NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

7772

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 Fremont Municipal Power Plant and Pumping Station

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number Eighth Street and Park Avenue n/a ☐ not for publication

city or town Fremont n/a ☐ vicinity

state Nebraska code NE county Dodge code 053 zip code 68025

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets __ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant __ nationally __ statewide x locally. (__ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date 5/24/02

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying 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 — Edson H. Beall 7/24/02
☐ 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):

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	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	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

n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: power plant
INDUSTRY: waterworks

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK
roof OTHER
other

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

(see continuation sheet)

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.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1907 - 1952

Significant Dates

1907 (substantial reconstruction)
1939-40 (major addition)

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

George Grabe, Fremont, Architect (1939, 1949)
Joe D. Phillippe, Fremont, Contractor (1939)

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- ■ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ other

name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	zone	easting	northing		zone	easting	northing
1	14	709180	4590020	2			

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on continuation sheet)

North 140 feet of Block 113, Original Town of Fremont, Nebraska

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on continuation sheet)

The boundaries of the nominated area coincide with the legal and historic boundaries of the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Clayton B. Fraser, Principal

organization FRASERdesign date 22 March 2002

street & number 420 South County Road 23E telephone 970.669.7969

city or town Loveland state Colorado zip code 80537

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7½ 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/title MDI Limited Partnership No. 36

street & number 1600 University Avenue, Suite 212 telephone 612.646.7848

city or town St. Paul state Minnesota zip code 55104

The Fremont Municipal Power Plant and Pumping Station is situated within the mildly urban setting of the eastern Nebraska city of Fremont. Located in a mixed-use neighborhood at the edge of the city's central business district, the property is bounded on the north by Eighth Street between Park Avenue and Main Street. It encompasses the entire northern half of City Block 113, with frontage on the three streets. North of the power plant across Eighth Street is a small park that occupies two city blocks, beyond which is a three-story school building. The nearby buildings in the business district are generally one- and two-story commercial blocks of various ages. Typical for its time and place, Fremont's business district consists primarily of low- and medium-rise commercial and institutional buildings, built and modified over an extended period. All abut the sidewalks, use similar materials and have similar proportions and scale. Integrity of these buildings ranges widely, with the most serious alterations generally occurring on the street-level storefronts.

When built originally in 1885, the water pumping station faced north toward Eighth Street, beside two frame dwellings immediately east. The power plant was built onto the south side of this structure, facing the alley that extended east-west through the center of the block. Rebuilt several times since--with the houses subsequently demolished--the plant's primary facade now faces Eighth Street, though its two public entrances are located on the building's west side, and the main industrial entrance is on the east. The structure is set back from the concrete sidewalks on three sides, giving it a more imposing countenance and integrating it with the setbacks of its residential neighbors. Between the sidewalk and the plant is a small grass lawn.

As it stands now, the Fremont Power Plant is actually an amalgamation of at least twelve different construction phases, six of which entailed exterior additions to the building. The plant was built in 1885 as a single-story brick structure with an 80-foot-tall, detached brick chimney. In 1895 a single-story addition with a cross-gabled roof was made onto the building's south side. In 1907 the building was essentially reconstructed as a two-story, hipped roof brick block. In 1927-1928 a massive three-story, flat-roofed brick addition was built onto the building's east side. In 1939-1940 three-story, flat-roofed additions were built onto the building's north and west sides, and in 1949-1950, another three-story addition was built onto the east side. These and other, lesser alterations involved fitting the building's interior with new generating equipment. (See Section 8 for a more detailed discussion of these alterations and additions.) Although thus built in different stages, the power plant owes its architectural character most to the 1939-1940 construction. This was designed by Fremont architect George W. Grabe, with Kansas City engineers Black & Veatch responsible for the mechanical design. The 1949-1950 construction, also delineated by Grabe, employed the same architectural style.

The power plant is today configured as a massive brick block, 178'4" wide by 118'7" deep. Reflective of its staged construction, parts of the building are variously two, three and five stories in height, with a basement under part of it. Supported by masonry exterior bearing walls, steel roof trusses and pan-type roof and floor slabs, the building and its additions have been classed since 1895 as a fireproof structure.

The defining elements from the 1939 and 1949 construction are essentially intact today. The roofs are flat, covered with composition roofing and lined with brick parapets all around. Exterior walls on the east, west and north are sheathed with wire-brushed red brick, laid in a modified common bond (with alternating headers and stetchers every sixth course). Brick on the south side, which reflects the most addition and patching, is either a wire-brushed or a common pressed variety. The poured-in-place concrete foundation walls extend above grade to water-table level on all sides. Windows in the central section of the north facade (1939 and 1949 construction) are evenly spaced in banks between brick pilasters. These feature industrial-sash steel frames, with loose lintels and concrete sills. This section is flanked on each side (1939 on the right and 1949 on the left) by a brick block with a large window featuring a round-arch head with concrete keystone and springers. (Now filled with glass blocks, the windows originally featured industrial-sash frames with fan lights.) The west facade, built in 1939, features an asymmetrical combination of colonnaded window bays toward the rear of the building and windows placed separately in a flat wall elsewhere. Like the north wall, these feature multi-sash frames, loose lintels and concrete sills. The east wall, built in 1949, features multi-sash windows aligned vertically in bays along a pilastered wall.

The power plant derives its architectural distinction from its Art Moderne facades. The north facade--the building's front--is essentially symmetrical, while the east and west sides are configured asymmetrically. On the north, the central three-story bank of windows is flanked on both sides by brick blocks with molded concrete band courses and copings. The central bank features 17 bays (9 built in 1939, 8 in 1949), each bay containing three levels of windows with corbeled brick pilasters inbetween. The pilasters are topped with stepped concrete caps, tied horizontally by a concrete band course. Above this course is a plain brick spandrel panel, itself capped by a concrete block coping. The building's facades are defined by large corbeled brick pylons, built in 1939 and 1949, which feature chamfered concrete-block heads similar to the pilaster caps. The north wall has two symmetrically placed pylons that frame the central colonaded section. (The right pylon was built in 1939; the left pylon was originally built in 1939, then dismantled and rebuilt in 1949 to maintain symmetry on the east addition.) The east wall has a single pylon (1949), the west, two (1939).

Despite its patchwork history, the power plant displays a remarkable degree of architectural unity, due largely to Grabe's use of the Art Moderne style in the 1930s and 1940s. Though not a high-style interpretation of the Moderne style, Grabe's design for the Fremont Power Plant

represents a successful adaptation of the style to an industrial structure. Spawned by the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs and Industrels Moderne held in Paris in 1925, the Moderne style was applied to a multiplicity of building types in America during the Great Depression, eventually forming the basis for other modern architectural styles. "In the case of America," architectural historian Marcus Whiffen has stated, "it did this less by exhibiting any stylistic consistency in the buildings housing it than by diffusing a sentiment for modernity and the notion that it could be achieved by means of decoration."[1] Characteristics of the style included relatively simple forms arranged in linear, determinedly modernistic or mechanistic compositions, which were usually vertical in orientation. Exterior surfaces were typically faceted with brick corbeling and often overlaid with a variety of decorative motifs, rendered in brick, terra cotta, concrete or architectural metals.

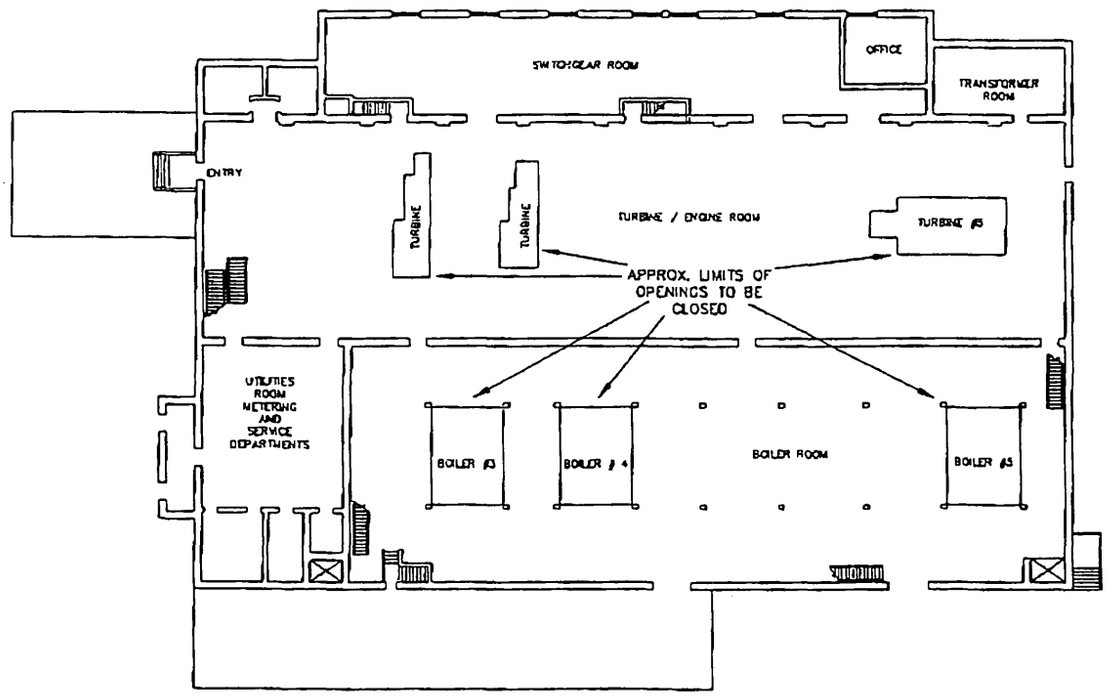

Figure 1. First floor plan, Fremont Municipal Power Plant and Pumping Station.

[1]Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1969), 235.

Art Moderne--and its showier sibling Art Deco--assumed a wide expressionistic range, from the sumptuously decorated movie houses then springing up across America to the myriad of small-scale, modestly rendered commercial buildings in the country's small towns and cities. As illustrated by the Fremont Power Plant, industrial buildings rendered in this style tended to rely on Moderne massing and brickwork rather than applied ornamentation. Grabe relied primarily on custom-cast concrete blocks for his ornamentation. The one use of architectural metals occurs on the west side, where aluminum canopies and coping frame the three public entrances.

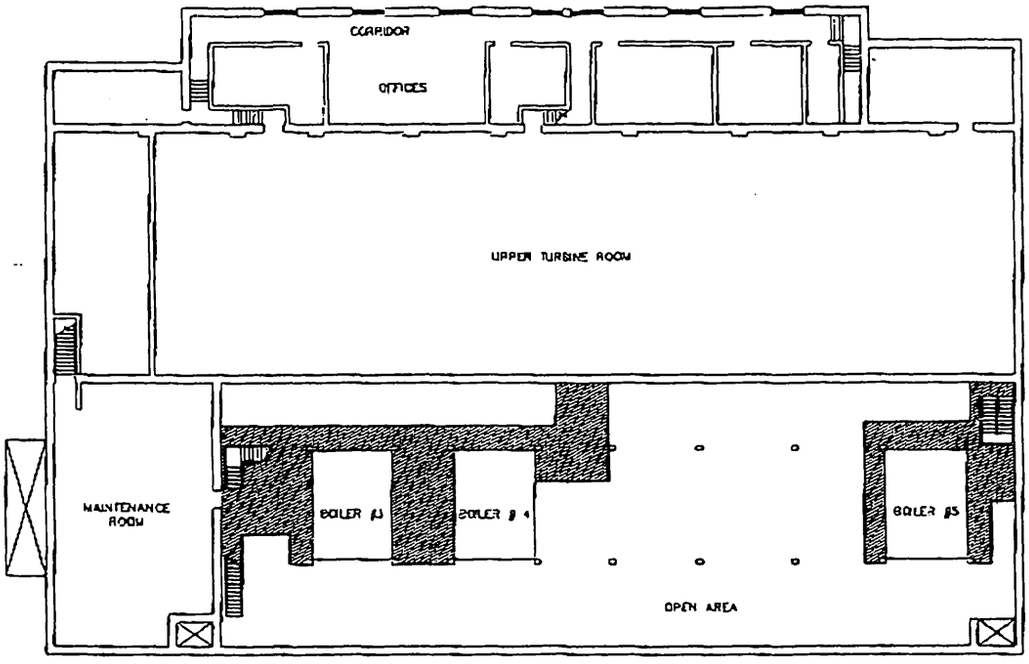

Figure 2. Second floor plan, Fremont Municipal Power Plant and Pumping Station.

As much as the exterior of the power plant has been altered, the interior has undergone more changes over its extended use. So many changes, in fact, that they are impossible to catalog with certainty. Although virtually all of the mechanical equipment has been removed since the building's closure in 1976, the architectural finishes and spatial organization remain essentially intact. Typical for steam-powered electrical generating plants, the Fremont facility is laid out generally with two major areas appended by smaller ancillary spaces [*see Figure 1*]. The boiler room occupies the southern half of the structure. Housing the dirtiest part of the operation, it features concrete slab floors, exposed brick walls and steel roof trusses with concrete pan roof.

The five boilers and most of the piping have all been removed from the building, but their riveted steel framework remains largely in place, dividing the space horizontally and vertically. To the north of the boiler room is the generator room, which once housed as many as five turbines. These also have been removed from the plant, leaving the space largely unencumbered. The generator room features concrete floor, brick walls with glazed tile at the lowest level and precast concrete roof slab on steel I-beams over riveted steel Pratt trusses. A Whiting 20-ton wall crane rolls on tracks supported by brick pilasters on the north side and steel columns on the south. To the north of the generator room is the smaller switching room, contained within the 1939 and 1949 additions. This contains a concrete floor, glazed tile walls and plaster ceiling.

A small transformer room (1949) is situated in the building's northeast corner. This is balanced on the other side by a pair of restrooms. The Board of Utilities' offices are located in the building's southwest corner (1939). Intended for visitation by the public, these are the most architecturally finished spaces in the building. They feature terrazzo floors, stained wood wainscots on the plaster walls, wood Moderne counters with metal inlay strips, and coffered plaster ceiling

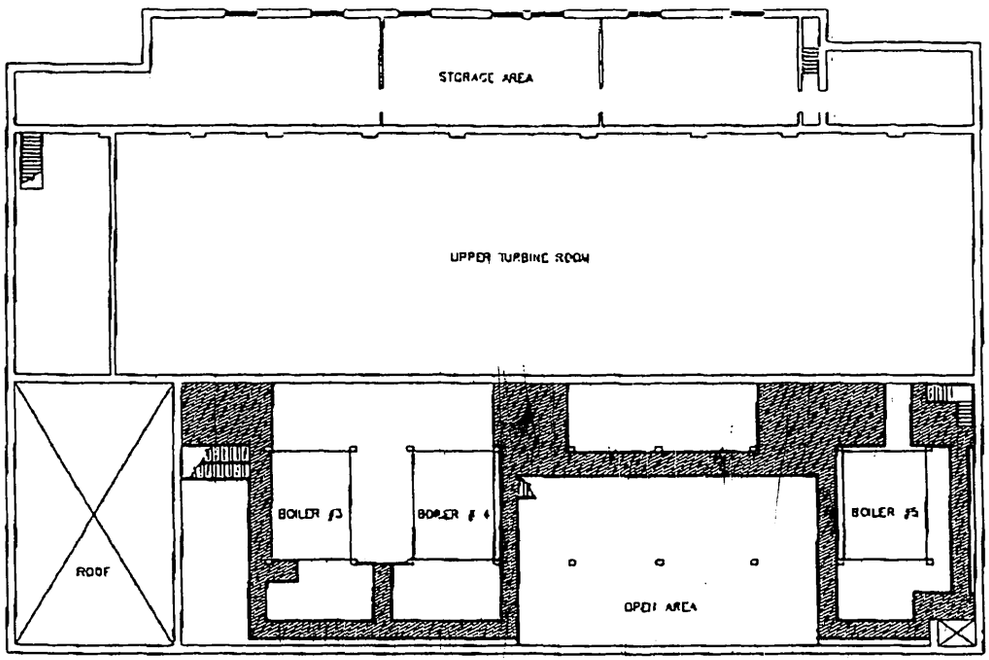

Figure 3. Third floor plan, Fremont Municipal Power Plant and Pumping Station.

with acoustic tile inserts. The building's second floor consists mostly of the open upper levels of the boiler and generator rooms [*see Figure 2*]. A row of single-story offices (1939 and 1949) lines the north wall. These are traditionally finished, with painted concrete floors and painted plaster walls and ceilings. A maintenance room is located in the southwest corner. The third floor level of the north section [*see Figure 3*] contains a large storage area subdivided into three equal-size spaces. The building's fourth and fifth levels contain the upper parts of the boiler room [*see Figure 4*]. Despite all of the exterior and interior alterations the power plant has undergone over the years, the building retains a high degree of integrity, design, workmanship, location, setting, materials, feeling and association from its definitive stage of construction. The power plant is an important landmark for Fremont, a visual anchor for the city's central business district.

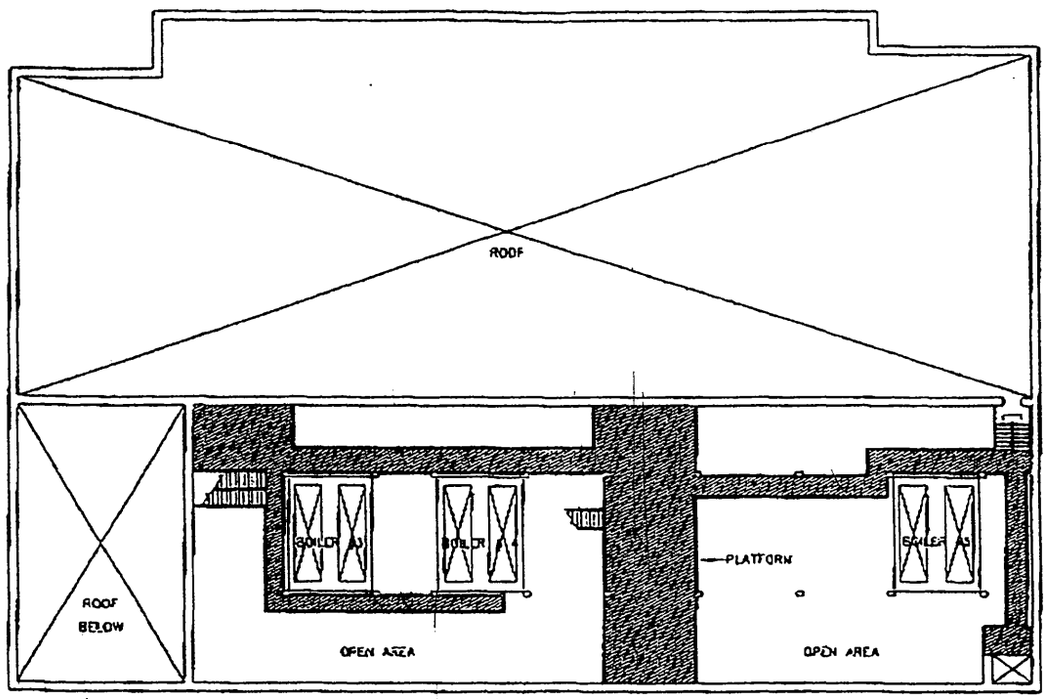

Figure 4. Fourth floor plan, Fremont Municipal Power Plant and Pumping Station.

Constructed in several stages between 1885 and 1950, the Fremont Municipal Power Plant and Pumping Station is a locally prominent landmark that derives its significance from two principal areas: industry and architecture. The property is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A for its exemplification on a local level of the power generation industry. Like the rest of the nation, Nebraska began generating electricity in the early 1880s, primarily in small coal-fired steam facilities that powered metropolitan street lighting networks. The earliest plants were privately owned, but the first municipally owned and operated electrical plants soon began to appear in the state as well. With its 1895 construction date, the Fremont Power Plant was only the sixth such publicly owned facility built in Nebraska. By 1902 eleven municipal generating plants were operating in the state. Ten years later there were 85. In 1926 the number peaked at 282. The Fremont plant enjoyed relative stability in the 1930s and 1940s, when many of the state's other municipal plants were closing in the face of competition from private utility companies. In an almost continuous program of expansion and improvement, the Fremont structure has undergone a series of modifications--in 1895, 1907, 1927-28, 1939-40, 1944, and 1949-50--designed to accommodate new, larger generating equipment. By the early 1960s the Fremont plant was one of only four municipal facilities in Nebraska still using steam-powered generators to produce electricity. Its stable management and longstanding self-sufficiency was a source of pride for the city, prompting the *Fremont Tribune* in 1937 to call the plant "the municipality's most valuable asset." As one of the earliest and one of the most enduringly successful municipal power plants in Nebraska, the Fremont facility has played a pivotal historical role in the development of this city.

The Fremont Power Plant is also eligible under Criterion C for its embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a period and style of construction. Although the structure was built in several parts, it owes its architectural character primarily to the 1939 addition (echoed in the 1949 addition). For that expansion, Fremont architect George Grabe used the Art Moderne architectural idiom, as he had on the Fremont Municipal Auditorium, built the year before. Grabe employed many of the hallmarks of the Moderne style: clarity of the exterior wall planes, vertical orientation created by corbeled brick pilasters, prominent vertical pylons with stepped caps, regularly spaced industrial-sash windows, and ornamental use of architectural metals. Grabe's successful interpretation of the Art Moderne style distinguishes the power plant among Fremont's Depression-era public buildings. For decades a local landmark, the Municipal Power Plant and Pumping Station forms a significant part of the material culture of this city. As such it deserves to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

On August 23, 1856, just two years after Nebraska Territory was established, Edwin Barnard and John Koontz drove claim stakes into the ground for what would become the town of Fremont. The two men, real estate speculators from Des Moines, had come into the new territory looking for a likely spot on which to start a town. What they discovered in the fertile hills between the Platte and Elkhorn rivers was "so goodly a landscape" that it "filled us with rapture and made blood fairly bound within our veins." Bernard and Koontz drove their first stake at the corner of First and D streets. Measuring one mile square, the town they envisioned was to be laid out using a traditional gridiron street pattern, with 12th Street forming its northern boundary, First Street the south, Nye Avenue the west and Union Avenue the east. The plat was bisected by the existing Army road between Omaha and Fort Kearney, which they named Military Avenue and used as their baseline. After staking out their new town, the men went exploring further west. When they returned two days later, they discovered that another group of Iowans had staked out a conflicting town claim. The two groups joined forces, calling their claim the Pinney, Barnard and Company's Town Plat. They christened the town Fremont, after John C. Fremont, the famous western explorer who was the candidate for the newly formed Republican Party in the 1856 presidential election. This name was a direct challenge to another nascent town, thirty miles west, which had been named Buchanan after James Buchanan, the Democratic candidate.[2]

Within three weeks of the town's founding, Barnard and Koontz had completed Fremont's first building, a crudely built soddy. They had located the town strategically astride the major route through the region to capitalize on the military and emigrant traffic along the road. With competition from numerous other speculatively platted towns in the region, however, Fremont developed slowly at first. One observer from 1858 characterized the area grimly as "a country, and it was all country, with smooth, level, gray surface which appeared to go on toward the west forever and forever." He described his introduction to Fremont:

> South of the little town site of Fremont the Platte River moved sluggishly along to meet and be swallowed up in the great Missouri. Ten or twelve log cabins broke the monotony of the treeless expanse that stretched far way, apparently to a leaden sky. My heart sank within me as I thought but did not say, "How can I ever live in a place like this."[3]

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[2]*Centennial Celebration: The Story of Fremont's First Century* (Fostoria, Ohio: John B. Rogers Producing Company, 1956), 4-5; Terry D. Boeck, *The Townbuilders (History of Early Fremont)* (Fremont, Nebraska: by the author, n.d.), 1-5..

[3]As quoted in *Centennial Celebration*, 6.

Fremont soon became the Dodge County seat, with a core of basic businesses. Davis and Chipman opened a sawmill, McCartney and Rogers a brickyard, Nye and Colson a freighting company. Margaret Turner built the log Valley House, the town's first hotel and stage station. John Hormel opened the town's first blacksmith shop, and the Smith Brothers opened the first general store, a dugout that also served as the town's first post office. When argonauts began pouring west toward Colorado in 1859, traffic through Fremont along the military road increased dramatically, and the town profited from this windfall. By the time the first telegraph line reached town in 1860, some 250 people lived in Fremont.

After the Civil War the Union Pacific Railroad began construction of the first transcontinental railroad westward from Omaha along the old Platte River Road across Nebraska. The UP tracks first reached Fremont in January 1866. Here the railroad built maintenance facilities, which generated a dependable source of income for the town and attracted more residents and businesses. The impact of the Union Pacific on Fremont's socioeconomic development can hardly be overstated, but it was not the only railroad to impact the growing town. In August 1864 venerable railroad builder John I. Blair organized the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad as the northern branch of the Pacific Railroad system. Built from Missouri Valley, Iowa, northward through Fremont, the SC&P extended to Sioux City by 1868. In January 1869 the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad was organized as a subsidiary of the SC&P. Also under Blair's control, the FE&MV stretched up the Elkhorn River Valley, from Fremont to the confluence of the Niobrara and Missouri rivers.

Fremont benefitted as a major supply nexus along these new lines. During the 1870s and 1880s, the town became home to a variety of industries: factories for production of brooms, cigars, pottery, baskets, beer and soda pop; a fence manufacturer; a hemp and twine manufacturer; a carriage works; clothing makers; canning factories; a roller mill that produced 150 barrels of flour per day; a creamery that produced a half-million pounds of butter per year; among other plants. Cattle- and sheepmen from the outlying region herded their stock into Fremont by the hundreds of thousands of head for feeding, butchering or shipping. The feed for these animals was produced largely by nearby farmers, who also shipped their produce into town by the ton. Churches, schools, banks and a variety of retail businesses emerged.

As Fremont's population increased steadily--1200 in 1870, 3013 in 1880, and 6747 in 1890--the city itself developed and grew. In the 1880s Fremont began making infrastructural improvements. In 1881 the city granted permission to the Fremont Telephone Company to erect the first telephone lines around town. Four years later the city began construction of its first municipal water works. For this Chicago contractor George Morgan laid underground lines beneath the streets and built a brick pumping plant on the south side of Eighth Street between Park and Main avenues [*see Figure 5*]. Though it would never be confused with Omaha, Fremont experienced an extended period of relative prosperity and growth through this period.

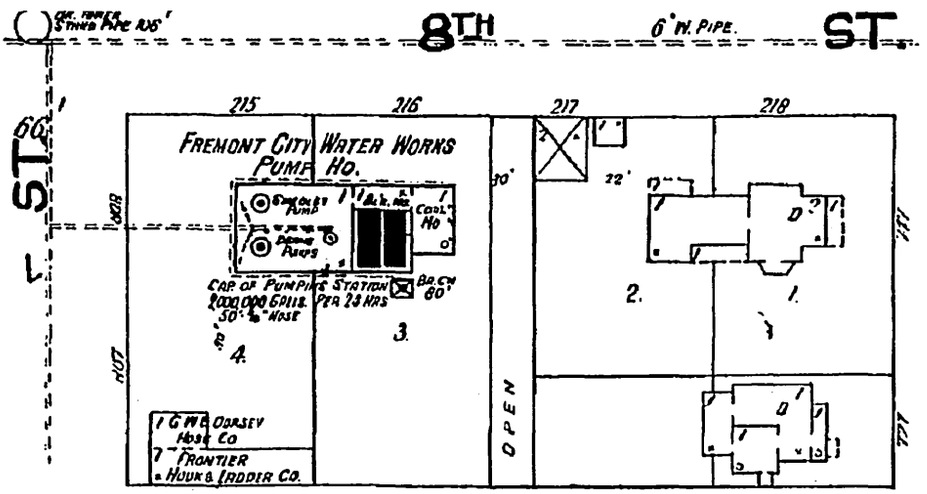

Figure 5. Fremont Municipal Waterworks, from 1892 Sanborn Map.

By the early 1880s, some of the townspeople had begun agitating for improved street lighting. The city had been lit up to that point by kerosene lamps, which required daily maintenance and provided poor illumination. In July 1885 the Fremont City Council met in a special session to consider granting a street lighting franchise to a private firm. Operated by C.D. Jones of Independence, Iowa, the company agreed to install no fewer than 20 light poles at downtown street intersections (at a cost of $2.50 per pole per month) to replace the 30 lamps then in place. The new lights were to burn a "much finer quality" oil than the existing fixtures, providing better and cleaner illumination.[4] Called the Fremont Gas and Electric Light Company, Jones's firm carried the promise that the lamps would eventually be electrified, but it is unclear when the city received its first electrical service. It may have been as late as 1891.[5] "The city is well supplied with light in the way of gas, arc and incandescent electric

[4]"Under the Gas Light," *Fremont Weekly Tribune*, 5 August 1885.

[5]Accounts on this differ. *Centennial Celebration* states that "by 1886 Fremont got its first system of electric arc lamps and a scattering of street lamps were erected." A history of Fremont utilities states that the city received its first electric lights in 1887. And *Electric World*, a national professional journal that monitored electrical progress in America, reported in September 1891 that "Fremont, Nebraska, now has electric lights."

lights," according to the 1891 Fremont City Directory. "There are a large number of gasoline lamps scattered in various parts of the city for street lighting." The first electric street lamps were arc lights, suspended from pole-mounted wires over the intersections. The wires were attached to pulleys that permitted the fixtures to be lowered to replace the carbon filaments.

Early in 1895 the city council received a petition signed by a majority of the city's voters. Dissatisfied with the service provided by the Fremont Gas and Electric Light Company, they requested that the city build its own municipal electric plant. The council convened a special session on February 15 to consider the petition. Representing the gas and light company, attorney E.F. Gray lectured the gathering on the illegality of the city competing directly with his clients. Gray concluded with what the city clerk characterized as "an ill-timed political speech" about the impropriety of city maintaining a budgetary surplus with which to fund the proposed plant. Mayor William Fried responded that the surplus had been accumulated in the city's best interests. "At the present time under the existing contract the cost of lighting the city is excessive," Fried stated, "and the said contract under which Electric Light is being furnished to this city will expire in September of this year, and unless an Electric Light Plant is erected by this city prior to such expiration, this city will be compelled to renew or extend such contract." He explained that the new plant would be in the "best interest of this city and would be a great saving in expenses to the city to construct and operate its own Electric Light Plant."[6]

Ignoring Gray's protests, the council appropriated $18,000 toward the plant's construction. Two weeks later the gas and electric company filed suit in district court to restrain the city from contracting for this construction, on the grounds that the city had accumulated its surplus of funds illegally. The court granted the injunction but then lifted it after a week. The city in retaliation went "after the Electric Light Company with a gad," according to the *Tribune*, by demanding that the light company report on its generating capacities, the number of incandescent and arc light fixtures it powered and the amount of power required for each fixture.[7]

The new generating plant would be built as an addition to the existing water works on Eighth Street. Measuring 30 feet by 42 feet, it was to be configured as a single-story brick structure. Steam for electrical generation would be produced by a Reynolds boiler, and the existing brick smokestack would be extended to accommodate the additional output. On July 4 the city received competitive bids from nine Midwestern firms from as far away as Fort Wayne. Low bidder at $16,308.00, the Bigelow Electrical Supply Company of Lincoln received the contract.

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[6]Fremont City Council Proceedings, Book 4: 350-353. "For Municipal Lighting," *Fremont Weekly Tribune*, 19 February 1895.

[7]"Meeting of the Council," *Fremont Tribune*, 28 March 1895.

The other firms complained that Bigelow could not perform the contract satisfactorily, but Bigelow assured the city of his capability. "We will get our boiler work from the Fremont foundry," he told the council, "and will employ only Fremont labor wherever it is practical to do so."[8]

With less than two months remaining in its lease with the gas and electric company, the council was anxious for Bigelow to push the work. The contractor had estimated the construction time at 60 days, but when the deadline arrived, he was far short of completion. In October Bigelow asked for a 40-day extension. He got 30. The city, meanwhile requested that the gas and electric company continue providing power until further notice. In late January the city accepted the light plant as complete [*see Figure 6*]. The single-story brick structure featured moderately pitched, cross-gabled roofs covered with wooden shingles and rimmed with plain-board eaves. Wood-framed windows and doors topped with segmental brick arches were scattered asymmetrically around the exterior walls. A large tapered brick chimney extended from the roof ridge in the building's center. The Fremont plant could hardly be said to exhibit any particular architectural style. A plain-faced industrial structure, it lacked any applied ornamentation.

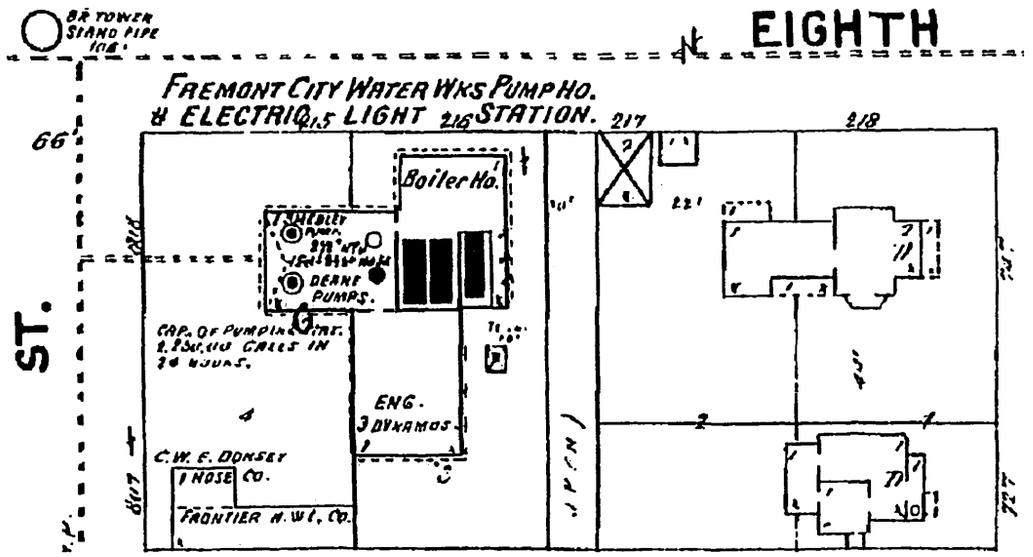

Figure 6. Fremont Municipal Waterworks and Light Plant, from 1897 Sanborn Map.

[8]"Electric Light Contract," *Fremont Tribune*, 4 July 1895.

In 1886 the city was forced to replace the central smokestack, after the existing stack was damaged by a lightning strike. Apparently, Fremont was still using gas lamps at some locations at this time, because the city contracted with J.P. Ogard to light the lamps for $1.25 per lamp per month. And the gas and electric company remained in business, supplying power to private homes and businesses not reached by the city system.

In building its own power plant, the City of Fremont was both following a national trend and leading a state trend. Like every major technological advance in the modern era, electricity had gone through years of experiment and development before it was ready for widespread distribution and consumption. During the early and middle 19th century, scientists and engineers in Europe experimented separately with the various aspects of electricity--its generation, transmission and application. One of the most noteworthy discoveries was made in the 1840s by French science writer Jean Bernard Leon Focault. Focault was the first to pass current between carbon rods to produce illumination, in what amounted to a rudimentary version of the arc light. Although his invention needed almost continuous adjustment to keep the rods positioned properly and the rods tended to burn up quickly, Focault's device marked the prototype for what would become the mainstay electric light source of the 1870s and 1880s.

What Focault lacked was a reliable energy source to power his arc light. This breakthrough occurred around 1867, after decades of experiments with electromagnetic induction, when a practical dynamo was developed that could generate electric power reliably and inexpensively. The innovation marked the critical transition from electricity produced chemically by batteries to electricity produced mechanically in commercially useful quantities. In 1876 Cleveland engineer Charles Brush developed an improved dynamo that could power several arc lamps. The next year he invented a carbon light that automatically adjusted the carbon rods using solenoids. The arc lamp gave off little heat compared with traditional gas lamps, and it produced light at a much lower cost. It was best suited to lighting large areas--auditoriums, theatres and street corners. With the issues of adequate power, reliability and economy thus resolved, the arc lamp quickly gained popularity in the late 1870s. Local companies soon organized in cities across the country to produce arc street lighting, generating electricity from relatively small turbines hooked to coal-, oil- or gas-fired steam boilers.

By the mid-1880s these commercial ventures had begun facing competition from power plants owned and operated directly by the municipalities. In building their own facilities, the cities were seeking to provide electricity as they had water and sewage service, on a municipal level at lower costs to their customers than private firms could offer. Major metropolises such as Galveston and Chicago began municipal electrical production in the 1880s, but the trend lay more in the province of smaller cities such as Harlan, Iowa; Bay City, Michigan; Harriman,

Tennessee; and Little Rock, Arkansas. By 1893 one source estimated that six percent of the electrical plants then in operation were municipally owned. But what was considered by citizens as a boon was regarded by many engineers and investors as a menace to free enterprise. "The tidal wave is sweeping over our land, and certain municipalities are now on the crest," seethed engineer W. Worth Bean, "but it will not need the average period of depreciation in a plant for the wave to subside and leave the wrecks stranded with increased burdens and depleted treasuries. Already cities have sold their plants, paying dearly for their experience, and others are looking for buyers, in order to unload their 'white elephants.' Municipal ownership is contrary to the spirit of republican institutions."[9]

Nebraska typified the national experience in its embrace of electricity. The first lighting plants were commercially owned facilities in Lincoln and Omaha. According to historian Dewey DeBoer, "Oldest available records indicate that the first plants were small single-engine units designed for but one purpose--usually lighting of street lamps. Most of these were owned by private individuals, family interests, or small stock companies."[10] While towns such as Fremont and Hastings were granting franchises to commercial companies in the mid-1880s, one Nebraska town--Crete--built its own municipal plant. With an initial investment of $9500, Crete built the state's first municipal plant in 1886, generating enough power for 50 arc lamps.

Crete's was apparently the only municipal lighting plant in the state until Falls City built its own plant in 1890. Falls City was followed by Schuyler (the town of Buchanan, renamed), which built its plant either in 1893 or 1894, and Wayne and Tecumseh. The Falls City facility

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[9]W. Worth Bean, "Municipal Lighting," *The Electrical Engineer* 23:476 (16 June 1897), 655:

> Government, whether national, State or municipal, was instituted for the purpose of protection and not production. It would be just as reasonable for the city to enter any pursuit, such as farming, or as a grocer, or keep a sawmill to saw its own material for sidewalks or paving, or manufacture shoes for its citizens, or run a saloon for the profit there is in it, as for it to enter the field of lighting. Just as sure as a nation becomes a commercial producer, competing against its own citizens, just so sure will the seeds of its own disintegration be sown. . . At this present writing municipal lighting has not passed through its most dangerous period, and it is difficult to predict its final result. It is now but at the dawn of its existence, but a December day will be long in comparison wit the life it has run, for when bonds are to be redeemed, accidents befall the plant, and a depreciated plant is to be renewed, then comes the trying ordeal, and woe be to the city that has not provided against that day, but has wasted its substance in riotous living, for then it will be found to have nothing left for its existence but the husks of "Municipal Lighting."

[10]As quoted in Paul Hensley, "Municipals Were First Public Systems." In *Public Power in Nebraska*, Depth Report #2. University of Nebraska School of Journalism, 1963.

was apparently the first casualty of what one reporter called the "municipal plant craze." Though only four years old, the plant was closed indefinitely in October 1894 because the "engines are in bad condition and not capable of running the lights."[11]

Fremont's facility, completed at the end of 1895, was apparently the state's sixth municipal lighting plant put into operation. A handful of other municipal generating plants was constructed later in the 19th century, and commercial facilities opened in Geneva, Plattsmouth, Beatrice, Malvern, Bloomfield and Talmage, among other towns. The Hastings electrical plant was reportedly the first commercial operation in the state to fail. In July 1895 it was sold under foreclosure to a New York investor. After the turn of the century several municipal generating works were put on line, including plants in Wilber (1900), Hastings (1901), Madison (1901), Lincoln (1905), Wisner (1905), Grand Island (1906), Beaver City (1906), Alma (1907), Randolph (1907), Red Cloud (1907) and Wahoo (1908).[12] The controversy over municipal versus commercial electrical generation continued unabated in Nebraska and the country until well into the Great Depression.

Most of the state's early street light systems employed arc lamps, often used in conjunction with earlier gas lights. Though they gave off poor illumination and often went out in the wind, gas lamps were still favored by many for their warm glow, preferable to the "sickly purple" produced by early enclosed arc lamps. It was thus common to see combinations of electric and gas lights along towns' streets during this transitional period. Despite their popularity, arcs suffered serious limitations. The beam from the carbon rods was intense, limiting their use to large interior spaces or street lights.[13] And the rods rarely lasted more than seven hours, necessitating a second set of rods in each lamp that would ignite automatically when the first were exhausted. Nebraska towns would often shut down the electricity at midnight in order to conserve power and the lamps' rods. Even at that, the rods needed to be replaced at least twice a week. In the early 1890s inventors developed a way to enclose the rods in globes, which increased their life

[11]"News of the Week: Electric Light and Power," *Electrical World* 24: 15 (15 October 1894), 376.

[12]The best single source of information for Nebraska's municipal power plants is: University of Nebraska and Works Progress Administration, "Survey of Municipal Electric and Water Systems in Nebraska." Final Report No. 941, November 1937. These dates are taken from this source.

[13]An 1881 textbook condemned the arc lamp, saying: "Its brilliancy is painfully and even dangerously intense, being liable to injure the eyes and produce headaches. Its small size detracts from its illuminating power--it dazzles rather than illuminates--and it cannot be produced on a sufficiently small scale for ordinary purpose or convenience. There is no mean between the absence of light and a light of overpowering intensity." As quoted in George R. Metcalf, "The Industrial Development of Electric Lighting," *Electricity* 10 (20 May 1896), 290.

considerably. Over the objections of lamplighters, open arcs were soon replaced with enclosed lamps. Enclosed-bulb incandescent lights were also then being improved to the point that they would eventually replace arc lights altogether by the early 20th century.

The Fremont plant generated about 100 kilowatts to power the city's arc street lights from sundown to 11 p.m. each evening. At the turn of the 20th century, the municipal plant was still producing only enough electricity to power the street lamps and fixtures in public buildings, with light for privately owned buildings supplied by the Fremont Gas and Electric Light Company. In 1901 consulting engineer Morgan Brooks inspected the facility and found it "not only to have been well installed originally, but to have been kept in excellent repair, as it is in very good condition today."[14] Five years later Chicago-based engineer C.A. Chapman presented an entirely different view in his inspection report. "The type and general arrangement of the machinery and appurtenances now installed in your station are not such as will permit of your securing the greatest economy from plant operation, under the conditions of load thereon," he stated, "nor as high a degree of efficiency from the employees as should be obtained in central station operation, because of the inaccessibility, especially when in operation, of many of the parts of the various machines." Chapman concluded that the existing physical plant was undersized and the equipment outdated and inadequate.[15]

The city was at this time considering expanding its facilities to begin servicing private users. To accommodate the additional 375-kilowatt turbine, Chapman designed the plant's reconstruction, estimating the cost for new machinery in a much larger building at almost $84,000. City Engineer J.W. Andrews scaled Chapman's design back somewhat, reducing its cost to around

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[14]Morgan Brooks, Correspondence to Fred W. Vaughn, Mayor of Fremont, 22 March 1901. Brooks enumerated the equipment then in service:

> The plant consists of Root water-tube boilers, a Corliss-type tandem compound condensing engine built by the Sioux City Engine Works, belted to countershaft, which in turn drives two "Wood" arc light dynamos, and one Fort Wayne single phase alternator. A marble switchboard distributed the alternating current, and an arc switchboard the direct current to an overhead pole line serving the city.

[15]C.A. Chapman, Correspondence to City of Fremont, 12 April 1906. Chapman criticized the plant, stating:

> The chances which are taken constantly by the operating force especially in the Engine and Dynamo room, are such as to expose them to serious accident at any time, and an accident occurring in this manner would, no doubt, result in serious condemnation of the municipality. The present boiler plant is not only extremely inefficient but inadequate for the service required of it, and the stack or chimney now utilized is not of sufficient or proper size to produce the highest efficiency in the boiler plant.

$50,000. To pay for the construction, the council issued bonds. In April 1907 the city contracted with five firms to provide equipment for the new plant. The Buckeye Engine Co. of Erie, Ohio, would supply the generating motors; the Sunderland Roofing and Supply Co. of Omaha would supply the water purifying system; Henry R. Worthington of Kansas City would supply the condenser; the Fort Wayne Electric Works of Indiana would supply the other electrical equipment; and the Fremont Foundry and Machine Co. would supply the electric hoist.

Built on the same site as the 1885/1895 plant, the building itself was substantially larger than its predecessor. It was configured as a two-story square structure with a hipped roof that was sheathed with concrete tiles and punctuated by a large cylindrical brick smokestack. The facades were lined with steel multi-sash windows set within bays formed by corbeled brick pilasters. Architectural expression for the building was provided by decorative brick corbels at the eaves and round brick blind arches over the window openings. Centered on the north wall, the main entrance was approached by a concrete stairway and surrounded by a mildly classical enframement. A similar doorway provided entrance to the office in the southwest corner. Although the new power plant was clearly an industrial structure, its balanced facades and handsomely proportioned windows integrated it with the adjacent neighborhood.

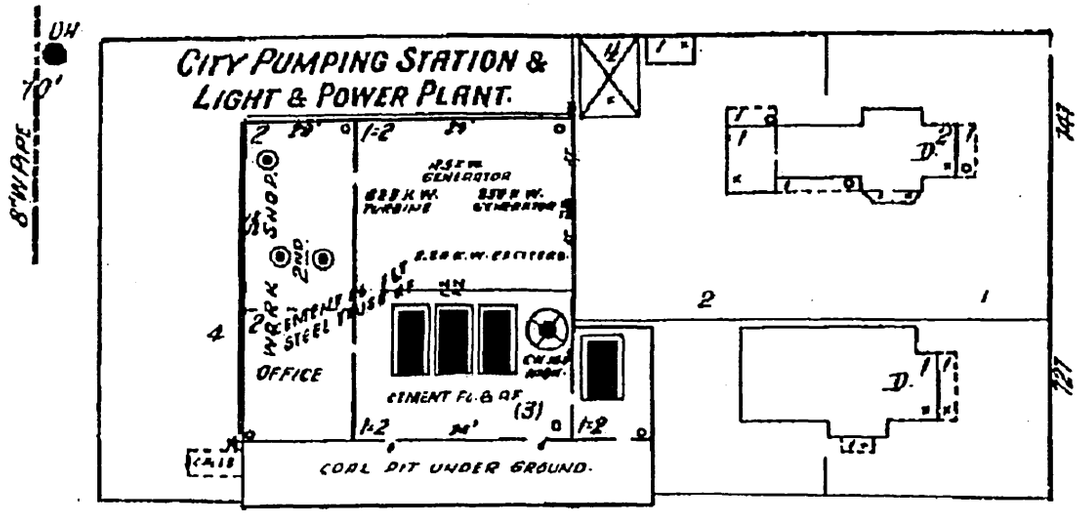

Figure 7. Fremont Municipal Waterworks and Light Plant, from 1914 Sanborn Map.

The Fremont Municipal Plant was configured typically for a steam-powered generating facility of its time [*see Figure 7*]. Essentially a two-part structure, it housed boilers in one large room

and generators in another. This arrangement isolated the delicate dynamos, gauges and switching equipment from the coal dust, soot and dirt produced from the stoking of boiler fires. A second-floor office was situated in the building's southwest corner over a first-floor workshop that extended along the building's west side. A large coal pit was buried at the alley on the south. Located side-by-side, the similarly proportioned main spaces were sized for efficiency in stoking the boilers and maintaining the generators. Traveling hoists were installed to lift the heavy machinery for maintenance and repair. With access to the boilers and generators at a premium, the main spaces were free-spanned by steel roof trusses to eliminate interior columns. And with the constant danger of explosion or fire, the building employed fireproof construction throughout. The exterior walls were brick, the floors and roof concrete. A brick firewall separated the boiler room from the generator room. Although the plant produced ample electricity for interior lights, daytime illumination was provided primarily by the large industrial-sash windows that lined the exterior walls. The 1907 iteration of the power plant may have incorporated minor substructural elements from the earlier building, but in its outward appearance and spatial organization, this was essentially an all-new structure.

Expanding the municipal power plant meant that the City of Fremont could now extend its street lighting system and offer electrical service to private customers on a 24-hour basis. During the 1910s and 1920s, the utility department made incremental improvements to the power plant and electrical grid to keep pace with steadily increasing demand for electricity. In 1910, for instance, a 500-kilowatt generator was installed. In 1911 Fremont began burying electrical and telephone lines as an alternative to pole-mounted lines. That year the Department of Utilities, which managed both the city's water and electricity, was placed under the auspices of the city's Board of Public Works. In 1917 a 625-kilowatt turbine was installed. And in 1919, with a surplus of power on its hands, the board began providing electricity to nearby Hooper; in 1921 it began selling power to Arlington; in 1922 to Cedar Bluffs; in 1923 to North Bend.

In 1921, no longer able to compete with the municipal system, the Fremont Gas and Electric Light Company finally quit business. The firm offered to sell its generating plant to the Board of Public Works, and after six months of negotiations the city purchased the company's distribution system--poles, wires, transformers, meters and other equipment--for $25,000. The plant itself remained in place, essentially abandoned. It was revived temporarily a year later, when a rotor failed on one of the city's turbines, crippling the Municipal Power Plant. To provide emergency service, the utility department quickly rehabilitated a turbine that had been dismantled at the old gas plant. The following year the city installed an additional 1500-kilowatt generator and 550-horsepower boiler in the Municipal Plant to forestall another similar emergency. In 1925 the board installed a new stoker and an exciter.

Late in 1926 the city was again contemplating another major expansion of its facilities to accommodate the steady increase in demand for electricity. "Owing to the unprecedented increase of the load at the Light and Water Plant, and the outlook for the future demands and possible rapid increase in the business," the utilities board reported to the city council in December 1926, "we have decided that as the proposed work is done at the present for the increased capacity of the plant, as was presented to you some time ago, that it would be to the benefit of the plant, and much cheaper to make arrangements at the present time for this increase, and to do so will require larger space within the building, that it can be done at this time and save a large expenditure in the future."[16]

The city hired the Burns & McDonnell Engineering Company of Kansas City to design the proposed plant improvements. As delineated by the firm early the next year, the addition would append onto the existing building on its east side [*see Figure 8*]. It was configured as a massive el-shaped three-story brick block. Unlike the 1907 structure, its roof was flat--supported by steel trusses, surrounded by brick parapets and topped by a riveted iron smokestack. Like the earlier building, the new addition featured separate rooms for generators and boilers, with a full-height

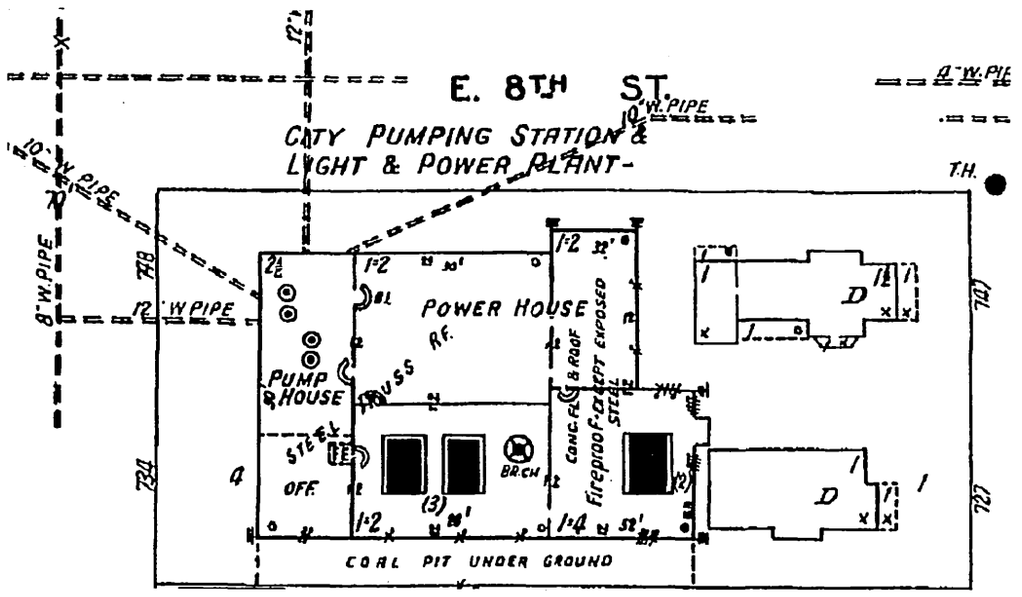

Figure 8. Fremont Municipal Waterworks and Light Plant, from 1928 Sanborn Map.

[16]Fremont City Council Proceedings, Book A, 43 (28 December 1926).

shaft for a coal stoker attached to the south side. Its asymmetrical exterior massing and spatial organization were purely functional, with apparently little consideration given to the way it integrated visually with the existing plant. Industrial sash windows of all sizes and enframements appeared on the exterior walls at various places. In a singular attempt at integration, one window on the north facade featured a fan-light head. Gone was the graceful symmetry of the 1907 plant. The addition stood awkwardly like an oversized boil on the exposed backside of the existing building.

The city council appropriated $60,000 for the new construction. As it had with the $16,000 spent in 1895, the $50,000 spent in 1907 and the smaller expenditures made along the way, the city intended to pay for this construction with revenues from electrical sales. Contracts for the building and equipment were let that spring and summer; early in 1928 the new addition was complete. The new facility held one 300-pound pressure boiler, with space for a second, future unit. Two years later the city installed a second 300-pound boiler and its appurtenant machinery. Later in 1930 the utilities board replaced the roof of the 1907 building with asbestos tiles and in 1932 installed a 2500-kilowatt turbine.

By the time the City of Fremont made its next push for expansion of the power plant in 1937, the complexion of power generation in Nebraska had changed considerably. That year 173 municipal electrical systems were then operating in the state, down over a hundred from a decade before. Of these, 74 were generating their own power and the rest were purchasing electricity from private sources. During the 1920s, many of the small municipal systems, lacking the funds for upkeep, had abandoned their generating plants or sold them to private utility companies. Their situation improved somewhat late in 1930, when Governor Weaver signed sweeping legislation covering the way they did business. Drafted by the Fremont City Attorney and ratified by a statewide referendum, the legislation authorized municipalities to issue bonds for improvements to their electrical systems and to extend power lines to serve customers in nearby rural areas and other towns. An article in *Nebraska History* explained the impact of the bill:

> This law made Nebraska a leader in this method of financing and shortly thereafter it was copied by surrounding states. It proved to be one of the most important laws concerning public utilities passed in the state. All financing of revenue bonds in Nebraska for city and village improvements are based on this statute, which has since been amended to include such improvements as sewer systems, water plants, and gas lines.[17]

[17]C.G. Wallace and Harold O. Johnson, "Municipally Owned Power Plants in Nebraska." *Nebraska History* 43:3 (September 1962): 197-201.

Fremont was typical in that expenses incurred on its plant had been repaid by revenues generated by the plant itself. But when the city considered a major overhaul of its electrical plant in 1937, it looked to another source of funds--the federal government. The city had used funds from the Public Works Administration the year before when it built its municipal auditorium and once again turned to the PWA for assistance with the power plant. The improvements would be extensive, involving installation of new equipment and building major additions to the building's north and west sides. The city hired Black & Veatch of Kansas City to design the equipment installations. Fremont architect George Grabe was responsible for the architectural work.

The choice of Grabe as the project architect was understandable, given that he was the only architect then practicing in Fremont. Born in Germany in 1883, Grabe immigrated to America with his parents the following year. His family moved to Gladbrook, Iowa, before settling in Cherry County, Nebraska. When he was 18, Grabe moved to Blair, and then to Omaha, to work in the building trades. In 1909 he began practicing architecture at the age of 26, designing with Charles Wurdeman in Aurora. In the spring of 1928 Grabe moved his practice to Fremont, where he drafted a variety of small-city commercial and residential projects. Grabe designed the municipal auditorium for the city in 1936. With its corbeled brick pylons, banked windows, symmetrical facades, and extensive use of architectural metals and ornamental concrete, it typified the Art Moderne style then in vogue.

Grabe used the same architectural expression in designing the addition to the municipal power plant. The improvement contemplated by the city required that 31 feet of additional space be added onto the west wall of the 1907 building and 24 feet onto the north wall. The remaining two facades of the 1907 structure would thus be covered completely with new construction. The west addition contained a first-floor public lobby and general office and smaller offices for the auditor and the Board of Public Works. Above this was a large storage room, with two other offices and the meter room. The north addition housed the switch gear room on the first floor, with a drafting room and more offices on the second floor and storage on the top level. Grabe integrated the new construction with the 1928 addition on the north facade by balancing a colonnaded central section with a side addition that was the same size as the previous addition. He delineated a fan-headed window in this small addition to match the existing 1928 window. For the west wall, he used the same Moderne pylons and columns, though it was configured asymmetrically. The south wall facing the alley was extended to the same three-story height as the 1928 addition. Grabe's additions changed the architectural character of the building entirely. The 1907 structure was no longer recognizable, hidden on the east by the 1928 addition and on the north and west by the proposed 1937 additions. Grabe had managed to integrate his design with the north facade of the 1928 addition, though, restoring a degree of architectural harmony to the structure. Although his design was derivative, he had successfully managed the building's proportions and the patterning of the fenestration and brickwork to create a definitively Moderne architectural statement.

In addition to work on the power plant, the city proposed rebuilding much of the electrical distribution system around Fremont, as well as some of the outlying water pumping and coal handling facilities. In August 1938 the Public Works Administration approved the power plant project, designating it as PWA Project No. 1329-P-F. The work was estimated to cost almost $300,000, of which PWA would fund up to 45 percent. Because it was intended in part as a make-work project to help alleviate unemployment caused by the Depression, the construction would utilize local labor at closely regulated rates. Late in 1938 the city began contracting with manufacturers for the various components of the plant: a new 400-pound boiler, turbine, extraction heater, blow-down tank, weigh larry, stoker, air compressors, bilge pumps, feed pumps, valves, control equipment. The Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Co. received a contract of almost $80,000 for the switch gear that would be housed in the north addition. The Electrical Engineering and Contraction Company of Des Moines received the contract for underground wiring for $44,000. The contract for the building itself was not let until the summer of 1939 to Joe D. Phillippe of Fremont for $72,000. In October Phillippe received an additional contract for the building's interior finishes. Phillippe and the equipment contractors worked through the rest of 1939 on the building and its contents. Early in 1940 the new structure was complete.

World War II effectively halted any further work on the power plant in the early 1940s. Late in 1944, as the war was drawing to a close, the Board of Public Works purchased a 4000-kilowatt turbine, a 75,000-pound boiler, condenser and ancillary equipment for almost $250,000. To house the new equipment, the city contracted with the Korshoj Construction Company of Blair for interior alterations to the building. Over the next three years the board made other incremental changes. In April 1948, in order to accommodate the increases in energy demand in Fremont, the city began considering yet another major change to the building. Costing an estimated $1.7 million, the alterations would entail installation of a new 10,000-kilowatt turbine and 10,000-square-foot condenser, along with other machinery and equipment. The building would again be extended--this time on its east side--using the same architectural expression as the 1939 addition. For this latest project, George Grabe again produced the architectural drawings and Black and Veatch the mechanical drawings.[18] In February 1949 the Board of Public Works awarded the contract for the architectural work to Francis R. Orshek for $355,000. The project was completed early the next year [*see Figure 9*].

[18]The Fremont Power Plant was one of Grabe's last commissions. As work of the building was underway in October 1949, Grabe was killed in a car crash five miles east of Fremont. "George Grabe Dies; Injured in Auto Crash." *Fremont Guide and Tribune*, 25 October 1949.

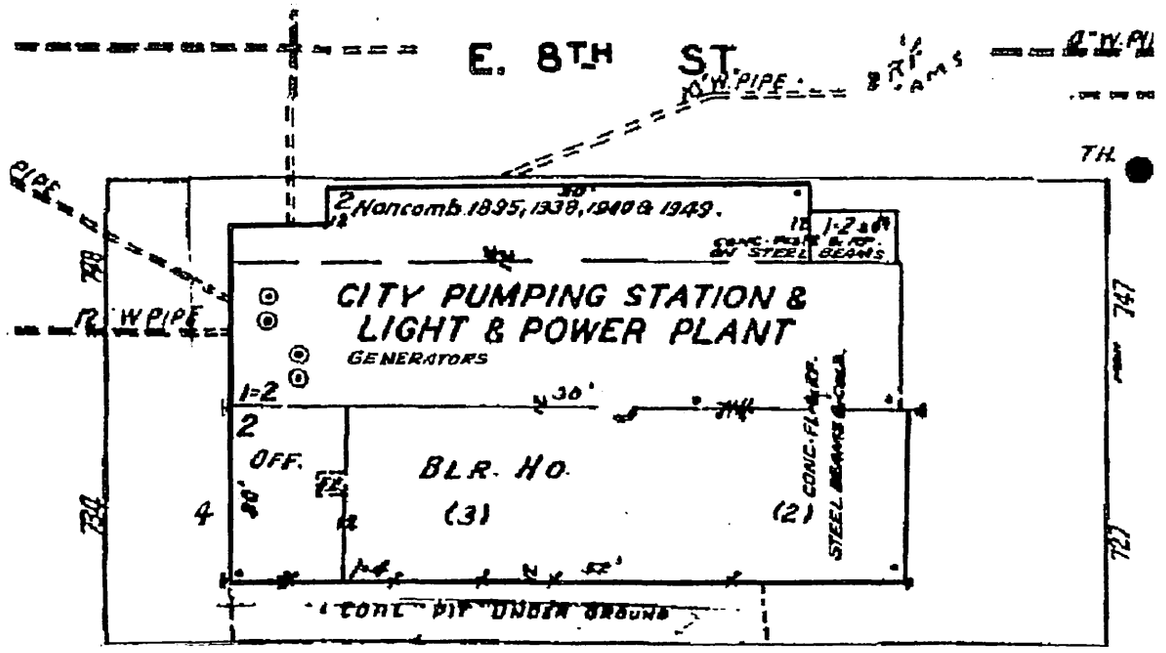

Figure 9. Fremont Municipal Waterworks and Light Plant, from 1956 Sanborn Map.

The 1950 addition to the power plant marked its last substantial alteration. Five years after completion of this latest improvement, the city again needed more electricity. This time, though, the Board of Utilities would not expand the existing power plant. Instead, the city opted to build an all-new facility on the east edge of town. The new plant would contain two huge coal-fired boilers (one put into operation in 1958, the other in 1963) operating at a 900-pound pressure to drive two generators with a combined capacity of 38,500 kilowatts. Construction on the Lon D. Wright Memorial Power Plant began in September 1955; regular operation from the first generator commenced in January 1958. The city continued to generate electricity from the downtown plant on a limited basis in the 1960s and 1970s. On September 16, 1976, after a third generator at the Wright plant went online, the downtown turbines were shut down permanently. The boilers, generators and ancillary equipment were later removed, and the Municipal Power Plant has since stood abandoned in place. The property has recently been acquired by MetroPlains Development of St. Paul, Minnesota, which plans to adaptively reuse it to provide senior housing. Sensitively rehabilitated, the Fremont Municipal Power Plant and Pumping Station will again offer an opportunity for preservation and interpretation of this important aspect of Fremont history.

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INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS

Name of photographer: Clayton B. Fraser
Date of photographs: February 2002
Location of original neg.: **FRASER**design, Loveland, Colorado
Description of views:

Photo number 1: General view of Power Plant and neighborhood. View to southwest.

Photo number 2: North front and west side of building. View to southeast.

Photo number 3: West side and south rear of building. View to northeast.

Photo number 4: North front and east side of building. View to southwest.

Photo number 5: East side and north front of building. View to west.

Photo number 6: East side and south rear of building. View to northwest.

Photo number 7: Detail of public entry on west side of building. View to east.

Photo number 8: Detail of pylon on north front of building. View to southeast.

Photo number 9: Interior view of first-floor generator room. View to west.

Photo number 10: Interior view of boiler room from second-floor platform. View to west.

Photo number 11: Interior view of first-floor public lobby. View to north.

Photo number 12: Interior view of second-floor drafting room and offices. View to west.