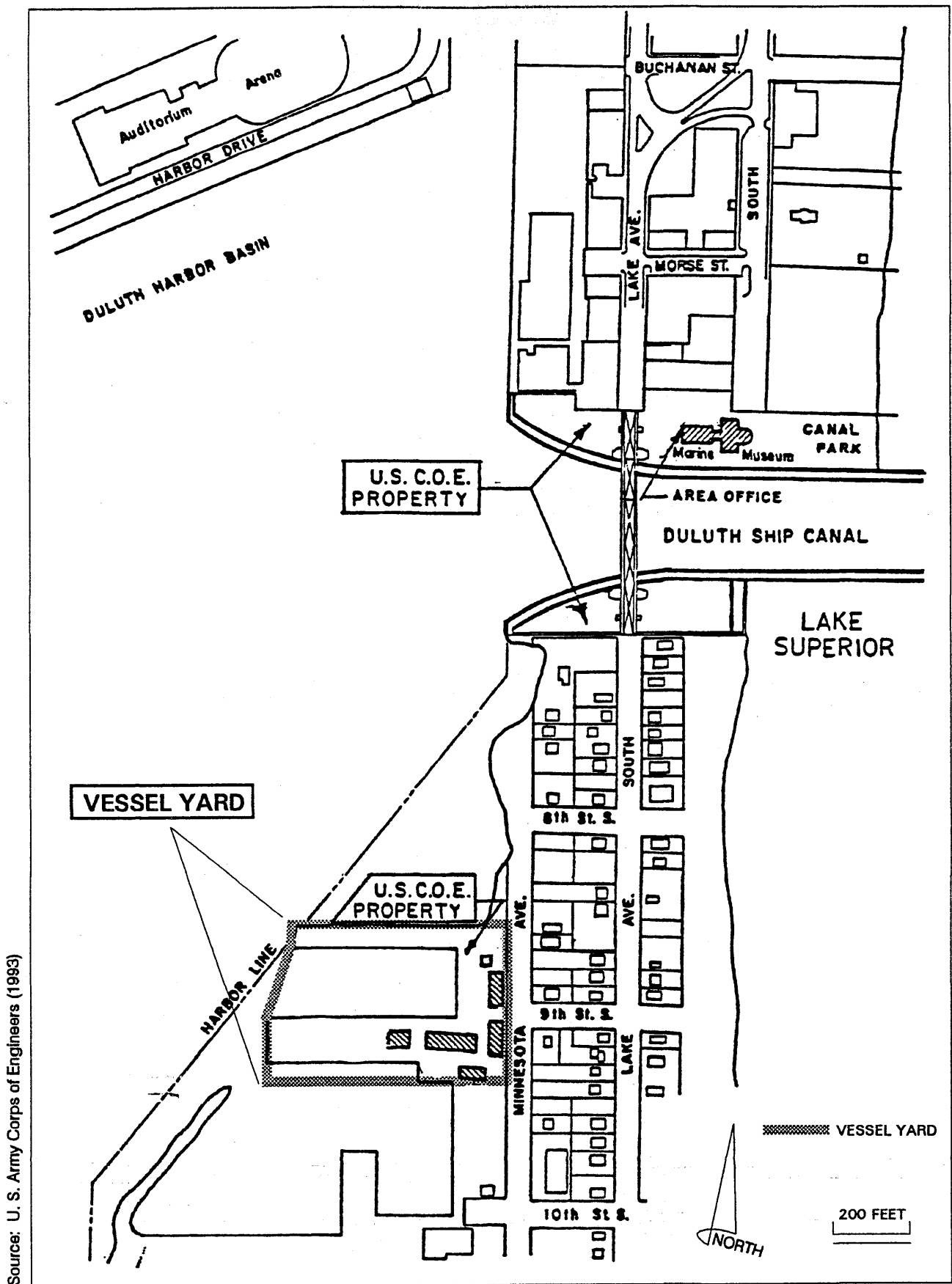
**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for application to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain 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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.



Source: McGill (1930)

Figure 1. Geographical Location Map



Source: U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (1993)

Figure 2. Vessel Yard and Vicinity

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### NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (cont'd)

period, and are executed in either stretcher or common bond brick, capped by flat roofs. An older structural clay tile/wire struck face warehouse was constructed in 1926 and features stepped end gables. A modern (1977) welding shop located on the south pier is a prefabricated steel sheet building. A 1948 sliphead is flanked by a north and south pier, which extend 384 ft and 441 ft, respectively, out into the harbor basin. Remaining intact since its 1941 construction, the vessel yard has managed to retain its integrity. Collectively, it possesses significance as a site of important events that have made a significant contribution to the development of Duluth, Minnesota and Superior, Wisconsin, and the harbor that serves them.

### DESCRIPTIONS

The accompanying photographs of the various building/structural elements of the COE Duluth Vessel Yard District (Duluth, St. Louis County, Minnesota) were taken by Christopher Marzonie on March 2, 1993. All photographs of buildings/structures are numbered to correspond to the key provided in the attached map of the COE Duluth Vessel Yard District (Figure 3).

#### No. 1: Residence (Roll 2:Photographs 8-12) (Contributing)

The two-story residence located at 829 Minnesota Avenue was constructed by the Corps of Engineers at its present location in 1941. Capped by an essentially flat roof with overhanging eaves, it creates a square footprint (Figure 4a), save a small enclosed porch appendage at its northern elevation. The 1,568 ft<sup>2</sup> dwelling features a dining room, kitchen, living room, and three second floor bedrooms. The residence rests on a concrete foundation and is wrapped in stretcher bond brick featuring two stringcourses. Half of the front facade is recessed at the second story, allowing for a walkout porch (Figure 4b). Fenestration is largely symmetrical throughout. In its original use, it served as the residence of the vessel yard manager.

#### No. 2: Garage (Roll 2:Photographs 3, 4, 6, 7) (Contributing)

The largely rectangular, single-story garage facility is anchored by a one and one-half-story towerlike section at its southeast corner, which projects out an additional 3 ft (Figure 5). Clad in common bond brick, it is capped by a flat roof which

Source: U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (1986)

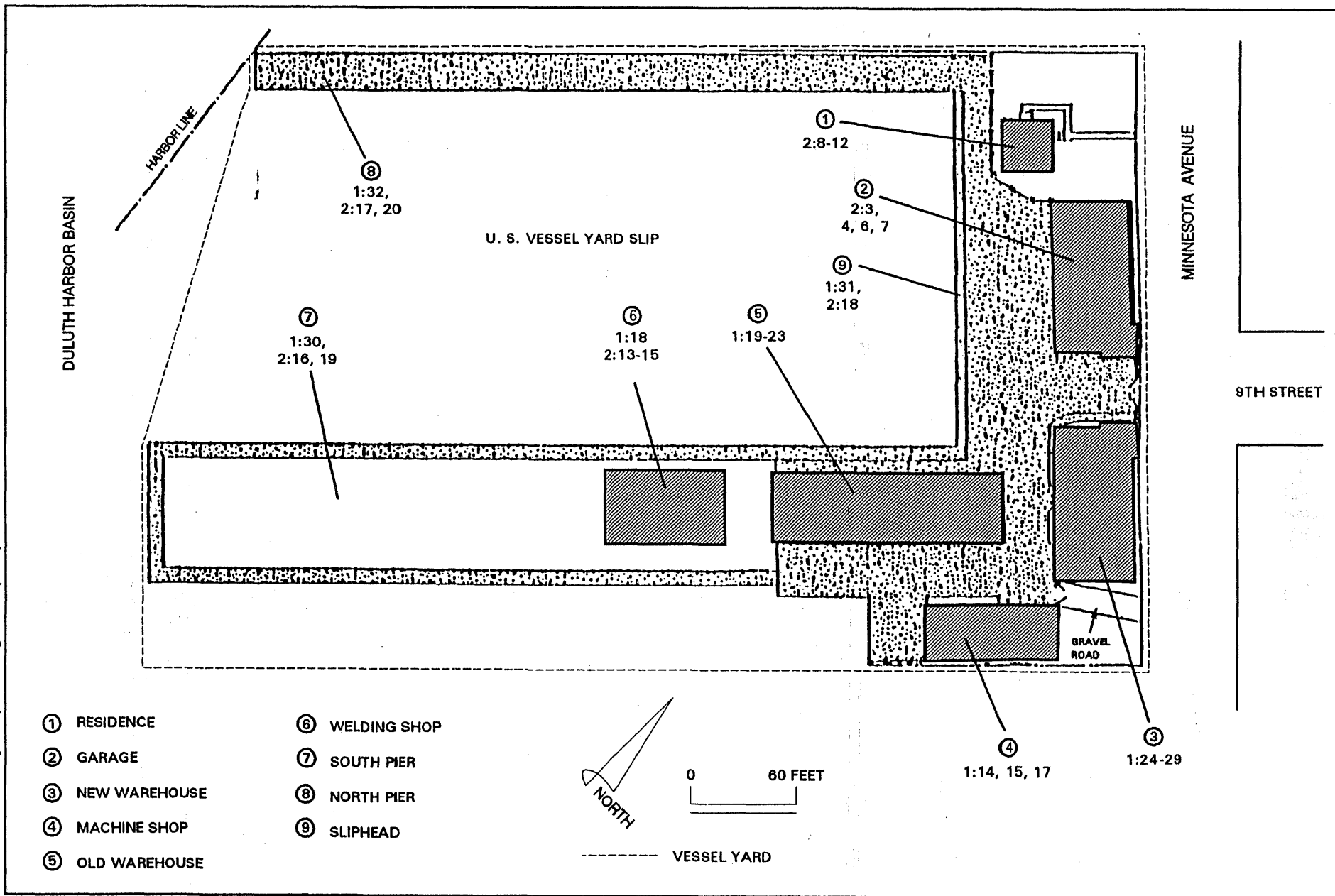


Figure 3. COE Duluth Vessel Yard District, 1986



Source: U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (1993)

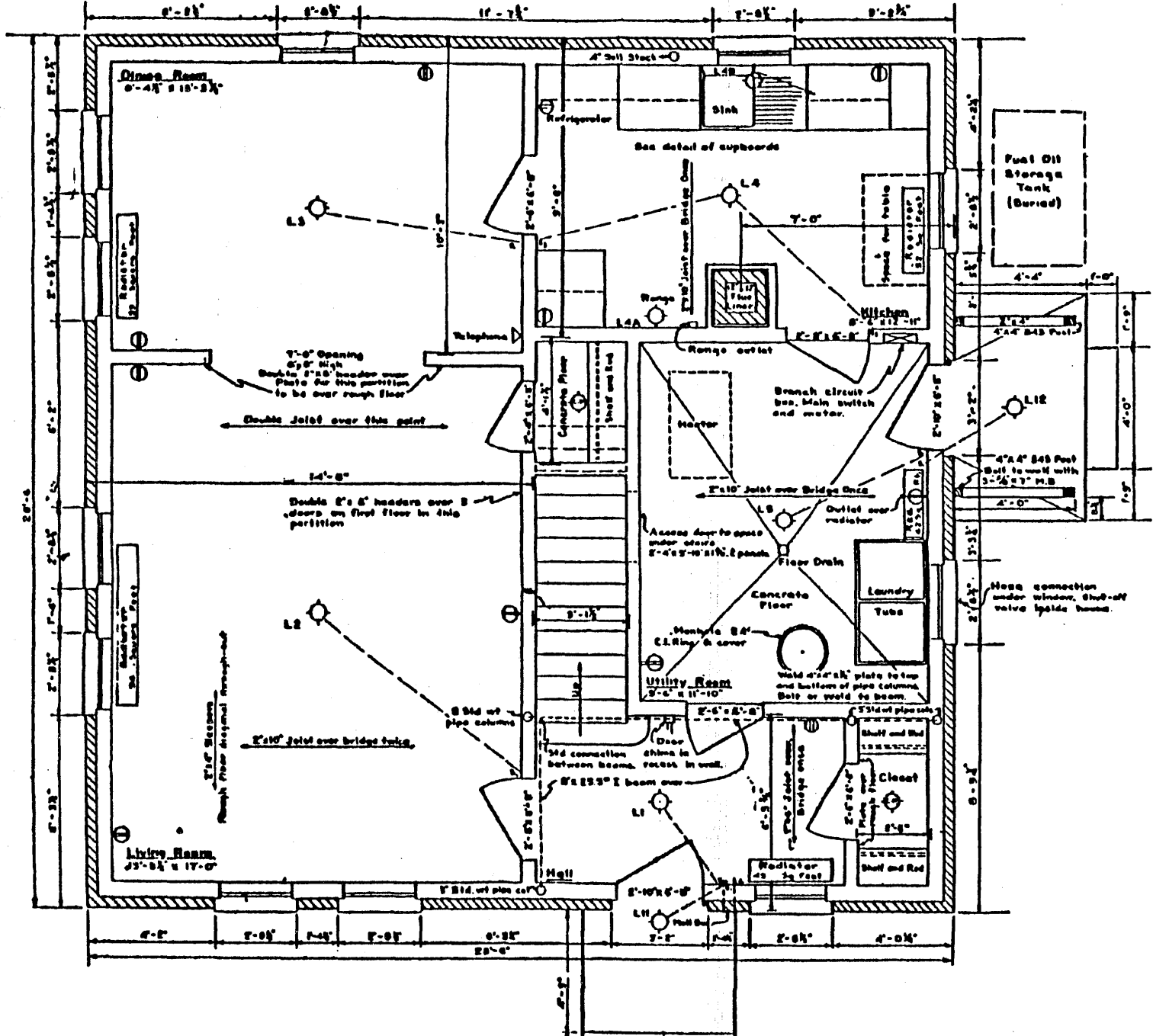


Figure 4a. Residence Floor Plan (first floor)

Source: U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (1993)

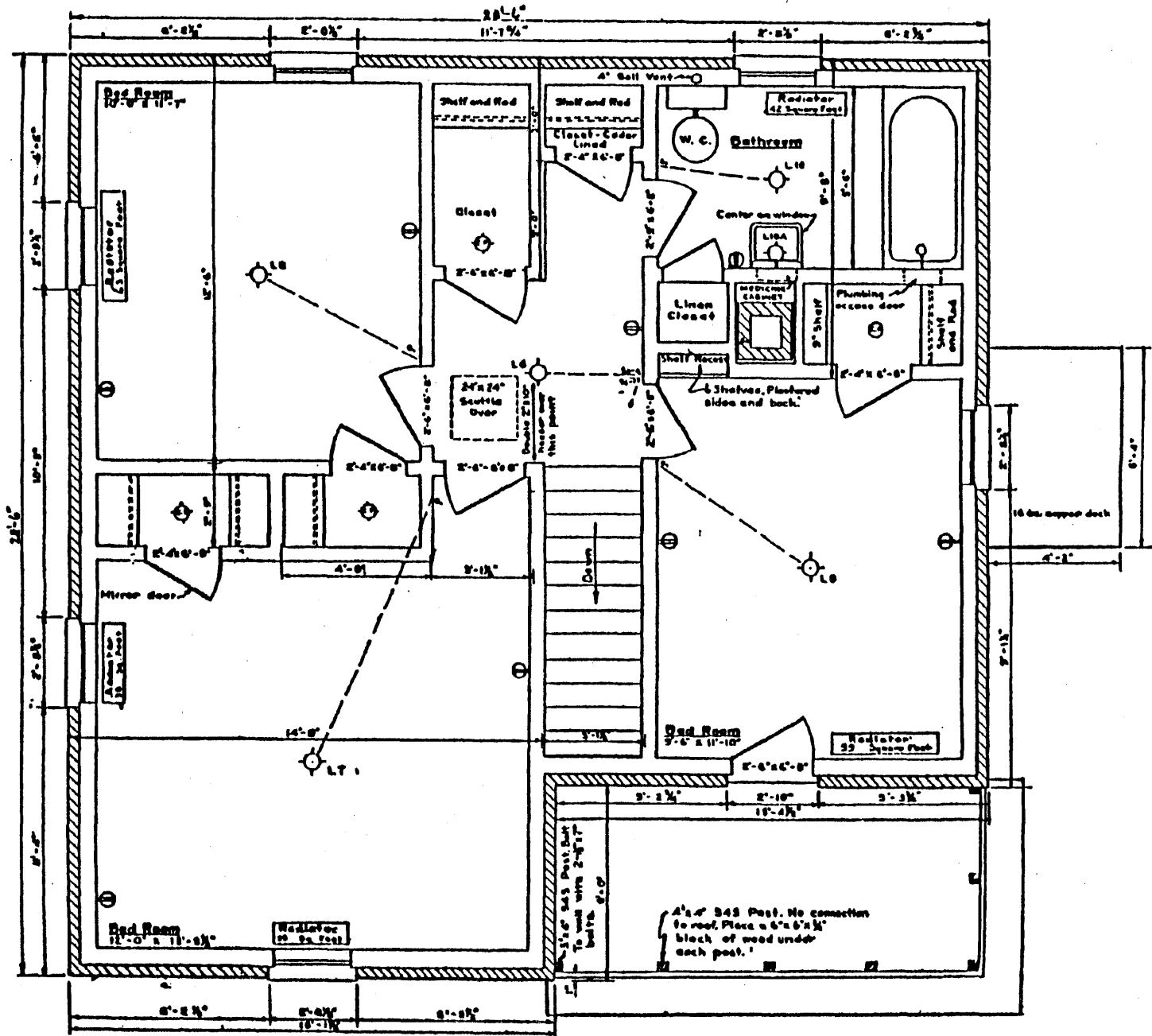
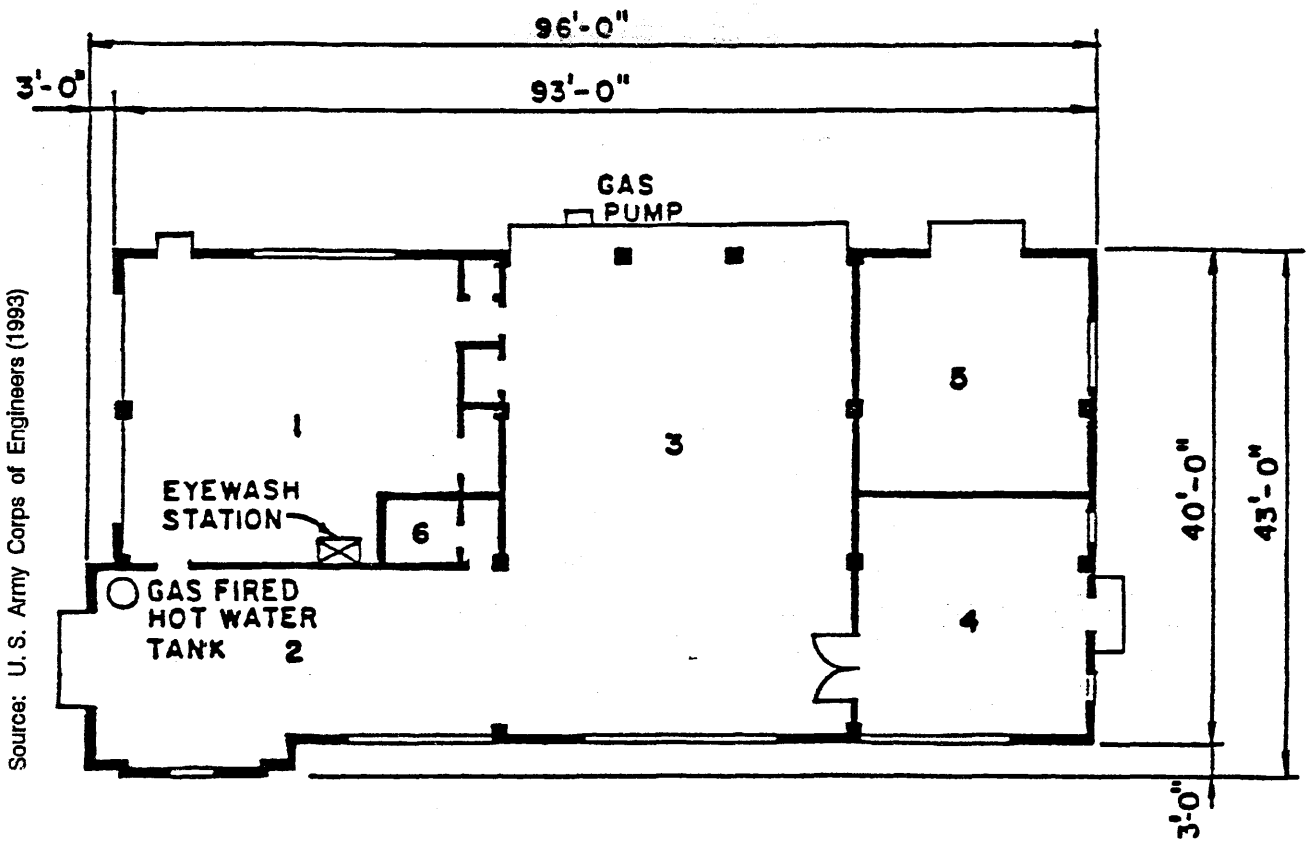



Figure 4b. Residence Floor Plan (second floor)



Source: U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (1993)

GARAGE FLOOR PLAN 

- ROOM NAME
- 1 MOTOR REPAIR OR SUPPLY STORAGE
  - 2 WASH RACK, 5 CAR STORAGE
  - 3 CAR STORAGE
  - 4 STORAGE PLANT EQUIPMENT
  - 5 SURVEY EQUIPMENT
  - 6 BATTERY STORAGE

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"

Figure 5. Garage Floor Plan

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was improved in 1985. Original steel sash windows have been replaced with glass block and/or concrete (Willis 1992). Constructed in 1941, its total area stands at 3,720 ft<sup>2</sup>. Usage is divided between car storage, vehicle repair, battery storage, and survey equipment storage.

### No. 3: New Warehouse (Roll 1:Photographs 24-29) (Contributing)

Like the similarly designed garage, the new warehouse is essentially rectangular in footprint, save a one and one-half-story towerlike section at its northeastern corner, which projects 3 ft outward (Figure 6). Constructed in 1941, the flat-roofed building is clad in a common bond brick skin. Window coverage includes steel sash, glass block, and concrete. A concrete beltcourse covers the majority of the eastern elevation, as well as the entire southern elevation. A glass block transom appears at the entrance to the office at the northern elevation. The 3,612 ft<sup>2</sup> building includes showers, offices, and museum and tool storage.

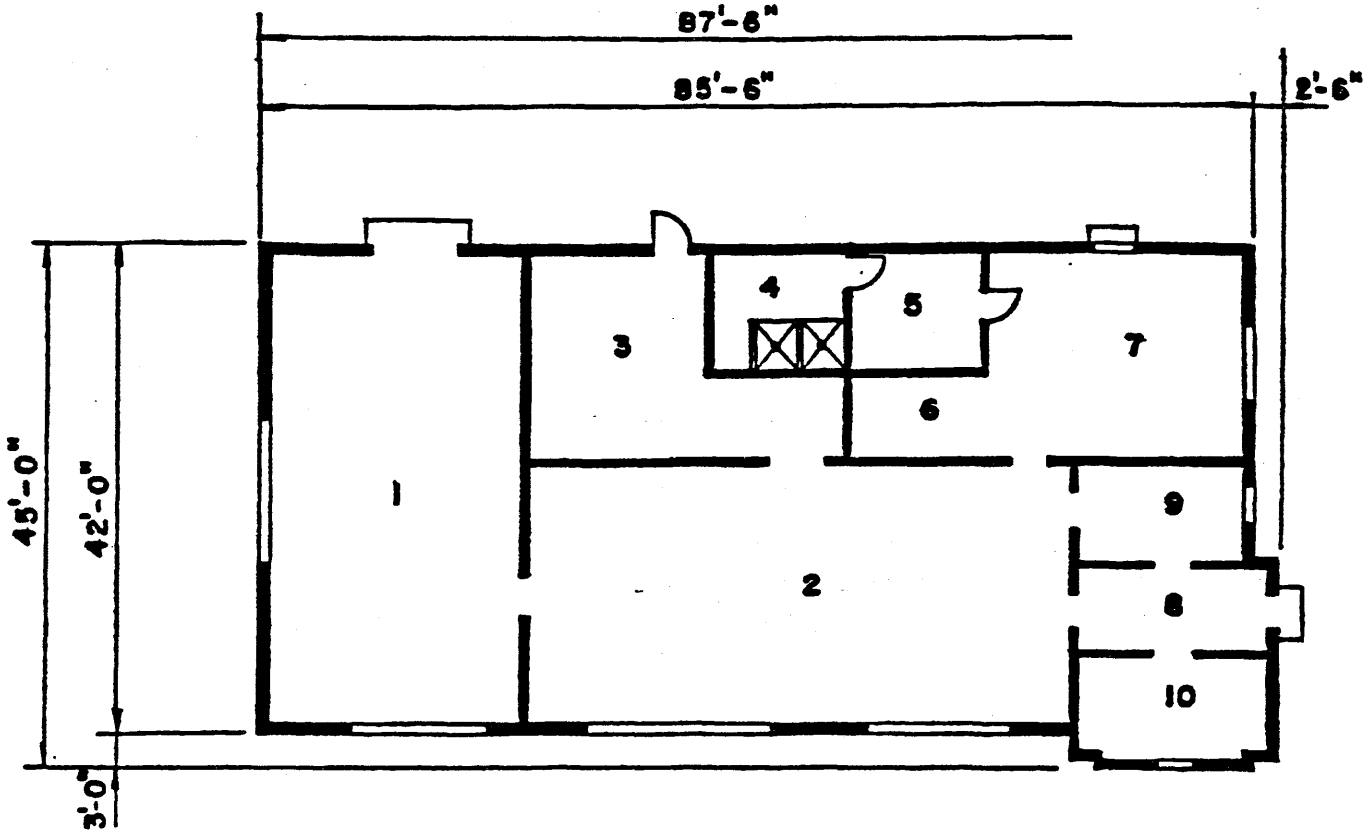
### No. 4: Machine Shop (Roll 1:Photographs 14, 15, 17) (Contributing)

Built during the 1941 construction phase, the single-story machine shop is the southernmost building in the COE vessel yard district. The 70 ft long, flat-roofed building creates a rectangular footprint and has a total area of 2,030 ft<sup>2</sup> (Figure 7). Wrapped in a common bond brick, the machine shop is divided into three rooms. The largest room is used as a machine shop, and the other two rooms are used for storage. The building features a concrete beltcourse, which wraps around the full expanse.

### No. 5: Old Warehouse (Roll 1:Photographs 19-23) (Contributing)

Characterized by its stepped gabled ends, the 4,940 ft<sup>2</sup> warehouse is the oldest building in the COE vessel yard and the only surviving building of the former yard. Completed in December 1926, the one-story warehouse has exterior walls of structural clay tile units with a wire struck face. The warehouse creates a rectangular footprint, measuring 123.5 ft × 40 ft (Figure 8). Original windows have been replaced by glass and concrete block (Willis 1992). Uses of the building include a carpentry shop, general storage, boiler room, warehouse space, and museum storage.

Source: U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (1963)



**NEW WAREHOUSE**  
**FLOOR PLAN**



**ROOM NAME**

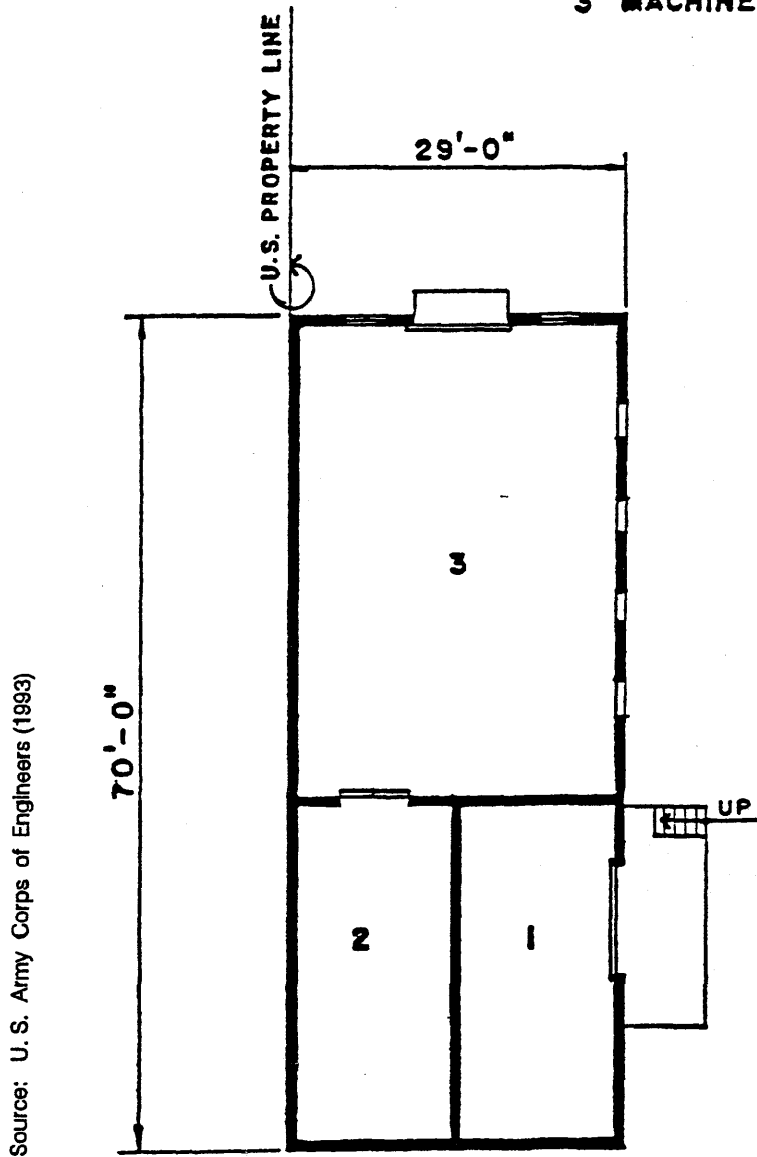
- |  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>1 ARTIFACT STORAGE<br/>(MUSEUM)</b>                     | <b>8 HALLWAY</b>   |
| <b>2 SUPPLY STORAGE<br/>(SMALL TOOLS &amp; COMMISSARY)</b> | <b>9 RECEPTION</b> |
| <b>3 SUPPLIES</b>  | <b>10 OFFICE</b>   |
| <b>4 SHOWER ROOM</b>                                       |                    |
| <b>5 TOILET</b>  |                    |
| <b>6 WOMEN'S ROOM</b>                                      |                    |
| <b>7 CREW'S ROOM</b>                                       |                    |

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"

Figure 6. New Warehouse Floor Plan

ROOM NAME

- 1 FLAMMABLE STORAGE
- 2 MISC. STORAGE
- 3 MACHINE SHOP



Source: U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (1993)

MACHINE SHOP  
FLOOR PLAN



SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"

Figure 7. Machine Shop Floor Plan

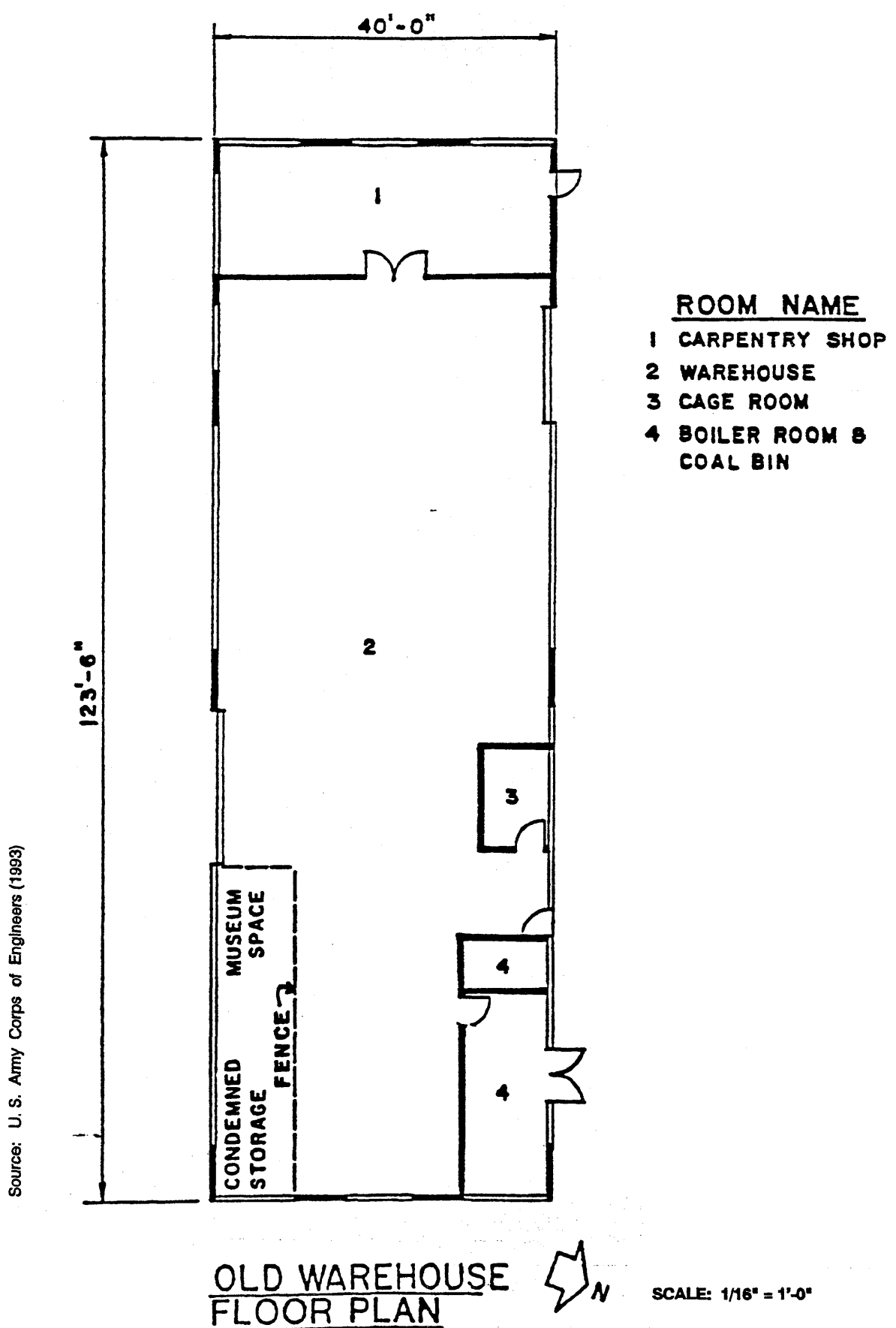


Figure 8. Old Warehouse Floor Plan

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**No. 6: Welding Shop (Roll 1:Photograph 18; Roll 2:Photographs 13-15) (Noncontributing)**

The modern welding shop is a noncontributing building in the COE Duluth Vessel Yard district. Erected in 1977, the 60 ft × 40 ft prefabricated steel frame building is capped by a gable roof pitched at a 4 in to 12 in ratio. Rectangular in footprint, it has a total area of 2,400 ft<sup>2</sup> (Figure 9). Two large garagelike doors are located at each gabled end. It is used for welding operations, as well as for equipment storage.

**No. 7: South Pier (Roll 1:Photograph 30; Roll 2:Photographs 16, 19) (Contributing)**

The south pier was constructed during two building phases in 1926 and 1931. A more recent superstructure was added in 1948. The south pier is the largest of the two piers, reaching an expanse of 441 ft (Figure 3).

**No. 8: North Pier (Roll 1:Photograph 32; Roll 2:Photographs 17, 20) (Contributing)**

Originally constructed in 1910, the north pier was rebuilt in 1940. It reaches out 384 ft into Duluth Harbor (Figure 3).

**No. 9: Sliphead (Roll 1:Photograph 31; Roll 2:Photograph 18) (Contributing)**

Located between the north and south piers, the concrete sliphead provides mooring access for COE vessels. It was reconstructed in 1948 (Figure 3). The original (ca. 1904) timber crib bulkhead substructure remains intact within the existing structure.



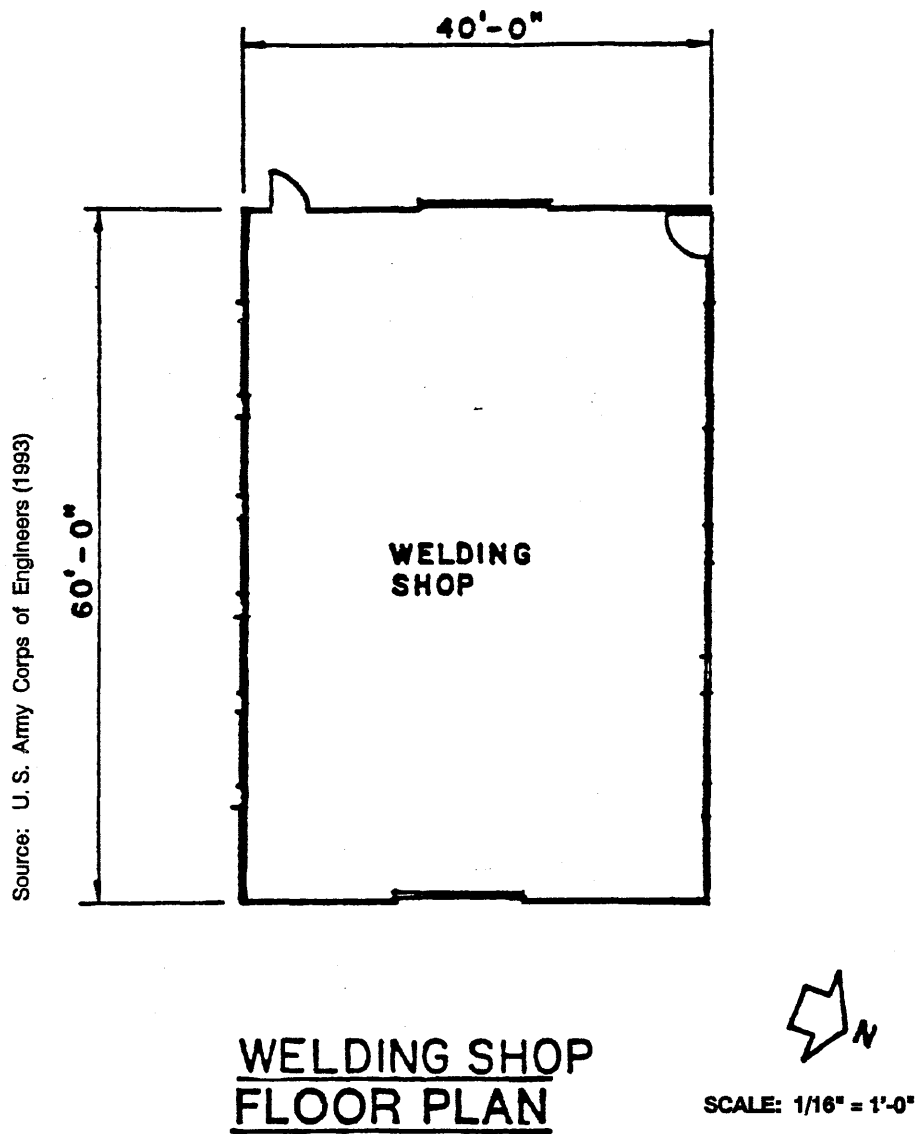


Figure 9. Welding Shop Floor Plan

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### NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers vessel yard at Duluth qualifies for nomination to the National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places by virtue of its significance to community planning and development, transportation, engineering, conservation and maritime history relative to the Duluth-Superior community and the upper Great lakes (Criterion A) and by virtue of its importance as a cohesive architectural expression of federal involvement (i.e., politics/government) in facilitating local/regional economic systems (Criterion C).

#### Historical Significance (Criterion A)

The COE Duluth Vessel Yard district site is historically significant due to its integral role in facilitating the economic emergence and overall growth of the Duluth, Minnesota/Superior, Wisconsin, region. The vessel yard has provided mooring facilities and maintenance and storage areas for the floating plant operated by the COE at the Minnesota Avenue and Ninth (i.e., Olive) Street site since 1904. From this site, the COE has initiated periodic dredging and general maintenance of the harbor and waterways, enabling the continued utilization of the lake. The utilization of the lake as a transportation source has proven to be the prime factor in the area's historic economic growth, as well as its continued economic viability.

The Duluth-Superior area has been the focus of economic activity since the fur trade era of the seventeenth century. The early French traders found that the upland forests near Lake Superior contained a large population of fur-bearing animals and that the lake, itself, provided excellent transportation back to their trading centers (Primmer 1939:17).

Native title to the lands, inclusive the City of Duluth, was extinguished through the Treaty of LaPointe in 1854. During the next year, town plats for Upper and Lower Duluth, along Minnesota Point, were drawn up and the Culver and Nettleton sawmill began operations on Lake Avenue (Deloria and Kickingbird 1973:78; Van Brunt 1921:97).

The utilization of lake transportation was a key element in the economic growth of the Duluth-Superior region. In 1855, the canal at Sault Ste. Marie at the eastern end of Lake Superior was completed. This opened a "sea-highway" in the Great Lakes of which the Duluth-Superior area was to be a major beneficiary (Hall 1976:22-23). The naturally sheltered bay formed by Minnesota Point at the mouth of the St. Louis River was regarded as one of the finest harbors in the world. Unfortunately, in its natural state the depth of the channel into the harbor was only "from 8 ft to 9 ft, and the channel tortuous,"

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ranging from between 100 ft and 500 ft wide. Although the situation improved somewhat after spring flooding, substantial efforts to improve access to the harbor were necessary (Ensign ca. 1899:4; Knowlton 1955:3).

As early as 1857, the Minnesota Pointe Ship Canal Company was organized by a number of Duluth businessmen with the objective of cutting a channel through Minnesota Point and providing more direct access to Superior Bay. Support for the project quickly evaporated with the financial panic of that year (Holmquest and Brookins 1963:158). In 1865, a breakwater was constructed at the foot of 5th Avenue East and Michigan Street in order to protect the city's outer harbor (Figure 1). This facility was apparently rebuilt and improved five years later, in 1870, by the Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad, which had recently completed its line between St. Paul and Duluth. This breakwater extended for 400 ft and was built at a cost of \$50,000 (United States Department of War, Army Corps of Engineers [USDW ACOE] 1927:1246; Holmquest and Brookins 1963:158; Van Brunt 1921:235). Shortly after completion it was reportedly destroyed by a storm in 1871 (Van Brunt 1921:188).

The coming of the railroad added a new dynamic to the push for harbor development on the Duluth side of Superior Bay. In 1866, Lieutenant Colonel W. F. Reynolds of the Bureau of Topographical Engineers (i.e., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) had, among other improvements, recommended the opening of a channel through Minnesota Point (Ensign ca. 1899:55). Federal activities mandated through the River and Harbor Act of March 2, 1867, were, however, limited to harbor and channel improvements associated with Superior, Wisconsin (USDW, ACOE 1927:1245).

In 1868, the Corps began several years of pier construction on the Superior side of the harbor. Breakwater construction and repair commenced on the Duluth side in 1871, with dredging operations beginning three years later (Erickson 1940:44). Between 1868 and 1896, the Corps conducted approximately 44 projects at a total cost of \$1,547,195.00, aimed at maintaining a usable channel into the harbor and at providing docking services to the ship traffic in the harbor. Research indicates that this effort represented 1/3 of all the development projects undertaken during that time period (Erickson 1940:44-45, 62-81).

The federal harbor improvement project carried out at Duluth was initiated under the River and Harbor Act of March 3, 1871 (USDW, ACOE 1927:1245). The enactment of this legislation ran concurrently with the construction of the Duluth Ship Canal (Figures 1 and 2). Completed in May 1871, this channel was developed as a joint venture by the City of Duluth and the Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad at a cost of \$43,791.84 (USDW, ACOE 1927:1245; Holmquest and Brookins 1963:159-160). The operation and maintenance of the canal was placed under federal control in 1873. Title to the facility was

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subsequently passed from the city to the U.S. government in 1887, with the latter reimbursing the city for its cost of construction (Holmquest and Brookins 1963:161; Van Brunt 1921:267).

During the 1890s, the Corps increased its activities within the harbor. The impetus for this action was the onset of intensified iron ore mining in the nearby Mesabi and Vermillion iron ranges. Prior to the boom in iron mining, the major commodity shipped through Duluth-Superior Harbor was grain produced in western Minnesota and North Dakota which was destined for Buffalo, New York (Eubank 1991:20). By 1884, iron ore was being hauled out of the Vermillion range, and shortly thereafter the Mesabi range, was opened to exploitation (Hall 1976:76). Ore was originally shipped out of Superior, but in 1892 the first iron ore dock was built in Duluth. Two other docks were constructed in Duluth before 1902.

In 1896, the Congress of the United States combined the maintenance and construction operations of the two harbors under the Duluth-Superior Harbor Authority and authorized \$3 million for harbor improvements and the rebuilding of the ship canal. Congress also implemented the "continuous contract system" which replaced the previously piecemeal maintenance and construction operations with regularly scheduled improvements (Hall 1976:45-47; Merritt 1979:339; USDW, ACOE 1927:1245).

In support of these projects, the Corps began purchasing its own vessels in 1897. During June of that year, Major Clinton B. Sears purchased the steam yacht *Pickett* from a private owner for use as an inspection vessel. The following month, Sears purchased the yacht *Nautilus*, renamed the *Vidette*, and ordered three naphtha launches to be built for the Corps by Truscott Manufacturing Company of St. Joseph, Michigan. These latter vessels were also intended for use as inspection ships. By the end of July of that year, two of the boats had commanders, and the *Vidette* had been refurbished (Evening Herald 1897a, 1897b, 1897c; News Tribune 1897a, 1897b).

Early in October 1897, bids were let for the construction of boat houses for three launches ordered from Truscott Manufacturing by the Corps on property leased at the foot of Seventh Avenue West (Figure 1). Other structures to be built to serve the government fleet included a boat house, a warehouse, an oil house, and a dock (Evening Herald 1897d, 1903).

Channel and harbor improvements conducted by the Corps at Duluth-Superior between 1897 and 1902 entailed the removal of 21,697,243 cubic yards of dredge spoil. These activities opened up 17 mi of channel ranging from 120 ft to 600 ft in width and provided an aggregate harbor basin area of 360 acres running in excess of 20 ft in depth. By 1906 goods passing through Duluth-Superior harbor amounted to 29,171,221 tons valued at \$251,899,844. This accounted for fully 56 percent of the

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total tonnage that passed through the locks at Sault Ste. Marie and ranked the twin harbors third in the nation immediately below New York and Philadelphia for tonnage handling (USDW, ACOE 1907:588-589). The intensity of this trade is even far more apparent when taken into consideration with the fact that it was seasonally restricted to a nine month period between April and December.

Corps activities at Duluth-Superior had entailed the expenditure of \$5,021,597.92 between 1867 and 1906. Goods transported through the port facility during this same period had an estimated value of \$2,593,135,606. This was arguably a good investment on the part of the federal government with expenditures amounting to less than 0.2 percent of the total trade passing through the port.

The growth of commerce during the last quarter of the nineteenth century is readily expressed through tonnage rates for goods entering and leaving the harbor. As of 1873, when the Corps took over the operation of the Duluth Ship Canal, the water-borne trade amounted to 281,602 tons (USDW, ACOE 1874:133). By 1896 when the two projects at Duluth and Superior were combined under one budget heading the transshipment of goods through the twin harbors amounted to 7,886,833 tons. Between 1900 and 1910 the annual tonnage rate averaged approximately 23 million tons; this increased during the succeeding decade to an average of about 48 million tons. The following decade saw a low of 30,083,555 tons during the post-war recession of 1921 and a high of 60,385,767 tons in 1929. In 1932, during the Great Depression, tonnage slipped to 10,519,804 tons (the lowest rate since 1898). The tonnage between 1933 and 1940 averaged about 36.8 million tons annually. This figure increased to an average of 70 million tons during the 5-year period of the Second World War. Trade statistics for the remainder of the decade, up through 1950, indicate a minimal decline averaging approximately 64 million tons annually (USDW, ACOE 1922:886; 1939:913; 1941:902; 1952:1000).

Data relating to the variety of goods and commodities entering and leaving the Duluth-Superior port facility indicate that the vast majority of this commerce consisted of bulk, unpacked, freight. In 1921/22 it was estimated that this element accounted for upwards of 97 percent of the total trade. At that time coal and oil accounted for 91.8 percent of the port's total receipts. Shipments out of the port were dominated by iron ore (84.3 percent) and grains (15.3 percent) (USDW, ACOE 1922:1433).

The need for the Corps to maintain a permanent presence at the Duluth-Superior port facility was viewed as critical due to the size of the harbor (49 mi of frontage, 17 mi of channel) and the intensity of the ship traffic. It was argued that

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these conditions made it a ...necessity for the closest inspection, by a special patrol provided with a steam tug, to prevent injurious deposits, encroachments of wharves and other private structures, the enforcement of rules regarding the rafting of logs, the anchorage of vessels, the opening of draws, and the care of United States property (USDW, ACOE 1907:591).

These requirements, combined with maintenance requirements and the potential of future facility expansion, provided the basis for the development of an operations center of which the vessel yard formed an intrical part.

### Engineering/Community Planning and Development (Criterion C)

In 1903, the Corps acquired, at a cost of \$6,700.00, 11 lots comprising 44,000 ft<sup>2</sup>, on Minnesota Point, on which to construct a vessel yard, supply station, and a new pier (USDW, ACOE 1903) (Figures 1 and 2). The plans for these lots included the construction of a bulkhead and landing pier, the deposition of landfills on which the vessel yard would be situated, the dredging of a boat slip, fencing and seeding the property, and the paving of a roadway. The total cost of these improvements was \$17,750.00 (USDW, ACOE 1904b:2748; 1907:588).

Present on the site at the time of Corps acquisition were the wreck of the tugboat *James Bardons* and Osborn's Dock (USDW, ACOE 1904c). The *James Bardons* was one of three vessels bearing that name and little information exists about its origins or appearance. It was probably built during the 1880s and was destroyed by fire. Its remains sat for several years in shallow water at the Minnesota Point location. The final disposition of the remains of the tugboat is unknown, but it is likely that they were used as part of the fill for the Corps of Engineers vessel yard (Pat Labadie, personal communication 1993).

Little information exists concerning Osborn's Dock. It may have been in existence as early as 1883 (Stoner 1883). The Fisk and Sears (1901) map of the harbor shows two docks at the location of the future Corps vessel yard, but the Beach (1903) map does not depict any development at this location. Its presence is similarly not mentioned in the annual *Report of the Chief Engineer* that details the purchase and development of the property on Minnesota Point (USDW, ACOE 1903; 1904b:2748).

As early as February 1903, the Corps had begun relocating the buildings it had constructed on Seventh Avenue West to the site of the new vessel yard. This process was not completed until December 1904 when the majority of the buildings were transported across the harbor to the new location over a two-day period (Evening Herald 1903, 1904a, 1904b). The 1904 COE plans for development of the new vessel yard site on Minnesota Point reveal the relocation of four buildings on the newly

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acquired land. These buildings included a boat house, launch house, warehouse, and paint/oil house constructed by F. P. Tims of West Duluth (USDW, ACOE 1904c) (Figure 10). A 1905 COE photograph (Figure 11) taken from Superior Harbor provides only a general view of the new vessel yard; however, it can be determined that the buildings were wood framed and capped by gable roofs. Most appear to be wrapped in clapboard.

After the move of the vessel yard to Minnesota Point in 1904, Corps activities focused on the dredging of the harbor and channels leading to the dock basins and the construction of new piers in both Duluth and Superior. In 1907, a cross channel was dredged through St. Louis Bay. The Duluth Ship Canal was additionally rebuilt and deepened to 24 ft. Built in 1926 by the Stack construction Company this tile and concrete structure was completed at a cost of \$13,400.00. By 1915, the majority of the Duluth Harbor basin had been deepened to 22 ft. Before the onset of World War I, the Corps acquired their own dredges and dump scows. In 1924, the yard was expanded an additional 120 ft along Minnesota Avenue, with additional improvements being completed in June 1927 (USDW, ACOE 1927:1248) (Figure 12). This development phase saw the construction of the still extant "old warehouse" building (Figure 8) on the vessel yard property. By 1927, the vessel yard featured 11 other buildings: a lumber shed, launch house, pattern storehouse, oil house, district boat house, small tool storage/office, garage, two warehouses, a storehouse, and a carpenter shop (Figure 13). A COE photograph (Figure 14) taken from near the end of the north pier provides a general view of the yard in 1927. All of the buildings appear to be wrapped in a horizontal board or clapboard, and capped by gable roofs. By the 1930s, the Duluth Harbor basin had been dredged to a total depth of between 22 ft and 25 ft (Hall 1976:45-47). At the beginning of the Second World War, the Corps appears to have been operating totally with its own maritime equipment (USDW, ACOE 1943a). In the summer of 1940, as construction plans for modifying the vessel yard were being finalized, the facility contained the following buildings (USDW, ACOE 1940): the district boat house; carpenter shop no. 1; oil house; office; 1925-26 warehouse; launch house; garages no. 1 and no. 2; storehouse; carpenter shop no. 2; lumber shed; and a condemned residence. The 1941 construction phase provided the vessel yard with an almost totally new face. Although the 1940 plans contained some stylistic embellishment at the cornices, such as mullions, they failed to make it to the construction phase. The result was a largely utilitarian architectural presentation, save an occasional string-/beltcourse, and an attractive gatepost design.

During the Second World War the Corps continued its mission of maintenance and construction within the Duluth-Superior Harbor and Basin. The dredging of the channels and harbor basin and the rebuilding of piers were the focus of activity. The only new activity added to the Corps' duties was protection "from sabotage of navigation structures" (USDW, ACOE 1942:1328). An indicator that Corps activities changed very little during the war is that the appropriations for Corps

Source: U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (1904)

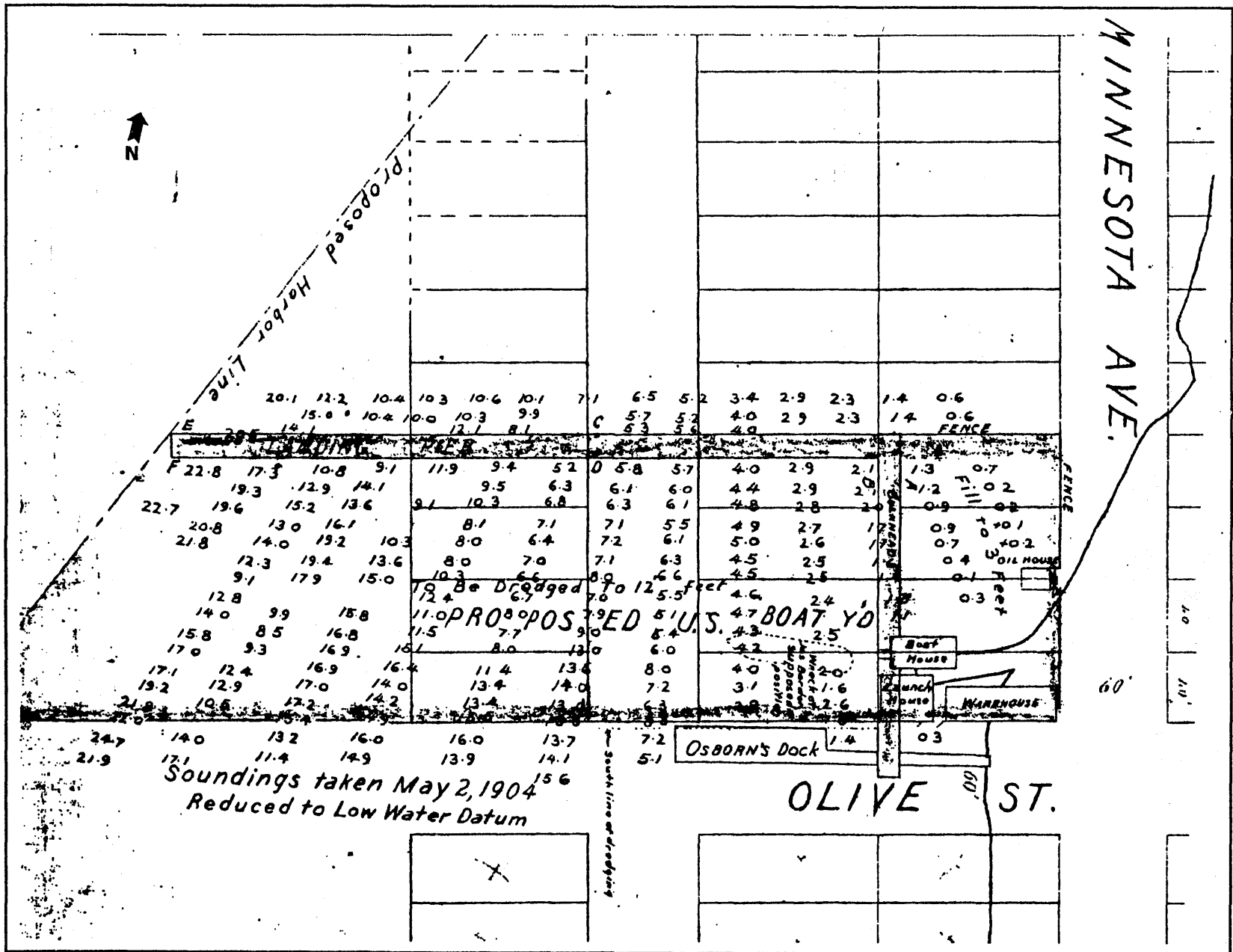
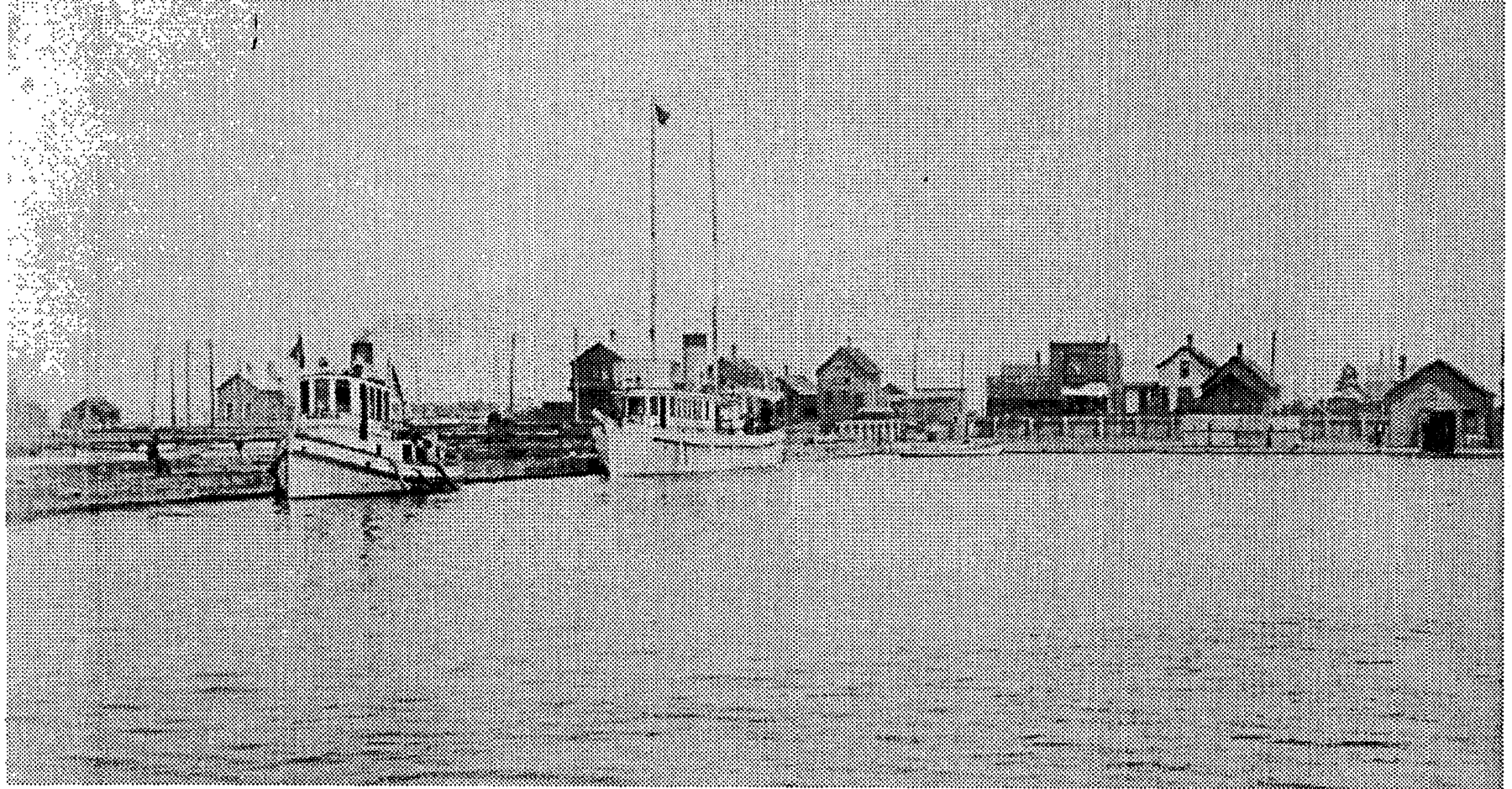


Figure 10. Duluth Vessel Yard, 1904



Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (1905)



*Figure 11. View of COE Vessel Yard from Duluth Harbor, 1905*

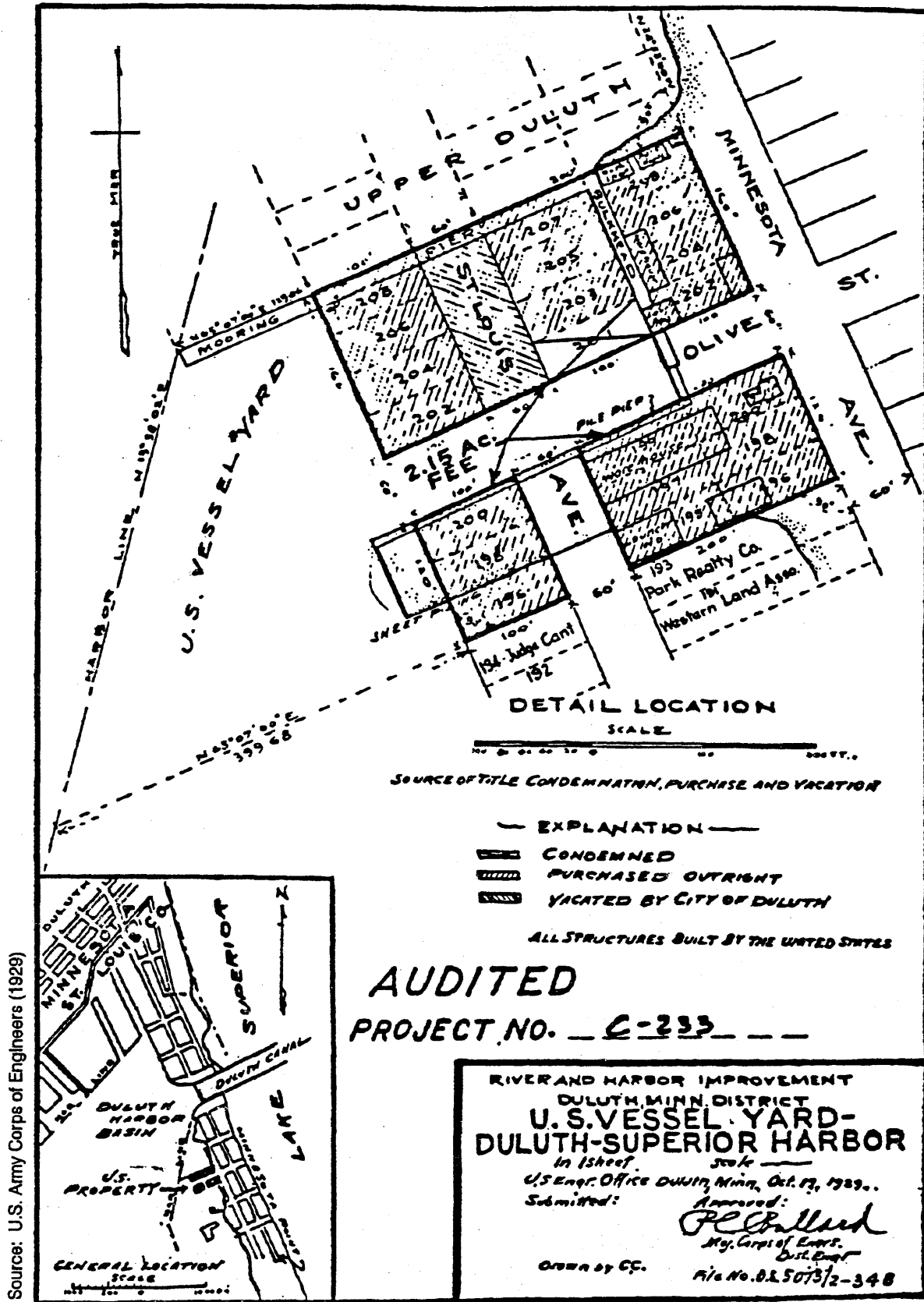
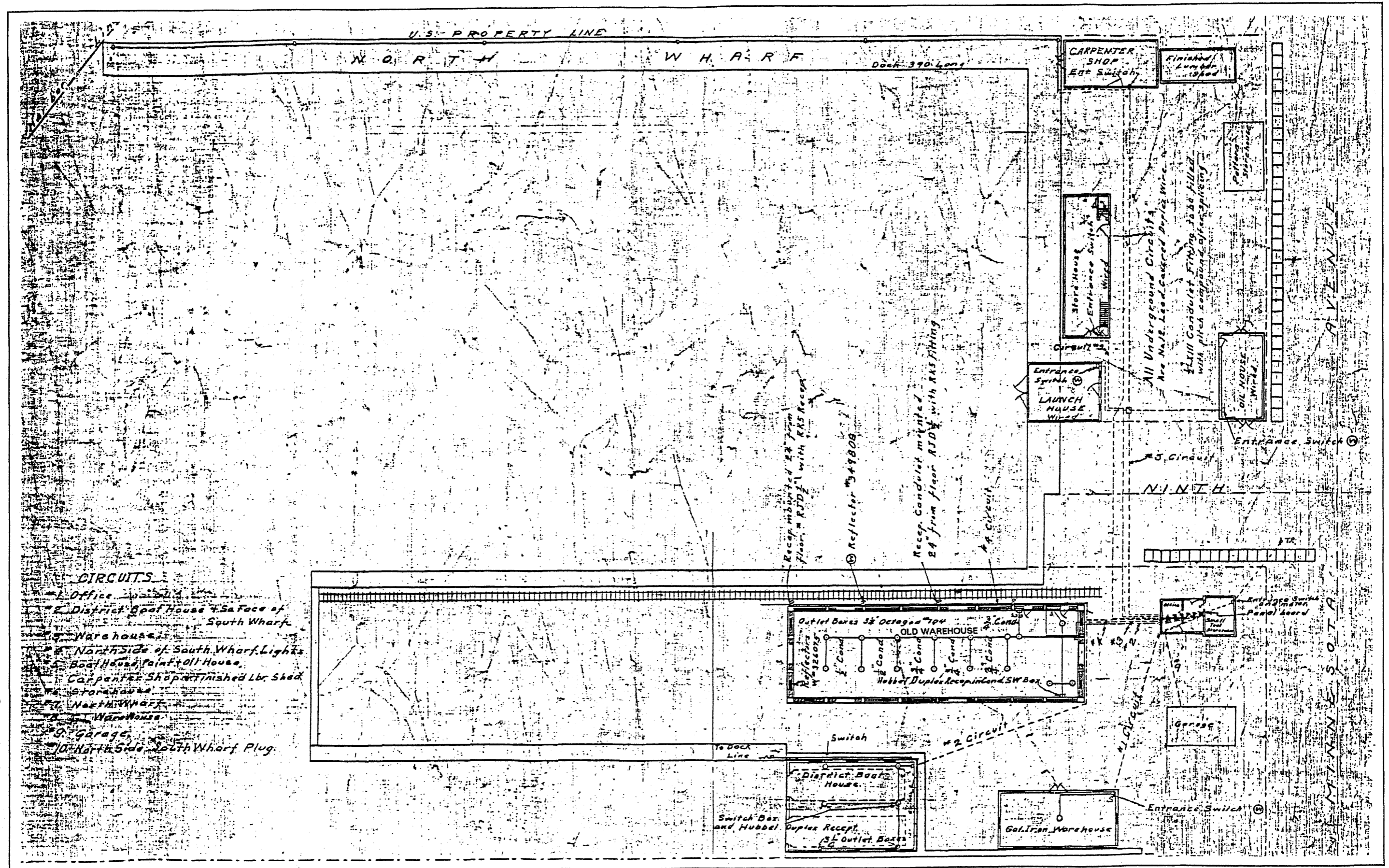


Figure 12. Vessel Yard Property Expansion, 1924



Source: U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (1926)

Figure 13. Duluth Vessel Yard, 1926

Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (1927)



Figure 14. View of COE Vessel Yard from Duluth Harbor, 1927

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activities in the Duluth-Superior region rose by only \$261,000.00 (2 percent) during the period from 1942 to 1945. This was at a time when tonnage shipped through the port witnessed an overall 90 percent increase over the previous decade.

The impact of the Second World War upon Corps activities in the Duluth-Superior harbor cannot be clearly defined on the basis of the "unclassified" nonmilitary budget headings available through the Corps of Engineers data base. The fact that the upgrading of the Duluth vessel yard is not mentioned in any of the annual reports, extending over its planning, construction and completion phases between 1939 and 1942, provides strong circumstantial evidence pointing to the facilities redevelopment as having been an item under the National Defense budget. Information contained in the Corps of Engineers, "Report of the Federal Civil Works Program as Administered by the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army 1951," tends to explain this omission on the basis of Corps reporting procedures:

Direct measures taken by the Federal Government in the interests of national security are clearly chargeable to the military budget. By a sort of tacit understanding, the Corps of Engineers has refrained from including any item of National Defense value among the evaluated economic benefits of proposed river and harbor improvements (USDW, ACOE 1952:286).

Postwar Corps activity remained focused on deepening the harbor and maintaining the channels. Departures from this regime included the installation, in 1951, of current-indicator lights, which relay to approaching ships the velocity and direction of the current in the entrance channels. The Corps also supervised the installation of a bubbler system in 1973 to help extend the Great Lakes navigation season (Hall 1976:47-49).

The COE was involved in pier construction and the modification (deepening) of the natural harbor since the late 1860s (Ensign ca. 1899:5). The 1890s saw increased COE harbor activity. By the end of 1904, COE harbor activities were centered on the current site at the corner of Minnesota Avenue and Ninth Street. The relocation of four buildings (boat house, launch house, warehouse, and paint/oil house) to the site made it the "home base" for COE operations. Activity was intense, as there was increased dredging of the harbor basin and channels, as well as construction of new piers. By 1915, the COE had managed to deepen the majority of the harbor basin to 22 ft. By 1927, the vessel yard contained 12 buildings, including the extant "old warehouse." A 1927 photograph (Figure 14) reveals that, aside from the "old warehouse" all buildings in the yard appear to be wrapped in clapboard or horizontal board and capped by gable roofs.

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The present identity of the vessel yard was largely created in 1941 (save for the "old warehouse" and a 1977 prefabricated steel frame welding shop). At that time, most of the existing buildings were demolished, yielding to new construction of a residence, garage, warehouse, and machine shop, as well as the rebuilding of the north pier. Post-World War II activity concentrated on the continued dredging of the harbor and maintenance of the harbor basin and its connecting channels.

The current vessel yard buildings represent a common architectural presentation of buildings of their genre (utilitarian) during the early stages of the modern era, appearing almost machine-made and possessing only the slightest applications of decoration. Utilitarian in nature, they are composed of brick and capped by flat roofs.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Vessel Yard district meets National Register Criterion A in its significance as the site of events and activities vital to local community planning and development (i.e., harbor construction) as fostered through the federally legislated River and Harbor Acts of 1896, 1902, 1907, 1908, 1916, 1919, 1927, 1930, 1952, 1960, and 1961 (i.e., Politics/Government). The development of the Duluth-Superior harbor and inland channel up the St. Louis River provided a crucial shipping link in the transport of goods to and from the Eastern manufacturing centers (i.e., Transportation and Maritime history). The continued maintenance of these improvements and their alteration to meet new design needs has remained an important function of the COE vessel yard for almost a century (i.e., conservation, engineering).

The focused activities of the COE in the Duluth-Superior harbor have formed a critical element of community planning and development since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Increased federal involvement in developing, maintaining and regulating the use of the harbor as defined through the River and Harbor Act of 1896, led to a permanent COE presence in the community. This was initially manifested in 1897 by the establishment of a government vessel yard. This facility was at first located on a rented parcel but subsequently (1904) moved to its present location. The continuing importance of the yard in harbor management is aptly demonstrated through still later facility expansion (1924) and redevelopment (1926/27, 1941, 1948) episodes, which have altered the face of the presently existing yard as being largely expressive of a 1941-48 vintage utilitarian government building complex. The cohesive architectural nature of the facility adds to its significance as an expression of Federal public works building design (i.e., architectural) during the 1941-48 period (Criterion C).

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### Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the southeast corner of city lot 196 running thence northwest (N24° 53' 00" W) a distance of approximately 340 feet along southwest boundary of the Minnesota Avenue right-of-way to the northeast corner of city lot 208 thence to the southwest (N65° 07' 00" E) along the northwest boundaries of city lots 208 and 207 and water lot 208 to the northwest corner of the North Pier, at the intersection of the Duluth Harbor line, a distance of approximately 490 ft, thence to the south-southeast a distance of approximately 230 ft to the northwest corner of the South pier, thence along the line of the pier front a distance of approximately 135 ft to a point intersecting to extended boundary line of water lots 194 and 196, thence along said line towards the northeast (N 65° 07' 00" E) a distance of approximately 560 ft to the southeast corner of city lot 196, the point of beginning (Figures 2, 3, and 12).

### Boundary Justification

This boundary encompasses the location of the original (1903/04) Vessel Yard (Figure 10) the 1924/27 Vessel Yard expansion (Figure 13) symbolized by the extant "old warehouse" and the area of the yard as it existed during the 1940/41 rebuilding project (Figure 3).