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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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Wells-Denbrook Architects Office Building

Other names/site number: _____

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

2. Location

Street & number: 1701 Cherry Street (also indicated as 623 17th Avenue South)

City or town: Grand Forks State: ND County: Grand Forks

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C ___ D

	<u>9-15-14</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>NDS:HPO</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)


Signature of the Keeper

11/4/14
Date of Action

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

(a non-historic storage shed)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE; Professional, architect's studio

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE; Business/organizational

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT; MidCentury Desert Modern

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Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CMU concrete block foundation, CMU concrete block and brick exterior walls, Ribbon glass and exposed wood frame walls, low-slope synthetic membrane roof, precast concrete floor deck, exterior stone trim

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The historic Wells-Denbrook Architects Office, built in 1954, is located at 1701 Cherry Street in Grand Forks (Grand Forks County), North Dakota.¹ The building is situated in the southeastern part of the city, near the Lincoln Golf Course. In 2014 the building serves as home to the Northern Lights Boy Scouts administrative offices. Besides the large church to the west of the site, the nearby neighborhood is mainly middle-income residential with two-way collector streets, mature boulevard trees, large boulevards, pedestrian sidewalks, and little to no change in topography. Most of the platted blocks are narrow and long with alley access, allowing for many of the utility lines to be kept concealed from the streetscape. The north boundary of the site, 17th Avenue South, and the west boundary, Cherry Street, are arterial collectors. These streets are also routes of two bus lines provided by the city's Area Transit. The materiality and scale of the Mid-Century Desert Modern building enable it to remain consistent to the residential houses along the block and blend into the urban fabric. The building is in a generally good condition of material integrity, with only minor deterioration due to weathering. There are few visible alterations beyond the period of significance, retaining high historic integrity for the exterior. Large shrubs line the foundation on the south and two large elm trees stand in the south yard, consistent with the architect's original site design. A non-contributing, non-historic small red storage shed sits at the southeast corner of the lot, and a wooden exterior ramp has been added to aid in accessibility. The site also includes a small parking lot on the south end with a concrete sidewalk leading to the veranda.

¹ The property was originally platted as 623 17th Avenue South, which is indicated as the firm's address in Wells' bio in the 1956 Bowker AIA architects index, but throughout the period of significance the firm consistently advertised itself at the Cherry Street side entrance address.

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Narrative Description

The Wells-Denbrook Architects Office building is situated on the site with a large front setback, matching the neighboring homes. Stylistically it can be classified as residential California/Organic Modernism (also referred to as Desert Modernism) with a low-slope roof, simple rectangular form, various colors of brick, ribbon windows, and an open porch. The long sides of the simple rectangular 42'-6" x 30'-0" building plan are oriented with the north and south elevations. At the building's base, the concrete foundation is exposed and includes small, in-swinging hopper or awning windows with shallow area wells to the lower level. Above the exposed foundation, the walls exhibit unusual snapped Roman face brick in a variety of reddish colors. The profile and bond pattern of the bricks enforces horizontality, however the pattern is given energy and interest through the occasional insertion of vertically oriented bricks used ornamentally. Yellow-gold paint and Kasota limestone accents, along with the varied brick colors, provide a harmonious palette of yellows, red, peach, and brown.

Though the entry door is not readily visible from the south façade, the extending low-slope roof plane and four broad, shallow exterior concrete steps provide a formal sense of entrance enclosure. The steps are flanked by low-profile planter boxes with rose-colored stone veneer. These planter boxes also provide the base anchor of the vertical steel-tube roof supports, allowing the west portion of the roof plane to project outwards over the steps. The roof itself is very shallow 2:12 gabled, made of a white rolled roofing membrane material, and has a peak running east to west. The soffit is constructed from stained wood planks, allowing them to remain a natural hue. In addition to sheltering the entry steps, the remainder of the overhanging roof plane projects over the walls to partially shade the high ribbon windows. These windows are made of five large single panes and are separated by four mullions that slant outward to support the eave. A sandstone sill below the windows creates a solid line ribbon effect across the façade extending to the east edge. The east wall acts as an end plane that extends past the south façade and steps outwards with each brick course corbeled to meet the roof.

The north elevation faces 17th Avenue and is similar in composition to the south façade. The exposed foundation includes five basement windows that are centered underneath each of the ribbon windows above. These basement windows best show the remnants of prior painting schemes, with a sea foam green paint (semi-transparent stain) visible as a hint of the more courageous paint treatments of the building's early years. Ribbon windows at the top of the walls, tucked just under the broad overhanging roof plane, extend uninterrupted from the east to west edges of the building. Like the south façade, the north elevation is capped on the east and west ends by protruding brick masonry walls that are corbeled outwards. At the east end, a half wall wraps around an open-air courtyard, with its concrete cap

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continuing the horizontal line created by the window sill band. Inside the courtyard, the brick masonry chimney extends above the low roof and is capped with concrete.

The east end elevation is narrow and is positioned close to the neighboring house to the east. The courtyard wall extends about halfway along the east façade, providing an intimate outdoor space accessible by the back door, which is also the façade's only opening. In its current state, a green chain link fence provides security. The main formal expression emphasizes the symmetrical ends of the eastern wall plane that step outwards to visually support the roof plane.

A variety of architectural treatments are incorporated into the west elevation, which serves now as it did historically as a banner or sign announcing the building tenant. The foundation portion of the base features yellow stone veneer of different shapes and sizes, extending beyond the building mass at the north end and at the south end and framing the entry steps. Much of the entry condition, including the steps and stone detailing, is obscured from the west due to installation of a wooden, exterior ramp for accessibility in the 1970s. Above the foundation, the elevation is divided into halves by a vertical line separating the blank brick signage panel from the recessed, glazed curtain wall entrance effect. The north half is a full brick wall, implementing the common outward corbel edge. This wall has served as the signage backdrop since its construction, and currently reads "Northern Lights Council Boy Scouts of America." (Historically this applied letter sign identified the architectural firm.) The south half of this elevation is recessed and includes the main entry, which is full glass curtain wall and has no outward slant. These two halves create a dichotomy of bulk and weightlessness, yet remain visually balanced. The steel tube trusses create symmetry by mimicking the angled slant of the building's north edge counterpart, which also helps balance the north half's heaviness by supporting the floating roof plane extension.

Interior:

The upper and lower floor interiors have undergone the most change in the building, largely in the form of adding and removing partitions as part of a 1964 renovation by the same architect, consistent with the original design. According to the original architectural drawings, the main floor's south half was partitioned into thirds for reception, conference space, and a small drafting area. The north half was not partitioned and was the main drafting space. Today, the north half is divided into thirds using the original centerline of the plan. Two private office spaces in the middle and east bay are accompanied with an open waiting area for visitors near the entry. The southern half has no full partitions and is currently home to office equipment and file storage. By retaining the exposed rafters and ceiling planking, the interior atmosphere remains warm and airy. The office interior partitions include clerestory windows that take advantage of the tall vaulted ceiling, while allowing the ceiling plane to float uninterrupted above the partitions. Light-colored, natural birch finished woodworking details cleanly maintain the warmth of the space. The surface-mounted

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fluorescent light fixtures are large eggshell pieces, and like many other modular elements in the building arrived on site and ready for installation. On the main (studio) floor, the overtly Modernist space-planning grid is emphasized by exposed double 2x12 sloped rafter beams clad with birch wood trim and exposed tongue and groove structural decking. In the basement level, a row of steel columns and a wide-flange girder runs along the east to west centerline. This frame system supports the concrete floor decking, known as Flexicore, for the main level. Flexicore is an engineered system of precast, prestressed hollow core planks that are typically cheaper than cast concrete and serves as another example of modularity within the chosen building materials. The foundation is constructed of concrete masonry units and the finished basement is treated in a utilitarian manner as finished storage space.

Consistent with the mid-century Modernist mindset, the Wells-Denbrook office building and studio consciously expresses interior planning grids and showcases their modularity. Through column and girder layout, the rectangular plan is split into two longitudinally, creating a north and south half, with six equal 6'-4" bays defined east to west. Modularity in materials and systems is found within the combination of concrete systems used, the steel columns, and the wood framing. The implied spatial grid pattern is emulated on the exterior through the window mullions: each mullion supports a girder on the inside, while every other mullion marks the main grid that was intended by the designers. This implicit grid is a character-defining detail of modern design, where the designers relied heavily upon the pattern to drive interior, exterior, and even furniture layout. The implied spatial grid – defined by a "Unistrut" suspension system -- is indicated on the sketch plans on the Continuation Sheets.

Architectural drawings in the Wells-Denbrook collections of the Orin G. Libby Special Collections section of the University of North Dakota Chester Fritz Library reflect the extent to which the interior layout was envisioned as infinitely flexible. One iteration of the 1954 design drawings shows partitioning of the studio level with three offices along the south half of the plan, accompanied by an alternate architectural concept for the same building configured as a residence, with four smaller rooms along the north and open living spaces along the south half. This suggests that the basic design may have been based on a precedent from a California Modern/Desert Modern project published in a popular journal. Interior layouts for the main level studio were redesigned and reconfigured in 1964 and 1971, more consistent with the residential floor planning layout, while adhering without deviation to the secondary planning grid established by the sloped roof structure and the meticulously detailed "Unistrut" support system for partitions.

Overall, the Wells Denbrook Architectural Office property retains high material integrity and integrity of historical context, affording a good example of the way Modernist architectural design thinking found its way into mid-sized communities throughout the central U.S. following World War II, virtually displacing the

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Classical Revival motifs embodying the Beaux Arts training for public commissions. From the perspective of 50-years' distance, the elimination of ornament in favor of simplified, engineered efficiency reflects a near-inevitable appeal that has continued to have pervasive influence on architectural training and design. Expressively honest and unadorned use of materials, balance of vertical and horizontal elements, exposed structure and broad overhanging roof planes are design tendencies that characterize Myron Denbrook's architectural work as a particularly restrained version of mid-century Modernism, characterized in this instance as Desert Modern based on mostly-residential precedents in the Palm Springs/Palm Desert area of California. The Wells-Denbrook firm's architectural influence was somewhat limited to the region of northeastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota, surrounding Grand Forks. This property, like much of Denbrook's work regionally, displays a fastidious precision in detailing bordering on obsessiveness. Though the simplified palette is extremely pared down, Denbrook's work in the Modernist vein affords useful comparisons with earlier public tastes for ornamental embellishment.

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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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1954-1974

Significant Dates

1954: Construction

1964: Interior remodel

1974: Firm moved out

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Theodore B. Wells

Myron E. Denbrook, Jr.

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

In the evolution of the firm's work from Theodore Wells' Beaux-Arts Classical Revival training toward Bauhaus-inspired Modernism more characteristic of Myron Denbrook, this property can fairly be regarded as a key transitional design marking the overwhelming emphasis on efficiency, expressive use of materials, and suppression of every form of applied ornamentation. The building is eligible with primary significance under Criterion C as a distinctive example of Organic or Desert Modernist style with methods of construction reflecting the emergence of Modernism in the decades following World War II. The property has secondary significance under Criterion A as it reflects the emerging patterns in architectural practice by a pair of architects with substantial influence on the building environment of Grand Forks, North Dakota, and Minnesota throughout the 20th Century. The property provides a useful, instructive case study for transformation of the architectural industry from Classical Revival themes to Modernist design through the lens of a notable regional architectural practice. It has retained a high degree of historic integrity of materials, feel, association, and setting. Two phases of interior alterations were made within the period of historical significance (1964 and 1971), and those design changes are precisely consistent with the architects' original design concept. Given the marginal original design of the thermal envelope, minor cosmetic alterations address increasing demands for improved energy efficiency without substantially altering the buildings material character or exposed Modernist details. The most apparent alteration to the exterior of the building is with the addition of a wooden ramp for wheelchair accessibility placed in the 1970s. Though the ramp obscures part of the entry condition as viewed from Cherry Street, the addition of the ramp did not impose major changes to the building itself and could be removed without damaging the historic fabric. The period of significance includes the beginning of the planning and construction of the building in 1954, the interior remodels by the original designers in 1964 and 1971, and the year the practice relocated to 1420 South 25th Avenue in Grand Forks in 1974.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The mid-century Modernist movement of architecture marked a shift from Classical motifs to expressed functionalism. The development of new construction techniques, availability of new materials, and especially changes in architectural values and theories provided the framework for architects to embrace this new way of thinking. The term "Modernism" is an umbrella for many other subsets of design, including high-style Miesian Modern, organic Modernism reflected in the lingering influence of Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West, and a particular residential strain of Modernism variously referred to as California Modern or Desert Modern. Desert Modernism was a distinct architectural style that was popularized in

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southwest California in the 1950s and 1960s. The emergence of this west-coast style in the practice of Wells-Denbrook was certainly due to the influence of young Myron Denbrook who studied at the University of Washington at just the time Modernism was becoming pervasive throughout North America.

Where the International Style or high style Modernist designers preferred streamlined materials and sleek glass boxes, architects of the Desert Modernism style took a more contextual approach and responded to the sunny skies and warm climate typical of southern California. Desert Modern designs by architect-developers John Lautner, E. Stewart Williams, Donald Wexler, A. Quincy Jones, Joseph Eichler, and brothers George and Robert Alexander in the Palm Springs/Palm Desert area were vigorously promoted in professional journals and advertising literature that would have been inescapably influential on emerging architects from all architects studying at the time in schools of architecture in the western U.S., post-war growth region. Large overhangs, dramatic rooflines, functional outdoor spaces, expanses of glazing, flexible interior plans, and expressive use of a simplified palette of materials were common. Local stone and brick paired with prefabricated engineered wood elements connected holistic residential-scaled designs with the efficient, machined buildings popular in other contemporary designs of the day.

The design challenge of the Wells-Denbrook Architectural Office was translating an architectural style developed in a desert climate seamlessly into the site of Grand Forks, North Dakota. Regarding environmental sustainability, the building does not perform as well as it might if located closer to its California roots. Given the time period in which it was built and considering the general lack of concern for heat loss, gain, and other sustainability matters at that time, the Wells-Denbrook office does not stand out as especially energy-efficient. It is, however, honest and unadorned in its architectural expression. The stone, brick, and glass reflect the Modernist tendency toward mixed materials, with a nod to the significant brickmaking industry in the region. The application of these materials also provides an example of meticulous detailing that was the essential reputation of these two conscientious architects: the Roman brick bond façade is sprinkled with the occasional brick laid upright, a simple, non-distracting theme that still shows designer attentiveness. Including curtain walls in the design indicates the advances in technology of the time, when building practices were striving for lighter frames and larger expanses. The characteristic, broadly overhanging "hovering" roof plane gives prominence to the entry and creates a dramatic visual expression from Cherry Street. The major roof extension covering the entry also creates functional outdoor space, as does the partially enclosed courtyard on the east side. The interior displays the Desert Modernism style with its open, flexible floor plan that utilizes light, spaciousness, exposed structure, and warm wood surfaces.

The firm's shift from Classical Revival to Modern Movement design reflects the influence of Myron Denbrook, who joined the firm in 1947 and can be observed through the comparison of drawings and

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projects completed before and after Denbrook joined the practice. Theodore Wells was a prominent architect in the Grand Forks area and surrounding region since establishing his architectural practice in 1923. Many of his projects were funded through the WPA and showcased Wells' mastery of geometric Art Deco detailing. The buildings on the Grand Forks Fairgrounds of 1936-1938 (NRHP 2009), The Walsh County Courthouse of 1940 (MPS 1985), and the Edinburg Auditorium of 1937 (NRHP 2013) are all valuable examples of the Art Deco/Art Moderne WPA projects that Wells completed following the Great Depression. Gothic Revival was also in Wells' architectural arsenal and carried him into the middle of the 20th century. For example, the Grand Forks South Junior High School (NRHP 1999), completed in 1932, displays a sensitively competent rendition of the Gothic Revival style.

Many more examples of Wells' Collegiate Gothic style are found scattered throughout the University of North Dakota Campus, which confirms that while Myron Denbrook provided a youthful connection to contemporary styles, the partnership of Wells-Denbrook Architectural firm did not abandon classical architectural motifs. The Education Building, built in 1954; the Chester Fritz Library, built in 1961; Squires Hall, built in 1963; and the historic Hyslop Sports Center (Gymnasium/Fieldhouse), built in 1951 are all solid examples of Collegiate Gothic architecture, featuring brick exterior, large windows, light masonry window and door detailing, and sometimes a central tower.

Theodore B. Wells' (1889-1976) extensive use of classical Gothic Revival and Art Deco architecture would have been heavily influenced by the classical training that he received while studying at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Though he graduated from the University of North Dakota with a degree in Civil Engineering in 1912 and served with an engineering division in the U.S. Army during WWI, he was able to nurture his affinity for architectural practice as a draughtsman throughout the United States and acquire formal skills while studying Beaux Arts design in the Atelier Jausseley at the École in Paris at the end of the war. Historians sometimes refer to the Beaux-Arts educational precedent as it was adapted to schools of architecture in the U.S. from 1880 to 1950, but Wells was one of very few architects in the region who actually studied under the original École des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

Wells' deep roots in the Grand Forks area began at his birth in 1889 to Herbert and Anna Wells. His parents opened and operated the Northern Hotel in Grand Forks where he and his three sisters grew up, and which Wells took over as an adult. He attended public school in Grand Forks and graduated Sigma Chi from the University of North Dakota in 1912. He worked as a draftsman for various North Dakota and Minnesota architectural firms from 1913 to 1917 and was inducted into the military in 1917. After his return from his 22-month service with the 307th Engineers in World War I, he returned to the state and became involved as a citizen and as an architect, opening his private practice in 1923 and designing an eventual 260 architectural commissions. Many projects resulted from military commissions and WPA

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sponsorship, which provided Wells with work when it was otherwise scarce. His master plan and design for the Grand Forks Fairground was typical of his mix of engineering and classically derived ornamentation. Others still, like the Grand Forks Herald building built in 1931, provided Wells with substantial opportunities for work outside of Federal projects. Wells was invested in the City of Grand Forks, but it was clear that the community was invested in him, too.

Myron E. Denbrook Jr.'s affiliation with Grand Forks began later, as he was Wells' junior by 33 years. Born in Akron, Ohio to Myron and Ida Denbrook, he graduated from the University of Washington in 1945 with a Bachelor's in Architecture. Even before graduation, Denbrook worked for various architectural firms in Washington and also was employed as a tool designer for Boeing Aircraft in Seattle. His employment under Wells resulted from response to one of the numerous letters that Denbrook sent to firms across the nation. In a phone interview with architectural historian Steve Martens in 2010, Denbrook reminisced at how warmly, affectionately, and graciously he was accepted into professional practice by the elder, whom he referred to as "Teddy" Wells. Myron Denbrook (1922-2012) was particularly technically oriented with material science, technical detailing, and specification writing among his specialties. He was a lifelong member and active proponent of the Construction Specification Institute. Some professional colleagues who worked contemporarily with him have characterized his cocksure certainty about the absolute rightness of each of his decisions and his personal style as "bombastic."²

Architectural drawings developed by Denbrook's hand reflect absolute certainty about the correctness of Modernist architectural thinking. Precise details appear in his drawings for features as mundane as custom-cast concrete splash blocks, and virtually his only flirtation with applied ornament can be seen in the interlocking geometric rectangular tile patterns that ornamented entrances on projects like the Grand Forks Armory and Auditorium (demolished 2011).

By remaining active in the community as architects, the Wells-Denbrook partnership knew that they could instigate positive change within the city they lived. Wells was on the Grand Forks State and County Fair Commission in 1936 while involved with design work for their WPA fairgrounds projects. He also served on the North Dakota State Board of Architecture, was part of the Kiwanis Club, Chamber of Commerce, UND Alumni Association, and was part of the Board of Directors of the YMCA. Denbrook was active with membership in the Lions Club, was a board member of the ND Association of Architects, and

² For example, interactions with Steve Martens at professional association meetings of Construction Specifications Institute and NDAIA. The stereotypical impression of a Modern "hero architect," adopted by youthful architects in many American communities, seems based on the persona assigned by Ayn Rand to her character Howard Roarke, derived from the often strident writings of Frank Lloyd Wright:

"So here I stand before you . . . exalting the simple laws of common sense – or of super-sense if you prefer – determining form by way of the nature of materials." [Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Organic Architecture*, 1939]; "and . . . the use of new materials like glass and steel to achieve more spatial architecture, and the development of a building's architectural 'character' which was his answer to the notion of style." [Wright's essay "New Architectural Principles" quoted from Kimberly Elman.]

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was the Vice President of the Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce for two years. In 1975, after the firm had moved to 1420 South 25th Avenue as Wells, Denbrook, Adams, Wagner Inc., they were involved with a project called "The City of Grand Forks: Shaping the space we live in." The project asked local persons and architectural firms for suggestions, ideas, or concepts that might improve the Grand Forks that they knew. The designers submitted their own possible solution to be included in the booklet, while Denbrook was on the jury to sort out and compile the proposals.

Together—and separately—Theodore B. Wells and Myron E. Denbrook, Jr. supplied the city of Grand Forks and the surrounding region with many important civic, institutional, and private buildings that serve the users faithfully and with grace. They built a reputation of careful and conscientious design and kept the client as the top priority. As Denbrook himself once said, their goal is to not "build a monument to ourselves, but to design functional, economical, yet beautiful buildings that represent the best buy for the money." Their adaptability is observed through the wide range of designs and built projects, including Gothic Revival educational buildings for the UND campus (NRHP district, 2010) as well as meticulously crafted Modern buildings, like the firm's office. The office building they designed for their studio was the product of a time of change in the architecture industry; it remains an excellent example of Desert Modernism's play between heavy materials and floating planes, open and airy interiors with warm detailing, and the engineered efficiency of new material technologies of the Post-War era that allowed for protruding roofs, walls of glass, and flexible interiors.

The building is eligible for the National Register for Historic Places with significance under Criteria C and A as an excellent example of a Midwestern firm's interpretation of organic Desert Modernism. The partnership of Wells and Denbrook has displayed adaptability and mastery through the wide range of designs and built projects, including Gothic Revival educational buildings for the UND campus as well as meticulously crafted Modern buildings, like the firm's office. This building exemplifies the transitional period for the firm, and reflects regional architecture practice more broadly as it explores the interplay between heavy materials and floating planes, open, airy, and warm interiors, and the engineered efficiency of new material technologies of the Post-War era that allowed for protruding roofs, walls of glass, and flexible habitable spaces. The gracefully restrained ornamentation, the meticulous detailing, and the commitment to functional, utilitarian design demonstrate the competence, diligence, and local success of two influential North Dakota architects in a modestly unassuming—yet dignified—building.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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- "Myron Denbrook, architect of much of Grand Forks, dies." *Grand Forks Herald*. By chaga@gfherald.com on Apr 10, 2012
- Sauerwein, Daniel. "Who Built the Fritz?: the Architects Behind the Building." Web blog posted November 29, 2011, Permalink URL fritzat50.wordpress.com/. Accessed March 12, 2014.

Wells-Denbrook Architects Office Building

Grand Forks, ND

Name of Property

County and State

Sherfy, Marcella and W. Ray Luce. *National Register Bulletin*, "Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Originally published 1979, Revised 1998.

Slaton, Deborah and Rebecca A. Shiffer. *Preserving the Recent Past*. Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, 1995.

Weintraub, Alan; in Alan Hess, *Organic Architecture: The other modernism*. Layton: Gibbs Smith, Publishing. 2006.

"Wells-Denbrook Architectural Records, (1925-1980)." OGL Collection #1487, and Acc. #2006-2841 in the Orin G. Libby collections of the Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND. [see, in particular, OGL Oversized Folder #40 (Job 5228) and #45 (Jobs 5408 and 6409).]

White, Hugh L. *Who's Who in North Dakota: A biographical directory*. Bismarck: Conrad Publishing Co. 1954.

Zevi, Bruno. *Towards an Organic Architecture*. London: Faber & Faber Limited. 1950.

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: Orin G. Libby Special Collections at UND Chester Fritz Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Wells-Denbrook Architects Office Building
Name of Property

Grand Forks, ND
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre (74' x 140')

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map): Grand Forks, ND-MN (1994)

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: 14 Easting: 646 920 Northing: 5 307 310

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Legal description: Cox's Addition, Lot 1, Block 25
Parcel number: 44.1303.326.000

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary of this platted parcel contains all areas and extant features historically associated with the Wells Denbrook Architecture Office building, within the residential neighborhood context of South Grand Forks.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Alexandra R. Schrader, principle author; Steve C. Martens, Architect, consultant
organization: for Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission
street & number: PO Box 13876
city or town: Grand Forks state: ND zip code: 58208-3876
e-mail: poleary@grandforksgov.com
telephone: 701-772-8756
date: 29 August 2014

Wells-Denbrook Architects Office Building
Name of Property

Grand Forks, ND
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

name/title: Northern Lights Boy Scouts
organization: Northern Lights Council Boy Scouts of America
street & number: 4200 19th Ave S
city or town: Fargo state: ND zip code: 58103-1884
e-mail: fargo@nlcbsa.org
telephone: 701-293-5011

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Wells Denbrook Architects Office Building
City or Vicinity: Grand Forks
County: Grand Forks State: ND
Photographer: Steve C. Martens
Date Photographed: May 2, 20114
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Digital image; ND_GF_WellsDenbrook NRHP_SCM777BW.tif
South (primary) elevation; photographer facing north

Wells-Denbrook Architects Office Building

Grand Forks, ND

Name of Property

County and State

Photo number 1 of 8.

Name of Property: Wells-Denbrook Architects Office Building

City or Vicinity: Grand Forks

County: Grand Forks State: ND

Photographer: Steve C. Martens

Date Photographed: May 2, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Digital image; ND_GF_WellsDenbrook NRHP_SCM769color.tif

West (Cherry Street) elevation; photographer facing east-southeast

Photo number 2 of 8.

Name of Property: Wells-Denbrook Architects Office Building

City or Vicinity: Grand Forks

County: Grand Forks State: ND

Photographer: Steve C. Martens

Date Photographed: May 2, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Digital image; ND_GF_WellsDenbrook NRHP_SCM774BW.tif

North elevation; photographer facing southwest from 17th Avenue S.

Photo number 3 of 8.

Name of Property: Wells-Denbrook Architects Office Building

City or Vicinity: Grand Forks

County: Grand Forks State: ND

Photographer: Steve C. Martens

Date Photographed: May 2, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Digital image; ND_GF_WellsDenbrook NRHP_SCM144BW.tif

East (end) elevation; photographer facing northwest

Photo number 4 of 8.

Name of Property: Wells-Denbrook Architects Office Building

City or Vicinity: Grand Forks

County: Grand Forks State: ND

Photographer: Steve C. Martens

Date Photographed: May 2, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Digital image; ND_GF_WellsDenbrook NRHP_SCM143BW.tif

South elevation; photographer facing northwest

Wells-Denbrook Architects Office Building

Grand Forks, ND

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Photo number 5 of 8.

Name of Property: Wells-Denbrook Architects Office Building

City or Vicinity: Grand Forks

County: Grand Forks State: ND

Photographer: Steve C. Martens

Date Photographed: May 2, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Digital image; ND_GF_WellsDenbrook NRHP_SCM134color.tif

Detail, South elevation close-up from entry; photographer facing northeast

Photo number 6 of 8.

Name of Property: Wells-Denbrook Architects Office Building

City or Vicinity: Grand Forks

County: Grand Forks State: ND

Photographer: Steve C. Martens

Date Photographed: May 2, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Digital image; ND_GF_WellsDenbrook NRHP_SCM122color.tif

Interior view of main level open studio; photographer facing west

Photo number 7 of 8.

Name of Property: Wells-Denbrook Architects Office Building

City or Vicinity: Grand Forks

County: Grand Forks State: ND

Photographer: Steve C. Martens

Date Photographed: May 2, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Digital image; ND_GF_WellsDenbrook NRHP_SCM122color.tif

Interior detail of main level open studio center partition clerestory; photographer facing northeast

Photo number 8 of 8.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Wells-Denbrook Architectural Office Building
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17th Avenue S

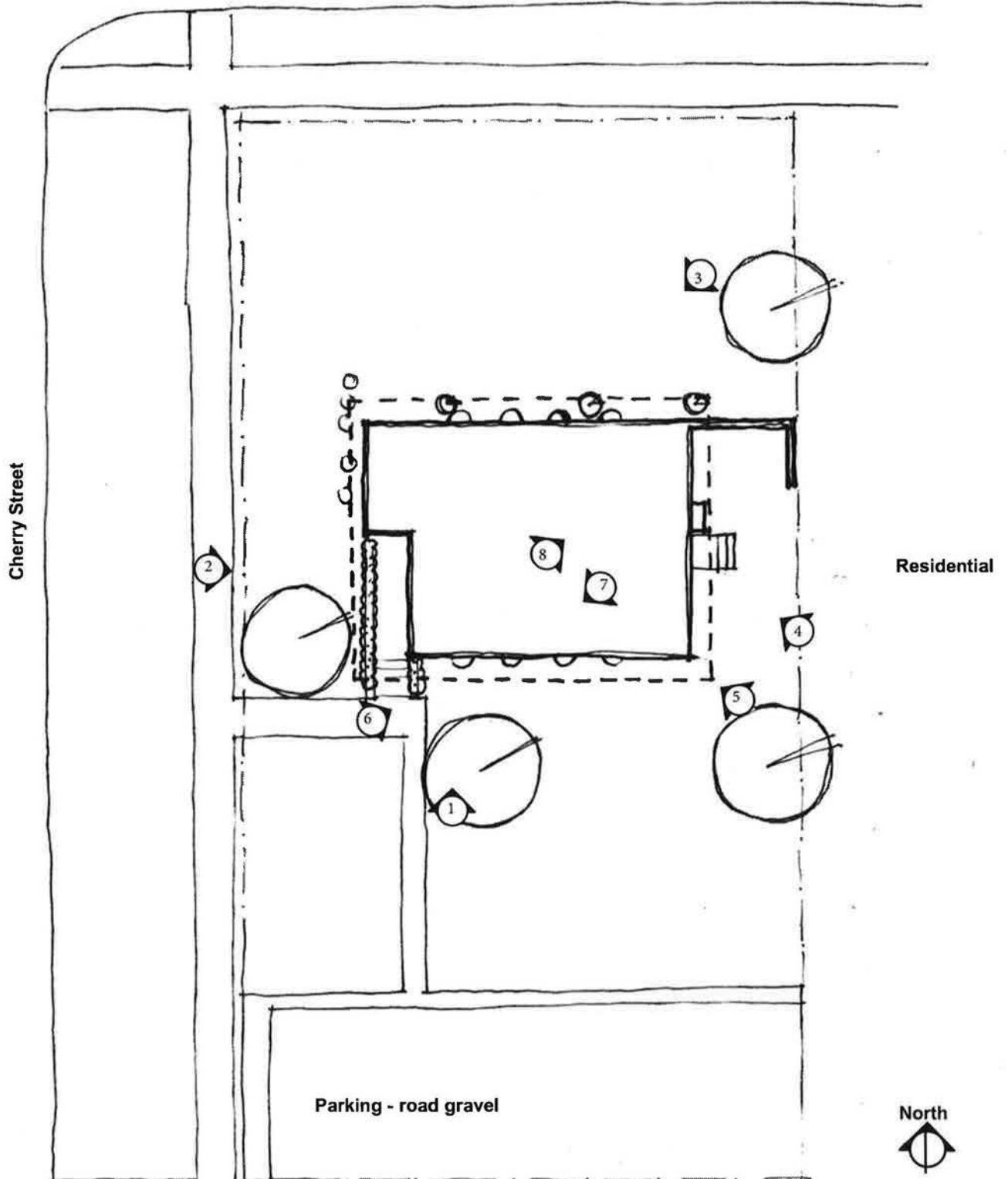


Fig. 1: Sketch map of Wells-Denbrook Architectural Office, with photo standpoints indicated

United States Department of the Interior
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Fig. 2: GoogleEarth aerial location view of Wells-Denbrook Architectural Office within city of Grand Forks

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Fig. 3: GoogleEarth close-up aerial view of Wells-Denbrook Architectural Office neighborhood

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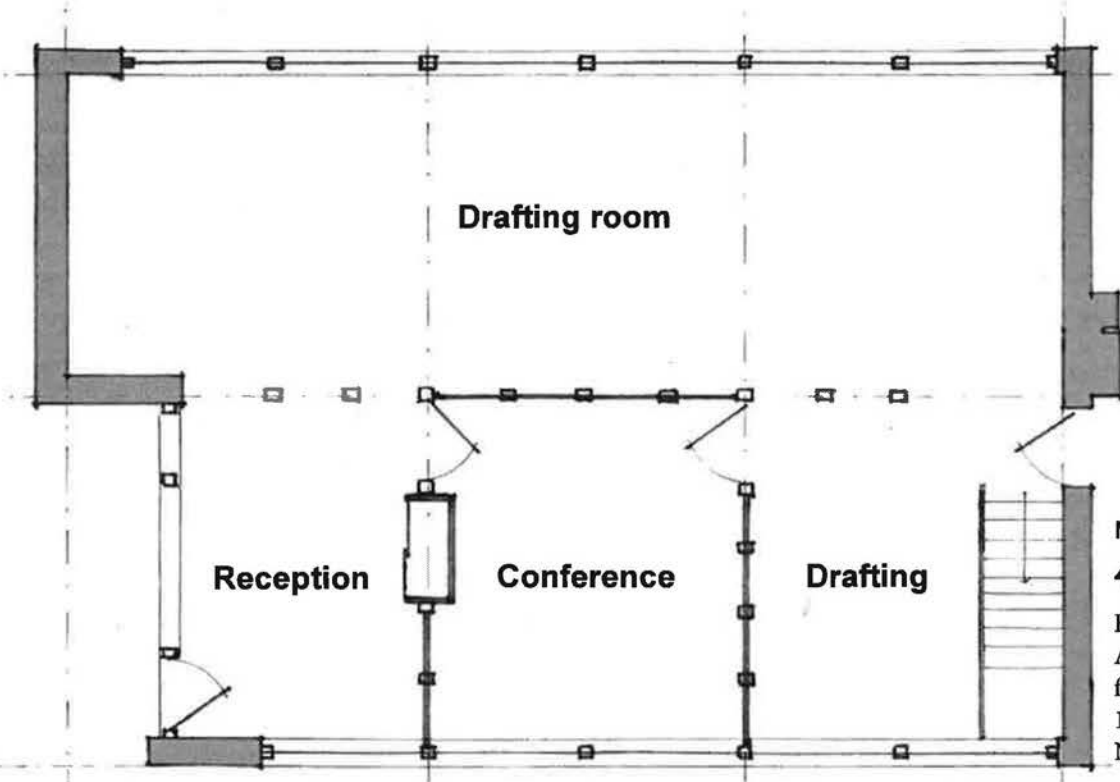


Fig. 4: Wells-Denbrook Architectural Office main floor studio plan, original 1954 layout. Not to scale

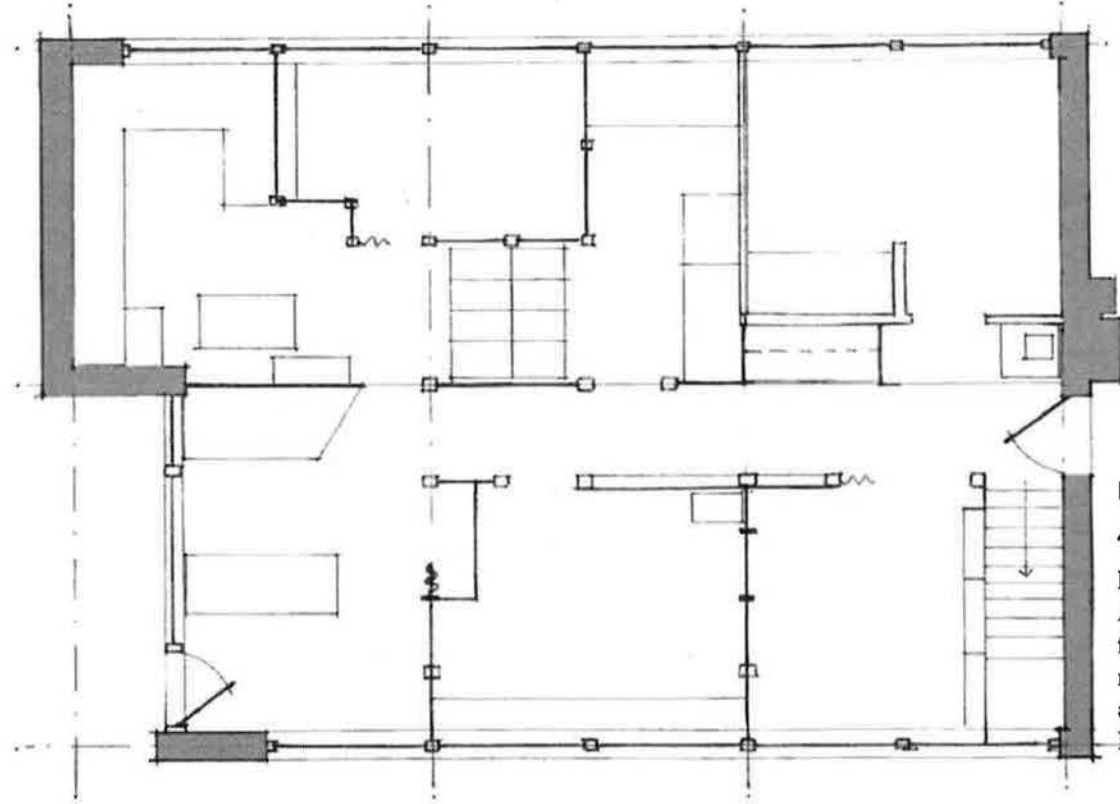


Fig. 5: Wells-Denbrook Architectural Office main floor studio plan, 1964 revised layout from 1971 as-built. Not to scale

United States Department of the Interior
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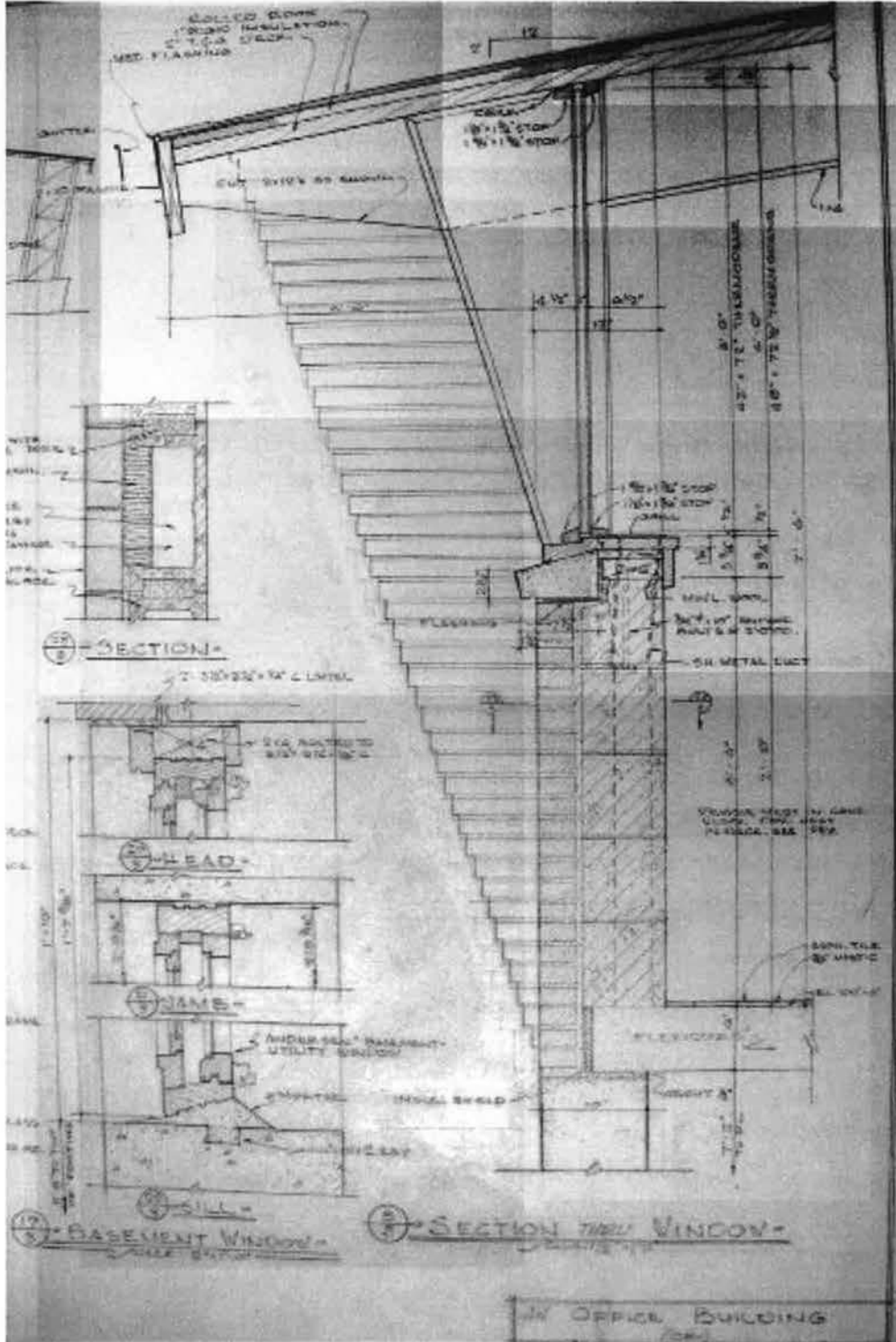


Fig. 6: Wall section architectural detail from architect’s original 1954 construction documents (in the Wells Denbrook architectural papers collection of the Orin G. Libby Special Collections at Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota; Grand Forks, ND)

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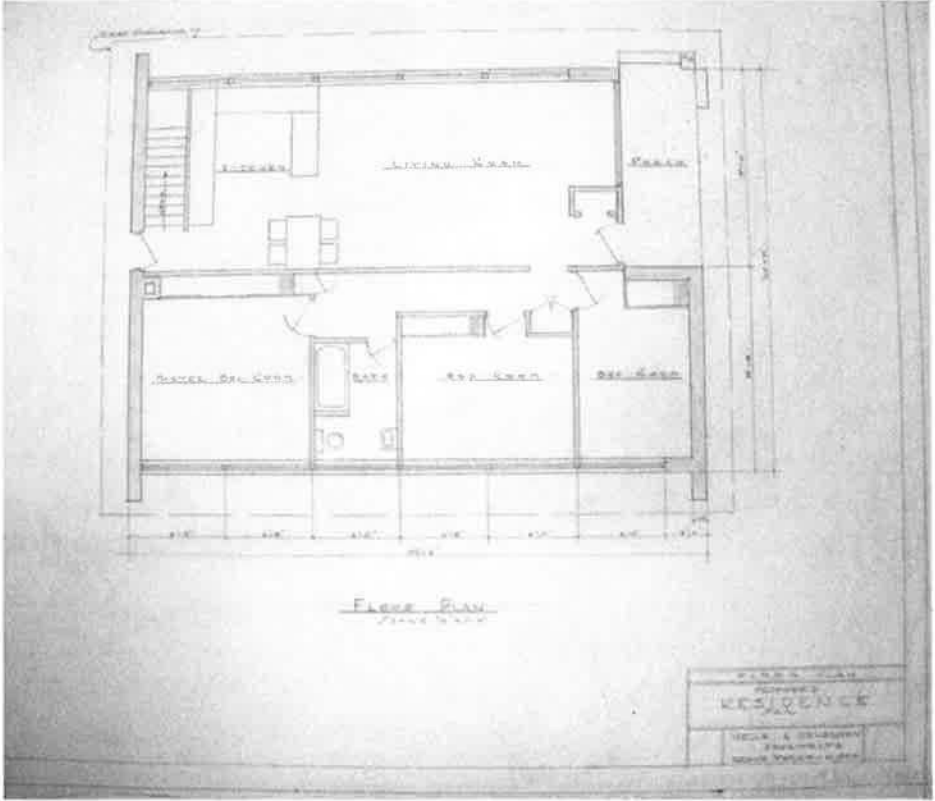


Fig. 7: Wells-Denbrook Architectural Office main floor plan, original 1954 residential concept
NOTE: when compared with other plans, north is shown reversed (down) per architect's original drawing

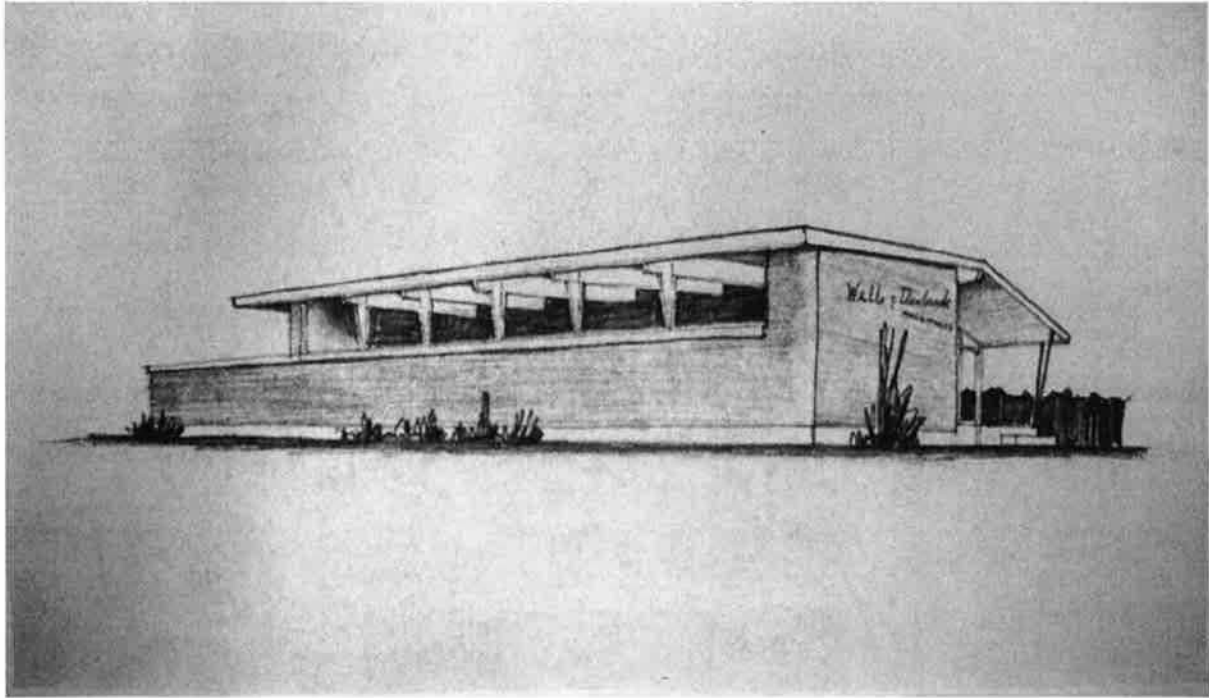


Fig. 8: Wells-Denbrook Architectural Office architect's sketch rendering, 1964

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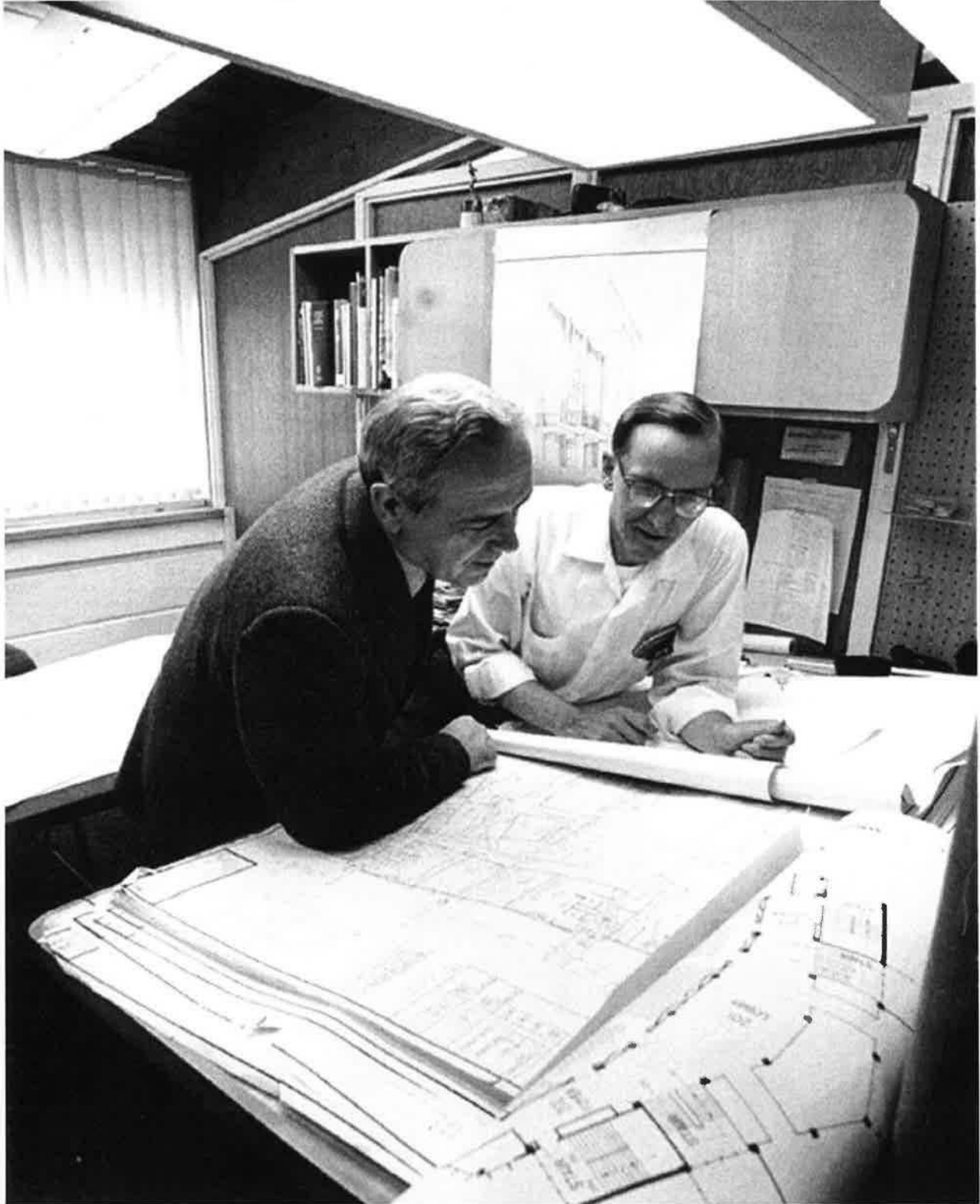


Fig. 9: Historic photo of Theodore B. Wells and Myron Denbrook consulting over an architectural drawing inside their studio office building, Sept. 1972

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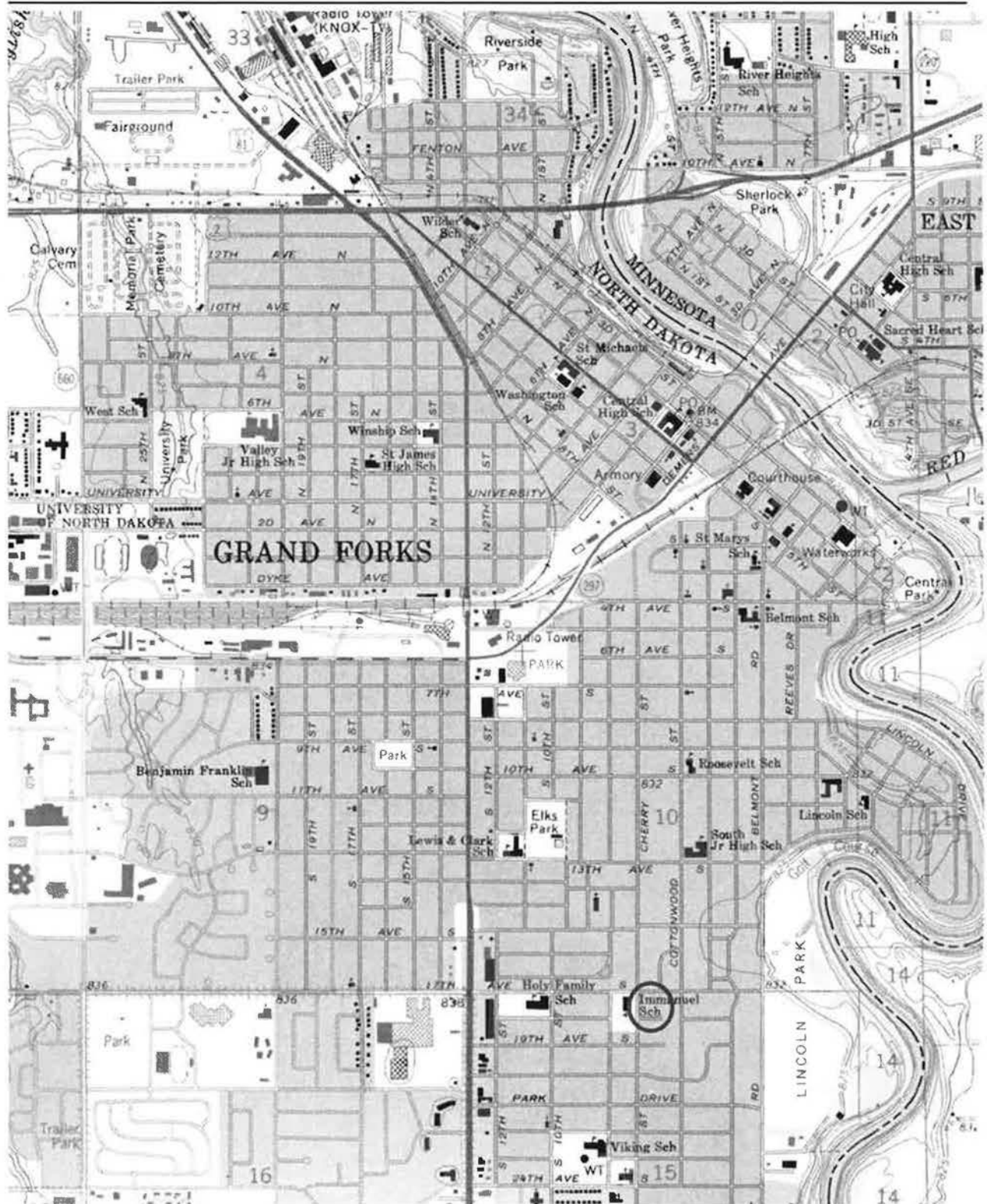


Fig. 10: USGS Topographic map for Grand Forks, ND-MN quadrangle locating Wells-Denbrook Architectural Office (UTM = Z14 E646920 N5307310)





NORTHERN LIGHTS COUNCIL
BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA













UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Wells--Denbrook Architects Office Building

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NORTH DAKOTA, Grand Forks

DATE RECEIVED: 9/19/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/05/14
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000900

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT _____ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Because the nomination established significance in terms of
continued use by the architectural firm, it is not essential
to justify exceptional significance under Criterion Consideration
6 (even though the SOS extends to 1974).

RECOM./CRITERIA A, C

REVIEWER [Signature]

DISCIPLINE Historic

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 11/4/14

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

To: Keeper, National Register of Historic Places
From: Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr./ Lorna Meidinger
Date: 16 September 2014
Subject: National Register Nomination



The following materials are submitted on this 16th day of September 2014, for the nomination of the Wells-Denbrook Architecture Office Building to the National Register of Historic Places.

- 1 National Register of Historic Places nomination form on archival paper
 - Multiple Property Nomination form on archival paper
 - 8 Photographs
 - USGS map(s)
 - Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)
 - Pieces of correspondence
 - 1 Other: Photo cd
-

COMMENTS:

- Please insure that this nomination is reviewed
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objections ___ do ___ do not constitute a majority of property owners.
- Other: